APHRODITE’S TORTOISE
THE VEILED WOMAN OF ANCIENT GREECE
The Classical Press of Wales, an independent venture, was founded in 1993, initially to support the work of classicists and ancient historians in Wales and their collaborators from further afield. More recently it has published work initiated by scholars internationally. While retaining a special loyalty to Wales and the Celtic countries, the Press welcomes scholarly contributions from all parts of the world.

The symbol of the Press is the Red Kite. This bird, once widespread in Britain, was reduced by 1905 to some five individuals confined to a small area known as 'The Desert of Wales' – the upper Tywi valley. Geneticists report that the stock was saved from terminal inbreeding by the arrival of one stray female bird from Germany. After much careful protection, the Red Kite now thrives – in Wales and beyond.
This book is dedicated to the memory of my grandparents, Eben John (1912–1987) and Dorothy John (1918–2002).
Gyda chariad mawr am bopeth.

Gyda chariad mawr am bopeth.
The Ladies cannot be but pleased to see so much learning and Greek upon this important subject.

Alexander Pope, Commentary on *Iliad* 22.468–72 (Andromakhe’s veil).
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This book began in embryo as part of my Master’s dissertation, ‘The Shining Veil: women and veiling in Homeric and Archaic Greece’. From there it developed into a full Ph.D. thesis, ‘Women and Veiling in the Ancient Greek World’. Consequently I have lived with ‘the veil’ for many years now, during which time I have notched up the support and friendship of many individuals. I am aware that I have been lucky enough to have encountered so many spirited, generous and learned people who deserve to be thanked here.

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Preface

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Last, but by no means least, I express my love and gratitude to my mother and father, Gillian and William, for their support and kindness. Diolch o galon.

All dates given are BC, unless otherwise stated. All translations are my own, unless otherwise indicated.
VEILING THE ANCIENT GREEKS

This book explores the veiling of women in the ancient Greek world from the period between roughly 900 BC and AD 200. It covers a wide geographical area that ranges from mainland Greece to Asia Minor, Egypt, and South Italy. The study argues that the veiling of the female head or face was part of a male ideology that required women to be silent and invisible creatures, like mute tortoises contained and hidden within their shells. This book suggests that veiling was so routine a practice that it seldom receives a mention in the ancient male sources, although, as the quotation from Menander cited at the top of this page suggests, the habitual practice of veiling does receive an occasional sideward glance in the texts. Despite (or perhaps because of) its brevity, Menander’s statement, that ‘that’s what women do’, speaks volumes about the routine nature of veiling. Women, the daughters of Aphrodite – sexualized, polluted and dangerous – subscribed to this male ideology (perhaps willingly, but perhaps not). While working within the confines of this philosophy though, the veiled woman was granted some independence and was allowed a degree of freedom of movement and self-expression since the veil enabled the woman to comment on her social standing, on her emotions (such as anger and grief and shame) and on her own sexuality. Just as the silent tortoise had the liberty to wander about underneath her all-covering shell, as long as she stayed silently unobtrusive, so too could the woman of ancient Greece.

Something of the ambiguity, inscrutability and fascination of the ancient Greek veil is found in a sculpted female head probably dating to the fourth century (Fig. 1); it is shattered and fragmentary and dislocated from its stone body, but shows signs of sublime delicacy in the confident mastery of its execution. The unknown sculptor has taken pains to make the arrangement of the elegant coiffure radiate like sun rays around the oval face, although the visage itself is mysterious, imperceptible. It lacks a nose, but that is inconsequential, for falling down from the crown of the head onto the face and across one eye, so that half of the countenance is concealed, hangs a diaphanously flimsy veil. The artist toys with issues of visibility beneath this delicate face-covering.
Chapter 1

The sculpted head comes from Cyrene in North Africa, although it depicts a woman dressed in hellenic fashion. It stands as a visual metaphor for this study on women and veiling in the ancient Greek world because, like the subject matter, the stone head, found on the periphery of the Greek world, is fragmentary; it has parts missing. Certain pieces of the face have long since disappeared; it even lacks a body, a context, as it were. The sources on ancient veiling are similarly incomplete and imperfect; they are often widely scattered and fragmentary, and sometimes they too lack a context.

But the battered veiled stone head is also compelling. Despite its dilapidated condition it is still beautiful and we are forced to admire the skill that went into its creation and the anonymous artist who had the confidence to render the semi-transparency of the folds of a veil falling across a face. Filled with admiration, the depiction of the veil draws us to the sculpture and compels us to gaze upon and study its delineation. The effect of the veiling leaves us, the viewers, wanting more; we yearn to touch the veil, lift it, and gaze unimpeded upon the face beneath. We ask questions of the veil and of its wearer: who is she? why is she veiled? with what is she veiled? How does the veil reflect this woman’s condition? Is she confined beneath its folds or does she use the veil for her own ends, for her own purpose? How does the veil make us feel?

The ancient evidence that we have at our disposal for the study of the veil in the Greek world – texts and images – are correspondingly absorbing and they force us to ask the same types of questions. Fragmentary they may be, but once an exploration of the ancient sources on the nature and role of veiling in the Greek world is undertaken, the sources become enticing and compelling. They demand that the veil of academic silence – or at least of scholarly neglect – be lifted too. For scholarship has not been attentive to the concept of veiling in ancient Greece; there has never been a major study of Greek veiling practices, although there are many enquiries into the construction and draping styles of Greek dress in general. However, these studies tend to concentrate on deciphering Greek clothing from the artworks and have rarely focused attention on the social and symbolic meanings of Greek dress, although the importance of clothing as a social and artistic construct of the ancient Greek world is finally beginning to be acknowledged in modern scholarship.
In 1931 Caroline Galt undertook the most comprehensive study of the Greek veil to date in her twenty-page article ‘Veiled Ladies’ in which she argued that the veiling of the head and face by women within Greek society from the archaic period to the hellenistic era was a commonplace. She was particularly interested in the hellenistic ‘mantle dance’, but also analysed the ritual unveiling of the bride at the wedding ceremony known as the \textit{anakalyptéria}, and advanced the (unsubstantiated) idea that veiled women found on fourth-century Athenian tombstones were actually wearing mourning veils. Analysis of textual evidence for veiling was kept to a minimum however, and Galt made only one fleeting reference to veiling in the archaic period, although she did produce evidence of veiling in the Roman world of the second century AD, which she sees as a continuation of a long hellenic practice of veiling. Despite her rather limited (and sometimes naive) readings of the ancient evidence, Galt did make the important (and, in my eyes, irrefutable) point that, 

In public…women were always more heavily swathed on the streets than has been realized… The veiling of the face [was] something more than a symbol throughout the whole of the Greek period.\footnote{This statement lies at the heart of my argument. I suggest that women of varying social strata in the ancient Greek world were habitually veiled, especially for public appearances or before unrelated men, and that an understanding of the function of veiling in Greek society can add to our knowledge of Greek social structure and especially to the perceptions of gender in hellenic antiquity. Veiling tells us much about the male construction of the female and can even enlighten us about female self-perception within any given society. The quotation from Menander’s fourth-century Athenian comedy \textit{Perikeiromene}, quoted at the heading of this chapter, operates in such a way: a young man, Moschion, speaks the words and he notes that women will instinctively veil themselves in the presence of a man (‘that’s what women do’). The reason for their veiling, he says, lies in their modesty, their imbued sense of shame and embarrassment. The female gesture of face-veiling is so natural that it needs no further comment or elaboration by Moschion.}

There are many references to the veil and to the act of veiling scattered throughout Greek literature and located in Greek iconography, but not one of these sources categorically tells us the reasons for the use of the veil in Greek society, or how it was perceived, or even gives such details as who wore the veil and when it was worn. These particulars have to be gleaned from scattered texts and images drawn together to make a more complete (but not necessarily whole) picture.

**Scholars and fundamentalists**

What is particularly puzzling in regard to the study of ancient veiling practices, is the scholarly silence which has persistently surrounded the subject. The rise of ‘women’s history’ in the late 1970s saw some remarkable breakthroughs in the evaluation and perception of women’s lot in antiquity, and the drive to investigate the ancient female experience has more recently been set beside issues of masculinity to create the new
discipline of ancient ‘gender studies’. Increasingly, scholarly attention has turned to concepts of the masculine construct of the female and to the female response to that paradigm, with particular emphasis being laid on the notion of ‘Otherness’, that is, woman as outsider, as the ‘Other’. Academic debate concentrates on issues of how women were represented in ancient literature and art as voiceless constructs; in the study of ‘daily life’, interest has focused on issues such as female seclusion and segregation in Greek (or at least Athenian) society, but also on notions of female visibility as reflected in Attic drama and ‘daily life’ by means of their indispensable religious duties and functions. What has not been debated to any logical conclusion, however, is how the male idealistic construct of correct female behaviour might have been put into practice in actuality. Scholars have argued for several decades, for example, to try to explain the dichotomy between the perceived ideology of female seclusion and its practical enforcement. Some have pointed out that women (of certain classes) were confined to the home while others have noted that evidence advocates that they had the ability to move about in the public sphere with comparative freedom. Nobody has suggested that the issue might be partially resolved by the use of veiling and that the veil creates a portable form of seclusion that a woman is able to wear on her visits into the male public world. Evidence for this concept exists in the ancient sources, but up to this point it has passed unnoticed (or at least with little comment) by classical scholarship.

In fact, very few contemporary scholars seem interested in using the terms ‘veil’ or ‘veiling’ at all. Those who acknowledge that women covered their heads or faces with a garment, that is to say a ‘veil’, prefer to call it a ‘mantle’, ‘shawl’, ‘kerchief’, ‘drape’, or ‘cloak’. The instances where this happens are numerous. For example, Martin Robertson’s discussion of a classical sculpture, of a woman conventionally known as Aspasia (Fig. 2), runs as follows:

She does not wear the *peplos*, but the old chiton and *himation*… The close folds of the fine chiton appear only near the feet. Above that a heavy mantle is wrapped all round the body and brought over the head. The right hand is on the breast under the mantle. The open left hand issues from the wraps at waist-level.

Robertson fails to acknowledge that what we have here is an image of a woman with a *veiled* head. Likewise, John Boardman describes the same figure as, ‘a woman draw[ing a] *cloak* over head’. Recently, Pantelis Michelakis has carefully avoided the word ‘veil’ in his discussion of the portrayal of tragic silence on the Athenian stage, preferring to use ‘mantle’ or ‘covering’. Thus he observes,

In vase paintings, mantled figures feature in various contexts… the act of covering oneself with a mantle denotes grief… [Furthermore] the use of the mantle denotes indifference, resistance and hostility.
Veiling the ancient Greeks

We might suppose that classical scholars unfamiliar with dress-terms might not think to use the word ‘veil’ (although Robertson appears to be confident in his use of Greek dress terminology), indeed in all sincerity they may not recognize a woman’s head-covering as a veil at all; but this is guilelessly to excuse them of a larger and more significant purpose in ignoring the veil. I suggest that classical scholarship wishes to distance itself (whether knowingly or subconsciously) from the political and social ramifications that the veil has in the ‘liberated’ West and I argue that scholarship is reluctant to connect itself to a garment that, to a great extent, is intimately and fundamentally associated with the subjugation of women and with the notion of Oriental ‘Otherness.’

‘The veil’ is still an emotional and impassioned subject for many people. It is a familiar image in today’s Western media where it is used in three (often contradictory) ways: firstly, it is used to highlight female sexuality bound up within the concept of oriental hedonism. This is the veil of sex, and it is used to illustrate stories of the kidnapping of Western girls, enslavement in ‘harem’s, and scandals in the Saudi royal family. Images of belly-dancers using veils as essential props are, oddly enough, frequently used by Western media to emphasize the encroachment of Islam on secular lifestyles. One report in the *Sunday Times*, for example, was entitled ‘Veiled Princesses Spend Millions On Virtual Escape’ and neatly draws together the Western fascination with the concept of indolent veiled beauties longing to peer out (if only by means of high tech gadgetry) from behind the veils and harem walls that surround them. This is a leftover image from the sensual Orientalist accounts of nineteenth-century travel writers and novelists.

Next, the veil is regarded by the media as the most powerful symbol of the suppression of women, particularly in the Middle East. Following the terrorist attacks on America in 2001 and the fall of the Taliban regime, western audiences have been bombarded with television and newspaper images of downtrodden women socially and politically constrained beneath *burqaas*. A ‘crusade’ to liberate women from the confines of their veils was organized by the wives of European and American political leaders, although, in fact, at the time of writing, television images of women in Kabul still show them swathed within their garments. Long standing traditions die hard.

The third way in which the media tends to envisage the veil is far more harmful. It is utilized as an image of terror, the symbol *par excellence* of Muslim fundamentalism and the Islamic threat to the West, an idea best captured in the satiric representation of the icon of Western freedom, the Statue of Liberty, ‘Islamicized’ beneath a *burqa* (Fig. 3).
Islamophobia is best encapsulated in the image of the veil, a depersonalising garment standing as a metaphor for all that is perceived to be oppressive and aggressive about Muslim society – either because it stands for militarism or for oppression. In the West we are fed startling media reports with headlines like ‘The Veil of Tears’, ‘A Voice Behind the Veil’, ‘Lack of schooling Veils Afghan future’ and ‘Anger Behind the Veil’ which rarely address issues of Islamic hijab (sacred dress and veiling codes) but nonetheless choose to use the veil and its imagery as a symbol of everything that is threatening about the recent upsurge in Muslim fundamentalism and Islamic ‘nationalism’. Little attention is paid to the fact that the veil is as much about religious belief, personal identity, community tradition, and female self-perception as it is about national or Islamic unity.

With this kind of socio-political baggage behind it (a baggage which has, in fact, slowly accumulated over the centuries), it is no wonder that issues surrounding the veil have only been tentatively approached by traditional classical scholarship. It is possible that the veil is too closely bound up in the notion of Islamization and is too acutely perceived as a restricting and restrictive garment for women – too political in other words – to be conceived of as an appropriate attribute of the classical world, especially for the democratic Greeks. But scholarship has recognized for some time that ancient Greek civilization was not an all-embracing free society in which equality for all was the rule of thumb. It admits that slaves, foreigners, children, and women were the ‘Other’ and grants that a woman’s lot in an ancient Greek community could be unsatisfactory in the extreme. By veiling their women the Greeks were creating a certain ideology that had a resonance for those within that society, both male and female. By acknowledging that Greek women might have been habitually veiled, classical scholarship would have to admit that those constructed ideologies were increasingly encroaching on similar ideologies located in contemporary veil-societies, especially those of the Arab world (which, as I hope to show, are not to be condemned as all bad). Therefore there is a hazard that yet again the democratic Greeks are removed a further step from the creed that upholds them as standing at the ‘cradle of Western civilization’. Acknowledging that Greek women were veiled and that Greek males had an ideology of female veiling opens up the danger that the Greeks themselves should be classed as the ‘Other’.

Greek veiling ideology was part of a widespread tradition of female veiling located throughout the ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean worlds. The earliest prototypes of the Greek veil were to be found in a number of successive civilizations of the Near East, where it was worn by the women of Sumer, the Hittites, and Neo-Hittites, the Hebrews, the Persians, and the Assyrians, from whom we get the earliest known law code on veiling – Middle Assyrian law 40, an edict that not only strictly classifies the type of women eligible to wear the veil, but one that also differentiates between the sorts of veils they can wear. Greek veiling and the philosophy behind it operated within the general milieu of the ancient Near East. Recent scholarship is beginning to advocate and push forward with increasing confidence the notion
that Greece is to be regarded as a Western branch of the old civilizations of Hatti, Mitanni, Babylon, Assyria, and the Levant, sharing in their cerebral processes and material artefacts to such an extent that some modern hellenists are coming to regard Greece merely as a colony of the Near East. This is perhaps taking things too far, although it would serve us well to remember that, ‘Greece was never sealed off from the East, and received impulses from that direction at most periods.’

The truth of the matter is that the Greeks were indeed part of the environment of the Oriental ‘Other’. That Otherness is stressed in many areas of Greek life and customs. Although scholarly attention has not focused in any depth on the issue of clothing and textiles, it is becoming clear that Greek dress was also heavily influenced by Near Eastern styles and ideologies; the veil was certainly one of several garment-types shared by Greek and Near Eastern women.

Evidence for the use of the veil in Greek society is undeniable. So in order to neutralize the threat of ‘veiled otherness’, scholarship has passed over the fact that the Greeks veiled their women and instead it submits ideas that women were ‘draped’ in ‘shawls’, ‘mantles’, cloaks’, and ‘hoods’. The terminology softens the notion that, in fact, Greek women were veiled with a variety of veil-styles that were deliberately intended to cover the head or the face or the body, working as part of a general male ideology that advocated and endorsed the veiling of women, at least in the public sphere.

Interestingly, French scholarship (classical and other) is more accepting of the veil and does not appear to be alarmed about using ‘voile’ as a legitimate term in art and textual studies. This might be explained by France’s historical connection to the Arab world (Algeria in particular) which is still keenly felt today. The recent ‘headscarf debate’ in secular schools has forced the issue of veiling back into the headlines and French academia has responded accordingly (especially among female scholars) with a re-examination of the history, symbolism and function of veiling in the East and West. The fact remains, however, that even on the continent scholars of classical antiquity are not sufficiently attentive to the history of veiling in ancient societies.

British and American academics have been, on the whole, manifestly reluctant to use ‘veil’ in artistic and literary studies. However, while there have been no full-length systematic studies of classical veiling to date, some headway has been made. For example, Douglas Cairns’ important works on the Greek idea of *aidōs*, has had cause to mention the veil on numerous occasions as a crucial element in the ancient concept and display of shame, modesty, and reserve. He uses the terms ‘veil’ and ‘veiling’ correctly and consistently throughout his scholarship and is confident in implementing anthropological and ethnographic studies of contemporary veil-societies to support his arguments and suppositions. Additionally, Sue Blundell has addressed the subject of veiling, chiefly in regard to her studies of the representation of gender in Greek art and, more generally, from her work on women in ancient Greek society. She has noted that,

In Athens veils were of two main types. A woman could either drape her cloak or
Chapter 1

*himation* over her head to form a veil or she used a separate piece of material, like a large scarf, which again was worn loosely over the head.\(^24\)

Here she correctly notes that the garments conventionally worn (or ‘draped’) around the Greek female body could be pulled over the head to form a veil. Her terminology is precise, for she realizes that any garment that usually functions as a covering for the body when pulled up onto the head does indeed become a veil. She continues,

sometimes as well as covering their heads [women] also held the veil up in front of their faces, so that only their eyes could be seen.\(^25\)

Furthermore, Blundell also offers an interpretation of the social function of the Greek (or Athenian) veil:

The evidence is very limited, but it seems that veils were used mainly when women were out of the house or appeared in the company of men to whom they were not related… But there may not have been any hard and fast rules about when veils were necessary… There were certain occasions, however, when veils were evidently a ritual requirement… For women the most significant occasion when the veil was used was certainly her marriage.\(^26\)

Blundell’s confidence in using ‘veil’ as an appropriate word to describe an ancient garment is matched by her perception that the nature of the garment allows it a great deal of flexibility; she notes that it could be constructed from other articles of clothing or that it could be a specific dress-article in its own right and she observes that it can be put to use to cover the head or the face according to the needs or inclinations of the wearer.

But the definition of ‘veil’ is not fixed even among scholars who are prepared to use the term and it is clear that there is a problem with the scholarly vocabulary of veiling. It is as well to state at this point, therefore, that in this study ‘veil’ will be used to refer to any garment that covers the head or the face, while ‘veiled’ can refer to the covering of the head, the covering of the face, or the covering of the head *and* the face; an attempt will be made to mark out the differences as individual cases arise. It is necessary to define these words in such a way because it is surprising to note how imprecise scholars can be in their definitions of the words ‘veil’, ‘veiling’, and ‘veiled’. An example may be taken from ancient Near Eastern scholarship. As we have already noted, the veil was found in a number of Near Eastern societies and in a variety of styles, and was an essential aspect of female life and the structuring of gender hierarchy in the ancient Near East. It is puzzling therefore to read a 1975 article by the Jewish scholar Matitahu Tsevat on Hittite marriage laws in which he claims, ‘women in the ancient Near East were ordinarily not veiled’.\(^27\) Moreover, continuing his investigation by commenting on an Assyrian palace relief showing captive Hebrew women being led into exile (*Fig. 4*), he stated that, ‘their heads are covered for the long trek, but not veiled’.\(^28\) ‘Covered’ but not ‘veiled’ – surely this is a contradiction in terms? However, as one begins to digest Tsevat’s article and
starts to appreciate his nuanced use of terminology, so it becomes clear that his definition of ‘veiled’ seems to be strictly limited to the meaning ‘with face covered’; he does not classify ‘veiling’ as alluding to the covering of the head. In other words, Tsevat is trying to say that the captive women have their heads covered, but their faces are exposed.

The scholarly avoidance of the word ‘veil’ is no doubt compounded by this uncertainty as to whether the covering of the head, but not the face, with a cloth should be referred to as veiling. In popular English parlance ‘veiling’ simply implies that someone is wearing some kind of face covering, the type described by the *OCD* (s.v. veil *sb* 2) as ‘a piece of net or thin gauzy material tied to the hat and completely covering the face in order to protect it’, although this oversimplified definition does not do justice to the complexity of veil-styles found throughout the world. The definition is very Eurocentric, since the ‘veil’ is defined as a net decoration attached to a hat, the kind popularly worn by women at modern weddings and funerals; this ‘veil’ is a fashionable caprice. A veil as seen in both contemporary and ancient veil-societies, is a head-covering (essentially a long, broad cloth) that has the ability to be turned into a face covering by drawing it across the visage, or else it is a specific cloth face-covering, usually created with pierced eye-holes, which is worn in conjunction with a separate head-veil (of course, face-veils and head-veils carry with them very different social ideologies, and these will be highlighted throughout this study). Therefore it would be much more helpful if we were to take the word ‘veiled’ to mean ‘with face or head covered’. It is in this more general sense that the term will be applied in this study.

**Arguing from silence?**

Those ancient sources which are at our disposal for the study of the Greek veil vary in nature and intent and are distributed over a wide period. The literary evidence includes poetic and dramatic works, histories, philosophical treaties, medical writings, epigraphy, and even letters and domestic accounts; the artistic material includes black-figure and red-figure pottery, relief carving and standing sculpture, terracotta statuettes, wall-paintings, and jewellery. These iconographic sources are also scattered over a wide geographical area and lengthy time scale.

These sources are problematic, involving a heavy male bias. In addition, each of the separate categories of source material has its own agenda and therefore its own pitfalls in its effectiveness as a piece of evidence. Dramatic texts for example no doubt give a prejudiced and on the whole negative view of female life in Athens; they were, after all, composed by men and performed by men to a (predominantly?) male audience as part of a civic (therefore male) ceremonial. The ideological separation
between the masculine and feminine spheres is stressed in both comedy and tragedy and both genres question the effect of sexual role-reversals upon society (explicitly in comedy with its cross-dressing scenes, and more subtly in tragedy where females take upon themselves psychologically masculine roles). Yet in spite of the ideological and inquiring natures of these dramatic works, it would be foolish to believe that these plays do not allow us glimpses into the daily structure of the society out of which they were created. Elements of real-life female experience and its male construction must be contained within the plays although the trouble starts when we attempt to tease out the reality from the ideology.

Much of this study might be regarded by the reader as an argument constructed from silence, though the silence of the ancient sources is not absolute; there are enough voices surviving in the ancient evidence to alert us to the notion that veiling was necessarily routine for Greek women in daily life and that the symbolism of veiling was a major facet of the (male) construction of Greek womanhood. The scattered references to the veil in the ancient literary sources are part of a more general pattern in which many aspects of ancient life, for a variety of reasons, are not discussed in any depth or else are mentioned only in passing, since they would have been familiar to the ancient audience and would not have needed further elucidation. Literary evidence tends only to focus on a customary or daily object or activity when it is being misused or abused and we will note that with the use of the veil, texts tend to focus on the subject of female unveiling, an act in which the usual and accepted social prescripts of veiling are broken by a non-conforming woman. A veiled and compliant woman tends to pass in the literary sources without much (if any) comment.

Iconographic sources can often fill in the silent gaps of the textual evidence and they frequently portray activities that are not discussed in the written sources at all. But artistic evidence offers up its own particular problems, and we must be aware that iconographic representation does not always reflect daily reality. Using art as evidence for ‘daily life’ is important, but it must be recognized that artistic evidence twists and corrupts ‘reality’ for its own ends. Representations of female dress (and its male analogue, nudity), and female veiling in particular, are especially prone to artistic contortions.

The veil is, admittedly, often absent from the iconography of Greek women, but I argue that the veil actually appeared in daily life far more than it is ever found depicted in art. There is a huge dichotomy between artistic representation of womanhood (which is a kind of fantasy) and the daily reality suggested by the literary sources. What one sees in the artworks, certainly as far as female representation goes (and issues of dress in particular), does not always (often?) correspond to what one would see on the streets of Athens. Iconographic evidence is certainly confusing in its ambiguity towards the veil, for as Lambin has observed,

The iconography of veiling has a number of different uses, depending on the city, the locale in general, the period and the fashion, even family habits: it is not at all unusual to see images of veiled and unveiled women side by side.
So numerous are the images of women represented on Greek pottery, that it is difficult to evaluate them satisfactorily. But with a smaller corpus of work, such as grave monuments from a particular locale, some figures can be provided. For example, among some thousand grave reliefs studied from East Greece (mainly from Asia Minor), there were only fifteen unquestionably unveiled heads of adult women; hundreds of others were veiled or semi-veiled. Studies of other areas and periods reveal different figures: examinations of Macedonian grave reliefs of the hellenistic period showed that out of a hundred representations of women only thirty-eight adult females were veiled, so that sixty-three were shown unveiled. These results suggest, perhaps, that there were trends and fashions in the depiction of veiled women that varied over time and place, but not necessarily that the veil itself was considered unimportant for women to wear at corresponding times and places.

Greek artists were clearly able to depict women veiled, but what is particularly interesting is the realization that for the majority of the time they choose not to. The literary evidence suggests that ‘decent’ women should always aim to be covered up, but art allows women to appear naked or semi-nude. The artist who fashions the woman unveiled must therefore be working to a different agenda to the creators of literature. He is constructing a different vision of womanhood. Somewhere in the middle of these polar opposites lies the truth of ancient Greek female experience: at home, and in private, a woman might well have worn the kinds of outfits depicted in the artworks (to a degree) and in comic texts, but I maintain that in public situations or in the presence of unfamiliar men, a woman was expected to be veiled.

Of course, the vast majority of relevant sources we possess were created by men, so that we lack a female perspective (the obvious exception is the poetry of Sappho). This male bias can account for the lack of attention or interest shown in essentially female areas of life, like child rearing, weaving, housekeeping, female dress and veiling, all of which were witnessed by men daily (or near enough) but were not considered worthy of recording in any detail in the sources. The comparative reticence of ancient male sources to consider the veil and the act of veiling is part of the widespread silence on female issues in general.

To get a fuller picture of what uses veiling served in Greek society, how veiling was perceived, and how the veil fitted into the male ideology, we need to expand our supply of information. Our second step on the exploratory road requires us to acknowledge the importance of anthropological and ethnographic studies that have been undertaken on the central significance of veiling in modern veil-societies worldwide.

The significance of comparative studies upon classical social history is widely felt in current scholarship. Recent research into ancient Greek housing, slavery, and attitudes to violence, gender and sexuality has drawn extensively on (primarily) Mediterranean anthropology in order to flesh out the bare bones of antiquity. Classicists’ utilization of comparative societies tends to be fostered by the scarcity or paucity of reliable information on many aspects of ancient Greek and Roman life.
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That is not to say, of course, that data from other cultures can (or should) replace missing information from antiquity, but it can be valuable in providing hypotheses, models or working methods for investigating past societies. However, care must be taken in the choice of a comparative society; nowadays it is not considered sufficient for the anthropologically-minded ancient historian to concentrate attention on so-called ‘Mediterranean society’ simply because it is the world inhabited by the peoples of classical antiquity, nor is it thought adequate only to focus attention upon the rural communities of modern Greece in an attempt to assimilate their styles of living with those of past peoples who inhabited the same land. We must recognize that the Mediterranean world is not made up of one homogeneous society and that modern Greece has developed out of its ancient past and has not necessarily been concerned with conserving an antique lifestyle like some kind of living museum.41

When attempting to find an anthropological model for her research on the gendered elements of ancient Greek houses, Lisa Nevett investigated several contemporary societies before deciding to focus her attention specifically on traditional Islamic society in the city of Tunis. She suggests that the status of women in contemporary Islamic society can be compared to that of women in the ancient Greek world, in that it attracts allegations of severe authoritarianism or protecting paternalism. Nevett notes that there are several points of direct comparison: firstly there is legal status, since women in both societies tend to live their lives as legal minors under the control of parent, guardians, husband or even sons. Secondly, there is the issue of the dowry, for in both Greece and Islamic communities a woman is provided with a dowry that she has the right to keep if divorced by her husband. Then, finally, there is the important issue of public separation of the sexes: the Muslim ideology of female segregation can be likened to the ancient Greek ideology of keeping women out of the public eye.42

In this study I mainly draw on information gathered from the veil-societies of the Near and Middle East (or the Arab world), the Indian subcontinent (from mainly Muslim societies), and (to some extent) the Mediterranean. While, as Nevett stresses, many of these societies share some fundamental ideologies about the status of women, none of them can be said to be a carbon copy of the others. Likewise, many of the chosen societies reflect certain elements of ancient Greek social structure (in particular its gender ideology, at least in regard to women), but none can be said to be a perfect model for ancient Greek social life. The veil-societies in which I am interested are now, I believe, without exception becoming increasingly industrialized (or ‘modernized’), having escalating access as they do to mass media, and are generally progressively more influenced by (or aspire to) Western lifestyles (although sometimes ‘progress’ continues in contradiction to official governmental legislation, as had been the case in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan). Nevertheless, in these changing communities, female lifestyles and the male ideology of female existence tend to resist change (women themselves are generally discouraged from adjusting or developing their lifestyles).43 Female-related issues tend to remain rooted in deep
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tradition, and any developments of the female lot in so-called ‘traditional societies’ tend to move at a much slower pace than those experienced by men.

In modern Islamic societies women encounter daily difficulties and obstacles that are (practically) unknown to their western counterparts, and it is these impediments and complications which allow for the comparison with ancient Greek women who tended to experience life, it can be argued, along similar lines. In an illuminating study on the life-experiences of contemporary Muslim women, the sociologists Chahla Chafiq and Farhad Khosrokhavar have suggested that society is fundamentally split into two categories. The first of these can be called ‘Revealed Civilizations’ (les civilisations de l’ouvert), in other words the societies where bodily display is immediate and routinely visible, although this openness about revealing the body does not necessarily have to have sexual connotations. These are societies where, because of marketing strategies and even fashion ideals, bodily voyeurism and exhibitionism are positively valued and where body language stresses its accessibility to the other (or same) sex. The second category can be labelled ‘Covered Civilizations’ (les civilisations de la couverture). These societies have a clear desire to cover the human form (particularly the female body) in an attempt to regulate sexuality, sexual relations between the sexes, and, more generally, relationships in society at large.44

Most ‘traditional’ societies – especially those of the Muslim world – are in the latter category even if some of them (like Tunisia and Egypt) are attempting to become Revealed Civilizations. The societies that made up ancient Greece fall into this latter category too because, even though male nudity was endorsed on certain occasions in Greek daily-life and became a symbolic statement in itself, and even though the artworks might show the idealized male and female body in various stages of undress or transparency, at the heart of Greek culture there beat a notion that modesty was the correct facet of a civilized society.45 As with Islamic women, modesty in manner and in dress was considered to be especially important for the female members of Greek society where covering and veiling, at least in public, were de rigueur.

Islam is perhaps one of the last world civilizations somehow to maintain its cultural integrity at all levels, economic, political, and social. This last great bastion of the ‘Covered Civilization’ has not allowed (like Christianity and Judaism) for the possibility of adapting to or adopting modernity, and, consequently, women in Islamic society continue (with obvious exceptions) to operate in an existence fundamentally rooted in the time-honoured past. It is possible therefore that the entrenched and deeply ingrained use of the veil and issues surrounding female veiling in these traditional veil-societies might be helpful in reconstructing ancient attitudes to the veil, from both a male and female perspective. Throughout this study I will attempt to expand and comment on the nature of ancient Greek veiling by comparing or contrasting it to modern veil-society models. At no point do I attempt to suggest that the ancient evidence can be seen to be undeniably reflected in a comparative example, but I will propose that the use made of the veil (physical or ideological) by women and men in contemporary veil-societies can help us interpret the ancient evidence.
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and provide us with a frame of reference that might improve our understanding of the ancient sources and the ancient experiences of veiling.

The veiled woman
Prem Chowdhry begins her investigation into gender relationships in rural Haryana in India with an evocative picture of the main focus of her study, namely veiled women:

An ubiquitous sight in rural Haryana is the veiled woman who covers either the whole face or just permits the eyes to show. This sight is somewhat incongruous set against the high visibility of women in Haryana involved in all sorts of work in the fields, working alongside men, from preparing the fields to irrigating and harvesting the crop. For many of them the fields, although ostensibly a public space, are in reality a mere extension of the private space. Visible too are women in processing agricultural work at home, tending the animals, fetching and carrying water…or involved in numerous other domestic chores. They are also noticeably visible in the streets, walking along purposefully, not loitering or hanging about, never alone but always in groups of two or more, avoiding the bazaars and places of male gathering. Only a closer scrutiny of their physical appearance and dress reveals several social layers with subtly marked differences, especially between women from peasant and non-peasant households…
The few uncovered faces that may be seen are those of the daughters of the village, yet to be married or visiting their natal homes, or those of older women, the exposure of whose face is socially sanctioned. Except for the very young, these women invariably cover their heads.46

Chowdhry describes veiling in varying degrees of strictness. It is employed by women of different age groups and social classes for the purpose of gaining access to the male public world in order that they may carry out domestic duties or female networking. This is the central focus of my investigation into ancient Greek veiling practices. The fundamental thesis is as follows: I suggest that women in various ancient Greek societies were veiled daily and routinely, at least in public or in front of non-related men, as a consequence of a male ideology that required women to appear subservient in all walks of life. The women themselves may have endorsed the concept of veiling willingly or may have felt restrained to remain beneath the veil as a result of social pressure. But whatever the case, it is interesting to speculate on the notion that the act of veiling, with a variety of veil-styles that concealed the female body in diverse ways and varying levels of austerity, gave women of differing social ranks a modicum of freedom to explore male public space unimpeded (and unimposing), and to interact with other women. This idea is current in contemporary veil-societies where veiled women are seen in a variety of public situations which attest to the comparative freedom afforded by the veil and by the women’s decisions to adhere (whether willingly or otherwise) to the principles of hijab. While conforming to a male-imposed ideology focused on notions of female (in)visibility, silence, and pollution, the act of veiling may also have allowed a Greek woman, like her modern Muslim counterpart, a means of self-expression by empowering her
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to negotiate her social situation. These veiling-acts, in different social encounters, enabled a woman to express her social status, to convey her sense of propriety, to elicit the aid of others, or to endorse her own sexuality.

Veiling is a principal constituent in the Muslim construction of womanhood; no one doubts the fact. I propose that veiling was an equally important component in the Greek comprehension of ‘femaleness’. The ancient sources stress that the veil is a garment suitable to the female condition and that the act of veiling is an important female gesture, fundamental to correct feminine behaviour as a fitting display of aidōs, which in itself shows a correct awareness of female sōphrosynē, or reserved self-awareness. In Greek thought, clothing does not necessarily make the man, but it does make the woman. Dress and clothing accessories are frequently used by ancient authors to identify the female condition and to explain natural womanly characteristics that fluctuate between the negative association of women, wealth, and vanity and the connection of women with modest dress and virtue. Thus, Aelian in his Varia Historia (late second century AD), notes:

Surely most women of antiquity indulged in extravagant habits. On their heads they wore tall crowns, their feet were clad in sandals. From their ears hung long earrings. The part of the chiton between shoulder and hand was not sewn but fastened with golden pins and silver brooches. These were the habits of women in very ancient times.47

But later in the same work Aelian records his admiration for the wife of Phokion, the fourth-century Athenian statesman, by recalling how her true sōphrosynē was expressed by the fact that she would as soon wear her husband’s himation as she would the garments conventionally held to be a female indulgence. She dressed modestly with whatever clothing came to hand and had no inborn craving for feminine dress:

She felt no need for a krokos-coloured dress or a Tarentine dress, a mantle, or shawl, or hairnet, or veil (kalypras), or little dyed chitons. She dressed firstly in humility (sōphrosynē), and secondly with what she had available.48

It is important to note that Aelian lists a veil (kalypras) among the items of female attire, an image that is stressed in other sources which recall incidents where men decide to dress as women, either for religious purposes, sexual exploits, or military strategy. Plutarch, for example, tells of an Argive festival known as the Hubristica in which ritual transvestism on the part of both sexes was expected. He recalls,

They clothe the women in men’s chitons and short cloaks and the men in women’s peploi and veils (kalypras).49

What makes for effective cross-dressing? In the case of looking like a man, Plutarch states that tunics and short (military) cloaks suffice; to look like a woman, though, one needs to don dresses and veils. These are the shorthand signals for gendered dressing and Aristophanes makes use of a similar code in his comedy Lysistrata when the women of Athens clothe the cantankerous Proboulos in what they consider
to be standard feminine accoutrements, in this instance a wool basket and a veil (kalumma). Likewise, in his *Thesmophoriazusae*, Aristophanes has the character of Euripides’ in-law dress in female clothing to infiltrate the female assembly, and it is likely that a veil constituted part of his disguise. Agathon gives the in-law a *kephale perithetos* – ‘a head wrap’ – as part of his disguise; this probably constitutes a veil. The famous Würzburg bell-*krater* (Fig. 5) supposedly represents a scene from the comedy and shows one of the Athenian women, Mikka, confronting the in-law who brandishes a knife above a wineskin-baby. Mikka wears the typical outfit of an Athenian woman, a dress and veil. If, earlier in the play, the in-law had hoped to infiltrate female society unimpeded and unnoticed, it was probably this combination of clothing that he opted to wear since ‘dress’ and ‘veil’ spell out ‘woman’. Certainly in his later masquerade as Helen of Troy, the in-law wears a veil as an important element of his female characterization (at line 850 he says that he has the correct costume), and the acts of veiling and unveiling seem to be central moments of the mock tragedy of Helen’s encounter with Menelaos (Euripides).

The transitory moment when a male character dons female dress might be represented in a small Athenian terracotta statuette of c. 400–350 (Fig. 6), one of several such comic characters found in a grave near Athens. Here we seem to have an actor wearing male comic padding, including a large phallus, all of which is revealed by the open pleated robe that hangs from his shoulders as if undraped or unpinned. The statuette has been interpreted as either an actor playing a female worshipper of the phallus, an actor playing a hermaphrodite, a hermaphrodite proper, or even a male prostitute. Susan Saïd’s reinterpretation cites the figure as an instance of comic transvestism, an idea endorsed by Helene Foley who notes that, ‘Perhaps the religious ecstasy that has gripped this transvestite female has caused the actor to reveal his male identity’.

However, a simpler explanation can be offered: I suggest that the terracotta might show the moment in a drama (as frequently happens in Old Comedy) when

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*Fig. 5. Line drawing from Tarentine red-figure krater showing a scene from Aristophanes’ *Thesmophoriazusae*, c. 380–370. Female character wearing a veil and a dress. Würzburg H 5697.*

a male character is forced to drag-up or, conversely, the incident when his disguise is infiltrated and his true sex is (literally) revealed. It is a moment of transition that is reflected here. What is important to note however, is that his female drag consists once again of a robe and a veil.

The veil then is a female garment *par excellence*, and it is in this capacity that I intend to examine it in this study. I am concerned to show how the veil affected (in various ways) the lives of women in ancient Greek society. But that is not to say that veiling was an act unknown to men, since the ancient sources stress that men could also veil themselves. It would be foolhardy to ignore this evidence, even though male veiling is not my immediate concern here. Nevertheless incidences of male veiling will be examined because of the light they shed on the ideology supporting female veiling. It is my intention to argue that female veiling was a customary routine in Greek society; on the other hand, men were generally unveiled except at times of intense stress when male honour was at stake or at moments when a certain ‘feminization’ needed to be evoked. Greek boys, therefore, will utilize the veil to stress their sense of *aidōs* by veiling themselves beneath their robes. In itself this essentially feminine act becomes the erotic focus for the adult Greek male. Beyond the youthful male utilization of the veil, however, adult Greek men veil themselves with their garments at times of crisis. They veil, for example, at the moment of death (their own impending death or at the death of others); they veil to hide emotions (especially despair, grief, and anger) and they veil to hide shame and loss of honour. In other words, Greek men veil themselves when their masculinity is compromised.59

It is then that they indulge in an essentially female gesture and veil themselves in accordance with the male ideology of veiling. The veil acts as a symbolic barrier and separates the emotional man from the rest of his society; in effect it turns a man into a woman, because it makes him socially invisible. But because the act is out of the ordinary, masculine veiling draws attention to a dilemma and solicits an immediate response from other men who will often coax, persuade, or goad the veiled man to unveil. Men only veil temporarily before normality is restored, then they unveil. However, it is a woman’s lot to stay resolutely beneath her veil and therefore to remain dogmatically separated from masculine society and to continue to function in society as an invisible non-person.

So male veiling does amplify our knowledge of the daily use and symbolism of the female veil. It is in this light that the issues of the male utilization of the veil will be examined.

The first part of this book is concerned with locating and analyzing the variety of sources we have for the Greek veil and to place the veil into a chronological framework. This will comprise an examination of the etymology of the Greek veil, an outline of the different veil styles found in the ancient iconographic sources, qualifying them chronologically and attempting, where possible, to classify them by name. Continuing with the visual evidence, we will examine the problems encountered in
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using art to investigate issues of ancient daily-life and the representation of Greek
dress, and the veil in particular.

The second half of the book is devoted to an analysis of veiling in Greek society
and in Greek thought. A key issue in the discussion of the veil will be its multivalence
of meaning. A major component examines issues of veiling and aidôs, veiling and
the social order, and, drawing on anthropological models, general ideas of who veils
and for whom. A discussion of female seclusion and separation follows and promotes
the idea that the veil gives some degree of social freedom to women as connections are
made between the veil and the house. Veiling is used to denote a woman’s life-cycle
and so a discussion of the veil as a rite of passage will follow. We will reassess the
evidence for the important veiling ritual known as the anakalyptēria, the unveiling
of the bride, and attempt to place it in its ceremonial setting by providing it with a
temporal sequence and a symbolic significance.

We will also look at the symbolic implications of the covering of female hair
and of the female face and body, and shows how the veil acts as a barrier to contain
female miasma, especially the pollution inherent in female sexuality. Attention is
also drawn to the symbolic silencing nature of the veil. As an extension of this, we
will investigate the erotic elements of the veil and looks at the notion of veiled aidôs
acting as a sexual turn-on expressed through connotations of lightness and fragrance.
Conversely, the following and final section deals with the notion of darkness and
considers the importance of the veil as an expression of female anger, as well as its
role in the rituals of morning and grief.

Notes

1 Trans. Arnott (Loeb) 1996, with amendments. For a full discussion of this passage see
Chapter 7.

2 Abrahams 1908; Barker 1922; Bieber 1928; Harrison 1977 and 1991; Morizot 1974;
Repond 1931; Ridgeway 1984; Shaeffer 1974; Symons 1987; Heuzey 1922; Özgen 1982;
Brooke 1962; Houston 1947.

3 Losfeld 1991 and 1994; Stewart 1997; Miller 1997 and 1999; Mills 1984; van Wees
1998; Bonfante 1989; Fridh-Haneson 1983; Frontisi-Ducroux, and Lissarrague 1990;
Scheid and Svenbro 1996; Stone 1981. See also Llewellyn-Jones 2002a. The study of Roman
dress and its social and symbolic functions has received more attention in recent years by

4 Galt 1931.

5 Ibid. 377, 393.

6 The debate and its possible solution are discussed fully in Chapter 7.

7 Robertson 1979, 56.


9 Michelakis 2000, 242. His footnote to the quoted passage (n. 10) refers to ‘cloaked boys’
and ‘mantled women’.

10 Report by Marie Colvin, 12th April, 1998. Artists are not slow on picking up the same
theme: a recent exhibition at the Glasgow Museum of Modern Art, for example, displayed
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A three-dimensional sculpture made of sheet brass, fashioned into the shape of a Muslim burqaar and simply called VEIL. The artist, Sibylle van Halen, commented that ‘VEIL is made up of metal; a figure or its absence, both ruthless and compliant; a feminine form of armour which protects or imprisons; European or Oriental; ancient or modern.’ Glasgow Museum of Modern Art, Ref. S-379. (Sheet brass, cut and drilled; steel key-rings; steel hoops and hook.)


15 Unidentified report.

In the last decade the western perception of the veil as a symbol of the oppression and control of women has been fuelled by events in Afghanistan where the Taliban militia forced women to wear the full-length chadri (burqaar) in an attempt to make them social and political non-entities. But this is not an Islamic teaching, and consequently women who had the opportunity and courage to speak out about the regime stressed that the Taliban use of the veil was not an orthodox Muslim produce. In 1996 The Independent interviewed a nineteen-year-old woman from Kabul who summed up the complex issue of the veil by claiming, ‘The mullahs say that they are making us dress in burqaars for our own safety, so that we don’t drive these Taliban soldiers from the countryside wild with our looks… But…I don’t think they like women…maybe they are afraid of us. They think we’re sent by Satan to tempt them, but this is crazy. Men and women should be equal under Islam’ (quoted in McGirk, ‘The Veil of Tears’, The Independent, 9th October 1996, 9). The Islamic fundamentalist backlash which was so blatantly apparent in Afghanistan is still making itself felt throughout the world and, thanks to some persuasive feminist teaching and as a move towards national identity, some women (especially educated women and women living in big cities such as Cairo and Damascus) are becoming convinced that it is better to return to the Islamic practice of veiling, while others are having that decision forced upon them. There is certainly a drive towards the re-veiling of all Muslim women. In his examination of the dress codes of the Koran and the Sunnah, the fundamentalist author Idris ibn Stanley Palmer, has made an impassioned plea for fellow Muslim men to ensure that their female relatives adopt a strict form of veiling – the niqab, or face-veil – a garment which women are not expected to wear according to the Koran. Nevertheless ibn Stanley Palmer argues, ‘In spite of the fact that these Taliban soldiers from the countryside wild with our looks…

17 For the debate on metanarratives, the notion of Greece as the cradle of western civilization and Orientalism see for example Bernal 1987 and 1991; Morris (ed.)1994; Shanks 1996.
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19 See, for example, Whitley 1991.
20 West 1997, 625.
21 The words voile (veil) or foulard (headscarf) are used interchangeably in French treatments of the veiling debate. For a discussion see Robinson 1998. The history of veiling (including discussions of veiling in classical civilizations) and its impact on modern French society is discussed by Lambin 1999 and Allami 1988. An examination of the history of veiling (especially Greek, Roman and Byzantine) on modern Tunisian society is discussed by ben Miled 1999. See also, Tillion 1964, 25–38. Similarly, the increasing number of Turkish families coming to reside in Germany has also opened up scholarly discussion on the veil (past and present) among German academics too, most notably in an interesting historic-enthnographic bilingual (German and Turkish) study by Akkent and Franger 1987.
22 North America has little to offer in the way of veil-studies in antiquity; discussions of veiling have been predominantly confined to studies of Greek wedding ritual by, among others, Mayo 1973; Rehm 1992 and 1994; Oakley 1982; Oakley and Sinos 1993.
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid. 36, 38.
27 Tsevat 1975, 238.
28 Ibid. 238, n. 12.
29 See below, pp. 61–2.
30 This has recently been endorsed by Nevet 1999. She suggests that discussions of housing and household structures are severely limited because of this tendency to under-represent the very familiar in the ancient evidence.
31 The circumstances for the unveiling can vary of course: Andromakhe at ll. 22, 468–70 unveils at the death of her husband, but in Ap. Rhod. Argo. 3, 444–7, Medea unveils herself in front of the much-desired Jason.
33 On this see Lewis 2002; Blundell 2002; Sebesta 2002; Llewellyn-Jones (ed.) 2002
34 Lambin 1999, 31.
36 Rüscher 1969, 59–196. Group portraits of families in which some women are veiled and others unveiled are interesting. See nos. 10, 11, 26, 29, 34, 42, 75, 87, 94.
37 The same can be said for Roman sculpture. In 96 group portraits from Rome dating to the late Republic and early Empire, 43 women are depicted veiled and 35 are unveiled. Portraiture in Asia Minor of the same period suggests a different picture: of 85 depictions of women, 47 are unveiled and 22 have veils pulled over their heads; the rest wear diadems, filets, etc. See Kleiner 1977; interestingly, her evidence from Rome covers exclusively group portraits of freed slaves. If relatively many women were veiled, it must be remembered that those freed adapted themselves to conservative Roman customs.
38 For a full discussion see Chapter 4 and Llewellyn-Jones 2002a.
39 Particular attention will be given throughout this study to the following works: Abu-Lughod 1986; Al-Khayyat 1990; Anderson 1982; Chowdhry 1994; El Guindi 1981 and 1999; Goodwin 1994; Göle 1996; Hawad-Claudot 1992; Jeffery 1979; Lhote 1955; Lindisfarne-Tapper and Ingham 1997; Makhlof 1979; Mernissi 1975 and 1987; Murphy 1964; Rasmussen 1991; Rugh 1986; Sharma 1983; Tarlo 1996; Weir 1989; Vogelsang-Eastwood
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1996a and 1996b.


42 Nevett 1994, 104 ff.

43 The theme has been effectively explored by Prem Chowdhry in her study of gender relations in rural India. See Chowdhry 1994.


45 See in particular Chapter 6.

46 Chowdhry 1994, 1–2.


49 Plut. *Mor.* 245E.

50 Ar. *Lys.* 530 ff. For a full discussion see below, Chapter 9.


52 See Green and Handley 1995, 52–3. They note, ‘what is not given in the text but does appear in the representation is that the woman, who is addressed by the pet-name Mikka (‘Little One’, 760), is seen to be remarkably ugly as her cloak suddenly falls from her face’.

53 For the in-law’s attempts to appear feminine, see the discussion by Taaffe 1993, 87 ff.

54 Ar. *Thes.* 889, 903.

55 Robinson and Graham 1931, 86.

56 Himmelmann 1994, 126.

57 Saïd 1987, 247.

58 Foley 2000, 295.

59 On male veiling see Cairns 2002.

60 A point raised by Cairns 2002.
DEFINING ‘THE VEIL’

Finding a vocabulary: an anthropological perspective

Arabic only has one word for ‘hat’, *qubba’ah*. It does not try to define different types of hats, as English does, by categorizing them as, say, bowler hat, top hat, trilby, Panama or boater. Arabic does not contain these words because (traditionally) Arab society did not use hats. Hats were alien to Arab civilization for many centuries, but when Arabs first saw Europeans wearing these strange head-coverings they classified all the types they saw under one heading – *qubba’ah*.

Similarly, Arabic does not have an equivalent for the English word ‘veil’. Instead, it employs hundreds of words which categorize different types of veils worn by different sorts of women in different parts of the Arab world. This richly nuanced veil-vocabulary alerts us to the fact that Arab society contains a diversely wide variety of garments which the English language can only struggle to identify as ‘the veil’. English, on the other hand, does not recognize these subtle variations and so classifies all female head or face-coverings as a ‘veil’.

The languages of the Middle East have dozens of veil-words that are used for specific veil-types, although some veil-societies have more words to denote differences in veiling than others. Arabic words such as *burqaa*, *chador*, and *hijab* can all be used to identify the veil even though there are divisions of meaning in this vocabulary. Both the *burqaa* and the *chador* are full length outfits which cover the face, the head and the whole body, a sort of sack-like garment which is widely worn in Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Lebanon; the *hijab*, worn in the majority of Muslim countries, on the other hand, is simply a head scarf, pulled tightly under the chin, with any excess fabric draped over the shoulders. Likewise, the languages of the Indian subcontinent have dozens of veil-terms: the *lugadi*, for example, is a short *sari* that veils the wearer’s back and head, while the *odhani* also veils the head and back but also hangs down the front of the wearer. Carla Makhlof, in her study of the veiling regulations among the women of North Yemen, has discovered that what is generally referred to by anthropologists as ‘the veil’ in fact consists of several separate parts, each having a special name and a particular purpose. A type of ‘veil’ worn indoors is called a *lithma* and is worn by unmarried girls at all times and by married women in daily routines of housework or at informal visits. In addition, Yemeni women also wear two types of ‘outdoor veils’; the first is the *sitara*, a huge piece of brightly coloured printed cotton that covers the head and body. To this is
added a piece of black semi-transparent batik that covers the face. The second type of veil worn outdoors is the *sharshaf*, a complicated garment made up of three parts comprising of a long pleated skirt and a waist length cape covering the head and shoulders (both made from a black shiny fabric) and a square of thin black muslin to cover the face, the *khunna*.5

Makhlouf’s study shows a careful and deliberate use of vocabulary for the veil in Yemeni society, reflecting women’s use of the garments to reflect a wide range of social and everyday messages.6 An illuminating article by Dionisius Agius explores terms for ‘head-dress’ in the Maltese language, and states that over many centuries (during which time Malta was open to a wide variety of cultural influences) the Maltese language acquired many terms for women’s veils originating from Arab, North African, and European roots, which were significant from both the socio-political and religious points of view.7 He notes that a head-dress can be variously defined by its fabric (silk, cotton, wool), colour (black, white, blue), pattern (stripped, dotted, floral), its draping (*sari*-like, *izar*-like, worn over the head, worn around the face), its construction (gathered into band, made into a short cape), the location in which it is worn (town, country, church), and the type of person who wears it (wealthy, peasant, old, bride, nun). A specifically named veil might be of a special colour and fabric, draped in a particular way, worn at a certain location, and by an exclusive type of woman. Veil-vocabulary can be that precise.

**Antique veils**

One thing that will quickly become obvious in this study is the fact that the ancient Greek language contained many words for ‘veil’. This must suggest that, like the Arabic model, different words indicated diverse usages and physical variations in veil-types found throughout the Greek world. The ‘veil’ was therefore a familiar facet of Greek daily life. We must remain alert to the probability that ancient Greek veil-terms were just as location-specific as their modern counterparts, and that they no doubt alluded to colour, shape, and style too. In addition they could have suggested the age and social rank of the wearer.

However, we must consider that ancient clothing terminology was open to a wide degree of flexibility and, like the essentially simple Greek garments themselves, dress-terms might have been changeable. We shall return to this idea below. If nothing else, at least the variety of words and definitions for ‘veil’ found in the Greek sources alerts us to the fact that ‘the veil’ was a visible and important element of Greek society and that as a garment it was probably open to a wide variety of styles and corresponding social nuances. These may be lost on us today, but they were no doubt meaningful for the Greeks themselves.

Studies of garment-terms in historical societies tend to be hampered by a lack of understanding of the specific vocabulary of dress. The further back in history we go, the harder it becomes to pin down the exact meaning of a wide variety of dress-related terms, including those concerning the veil. An analysis of Old English
Defining ‘The veil’

words for ‘veil’, for example, has suggested that problems occur when trying to define a veil in any remote society. There are several Anglo Saxon terms for ‘veil’, the most common being *wimpel*, a general head cloth, while another popular word is *cuffe* or *cuffia*, from which we derive ‘coif’, and which probably relates to some kind of hood. *Rift* was a veil exclusively worn by a nun, which came to stand for the religious life we speak of today as ‘taking the veil’, while other types of veil were described by the words *wrigel* and *orel* and perhaps referred to head-dresses worn as ‘best veils’ in conjunction with *filets*. Representations of veils in various forms abound in Anglo-Saxon art, as was to be expected in a Christian society which followed St Paul’s dictum that women should cover their heads, but it is impossible to marry the Anglo-Saxon vocabulary for veils with the illustrations in Saxon art.

The study of ancient Greek clothing terminology is riddled with problems and inconsistencies. George Losfeld’s work, *Essai sur le costume grec*, lists around 460 known clothing terms, many of which have unexplainable meanings. We have probably lost many nuanced and colloquial terms for items of clothing which varied according to time and place. The ancient Greeks themselves were very relaxed about naming their items of dress. This is not surprising, perhaps, when one considers that ancient Greek clothing itself tended to be made from basic shapes which were draped and wrapped around the body in a number of styles. Large lengths of cloth could also be used for a variety of other purposes; a cloth functioning as a robe can also be used as a bed sheet or a wall hanging or even as a sail. A lively passage from Apollonius’ *Argonautica* makes this clear: we are told that a *peplos* was made by the Graces for Dionysus and was subsequently handed down as a precious heirloom in the family of Thoas, until it finally became the property of Jason, who wore it with pride. But even this priceless object had had another function – according to Apollonius, it had been used as a bedsplay by Dionysus when he made love to Ariadne.

Greek garments were composed of basic rectangles of cloth that were draped around the body and held in place by pins, knots, and sashes, which meant that the actual function of a garment could be readily changed. A length of cloth working as a *peplos* could be easily unpinned, opened out, folded differently and remounted on the body as a *himation*. It becomes easy to account for the fluidity of ancient Greek dress vocabulary since Greek garments themselves were constantly changing shape and being adapted to different usages.

The difficulty of coping with an incomplete vocabulary of changing technical and colloquial terms is well shown by texts that list, often without context or description, a series of specific dress-terms. Epigraphic evidence sometimes contains such clothing lists (most famously the clothing inventory of the Artemis Brauronia sanctuary on the Athenian Akropolis), but poetic sources such as the list of female garments and dress-accessories given by Aristophanes in his *Thesmophoriazusae II* (fr. 321) contain comparable catalogues.

Iconographic representations of Greek dress, and of the veil in particular, frequently show how one item of clothing can be thrown about the body in such
a way that it creates another type of garment. This, in fact, is the essence of the Greek veil. There certainly were separate head-coverings worn by Greek women at various stages between the eighth and the first centuries, and there was even a separate face-veil in vogue between the fourth and first centuries, but other styles of veiling – the most commonly found veiling-types in fact – were created out of another garment: a pharos, or mantle, could be pulled over the head or across the face to create a veil, a himation could be pulled over the back of the head to make a veil, or the over-fold of a peplos could serve the same purpose.

**Covering garments.**

The Greek veil (before the fourth century at least) was usually created from a garment that served an additional purpose, usually a voluminous mantle or robe that covered much of the body. A number of words, such as epiblēma and periblēma (together with the associated terms epibolaia, epiblemata and epibolaion), in a variety of literary sources have the general meaning of ‘that which is thrown over, around or about’. They seem to be synonyms and appear to refer to a large piece of cloth which can be utilized as various garments and even as bedspreads or other coverings. Generally though, they act as mantles and cloaks that have the potential to be pulled forward over the head to form veils.\(^\text{12}\) As Richter notes:

> The *epiblema* is a kind of shawl ‘thrown over’ both shoulders, covering back and sides. In a way it corresponds to the later *himation*, in that it hangs down freely, and that it is…sometimes pulled over the back of the head…as the mantle was so often in later times. Sometimes, on the other hand, it was worn covering the chest, with the ends hanging down the back. The *epiblema* could be long, trailing on the ground, or quite short.\(^\text{13}\)

Her definition correctly suggests the flexibility of the garment and the notion that, be it long or short, covering the head or flung across the chest, the garment might still be classified as an *epiblema* or *periblema*.\(^\text{14}\)

Head-dresses too were prone to adaptation. Fluidity in alternating the words used for veils in the Greek language may have been reflected in the fluctuating use of garments, veils, and other head-coverings themselves. What was termed a *mitra* could easily be called a ‘fillet’ or even a ‘head cloth’ since the nature of this head covering was, like the veil, simply a length of fabric wrapped around the head to create different shapes. As has been noted,

> It would be wrong to think that the word ['mitra'] applied in all periods to a piece of cloth of the same shape and proportions or that it could be worn in only one way. Both the continuity and the many variations in practice in tying the hair can be readily observed in art, and there is no need to find a new word for every such variation… [The] Greek *mitrephoros* wore a turban in the sixth century, preferred a tied head cloth or fillet in the fifth…while his female companion used her *mitra* still to cover more of her hair. Thus, the shape of the *mitra* certainly changed over time. The more we learn about the Greek use of ‘technical’ words for dress, utensils, or implements, the less precise
that use proves to have been, and it would be a pity to exclude associations of words and representations through insisting on over-precise identifications.\textsuperscript{15}

A fragmentary image by the Athenian artist Douris (Fig. 7) emphasizes the point: a woman binds her hair with a large and wide pleated cloth that is easily big enough to act as a head veil and, in fact, such a deftly pleated linen cloth falling into delicate concertina-folds is frequently seen utilized as a veil, particularly in fifth-century vase-paintings.\textsuperscript{16}

The word ampekphonē (or ampekhonon) can also be classed under the general heading of epiblēmata, deriving as it does from ampekhomai (to drape),\textsuperscript{17} and it can also have a meaning of ‘outward appearance in dress’ in general, confirming that it is the outer and hence the most prominent item of clothing.\textsuperscript{18} More specifically, though, it refers to a female outer-garment, most probably a veil, which is especially noted for its delicacy and semi-transparency: Hesychius and the Suda classify it with the words summetron periblēma and leptōn himation and Pollux endorses these definitions by calling it a himation, a stolē, an amphieszma and a micron periblēma.\textsuperscript{19} The ampekphonē is understood by Gow as,

the wrap regularly worn by women, which resembles an ample himation but is often made of very thin and clinging materials which allow the heavier folds of what is worn beneath to show through… [W]hen worn out of doors [it] usually envelops both arms and also hoods the head.\textsuperscript{20}

The fine and expensive quality of the garment is endorsed by the fact that it can be perfumed and, as such, it is discovered in the textual evidence as part of a hetaira’s armoury of charms,\textsuperscript{21} while its transparency is attested for by the comic playwright Pherekrates, who observes a group of prostitutes whose ampekhonai are – in the speaker’s imagination at least – revealing enough for him to see their pudendas.\textsuperscript{22}

The delicacy and fragility of the garment is highlighted in Theocritus’ story of an Arkadian shepherdess who tears her flimsy ampekphonē during her first sexual experience with her lover, who accordingly promises to buy her a bigger and (by implication) a better one:

\textbf{GIRL:} You’ve torn my ampekphonē into rags and I’m naked.  
\textbf{DAPHNIS:} I’ll give you another one, bigger than this.\textsuperscript{23}

It appears, then, that the ampekphonē could be an expensive garment. It is not surprising to see it listed among items of textile dedications in shrines to major goddesses, in particular at sanctuaries of Artemis. On the Athenian Akropolis, an ampekphonē is recorded as being draped over the statue of Artemis, which renders feasible the word’s translation as ‘veil’.\textsuperscript{24} The word occurs three times in the clothing
Inscriptions at the Artemis Brauronia sanctuary: on two occasions the garment is draped around the statue (one of these particular cloths is woven with the words ‘sacred to Artemis’), while the third reference to an ampekhone has it as a dedication by a woman named Mnesistrate and states that it is contained in a wooden presentation case.

**Krēdemon, kaluptē, kalumma**

There are three main ancient Greek words for ‘veil’ found in a wide variety of sources; those words are krēdemon, kaluptē and kalumma. What do the words mean exactly?

Generally, words for veil are based on the notion of covering something, wrapping around something, or dragging and trailing; thus both the Greek veil-words kaluptē and kalumma appropriately derive from the verb kaluptō, ‘to cover’, while krēdemon is constructed from karē, ‘head’, and deō, ‘to bind’, and is therefore literally a ‘head-binder.’ But we are in the dark as to how the krēdemon, kaluptē and kalumma appeared or how they were differentiated from one another. We cannot easily qualify them with a colour, a fabric, or a style that is precisely defined in any source, or say if they were ever conceived of that way. We must be prepared to acknowledge that the three main veil terms could have been open to flexible usage in accordance with other Greek dress terms.

That the krēdemon, kaluptē and kalumma designate garments indistinguishable in essentials is certain: they are all words for types of veil. What is more difficult to ascertain however is whether these differences in words were reflected in a physical difference in the veils themselves (size, material, decoration or colour), or by variations in their use.

However, scholars have not been unanimous in defining these words as ‘veil’ and the term krēdemon in particular has caused some scholars to doubt the translation as ‘veil’. But it would be misleading to follow the etymological root of the word and envisage the krēdemon as a fillet or headband. The sources make it clear that it is a garment that is placed over the head and not bound around the head. Thus, for example, in *Iliad* 14 Hera covers herself with a glistening white krēdemon at the culmination of her dressing scene. It is the word used for the veil which the goddess Ino takes off and hands to Odysseus, for the head-dresses thrown off by Nausikaa and her maids and for the shining veil that Penelope wears as she appears in front of her suitors and which she modestly draws across her face.

Nausikaa and her maids divest themselves of their krēdonna in order to play a ballgame; ribbon hair-bands would be the last thing to discard in this circumstance, while Penelope’s gesture of holding her krēdemon across her face would be absurd if it was a ribbon. While he concedes that the krēdemon is not a ribbon, Richard Janko, in his commentary on the *Iliad*, argues instead that,

> A krēdemon… is a kerchief or wimple covering the head and shoulders but leaving the face open, like the mantilla still worn by Greek country women; the rendering ‘veil’ is wrong.

28
But if Janko is unsatisfied with the word ‘veil’ (which suggests that, like Tsevat, he defines ‘veil’ only as a face-covering), then his substitutes ‘kerchief’, ‘wimple’ and ‘mantilla’ are as equally prone to misunderstanding and misinterpretation. Strictly speaking, a kerchief is a cloth worn as a head-covering but one that can also be utilized as the covering for the décolletage of a woman’s bodice – a popular female fashion throughout the seventeenth century AD; a wimple is a square, rectangular, or circular cloth placed on top of the head from where it hangs down to the shoulders, but it can also be used as a chin-strap. A mantilla is actually a shawl of lace that can be worn on the head, draped over a hair-comb or simply allowed to fall around the shoulders.

Late Greek lexicographers and commentators are confident in their interpretation of the word krēdemnon as ‘veil’ and they seem to be united on its form and purpose. In fact, the krēdemnon becomes the focus of particular attention by pagan and Christian scholars of the late Roman Empire who seem to be keenly interested in examining early Greek examples of veiling (and Homeric precedents in particular) as proper exemplars of correct feminine behaviour. It is important to consider that a Homeric character like Penelope might have been a more familiar role model for early Christian women than a bona fide Christian figure like the Virgin Mary. Examinations of these ancient and revered texts helped to endorse the veiling regulations laid down by the likes of Paul and Tertullian for the control of women within the early Christian community. Thus, in his commentary on Odyssey 1.334, Eustathius regards the krēdemnon as a head-veil and on Odyssey 1.335 he notes that it was capable of being drawn across the face and that it could therefore be activated as a face-veil, a katapestasma, or ‘curtain’:

Having held it before the cheeks as a flowing, shining veil (lipara krēdemna), [Penelope] makes an appearance; so not only is the krēdemnon a ‘binding’ for the head (desmos esti kephalēs) but also a wide (platu) curtain or face-covering (katapetasma) if indeed it is drawn down onto the cheeks and veils them (epikaluptei autas).

Dicaearchus also assumed that Penelope was able to pull her krēdemnon across her face, thus leaving only her eyes visible, and Porphyry claims that the krēdemnon was specifically a head-veil but that at her appearances in front of the suitors, Penelope pulled her head-veil down over her face and across her cheeks in order to conceal her tears:

The krēdemnon was not a face-veil (prosōpou periblēma), but for the head; so he [Homer] says somewhere, ‘the queen among goddesses covered her head with a beautiful krēdemnon, new-made and white as the sun’ [ll. 14.184 f.]. So by pulling down the head-veil (kephalēs kaluptran), which he calls a krēdemnon, she wanted to hide her tears and to wipe the tears away with the krēdemnon. So ‘her bright krēdemnon drawn over her cheeks’ does not mean that she is covering her head and cheeks, leaving only her eyes showing, but that she is pulling down the krēdemnon from her head and uncovering her head and revealing her face, but keeping the krēdemnon in her hands in front of her cheeks. Similarly, when Telemachus cries he lifts his cloak in front of his eyes [Od. 4.115]; hence
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she is said to ‘draw’ (because she pulled it down and held it in front of her eyes), and he to ‘lift’ (because raising it from below he puts it in front of his eyes).³⁵

It is probably best to regard the krêdemnon as a head-veil that hung from the back part of the head and covered the back and the shoulders of the wearer, but whether it reached to the ground or even trailed on the floor is impossible to ascertain. It could be drawn forward to cover the lower face when necessary, but it should clearly not be classed exclusively as a face-veil, although it could feasibly be termed an ‘outerwrap’ or epiblêmata.³⁶ It could be argued that the krêdemnon was regarded as a particularly fine or luxurious garment for in the epic tradition it is constantly referred to for its brilliance, especially for its shining quality (lîparokrêdemnos, ‘shining veil’, is not infrequently used as a description of the garment),³⁷ and it is worn by goddesses, royal wives and daughters in Homeric and dramatic passages that require women to stand at the focal point of a scene and to appear conspicuously veiled; it is therefore sometimes referred to as vividly coloured white or red or purple.³⁸

One particular head-dress which warrants special attention, since it contains in part a krêdemnon, is that worn by Andromakhe at Iliad 22.468–70. The description of her headgear is notoriously complex and has often compelled commentators to attempt to decipher their arrangement, so much so that even Alexander Pope in his 1742 commentary on the passage was unable to, ‘pass over a matter of such importance as a Lady’s dress without endeavouring to explain what kinds of heads were worn above three thousand years ago’.³⁹ The Homeric passage relates that:

Far off [she] threw from her head the shining bindings, the ampux and the kekruphalos and the plektê anadesmê together and the krêdemnon which Aphrodite the golden had given her on the day that Hektor of the shining helmet led her forth from the house of Eetion and gave numberless gifts to her.⁴⁰

It is largely due to the difficulties within this episode that scholars have misread krêdemnon as ‘head-band’ or ‘fillet’ instead of ‘veil’. This error arises from line 469 with its three items of headgear termed as ampux, kekruphalos, and plektê anadesmê, and which occur nowhere else in Homer.⁴¹

The ampux is attested in other sections of Homer by the epithet khrusampux, literally meaning ‘with golden ampux’. It is frequently used by Homer as an epithet for horses, apparently referring to their bridles, which probably means that as an item in a woman’s toilette the ampux takes the form of a metal strip or band, possibly of beaten gold.⁴² Thus we find the chorus of Aiskhylos’ Suppliant Maidens fearing that they will be dragged from the altars of the gods like a horse by the frontlet (hippadon ampukôn).⁴³ It is probably correct to think of Andromakhe’s ampux as a metal fillet (possibly of the type worn by the dancing girls of Iliad 18.597). It could be synonymous with the stephanê, which was certainly a metal object and could conceivably be made of gold.⁴⁴

The kekruphalos is to be found outside Homer in classical Greek literature and seems to have retained its original meaning. Essentially it was a net-like cap or woven
snood used to keep the hair in order and was particularly well-suited to the major female hairstyle of the day, the chignon. Acting like a little bag to contain the hair, it appears that women may have tucked the long ends under a fillet or stephanē and let them hang down at the back, although it looks as though the styles in which it could be worn were manifold. Sometimes it covered the hair completely and sometimes it left the hair visible over the forehead only. Alternative names for the same head-dress-type could be mitra and sakkos, although Abrahams simply prefers to see it as a non-descript ‘kerchief’ worn on top of the head and behind the ampux and open to a variety of draping methods. It is more difficult to explain the plektē anadesmē however, although the connection between, on the one hand, plektē (from plektos) meaning ‘coil’, ‘wreath’, or ‘twisted rope’ and, on the other, anadesmos, ‘a binding’, seems to indicate that it is some kind of fabric fillet possibly twisted or plaited.

Because the Homeric passage places the krēdemnon last on the list of head-coverings to fall off Andromakhe’s head, it is supposed that the other desmata must have been worn over it and would have held it in place; but this would seem to place too literal an interpretation on the passage. Homer is not always specific about the order in which garments are worn and it is not unusual to find a Homeric hero putting on an outer-robe before donning his tunic. In the context of the scene, the true arrangement of Andromakhe’s head-dress is irrelevant; her manic action at Hektor’s death probably means that she tears off her head-coverings all together as one disordered cluster, she does not take them off in an orderly fashion. Nevertheless, it is probably better to think of the krēdemnon as a veil that covers all the other components of the head-dress.

Andromakhe’s headgear provides a startling contrast to the simple nature of the head-dresses of other Homeric women such as Hekabe, Helen, Nausikaa, and even Hera. Furthermore, the words seem to have little or no bearing on the examples of veil-styles found in archaic or later Greek art. Interestingly, though, Etruscan tomb art from the seventh and sixth centuries does seem to depict the kind of headgear that is recorded in Homer. Given the trade and cultural connections between Etruria, Greece and the Near East in the archaic period, it is tempting to turn to the Italian artistic evidence. In fact, in an attempt to qualify Andromakhe’s headgear in the artistic tradition, Helbig has suggested that the kekruphalos is represented in Etruscan art by a commonly-found peaked cap or net which pushes up the hair into a top-knot. The ampux is represented by strips of stiffened fabric or metal placed just above the forehead, and the plektē anadesmē by a roll of fabric that is sometimes twisted (Fig. 8 a–d). The krēdemnon is therefore the veil that covers the whole head-dress, and can either be shoulder-length or, presumably, floor-length. His arguments are persuasive and the iconographic evidence he offers is certainly the closest thing that has been suggested to date to match the Homeric description.

The discrepancy in the dates between Homer’s description of the head-dress in the epic and the depiction of the headgear in Etruscan art is, of course, considerable, but we should always take into account how fashions changed at a much slower rate in
antiquity than today. In addition, native fashions were always strongly influential in each locale and there was never any real sense that one fashionable ‘look’ was worn concurrently throughout the ancient world. It is more difficult to believe, however, that any Etruscan noblewoman actually wearing this style of head-dress would have referred to its components by their (possible) Greek terms (or at least the ones that Homer used), let alone their original Anatolian names; there were probably local Etruscan terms used to describe these garments too.

Whatever the realities of Andromakhe’s head-dress, it appears that in Greek usage the krēdemon and the kaluptre were synonymous – the name of the latter being derived from the purpose of the veil, and the former from the chief part of the body that it was expected to cover. In addition, the kaluptre seems to have been a standard form of veil that might have covered much of the body rather as did the krēdemon and, like the krēdemon, it may have been noted for its fine (sometimes even exotic) quality. Nonetheless, it was a veil that appears to have been a standard part of female dress and worn daily. Kirke and Kalypso each veil themselves with a kaluptre as part of their daily toilette:

the nymph clothed herself in a long white robe, finely woven and beautiful, and about her waist she threw a beautiful sash of gold, and on her head she placed a veil (kephalēi d’ephuperthe kaluptre).55

Likewise, the veil that Hekabe casts off at the death of her son is also referred to as a kaluptre. Since Hektor’s decision to meet Akhilleus in the field at Iliad 22 comes as a shock to Priam and Hekabe (and there is in this whole section of the epic the theme of rash decisions and speed of action), we probably need to envisage Hekabe’s arrival at the city walls at this juncture as an impulsive action. We should regard the clothing that she wears (the veil and the robe which she opens to reveal her breast), simply as her daily dress and not as any kind of ceremonial or occasional costume.56

As with Homer’s Hekabe, Aiskhylos, in the Persai, recounts how the sudden news of the loss of a son catches a Persian mother unawares and the veil which she tears, her kaluptre, is part of her daily garb.57

The appearance and usage of the kalumma is more ambiguous. On the surface it appears that this particular veil might be connected with mourning, grief, anger, and despair, since the kalumma is alluded to twice in epic poetry as black or dark.
Moreover, on these two occasions the kalumma is deliberately put on by the wearer to make a conspicuous statement – Thetis dons a dark kalumma as she leaves her watery home to visit Olympus, while Demeter specifically discards her krēđemnon in favour of a black kalumma as she searches for her daughter. So ostensibly it looks as though the kalumma is defined by its dark colour as different from the krēđemnon and kaluptrē.

But the suggestion that the kalumma is not a common veil, but one worn to express a sense of grief or anger, cannot be supported by later evidence. Bacchylides, for example, recounts how the Nereids gave Aithra a golden kalumma and according to Aiskhylos’ Kassandra, a bride will peer from behind a kalumma on her wedding day. Euripides’ Iphigeneia also attests that a bridal veil could be referred to as a kalumma. It is hardly fitting to imagine a bridal veil as black and associated with anger or grief, and so we need to be open to the possibility that the kalumma did not necessarily retain its original Homeric association with the colour black in later periods. If the kalumma does appear to be the garb of mourning, this is probably inadvertent; perhaps the author of the later Homeric Hymn to Demeter selected the word which he found connected with mourning in Homer.

Aristophanes refers to the kalumma in his list of women’s garments but he does not suggest that it is envisaged as dark. On the contrary, the items of dress listed in the fragmentary Thesmophoriazusae II are expensive and eye-catching, while in the Lysistrata the kalumma itself becomes the focus of attention in the debate between Lysistrata and the Proboulo where it is alluded to as a standard item of dress for Athenian women. It does not appear to be identified by Aristophanes with a specific colour. By the classical period it seems the word kalumma had lost any precise meaning that it may once have had and came to refer instead to a standard type of veil, no different perhaps from the krēđemnon and kaluptrē in size or shape or usage.

The krēđemnon, kaluptrē, and kalumma cannot now be assigned a physical attribute or a function that marks them apart. We cannot say which, if any, of these veil-types was more popular during any one period or in any one place, or whether one was considered to have been of more symbolic importance or was imbued with more meaning than any other and, moreover, it is out of the question to attempt to identify these veil-types in the iconographic sources. There is not one artistic representation of a veiled woman which we are able to qualify with any certainty as wearing a krēđemnon, kaluptrē or kalumma. The nature of the evidence does not provide us with that luxury.

Using the lexicographers
The lexicographers can take an active interest in veiling-issues; they provide us with a rich vocabulary for the veil that extends well beyond the three main veil-words. Post-hellenistic lexical studies tended to serve two purposes: firstly, they aided the understanding of ancient authors by providing something of a commentary on an
old text, and secondly they collected vocabulary deemed suitable for use in fashionable pure Atticist prose. These collections contain words for ‘veil’ which would otherwise be lost. The Suda (compiled at the end of the tenth century AD) conserves fragments of the earliest and best Greek scholarship and occasionally it comes up with a veil-word. The *Onomasticon* of the second-century AD writer Iulius Pollux provides several short sections on garments that include fleeting references to the veil. Especially noteworthy, however, is the fifth century AD lexicographer Hesychius of Alexandria whose collection of rare Greek words found in poetry and non-Attic dialects contain many veil-terms. Hesychius claims that his work was based on the specialist lexica of Aristarchus, Heliodorus, and others dating to the first century, although it would appear that much of Hesychius’ work has been lost (such as the original source citations) and in many places it has been interpolated, while brutal abridgements have reduced the lexicon to little more than a glossary of terms. Nevertheless, Hesychius remains a primary source for the study of Greek dialects and the criticism of ancient poetry. It is his interest in dialect that makes Hesychius a particularly important source for the study of veil-words (and garment-terms in general) because many veil-types probably had localized styles with corresponding localized names. Thus, as we shall see, a veil called *tegidion* only enters into the sources in the late fourth century where it is found worn in Boeotia, Macedonia, Asia Minor, and Egypt (and possibly Attica) but does not appear to have been worn in the Pelopon-nese or the Italian colonies. Moreover, it appears that the fashion for wearing the *tegidion* and the word ‘*tegidion*’ itself disappear from daily usage at about the same time, in the early Roman period. Likewise, a veil-word found recorded in the Suda as *maphortēs* (and its diminutive *maphorion*) seems to have entered into the veiling-vocabulary relatively late, sometime in the second century AD, where it appears as a veil worn by women and priests.\(^{65}\) It appears that the *maphortēs* continued to be used as a religious head-covering by Christian women throughout late antiquity and into the early medieval period.\(^{66}\)

So we must bear in mind that veil-styles and veil-terms might have had a limited lifespan, entering into the overall Greek vocabulary (or a dialect) for a short time before disappearing, or becoming ‘old fashioned’, or being used in a different way. Table 1 (at the end of this chapter) lists the variety of veil words found in the lexicographical sources and provides the definition of the veil-words given by the lexicographers themselves. However, there is a real problem in using the lexicographic definitions, inasmuch as the lexicographers tend to define a veil-term by simply giving an alternative word for a veil without describing its look or function. Occasionally the lexicographers will qualify a veil-word with a description of either its make-up or its use. Thus, Hesychius glosses the word *ginglian* as *kalumma kephalēs ereoun*, or ‘woollen head-kalumma’.\(^{67}\) Problematically, the word *ginglian* is not found in any other context and so cannot be qualified further. Likewise he explains the word *satta* as *kalumma kephalēs gynaikeias* (‘women’s head-kalumma’) but offers no further definition.\(^{68}\)
The lexicographers do, however, prove that there were many words in the Greek vocabulary for ‘veil’; they alert us to the likelihood that these words would have referred to different styles of veil or to the different uses to which veils were put. It is possible that many other veil-words have been lost. From the lexicographers we can confirm that the veil, in a variety of forms, was a familiar garment throughout Greek antiquity.

**Conclusion**

So what can be done with this wide variety of veil-terms? On one level it would appear very little, since an attempt to identify anything as specific as a *krēđemnon*, *kaluptrē* or *kalumma* in Greek art or literary texts is pointless and mistaken. Occasionally it is possible to put one of the vaguer Greek terms to use and to match it up with its artistic counterpart – the *tegidion* is a case in point – but such definite identification is extremely rare. Many of the veil-styles located in the Greek iconographic sources are impossible to identify by any Greek term, no matter how unclear its usage or how tempting it is to apply one of these terms to a veil-style. It would be pointless calling them by an imprecise name like, say, *ampekhonē*, and it might be safer to veer away from Greek terminology completely. Therefore in the next chapter we will meet with (predominantly) Arabic terms for specific veil types (words like *shaal*, *maghmug*, and *lithma*) that will be used to identify certain ancient Greek veil-styles. This might not be the most satisfactory answer, but at least it is expedient: we need to adopt a common workable veil-vocabulary so that our investigation of the Greek veil can proceed without further complication or impediment.

However, we shall see in subsequent chapters how the three main veil-words (but *krēđemnon* in particular) are imbued with an important but subtle symbolism that will reveal much about the ideology that lies behind the veiling of women in Greek society. The words themselves can help us to reconstruct the veiled female.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Veil-Word</th>
<th>Literal Meaning</th>
<th>Lexicographer</th>
<th>Definition (if recorded)</th>
<th>Translation of Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>κρήδεμνον</td>
<td>Head-binder</td>
<td>Hesychius</td>
<td>ἐπιβόλαιον, ὁ ἑστ. ὁ χρῶται ψανίκες...στεφάνις, καὶ κόσμος κρήδεσμον· κεφαλόδεσμον.</td>
<td>It is an epibolaion, customary for women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>κρήδεμνον</td>
<td>Head-binder</td>
<td>Suda</td>
<td>κεφαλόδεσμον, ἢ μαφόρτιον.</td>
<td>A kephaladesmion, a little maphortes (?).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>γιγγλίαν</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hesychius</td>
<td>κάλυμμα κεφαλῆς ἑρεύν.</td>
<td>A woollen head-kalumma.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>σάττα</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hesychius</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>σαταρνίς</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hesychius</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἐπίκρανα</td>
<td>About-the-head</td>
<td>Hesychius</td>
<td>περικεφάλαια, καλύμματα.</td>
<td>Little-about-the-head; little kalumma (?).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἐπίκρανον</td>
<td>About-the-head</td>
<td>Pollux. Onom. 2.42.</td>
<td>κεφαλίδιον, περίκρανον</td>
<td>Little head-covering (?), around-the-head.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἐπικρατίδιον</td>
<td>Little-upon-the-head</td>
<td>Hesychius</td>
<td>στιμονικὸν κάλυμμα ἄχρι τῆς κεφαλῆς.</td>
<td>A spun kalumma utterly [covering] the head.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>μαφόρτιον</td>
<td>Little maphortes</td>
<td>Suda</td>
<td>κρήδεμνον</td>
<td>Krēdemnon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>μαφόρτις</td>
<td></td>
<td>Suda</td>
<td>κρήδεμνον</td>
<td>Krēdemnon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἐπίκρηνον</td>
<td>About-the-head</td>
<td>Hesychius</td>
<td>κεφαλόδεσμον</td>
<td>Head-binder.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἐπίκρηνον</td>
<td>About-the-head</td>
<td>Pollux. Onom. 2.42.</td>
<td>περίκρανον</td>
<td>About-the-head.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἐπισκιασμόν</td>
<td>Shaddow-cast-around</td>
<td>Hesychius</td>
<td>κάλυμμα</td>
<td>Kalumma.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>κεφαλόδεσμον</td>
<td>Head-binder</td>
<td>Hesychius</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>κάλυμμα</td>
<td>Covering</td>
<td>Hesychius</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>κάραννος</td>
<td>About-the-head(?)</td>
<td>Hesychius</td>
<td>κεκρύφαλος, κρήδεμνον.</td>
<td>A hair-covering, a krēdemnon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἑρμιά</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hesychius</td>
<td>κάλυμμα</td>
<td>Kalumma.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Defining ‘The veil’

Notes

1 For definitions see Brooks 1995, 13 ff.; Jeffrey 1979, 150–9.
2 For Indian veil-terminology see Joshi 1992.
3 Makhlouf 1979, 30 ff.
4 The *lithma* is a piece of brightly coloured muslin draped over the head in such a way as to cover the hair and forehead, with a section of the cloth allowed to hang free so that it can be utilized to cover the whole face, except the eyes, according to changes in the definition of the situation. When there are no men around, the *lithma* is allowed to remain down, but a woman covers her face in the presence of a man who is not her husband or very close relative. The *lithma* is used when a man unexpectedly enters a room where women are gathered.

5 It is interesting to note that women of higher social status tend to wear the black *sharshaf*, while women further down the social hierarchy wear the more colourful *sitara*.

6 Makhlouf’s study has been endorsed and expanded by the work of Jennifer Scarce, who has examined the veil-vocabulary of the Near and Middle East (with a concentration on Afghanistan, Iran, and Turkey), by that of Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood who takes a broader approach to the subject, and by Dawn Chatty who focuses on the veil-vocabulary of the Arabian Peninsula. See Scarce 1975 and 1987; Vogelsang-Eastwood 1996a; Chatty 1997.

7 Agius 1997.
8 For a discussion see Owen-Crocker 1986, 141.
13 Richter 1968, 8–9.
14 In fact, in 1908 Abrahams had suggested that the term *epiblêmata* should be generically applied to the types of outer-wraps worn by both men and women in ancient Greece and that therefore the classical *himation* should be classed in this type of way. She was correct in stating that any outer garment had the potential to be utilized as a veil by both sexes when and where the need arose.
16 The same is true of a fifth-century Athenian representation of Danae who similarly has tied her hair with a wide, folded cloth that could easily be employed as a veil. See Reeder 1995, 269.
17 Thus we have ἀμπέχει, ἀμπεχόμενος, ἀμπεχόμενον, ἀμπεχόμενῳ. See Losfeld 1991, 142, 159–60, 321.
18 Xen. *Mem*. 1.2.5; and, as male garments, Plato *Rep*. 425b.
20 Gow 1952, Vol II, 273. He specifically avoids the term ‘veils the head’.
21 Athenaeus 596c.
23 Theoc. *Id*. 27.59–60.
Chapter 2

24 IG II (2) 1514.34, 36, 50.
25 So, for example, the Latin velum (and thus the English veil, Italian velo, and French voile) suggests a curtain-covering; the Welsh veil-word gorchudd has the meaning ‘covering’ (from cudl-covering and cuddio – hide). For a full discussion see Buck 1949, 436.
26 See definitions in Boisacq 1950 s.v. καλύπτω, κρήδεμνον. See also Chantraine 1968 s.v. καλύπτω, κρήδεμνον.
27 Losfeld 1991, 332 refers to it as a ‘bandeau de tête’.
28 Od. 5.436, 351, 373, 459. Such an argument for the krēdemnon as a fillet is aided by the supposition that Ino’s krēdemnon would be more effective as a lifebelt for Odysseus if it were a length of ribbon, rather than a large veil. But the point is being missed – neither a veil nor a ribbon would work as a practical lifebelt, indeed, how can a length of cloth of any kind serve that purpose? The life-saving qualities of Ino’s krēdemnon are contained within the fact that it is a gift of a goddess, blessed by her powers, and not a practical piece of life-saving equipment. The krēdemnon of Ino is a typical motif of the fairy-tale kind, where a benevolent figure of an other-worldly nature bestows an article of clothing on a deserving protagonist; thus Cinderella is given a pair of glass slippers by her fairy godmother, and a frequent motif in other fairytales is the bestowing of magical clothing on worthy individuals.
29 Od. 6.100.
33 Eustathius on Od. 1.335. I am grateful to Malcolm Heath for drawing my attention to this passage.
34 Dicaearchus F92 Wehrli.
35 Porphyry on Od. 1.332. I am grateful to Malcolm Heath for drawing my attention to this passage.
36 For definitions see further Chapter 3.
38 The notion of conspicuous veiling is discussed in Chapter 10. For red veils see below, Chapter 8.
40 Il. 22.468–72:

\[
\text{τὴλε δ’ ἀπὸ κρατός βάλε δέσματα σημαλόειντα,}
\text{ἀμπυκά κεκρυψαλόν τε ἵθε πλεκτήν ἀναδέσμην}
\text{κρήδεμνον θ’, ὁ ρά οἰ δώκε χρυσῆ Ἀφροδίτη}
\text{ἡματ τῷ ὅτε μιν κορυθαίολος ἠγάγεθ’ Ἐκτωρ}
\text{ἐκ δόμου Ἡπείρονος, ἐπεὶ πόρε μυρία ἑνᾶ.}
\]

Trans. Lattimore 1951, with amendments.
41 See Richardson 1991, 157. The word ἀναδέσμη reappears in later Greek literature and can be found in Nonnos, Agathias, and Photius.
42 Il. 5.358, 363 etc.
43 Aes. Supp. 431.
44 Abrahams 1908, 112.
45 See, for example, Ar. Thes. 138, 257–8; AP 6.206.4, 207.2, 275.2.
46 Abrahams 1908, 112.
47 See Aes. Choe. 248; Eur. Tr. 598, 1010, Med. 978. Abrahams 1908, 36 argues that the
word is applied elsewhere to baskets which, she suggests, had an open-weave. See *Il.* 18.40 and 22.469. Therefore she confusingly identifies it as a hairnet.

48 See further, van Studniczka 1909.
49 See, for example, *Od.* 16.173, 23.155.
50 Abrahams 1908, 37.
51 See, for example, Spivey 1997, 40 ff.; Osborne 1996, 114 ff.
52 Helbig 1887, 157 ff.
53 Similar head-dresses are worn by South Italian women in the fifth and fourth centuries.

A good example of this head-dress and veil can be found on a bell-krater by the Libation Painter. See Trendall 1989, fig. 301. A Pontic amphora dating to c. 530, which has recently been interpreted as the scene of the original quarrel between the three goddesses that sparked off the Trojan War, shows them dressed in Etruscan fashion and laying on couches; their pointed shoes hang on the wall behind them. For details see Schefold 1992, 204. The three goddesses are dressed in splendid layered garments and they all wear the elements of headgear that were identified by Helbig and which are covered with huge garment-veils that enshroud their figures like the modern-day Iranian *chador*. The long veils hanging from tall head-dresses are pulled around the front of the torso in a style of dressing which is distinctly Anatolian; in view of the real possibility of connections between Etruria and Anatolia in the archaic period, this style of dressing cannot be brushed aside. Lorimer 1950, 387–8 reminds us that, after all, Andromakhe was not Greek but Cilician and that perhaps in an effort to stress her foreign origins, epic tradition may have given her a costume typical of her Ionian background, a style of dressing which might have penetrated into Italy too where it is reflected in Etruscan iconography. The same head-dress components can be located in other Etruscan art works: see Spivey 1997a, figs. 46, 75, 76, 87, 88, 123, 124, 167–8. In contrast, other Etruscan representations of veiled women show a much simpler form of veil, more on a par with the archaic Greek *pharos*-veil: See ibid. figs. 73 and 74.

54 *Aes.* Supp. 120–1 speaks of linen veils from Sidon.
59 *HH2* 41–4.
60 Bacch.* Dith.* 17.37.
61 *Aes.* Ag. 1178; Eur. *IT* 372. For a discussion of the colour of the wedding veil see below, Chapter 8.
62 See further Lorimer 1950, 386.
63 Ar.* Fr.* 321.5.
64 Ar.* Lys.* 530. For a discussion of this passage see below, Chapter 9.
65 *BGU* 845.15 (2nd century AD); *POxy.* 1295.19 (3rd century AD); *PMeyer* 23.6 (4th century AD).
67 Hesychius s.v. γυγγλίαν. After Adriani 1948.
68 Hesychius s.v. σάττα.
VEIL-styles IN THE ANCIENT GREEK WORLD

This chapter will attempt to chronicle and summarize the great variety of veil-styles adopted in the Greek world from the eighth century BC to the first century AD. We shall try to classify the veils by name, using Greek words where possible but employ modern Arabic (or other) terms where necessary, simply to form a vocabulary for, and inventory of, veil-types. Our condensed treatment is not meant to be exhaustive but merely an indication of the multiple veiling styles encountered in the Greek iconographic sources.

The iconographic evidence offers two distinct types of Greek veil: the first can be classified as ‘outerwraps’ and ‘garment-veils’, items usually drawn over the head and sometimes across the face to conceal and disguise these regions, and occasionally fastened with pins or ties. Today, outerwraps are worn by draping or wrapping a length of material around the wearer in the style of the Moroccan izar or huik,1 the Indian sari,2 the Egyptian miláyeh3 (Fig. 9), or the Turkmenese chypry,4 the Afghan chadri,5 and the Iranian chador6 (Fig. 10). The outerwrap veils (izar, huik, sari, and miláyeh) most closely resemble the ancient Greek himation in the way that they are draped around the body and are utilized as head-veils and face-veils. Garment-veils (like the chypry, chadri, and chador) tend to be more versatile and can be used as cloaks, mantles, head-veils, and face-veils according to the needs and wishes of the wearer. In this respect they resemble the ancient Greek pharos which, as we will see, was often utilized for a variety of purposes and can be classed under the general Greek term epiblēmata.

The second type of veil style encountered in the Greek sources is, surprisingly, the face veil, analogues of which can still be found all over North Africa and the Middle East. While it is generally assumed that face-veiling originated with Islam, in fact the earliest evidence for the phenomenon occurs in the classical Greek world.7 For the purpose of this study, a face-veil is defined as a length of cloth which is

Fig. 9. Contemporary Egyptian miláyeh. With kind permission of Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood (Textile Research Centre) and the RMV, Leiden.

Fig. 10. Iranian chador. With kind permission of Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood (Textile Research Centre) and the RMV, Leiden.
expressly designed to cover part or all of the face and is to be regarded as a separate item from the outerwrap or garment-veil, both of which can also be used to cover the face as the situation demands. Today there are many forms of face-veil, although they can roughly be divided into three main types: firstly, there are those made from lengths of fabric that are wrapped around the head and face. These include the *lithma,* the *shanbar,* and, of course, the *yaşmak* (Fig. 11). Next there are face-panels or lengths of fabric that lack eyeholes and are simply hung over the face, such as the *maghmug,* or the *sheshaf* worn in the Yemen (Fig. 12). Finally, there are pierced face-panels, like the *burqa,* the Turkish *peche,* the Iranian *picheh,* the *shämwenjä* of Turkestan, the Saudi *batalu,* and, most importantly (for our purpose), the *niqab,* worn in much of the Arab world (Fig. 13).

It is clear that several styles of veil are particular to a certain country or region. While most modern veil-styles fall into the categories outlined above, almost all veil-societies have their own unique veiling nuances particular to their own regions. Much the same was no doubt true in the ancient Greek world. We shall see that veiling-styles in Boeotia, Macedonia, Asia Minor, and Egypt certainly followed similar trends in the late classical period and throughout the hellenistic age, but that Attica and the Peloponnese may have followed a separate veiling tradition. The ancient sources rarely dwell on regional variations in dress, but we should be alive to the probability that they existed. Occasionally, however, if a style was thought to be highly unusual or even bizarre, an author could deem it worthy of comment; as we have noted, this might explain Homer’s interest in Andromakhe’s (foreign?) headgear in *Iliad* 22, and a similar interest in peculiar foreign fashions can be located in the work of Strabo who, observing the women of Iberia, notes that,

One might also class as barbaric in character the ornaments of some of the women [of
Veil-styles in the ancient Greek world

Iberia], of which Artemidoros has told us. In some places, he says, they wear around their necks iron collars which have curved rods that bend overhead and project far in front of their foreheads; and at will they draw their veil (*kalumma*) down over these curved rods, so that the veil, spread out, becomes a shade for the face; and all this they consider an ornament. In other places he says, the women wear round their heads a *tympanion*, rounded to the back of the head, and as far as the ear-lobes, binding the head tightly, but gradually turned up at the top and sides; and other women keep the hair plucked from the forehead so closely that it glistens…and still other women put a high rod on the head, twist the hair round the rod, and then drape it with a black veil.18

Where evidence is comparatively abundant, it is possible to identify regional variations in veil-styles; thus the East Greek *korai* of Samos and Miletus wear the veil in different and regionally distinctive ways. However, several veil-styles could be found concurrently, and the rich Athenocentric documentation supports this idea with evidence suggesting that in the fifth century alone at least four major veil-styles can be identified being worn concurrently. Other information, such as a very rare depiction by the Marsyas Painter of a woman wearing a turban-like head-dress and with her lower face and whole body veiled in an elongated version of the *yašmak* (*Fig. 14*),19 suggests that an even wider variety of styles were in vogue but make only fleeting appearances in the sources.20

Greek art offers abundant evidence for veiling and the development of veil-styles from the eighth century through to the Roman period, although some types of veil are shown in iconography far more than others. It is dangerous to routinely use art as an indicator of changing modes of fashion. However, the clothes worn by women on vases, sculptures, reliefs, and (occasionally) wall-paintings are probably taken from real-life practice, even if the needs or conceits of the artist or the patron may require that the depiction of clothing, and of female dress in particular, conforms to certain rules.21

Aegean origins.

Despite the wealth of pictorial information on fashion from the splendid and sophisticated frescos of Minoan and Mycenaean artists, there is very little evidence for veiling in the ancient Bronze Age palace civilisations.22 In fact the women of the Minoan and Mycenaean courts favoured highly elaborate coiffures in which the dividing of the hair into horizontal sections was prominent, and one would not expect such complex creations to be hidden by any kind of head covering.23

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*Fig. 14. Line drawing of a woman wearing a mantle wrapped in such a way that it creates a *yašmak* and a turban. *Lebes gamikos* by the Marsyas Painter (detail) from Kerch, c. 400 bc. The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, 1475.3.*
Chapter 3

However, Minoan evidence does attest to one distinctive type of veil. On a famous wall painting from Thera known as the ‘Fresco of the Crocus Gatherers’, women pick flowers in a rocky landscape and offer them to a seated goddess while dressed in brightly patterned clothes. One single female (a girl) is covered in a transparent polka-dotted yellow-red veil which covers her head and envelops her whole body (Fig. 15). It is assumed that since the women are all dressed in festival clothes, and are picking crocuses as part of a religious rite to celebrate spring, the unusual appearance of the veil as an element of the ritual and indeed its colour may have something to do with the ceremony, it has been suggested that the crocus has a connection with initiation. Beside this one depiction, however, there is no further evidence for the veil in the art of the palace civilizations. It is doubtful whether this single Theran example of a ‘saffron’ veil gave rise to the much-used Homeric epithet _krokopeplos_ (‘saffron-robed’).

Fig. 15. Line drawing of a Minoan girl wearing a yellow and red polka-dot veil. Theran wall-painting (‘Fresco of the crocus gatherers’), Santorini.

Shoulder-length veils: evidence from the Greek mainland

Vase paintings dated to the Late Geometric and Early Protoattic periods (c. 750–700) offer evidence for a short veil that barely reaches to the shoulders. The tradition of depicting female mourners demanded that certain aspects of their physicality be portrayed in art; in the Geometric period rudimentary breasts were needed to distinguish the symbolically naked females from males, although by the Late Geometric period women were increasingly depicted in long dresses.

One signal guaranteed to indicate femininity on these early pots is the female-specific mourning gesture of raising two hands to the head. This movement draws attention to the head and, in particular, to the hair, which was pulled and torn in a ritual outpouring of grief. Consequently, the artists pay considerable attention to the dishevelled locks which are usually depicted in multiple strands, although by the Middle Protoattic period (c. 675), when the defining female gesture has become the laceration of the cheeks, the hair is usually treated as a solid dark mass with a wavy outline.

Occasionally, however, one encounters a mourning woman whose hairstyle does not conform to established iconographic modes; Figs. 16 and 17 are such examples. These women are either wearing their hair in a very chic ‘bob’, or they are sporting some kind of head-covering. I suggest that we have here the earliest depictions of a short veil worn as a separate garment and reaching to the shoulders or just beyond. _Fig. 16_ is the earliest visual evidence for the veil; dating to c. 750, the fragment of a Geometric Tirynthian vase shows a line of veiled women dancing hand in hand. Andrew Lang long ago argued that the women were not veiled, but that they wore,
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‘early post Homeric short hood capes’. He maintained that the head-coverings were sewn pieces of cloth which were made to form hoods with deep cowls, a highly unlikely proposition when one considers the overwhelming evidence for clothing being constructed from simple shapes of cloth pinned together without the necessity for cutting, shaping, or sewing. More probably the women wear very simple veils made from a rectangle of unstitched cloth. We cannot know what this veil was called but following its modern Egyptian counterpart, we could term it a *shaal*, the contemporary Arabic name given to a very simple kind of short headcloth.

It has recently been suggested that the archaic korai from the Isthmian *perirrhanterion* (c. 650) have veils draped over their hair (Fig. 18). What at first looked like plain, thick bands of hair appeared on close examination to contain elements of bright pigmentation (red and blue), suggesting some kind of coloured head-covering. It is claimed that the broad diagonal stripes do not represent the hair but a woven patterned veil, a type perhaps recalled by Sappho who recollects that it was a custom in her mother’s generation for women to have their locks bound in purple head-coverings. A similar veil is worn by the female heads appearing on the rim of the Chian ‘Aphrodite bowl’ discovered at Naukratis (c. 600), where patterned bands are once again prominent (Fig. 19).

It is generally accepted that the mainland korai found on the *perirrhanteria* are derived from Near Eastern originals, via Samian influence. This Eastern bias is felt in the dress of the korai who, in addition to the *shaal*-veil, also seem to wear longer veils which (probably) hang down their backs.
before they are pulled around the torso and tucked into a belt. Such a style is the hallmark of Near Eastern dress and was adopted by the women of East Greece too, if the depictions of the korai are anything to go by. The fact that highly decorated Near Eastern fashions were entering Greece during the archaic period is well documented in sculpture, vase painting, and in poetry. According to Alkman, Spartan girls wore rich and elaborate Eastern-style gowns for their religious duties and were familiar with the styles of Lydia, particularly in headgear. Finds of miniature statuary of clothed females from Sparta, particularly from the sanctuary of Artemis Orthia, testify to the influx of foreign textiles which are rendered in minute detail on the otherwise crude statuettes.

**East Greek sojourn: veiled korai**

Korai, the generic term for statues of Greek maidens, come in a variety of materials and sizes, and give us most of our knowledge of veil-styles in East Greece. The types of veil worn by the East Greek korai owe a debt to those worn by Anatolian women of the Neo-Hittite period. Some of the earliest korai found wearing veils (c. 650–620) come in the shape of small statuettes from Ephesus, where the veil is combined with the chiton. About 580 it appears in Ephesian art on an ivory figurine (Fig. 20) and on a bronze statuette, both of which show a long veil tucked behind the ears and brought around the torso and tucked into the belt in a typical Neo-Hittite and Phrygian dress-style which is also found on the Isthmian korai. The ‘close-fitting’ veil, tucked behind the ears and folded into a waistband, is also a feature of the
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dress of the Anatolian women of Maraš (Fig. 21). The style of the latter dates to the mid-eighth century onwards and involved a tight-fitting head-cloth or kerchief, often fringed and sometimes decorated, over which was draped a fringed veil. The veil was drawn over one shoulder (commonly the left), pulled around the torso and tucked into the waistband on the other side of the body.

Of the larger-scale East Greek korai, the earliest standing figures date to 600, although they are crafted in the Daedalic style with foldless garments. The most interesting development in the korai tradition occurred at Samos when a new veil-type was introduced, no doubt through Anatolian influence; the Samian korai tradition flourished uninterrupted from c. 570 to 520, when it finally petered out.

The veil is the most conspicuous garment found on the Samian korai. It consists of a single rectangular piece of cloth that seems lightweight and possibly diaphanous. It is usually folded double and worn over the head so that it falls in two layers down the back, while one layer (sometimes the upper, sometimes the lower) is pulled forward around the torso and folded into the belt over the left hip. The asymmetry of this fashion is balanced on the right side where the veil is either flung over the shoulder or held in the hand so that it creates a long vertical line. This veil, never for certain found on mainland korai, is first encountered on Samos around 570 on the ‘Cheramyes Hera’, (Fig. 22) who wears a chiton, a mantle, and a veil.
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combination of garments appears here for the first time in Greek art. It is clear that the artist is obviously interested in the textures he can achieve in contrasting different types of clothing. He pays close attention to the plissé sections of the chiton and mantle and to the smoothness of the veil whose layers and edges are indicated by two parallel incised lines, as the edge of the lower veil is pulled forward around the left side of the torso and is tucked into the waistband at the front. Later Samian korai tend to reveal more of their clothed bodies as the veil progressively shrinks to cover only the wearer’s back.

Unfortunately, none of the surviving Samian statues reveals how the veils were worn over the head (since all are headless), although it is suggested that they followed Neo-Hittite styles of combining the veil with a polos head-dress (Fig. 23). Strikingly, the long rectangular Neo-Hittite veil (the same length as the tunic) is always depicted pulled around the torso and tucked into the belt, in the same style that we find at Samos. Ridgeway believes, with some justification, that it was this type of longstanding Anatolian fashion of veil and polos that was worn by the Samian korai because,

The Samian statues do not look particularly Greek in conception or form…[and] the specific combination of surface patterns made of thin, engraved lines and the smooth veils tucked in at the waist seem…too Oriental to be ignored… The heads of the Greek figures are no longer extant: but since the iconography of a tall head-dress accompanied by a veil…is so firmly established throughout Anatolia…such a reconstruction would not be implausible even for the Samian/East Greek statues.

By 540 the Samian fashion began to give way and the korai wore their veils in an increasingly Milesian style. This consisted of a long rectangular veil tucked into the waistband like the Samian examples, although it was softly draped around the shoulders, so that it curved...
around the face and neck before falling down the back. The Milesian veil gently undulates around the temples suggesting the hair underneath, in contrast to the tighter Samian style, and is generally surmounted by a ‘fillet’, which replaces the high Samian _polos_. This style is best shown by a votive relief of a young woman from Didyma (Fig. 24).

**Pharos-veils, 675–200**

Textual evidence shows that the garment known as the _pharos_, which is usually translated in English as ‘mantle’ or ‘robe’, could also be used as a veil, although by derivation, ‘_pharos_’ simply means ‘a piece of clothing’. It was easily made from a huge oblong of fabric and was therefore open to considerable variety in its wearing. There is a clear development in the use of this versatile length of fabric over the centuries. From the archaic period to the hellenistic age it tends to be worn by women as a cloak covering the shoulders and arms, and it is frequently pulled over the head as a veil. Given the absence, outside of Homer, of any satisfactory Greek word for an archaic-style mantle, we can use the word _pharos_ when discussing this style of garment in its seventh- and sixth-century context and, where appropriate, for later examples too. Consequently when it is drawn over the head or across the face, we can reasonably employ the term ‘pharos-veil’.

The _pharos_ is actually well attested in the literary sources being used as a veil. Indeed, the scholia on Euripides’ _Andromakhe_ line 831 observes that it shares the same purpose as the _krēdemon_. We find that Odysseus envelops himself within his _pharos_ as he silently grieves before the Phaiakian court, while, in the _Works And Days_ we are told how,

```
Up to Olympos from the wide-pathed earth,
Lovely apparitions, veiled in white _phare_,
Going to join the Immortals, abandoning humans,
Off go Aidōs and Nemesis.
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Similarly, in the classical period, Aithra, the mother of Theseus, veils herself with a _pharos_ as she sits in lamentation, an act typically lampooned by Aristophanes in _Thesmophoriazusae_, when Euripides’ in-law, in drag, puts his robe over his head and draws it across his face in order to play the role of Helen. ‘She’ sits weeping at the ‘tomb’ of Proteus, until Euripides, in the guise of Menelaos, asks,

```
Lady, why thus _pharos_-veiled do you keep
Seated besides the tomb?  
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And in a Sophoklean fragment (probably from _The Judgement_) an anonymous character declares,

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See, I am veiling myself in this _pharos_ as though it were my own.
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From the archaic period onwards, then, we find that a _pharos_ frequently doubles up as a veil, a typical use of an unstitched garment. The fashion for the _pharos_-veil
has a long history on the Greek mainland where it is habitually worn over the shoulders and head without ever being tucked into a belt or waistband – the korai of the Athenian Akropolis wear their phare in this style, and this is what separates them from the East Greek types. The Greek pharos-veil tends to hang in a long vertical line from head to foot, concealing the arms and torso, but occasionally swathing the body in its folds when a section of the veil is thrown over one shoulder with the probable purpose of securing it in place during movement. It is a well-known iconographic style and, what follows here is only the briefest outline.

The pharos-veil is first attested on an Early Protoattic tankard, where a line of mourning women, wearing white dresses, are covered by dark mantles that are pulled over their heads as they raise their arms in the traditional gesture of grief (Fig. 25). From the same period comes a krater depicting a mourning woman squatting on the ground and raising her arm in a display of ritual misery (Fig. 26); her body is enveloped in a mantle, similar to the Egyptian miláyeh (Fig. 9), which is pulled on to her head and allowed to hang over her forehead.

The famous relief pithos from Mykonos (Fig. 27 c.675) also affords an early depiction of a pharos-veil as worn by Helen. It seems that her dress is made from two layers, since over her elaborate peplos Helen wears another fringed garment woven with swirls and hatches. It could be argued that this is her pharos, which is also fringed and tasselled in what appears to be a fine fabric (perhaps linen), because the contours of Helen’s body are clearly visible beneath it. The outline of Helen’s hair is also seen under the veil.

Dated to around 650, Fig. 28 shows a bronze mitra, discovered at Olympia, depicting the killing of Klytemnestra by Orestes. The queen wears a woven peplos, a sash, and (perhaps) a cape, while above her head she holds a huge veil which is worked with animal motifs, fringed edges, and tassels. The quality, design, and sheer size of the veil recall the veil worn by Helen on the Mykonos pithos. Both veils are reminiscent of the types worn by Assyrian women (and later adopted by Neo-Hittite women) of the same period. The Olympia mitra and the Mykonos pithos reflect the desirability of Assyrian-inspired fashions during the mid-seventh century, as well as the durability and importance of Near Eastern textile trade routes. Unfortunately Assyrian women appear infrequently in the official royal artworks and rarely emerge on the palace reliefs, but one famous example depicts king Ašurbanipal (668–627) feasting at an al fresco banquet with his queen, Ašur-šurrat (Fig. 29). She wears an intricately-worked garment similar to that worn by Helen on the Mykonos pithos, consisting of a long fringed tunic and a single shawl wrapped around her lower and upper body. The end of the shawl is draped over her shoulder but probably this excess piece of fabric (like a modern-day sari) could be drawn over the queen’s head as a veil.

The early Greek pharos-veil tends to be a large rectangle of cloth that is skilfully woven with a series of geometric shapes or animal motifs and often bordered with a fringed and tasselled hem. If the find-spots of the Mykonos pithos and the
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Fig. 25. Line drawing of a mourning woman wearing a *pharos*-veil. Early Protoattic tankard (detail). Reading University 54.8.1 H.12.

Fig. 26. Squatting mourning woman enveloped within a *pharos*-veil. Line drawing from an Early Protoattic *krater* (detail). Mainz University 156 (*krater D*).

Fig. 27. Helen wrapped in an elaborately woven, fringed and tasselled *pharos*-veil. Relief pithos from Mykonos, c. 675. Nat. Mus. Athens, MYK 67.

Fig. 28. Klytaimnestra covers herself with an elaborately decorated *pharos*-veil. Bronze mitra from Olympia, c. 650. Arch. Mus. Olympia B 4900.

Fig. 29. Queen Ašuršurat of Assyria in an elaborately woven fringed mantle. Assyrian palace relief, c. 645. BM, London. WA 124920.


From the same period, and in a very

Olympia *mitra* reflect the fashion trends of those areas, then Assyrian veil-styles infiltrated deep into the Peloponnese, but this is in no sense certain. A fragment of a relief from Mycenae (Fig. 30, c. 630), however, suggests that the *pharos*-veil was worn in the northwest Peloponnese,\(^7_4\) while a stele from Sparta (Fig. 31) shows a heroine (Helen?) wearing the same type of garment.\(^7_5\)

Fig. 32 is one of the earliest examples of a vase painting showing the *pharos* being used as a veil. Dating to c. 675–650, this fragment of a Naxian amphora depicts Aphrodite wearing a dark mantle which is draped over her shoulders and upper arms and pulled onto the back of her head.\(^7_6\) From the same period, and in a very
rare depiction (Fig. 33), the goddess Athene has veiled her head with her *pharos* and throws the excess fabric over her shoulder.\(^\text{77}\) A well-known Korinthian *krater* of roughly 550 has the treacherous Eriphyle veiled in a coloured *pharos* (Fig. 34).\(^\text{78}\) Strikingly similar is the modern version of the *pharos*-veil worn in numerous contemporary veil societies (Fig. 35).
By the early classical period the draped cloth of the *pharos* had lost its elaborate decoration and is totally plain. At this time, the mantle itself is made from an enormous rectangle of fabric that looks too cumbersome to be worn merely around the shoulders and over the head. It almost demands that it should be draped across the torso and slung over one shoulder as well (see Fig. 2). This becomes a very popular style of wearing the *pharos* for both sexes throughout the classical period and well into the hellenistic age. It is worn thus by, for example, the Athenian Basilinna (Fig. 36) and it is found on a host of hellenistic terracottas. Examination shows that the *pharos*-veil is the most widely worn female outer garment on the terracotta statuettes that are generically termed ‘Tanagras’, and that this garment undergoes a fashionable development in its own right.

The characteristic dress of the Tanagran ‘standing lady’-type is an enveloping *pharos* that is frequently pulled over the head as a veil and sometimes surmounted by a wide brimmed straw hat called a *tholia*. Despite its intricate-looking drapery, the Tanagran *pharos*-veil is simply created from throwing part of the mantle across the opposite shoulder; it has none of the characteristics of *himation* drapery (see below). The *pharos* completely covers the torso and hides the arms and even the hands, although it is obviously voluminous enough to allow for movement beneath its folds because it is the various contortions of the concealed hands and arms beneath the mantle that create the variety of draping styles. It is common to see the *pharos* being clutched in a hidden hand and pulled taut to create tension in the cloth that makes for an interesting variation on a standard drape. Thus the hellenistic *pharos*-veil can be a relatively simple affair resembling the earlier classical fashion (Fig. 37), or a more intricately ‘constructed’ garment that is pulled and held about the body in a variety of contortions created out of the same simple draping style (Fig. 38). Both fashions are designed to shroud as much of the female body as possible.
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The himation-veil: c. 520 BC–200 AD

The himation-veil is first attested in the late sixth century. The major difference between the himation-veil and the pharos-veil stems from the fact that while the pharos was used to cover the head and shoulders and was sometimes slung around the body, the himation was deliberately draped around the lower torso and hung over a shoulder from whence it was frequently pulled over the head. Unlike the pharos, the himation had to cross the body on a diagonal and was usually draped under one arm and over the other.\(^85\) An early depiction of the himation-veil by the Amasis painter (Fig. 39) clearly lacks the elegance of later images of the same garment; it seems that the artist was not entirely familiar with placing the female frame beneath its heavy folds, because here the himation sits around the torso, on the head, and over the shoulder as a rather inelegant clump of cloth.\(^86\)

The himation-veil is found in iconography from around 520 and remains a very popular fashion throughout the fifth and fourth centuries, into the hellenistic period and beyond, and as it is a well known style, here a few representative examples will suffice. The himation-veil is frequently attested on Attic grave reliefs of the classical period and can be found worn by Ampharete (Fig. 40), Hegeso, Theano, Ameihoklea, and Demetria and Pamphilia (Fig. 41)\(^91\) to name but a few.\(^92\) The style is almost universal and so, on a gravestone from Boeotia, for example, we find that a woman named Diodora has veiled her head with the end of her himation (Fig. 42),\(^93\) and all of the main female figures on the mid-fourth-century ‘Sarcophagus of the Mourning Women’ from Sidon are himation-veiled.\(^94\)

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*Fig. 39.* Line drawing of a woman wearing an early example of the female himation-veil. Olpe by the Amasis Painter (detail), c. 520. Met. Mus. N.Y. 59.11.17.

*Fig. 40.* Drawing of Ampharete wearing a himation-veil. Attic grave stela, c. 410. Ker. Mus., Athens.

*Fig. 41.* Drawing of the grave stela of the sisters Demetria and Pamphile, both of whom hold a section of their himation-veils in their hands as if drawing them across their faces. Attic grave stela, c. 320. Ker. Mus., Athens.
Large-scale sculptures aid our understanding of how the *himation*-veil was created, since they offer a three-dimensional image. A statue of Demeter from Knidos (c. 340, Fig. 43), for example, shows the seated goddess with her head veiled by her *himation*, although two ringlets are allowed to spill out around her neck.\(^95\) Vase-paintings also offer a view of the *himation*-veil, and examples of women wearing this widespread fashion could easily run into the hundreds. A fine example of the genre is the famous red-figure *skyphos* from Chiusi showing the downcast Penelope seated at her loom wearing a delicate linen chiton over which is draped a large *himation* which falls in concentrated swathes and is drawn over her head as a veil (Fig. 44);\(^96\) similarly, in an elegant depiction, Aphrodite manages to wear her *himation*-veil with the grace one would expect of a goddess (Fig. 45).\(^97\)
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The *himation*-veil is rarely found on the hellenistic Tanagra figurines, although it is to be seen worn by earlier Athenian terracotta models. But these latter types represent Demeter and Aphrodite and do not conform to the later Tanagran tradition of showing mortal women. When the *himation* is found in hellenistic examples, it tends to be sported by children, young girls, and seated women who are supposedly indoors. Seemingly, the more complete form of veiling afforded by the *pharos*-veil was considered more desirable for outdoor wear.

While scholars are very familiar with images of the *pharos* and *himation*-veils, few have consciously traced their developments. Yet these styles are so widespread in the iconographic sources that they cannot be missed. Most art historians at least recognize that both the *pharos* and *himation* can be used to cover the head (even if the ‘veiling’ terminology is not settled). But there are other veil-styles that appear less frequently in the sources and have consequently tended to go unnoticed. It is interesting to observe that by the early classical period, in Athens and elsewhere, women began to be more covered up. Not only was the concealing arrangement of the *himation* more carefully arranged, but short head-veils were added to the ensemble. By the late fourth century, there was a veil specifically designed to cover the female face.

The return of the shoulder-length veil (*shaal*): 520–420.

A return of the shoulder-length veil occurred around 520 and this remained the most popular form of veil until c. 420. It is shown being worn by a variety of women from pipe-girls to goddesses and is a fashion particularly prominent in the works of the artists Makron and Douris. Several types of *shaal*-veil can be identified within this hundred-year period, beginning around 520 with a depiction of a pipe-girl who puffs away at her *aulos* while she wears a transparent chiton that clearly reveals the lines of her slender body beneath (*Fig. 46*). Her head is covered by a delicate *shaal*-veil (only her fringe at the hairline is visible) that must have been made from a large rectangle or square of fine linen. It is placed on the crown of the head to fall in a series of elegant concertina pleats and sweeping folds. The same type of veil is worn by a seated woman holding a mirror on a cup found in the Athenian Agora (*Fig. 47*). Possibly a hetaira (by the accompanying accoutrements, including a bed), this woman wears a transparent chiton, a *himation*, and a *shaal*-veil that falls in multiple soft folds around her neck and shoulders. She is accompanied by an aged dwarf, who, it has been suggested, evokes the figure of Eros when paralleled by his mistress’ role as Aphrodite. Indeed, a *shaal*-veiled goddess of desire is found accompanied by diminutive Erotes on an early-fifth-century cup by Makron (*Fig. 48*). The *shaal*-veil is worn by another *femme fatale*, the faithless Helen, as she flees from her vengeful husband on an amphora by the Berlin Painter (*Fig. 49*), but the *shaal*-veil is not confined to the realm of the *demimonde*; it is worn by respectable goddesses such as Hera and Amphitrite who drape it over a headcloth or some other more elaborate head-dress, and it is also found worn by brides. A variation
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on the pleated linen *shaal*-veil is worn by Atalanta on a white ground *lékythos* by Douris (Fig. 50); it appears that the veil is worn across the crown of the head and hangs down to cover the ears without concealing the back of the head or neck. It thus allows the ornamental headband to be displayed to full advantage.  

Sculptural representation, in the form of a grave relief commemorating Timarista, shows that the *shaal*-veil, falling in soft (but not stylized) folds, conforms to the technique of rendering cloth with the ‘wet-look’ effect familiar from other contemporary reliefs (Fig. 51), and it is possible that here Timarista wears her veil over a close-fitting head-scarf.  

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Fig. 46. Line drawing of an *aulos*-player wearing a transparent robe and a pleated *shaal*-veil. Kalyx-*krater* fragment by the Kleophrades Painter, c. 520. Nat. Mus. Copenhagen 13363.

Fig. 47. Line drawing of a hetaira (?) wearing a draped *shaal*-veil. She is accompanied by an aged dwarf. Tondo of fragmentary cup by Makron, c. 480. Private collection, Germany. After Dasen 1993.

Fig. 48. Drawing showing Aphrodite wearing a *himation*, a pleated chiton and a pleated *shaal*-veil. Detail from a *kylix* by Douris, c. 480. Staat. Mus., Berlin 2291.

Fig. 49. Line drawing of Helen wearing a pleated *shaal*-veil. Attic amphora (detail), c. 470. Kunsthist. Mus., Vienna IV 74.1.

Fig. 50. Line drawing of Atalanta wearing a pleated *shaal*-veil folded to create two distinctive points and worn in conjunction with a headband. Detail of a *lékythos* by Douris, c. 480. Cleveland Mus. Art 66. 114.

Fig. 51. Drawing of the gravestone of Timarista, showing her wearing a softly draped *shaal*-veil. Detail of a marble stela from Kameiros (Rhodes), c. 400. Arch. Mus. Rhodes 13638.
An alternative type of *shaal*-veil is found on a *lekythos* representing a seated woman wearing a concealing *himation*. Her head is covered by a short, stiff veil depicted without pleats but with a patterned border and resembling, for all intents and purposes, a modern tea-towel (Fig. 52), although the fabric may be folded in half, which would help explain its inflexibility. A similar, but more pliant, *shaal*-veil is worn by the so-called ‘Hestia Giustiniani’ (Fig. 53, c. 470) where the opaque fabric is clearly folded double, but hangs in soft undulations down past the shoulders so that it covers everything from the head down to the elbows.

A veil of the same shape is worn by a woman on a perfume bottle of c. 450 (Fig. 54). This time the veil is completely transparent so that it reveals the hairstyle and fillet underneath, although it is covered by delicate woven dots and a fine fringed hem that complement the beauty of the woman’s patterned *himation*. Similar
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Veils, not as transparent but certainly decorated, are frequently shown as worn by brides whose status as important objects of the male gaze throughout the wedding proceedings would without doubt entitle them to wear a costly garment; as the ultimate bride and wife, the goddess Hera is also associated with the star-spangled shaal-veil. A series of black-figure Kabeirian-style Nereids ride on the backs of various sea-creatures on a stamnos-pyxis from Boeotia (Fig. 55, c. 430–420): their elaborate coiled and twisted hairstyles are surmounted by garlands and are covered with very fine-fringed and fairly long shaal-veils which float behind them in the sea breeze. The veils themselves are decorated with regularly spaced polka-dots and woven edges.

A more confusing type of shaal-veil appears to be worn in conjunction with a separate long veil on a Roman copy of a hellenistic sculpture (a Muse of the Farnese Melpomene type from the via Aventina in Rome; Fig. 56). This figure wears what seems to be a short shaal-veil pleated to form a rounded fan shape draped over a top-knot of hair which is partly covered by a long, narrow veil that hangs asymmetrically down past her left hip but stops abruptly on her right shoulder. This long veil is a separate garment from the ‘himation’ that is draped around her legs. As far as I am aware, this depiction of a short ‘fan-veil’ is unique in Greco-Roman art.

The kolpos-veil: 450–400

A veil style that has gone almost entirely unnoticed is one that we may term the kolpos-veil, since it derives from the kolpos or ‘overhang’ of the female peplos. From the mid-fifth century the fashion was to draw the back of the kolpos up over the head as a veil. This style could be formed from both the open-sided peplos, as displayed on an example from the late-fourth-century stele of Polyxena (Fig. 57), and from the closed peplos, one which is sewn up on both sides. The latter version is demonstrated in a front and back view of a bronze statuette of a young woman in the Louvre (Fig. 58). Leon Heuzey provided a series of good clear reconstructions of these rare depictions of the kolpos-veil by using modèles vivants to support his arguments (Figs. 59, 60 and 61). However, his study missed the fact that the kolpos-veil could also be used to conceal the lower-face, as is the case with the woman depicted on a mid-fifth-century lekythos (Fig. 62). In this bizarre scene, a woman masks her lower-face with her kolpos-veil while her eyes meet the gaze of a seated monkey.
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Figs. 58a and b. Figurine of a woman wearing a peplos which she transforms into a veil by pulling the kolpos over her head. Bronze statuette, c. 460–450. Louvre, Paris. BR 297. Photo RMN: C. Larrieu.

Figs. 59, 60, 61. Reconstructions of the draping of the kolpos-veil. After Heuzey 1922.

Fig. 62. Line drawing of a woman veiling her head and face with her kolpos whilst staring at a seated monkey. Amphora (‘Nolan Amphora’) by the Phiale Painter (?), c. 450. BM London E 307.
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Face-veils

While it was possible to veil the face with all of the veil-types examined above, \(^{122}\) from the mid-fifth century onward (and increasingly so by the end of the fourth century), one finds examples of specific face veils. Images of women with their faces veiled with wraparound or garment veils become far more common towards the end of the classical period (Figs. 63 and 64). A Tanagran figurine from Boeotia, dating to the early years of the third century and typical of its type (Fig. 65), \(^{123}\) can be compared with an earlier fifth-century Athenian krater which depicts three similarly-veiled women (Fig. 66). \(^{124}\) But in addition to these examples of garment-veil used to cover the face, there are two further types of Greek veils that specifically designed to cover the face, although we can only give a definite Greek name to one of them: tegidion.

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**Fig. 63.** Terracotta vase in the shape of a female head. The head and mouth is swathed in a pharos-veil. After Robinson 1938.

**Fig. 64.** Terracotta vase in the shape of a female head. The lower face and the head are veiled. After Robinson 1938.

**Fig. 65.** Woman with veiled lower face. Terracotta statuette, from Tanagra (?), late fourth century. Gemeentemuseum, The Hague OC(ant) 6–39.
The *tegidion*

Having the meaning ‘little roof’ (a diminutive of *tegos*),\(^1\) the word *tegidion* was vaguely defined by the lexicographer Hesychius as ‘a sort of adornment for women.’\(^2\) But what style of dress (or adornment) could possibly be said to resemble a ‘little roof’? The answer, I think, is found in a popular female head-dress worn in most of the Greek world between the fourth and first centuries (it disappears in the Roman period). This is actually a face-veil composed by cutting eyeholes into a single rectangular cloth. It is sometimes edged with a delicate fringe, is bound around the head by a fillet and is often fastened over the forehead with (what appears to be) a brooch. Unfortunately it is rarely shown in the position for which it was designed, that is, hanging down over the face like a style of Islamic veil known as the *niqab* (Fig. 13),\(^3\) although a few examples are known (Fig. 67).\(^4\)

The word *tegidion* appears in an inscription dated to the third century listing dedications of clothing in the sanctuary of Demeter at Tanagra.\(^5\) It is perhaps no coincidence that a little-known travel-writer of the same date called Heraclides Criticus comments on the women of Thebes (only a stone’s throw away from Tanagra) as being the most beautiful in Greece. He notes that,

> The covering of their clothes (*himatia*) on their head is such that the whole face seems to be covered by a mask, with only the eyes showing through; the other parts of their face are all covered by the garments.\(^6\)
This is almost certainly another reference to the ‘little roof’, and it is easy to see why
the veil would be so named: the cloth is folded off the face and back onto the head to
form a flat surface with overhanging eaves resembling a little gable.¹³¹ A watercolour
of a small female head found at Pergamon made by the antiquarian Thomas Burgon
in 1830, and now on display in the Ashmolean Museum, perhaps shows most clearly
the construction of the tegidion, as the eyeholes are clear above the forehead and the
back of the face veil is tucked neatly into the headband and head-ties (Fig. 68).¹³² The
tegidion is sometimes found covered by the himation or pharos-veils, and is folded
back to reveal the gable-like shape. In daily life it was surely worn down over the face
in conjunction with a himation or pharos-veil that covered the head, the hair, and
enveloped the body. Figs. 69 and 70 provide a reconstruction of the tegidion both as
worn on the back of the head and as pulled down over the face like a niqab.
There are numerous examples of this style of veil which have been found around the Greek world from Tanagra to Macedonia, and from Troy to Alexandria. But as the majority of statuettes depict women with their ‘little-roof’-veils thrown back off their faces and over their heads, their vital importance as sources for the study of Greek veiling have tended to go unnoticed by scholars.\(^{133}\)

The *tegidion* is also located in textual evidence: a letter from the archive of Zenon in Philadelphia, Egypt, dating to 256, implies that the *tegidion* was commonly used in Egypt. Indeed, it is worn on several Egyptian statuettes found in Alexandria.\(^{134}\) Given the close relations between Boeotian Thebes and Alexandria, it is significant that the fashion for the face-veil was common to both cities.\(^{135}\) It may well have found its way to Alexandria after the Macedonian destruction of Thebes and Alexander the Great’s subsequent movement down the coastline of Asia Minor and into Egypt. The *tegidion* is found on a rather grotesque wreathed Graeco-Egyptian head, where it is worn down over the face, although its eyeholes appear to be larger than those on the usual Tanagran models (Fig. 71).

The most famous example of the *tegidion* is worn by a beautiful bronze dancer from Alexandria. (Fig. 72).\(^{136}\) Her body and head are wrapped in very fine, semi-transparent linen and she draws the end of her fringed *pharos*-veil over her nose and mouth.\(^{137}\) The upper edge of the inner-veil, the *tegidion*, is clearly visible beneath the waves of hair, and creases in the fabric are discernible, especially around the eyes. The eyeholes are large and almond shaped and reveal the Egyptian-style make-up applied around the eyes and eyelids (Fig. 73).\(^{138}\) The effect is of a little mask, and, indeed, the word *prosōpidion* (‘little mask’ or ‘face-cover’), found on a clothing-dedication from third-century Miletus, could well be an alternative name for the *tegidion*.\(^{139}\) Moreover, according to Antipater of Sidon, a young woman named Herakleia is specifically said to have worn a *prokalumma prosōpou*, literally ‘a veil for the face’, a garment which she dedicates to Aphrodite immediately prior to her wedding.\(^{140}\) The *prosōpidion* is, of course, a derivative of the word *prosōpon*, ‘face’. Because the veil covers the face like a mask, becoming in effect another (featureless) face, it seems to have borrowed its name. In fact, Plato the Comic tells that an *othonion prosōpon*, a veiled face (or ‘linen-covered face’), was another name for a theatre mask,\(^{141}\) presumably the type which Thespis introduced onto the Athenian stage, a style which was then refined by Choerilus and Aiskhylos who appear to have drawn features onto the simple plain cloth faces.\(^{142}\)
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The *maghmuq* veil
A second, much rarer, type of face veil has been identified on an Alexandrian statuette dating to the early second century (*Fig. 74*). Here the woman wears a delicately fringed face veil *without* eyeholes – in other words, a face-panel that hangs from her forehead down to her chest. Presumably the fabric (probably linen but possibly silk) was so sheer that eyeholes were unnecessary and, in this respect, it resembles a Yemeni silk face-veil known variously as the *maghmuq* or the *sheshaf*, which is sufficiently transparent for the wearer to remain capable of seeing the world around her (*Fig. 12*).
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The *lithma*-style veil
A final type of veil, a variation on the *pharos* -veil style, can be called the *lithma*-veil, because it relates closely to a fashion worn widely throughout the modern Arab world whereby a single length of cloth is wrapped around the lower face while the upper face is either left uncovered or hidden by a second garment, such as a mantle or another kind of outerwrap (Fig. 75). Thus a statuette from Myrina (Fig. 76, c. 250) shows a woman wearing a *pharos*-veil that has been pulled around the lower face to mask her mouth and chin and is secured on the right side by being tucked into the head band of the *tegidion* with which it is worn in conjunction. Complete concealment for the woman beneath these layers is guaranteed.

![Tuareg man wearing a *lithma*](image1)

*Fig. 75. Tuareg man wearing a *lithma*. After Vogelsang-Eastwood 1996a.*

![Woman well-veiled in a *pharos*, drawn across the mouth like a *lithma*, and a *tegidion* thrown off the face. Terracotta statuette from Myrina, c. 250–230. Louvre, Paris 1163, 0.09. Photo RMN: Chuzeville.](image2)

*Fig. 76. Woman well-veiled in a *pharos*, drawn across the mouth like a *lithma*, and a *tegidion* thrown off the face. Terracotta statuette from Myrina, c. 250–230. Louvre, Paris 1163, 0.09. Photo RMN: Chuzeville.*

**Conclusion**
The veil and the concept of veiling were a prevalent reality for the women of Greece. The veil underwent a series of fashionable changes that can be plotted with comparative ease and given a chronology of its own. Various forms of veil, from mantles that enclosed the whole body to masks that additionally covered the face, were employed for the purpose of disguising the female form.

It is clear from the literary sources that the veil was already an established item of female dress in the Homeric world (and it may have had an older pedigree). From artistic evidence of the seventh century it appears that the styles of veil worn by the
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women of Greece were borrowed from, or analogous with, those worn in the Near East. Two styles of veil are found in these early sources: the pharos-veil (in a highly-decorated Assyrian style at first, but later becoming plainer and less elaborate) and the short shaal-veil. The latter is not attested in Near Eastern art and could well be a wholly Greek fashion, although the coloured diagonal patterned bands worn by the Isthmian korai might hint at the Lydian styles alluded to by Sappho.

The korai of Samos and Miletus wear decidedly Anatolian-types of veil, while women on the mainland use phare as the chief way of covering their heads, bodies, and faces until the late sixth century. It was at this point that rival styles came into fashion, with the female adaptation of the male himation as a veil and with the reintroduction, for a short time, of the shaal-veil (although now found in a wider variety of styles). The himation-veil and the pharos-veil remain in vogue well into the Roman period but by the mid-fifth century the iconography suggests that women were beginning to use these garments to cover more and more of their bodies, and by the close of the fourth century the trend comes to a climax with the introduction of the tegidion and the maghmuq-style veils, both of which were specifically created to cover the face.

As the veil underwent a series of transformations, over a relatively long period, it proceeded to cover up more and more of the female body and face until these were completely hidden beneath layers of cloth. The question is, why? Before we can begin our investigation of the social meaning of the Greek veil there still remains another somewhat complex issue to discuss, for the iconography may give more evidence for women’s use of the veil than first meets the eye.

Notes
1 The izar is made from two pieces of cloth, around five metres long, which are stitched together. Part of the cloth is folded over and about 40 cm of it is draped over the right shoulder. The excess is pulled around the back and about 50 cm is brought back over the chest and fastened on the left shoulder. The folded cloth is then brought across the chest and pinned to the right shoulder so that it creates a type of bib. The cloth is draped over the head and brought forward to conceal the arms and the front of the torso. For details see Rackow 1958. The modern huik, made from a semicircle of light-weight cloth, is more user-friendly. It reaches down to the ankles and is usually worn with a small face-burqa. See Vogelsang-Eastwood 1996a, 69 and Jereb 1995, 57.
2 The sari is without doubt the most elegant of wrap-around garments. It has a long history and displays a variety of regional styles in draping, although all styles begin with the basic act of tucking the sari into a waistband or petticoat of some kind and pleating and folding it into shape. The end of the Gujarati-sari hangs loose over the right shoulder so that the decorated edge is displayed at the front of the torso, although the Pradesh-sari goes over the head with the decorated end hanging at the front. With all the variety of styles the head and face can be veiled by passing a section of the sari over the head; it is often held across the face with the hand or clamped in the teeth. For a good investigation into the regional styles of the sari and the multiple ways of draping the cloth see Lynton 1995.
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Miláyeh is simply an Arabic word for ‘cloth’, although it is usually qualified by the word liff, which refers to the manner in which it is draped (i.e., ‘draped cloth’). The miláyeh liff is a voluminous dark, shiny cloth which is draped sari-like over a woman’s indoor clothes. It has a long history in Egypt, which stretches back to the middle ages, although today its popularity is dwindling in favour of the hijab. It is often associated with old women and the very conservative, but nonetheless, it can still have an erotic appeal. For details see Vogelsang-Eastwood 1996a, 69–72 and Rugh 1986, 108–9.

A kind of coat with false sleeves. For details see Vogelsang-Eastwood 1996a. 76–7. It can be compared to the Arabian abaya.

This is made from a large semicircle of cloth and is hung from the head without being draped around the body. A nineteenth-century description of the chadri (or chaadaree) states that, ‘[women] in town are always wrapped in a large white sheet which covers them to their feet and completely hides the figure. They are able to see by means of a network in the hood which covers the head’ (cited in Scarce 1975, 10). Scare 1975, 10, 12 also provides several clear patterns for the construction of the garment-veil. An alternative name for this type of garment-veil (although strictly speaking, it is inaccurately used) is burqaa; Western media reports routinely employ this latter term. On the chadri see further Daly 2000.

Use of the chador originated in Iran from a very early period and, like the chadri, it was created from a semicircular cloth hung from the head. The origin of the word is Persian and simply means a cloth or sheet. The term chador can be qualified with ‘chadari-shab’, meaning ‘night-cloth’, which can refer to bedclothes, sheets, or an all-enveloping veil. The Afghan chadri is clearly derived from the same word. See Scarce 1975, 13, and 12 for a pattern. Today, most Iranian women wear a black version of the chador which completely covers the body but leaves the face exposed, but it can be supplemented with a ‘maghneh’, a kind of shaped hood, which is used to ensure that the neck and hair region is completely veiled. In addition, women also use an indoor or ‘prayer’ chador at home. This is made of a lightweight, often light coloured (even floral) fabric, and can be something of a fashion item in its own right, as the British journalist Alison Doubleday observed: ‘I had thought that I was buying something drab and shapeless, but [some Afghan friends] made me see that the prayer veil was a highly coveted item of fashion.’ See, Doubleday 1988, 64. On the chador see further, Vogelsang-Eastwood 1996a, 72–5.

On the origins of Islamic face-veiling see Vogelsang-Eastwood 1996a, 26 ff; Chatty 1997, 128–9; al Munajjed 1997, 52–3. Islamic oral traditions indicate that Mohammed asked his wives to veil their faces in order to set them apart and highlight their special status and to create a social distance between them and the throngs of followers who visited his house. In emulation of Muhammed’s wives, women of the elite class began face veiling too, and within 150 years of the prophet’s death the system of veiling and the seclusion of women of the upper class became fully accepted. Women in the early Islamic period seemed to have covered their heads and faces with a variety of veil-types, but the most important outerwrap was the djilbaab, a garment that completely enveloped the figure leaving only one eye exposed. See Stillman 1986, 732–50. There are also references to a veil called a mandil being used in this period, but it is unclear what this was. There is a possibility that it was a small headcloth or kerchief, although the word might have its origin in the Latin mantellum (cloak) which links it to the Spanish mantilla. See Rosenthal 1971, 63–100.

The use of a single piece of cloth to envelop the head and veil the face is found in many countries. They come in a variety of fabrics, textures, colours, and patterns, but generally a light semitransparent cloth is preferred.
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9 See below.
10 A type of face veil created out of a turban and worn by urban women in Syria. See Kalter 1992, figs. 546–9.
11 This is created from two pieces of cloth, as was noted by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, the wife of the British Ambassador to Istanbul, in 1717: ‘No woman of what rank so ever [is] permitted to go in the street without two muslins, one that covers her face all but her eyes and another that hides the whole dress of her head and hangs half way down her back.’ See, Montagu 1925, I.7. In fact there were two ways of draping the yaşmak; the first, known as the ‘kalpi yaşmak’ or ‘closed yaşmak’, was made of a length of cloth folded in half lengthways which was placed just over the nose and under the eyes and allowed to hang down the lower face. The fabric was tied behind the head. The upper piece of cloth was folded in half and wrapped around the forehead just above the eyebrows, so that only the eyes and eyebrows were visible. The açık yaşmak, or ‘open yaşmak’ was virtually identical to the closed variety, except that the cloths were not folded in half and therefore the yaşmak took on the diaphanous quality much loved by male authors of the nineteenth century. For the development of the yaşmak and its subsequent appearance in European literature see, Scarce 1987, 79 ff. The yaşmak was adapted to suit the more Westernized climate Turkey was striving to adopt throughout the early 1900s, see Vogelsang-Eastwood 1996b, 56–7. The yaşmak was finally prohibited in 1923 when Turkey became a secular republic. The issue of the abolition of the yaşmak and the male fez is well treated by Göle 1996, 60–130 and by Norton 1997, 155–7, 162–4.
12 There are two variations on the burqaa (also spelt burqu, burko): the first is composed of a single piece of material that covers the nose and mouth and is tied with a cord above the ears and at the back of the head. The second is made from two pieces of cloth; the first makes a headband (‘isaba), while the second covers the lower face. There is usually a link between the two pieces at the sides and in the middle (over the bridge of the nose). The earliest surviving burqaa, made from two pieces of white stitched linen, comes from Egypt and dates to c. AD 1250–1350 and can be balanced by a series of contemporary illustrations. See Vogelsang-Eastwood 1983. From the nineteenth century to the present day women have taken up the custom of sewing metal disks or coins onto their burqaa, while metal tubes frequently adorn the fabric join of the lower and upper veils at the bridge of the nose. While the Egyptian and Saudi burqaa retain their plain simplicity, those worn by Palestinian women tend to be highly decorated and are regarded as facial decorations rather than modesty garments. See Weir 1989, 188–91. See further, Scarce 1975 and Chatty 1997.
13 A black horsehair face-veil, especially popular with women in and around Istanbul. See Scarce 1975, 13; Vogelsang-Eastwood 1996a, 54.
14 Like the peche, a black horsehair face veil worn in Persia, from at least the thirteenth century, in combination with the chador. A Spanish account of the early fifteenth century recalls that, ‘these women [of Persia] go about all covered with a white sheet, with a net of black horse hair before their eyes’. While towards the end of the same century a Venetian report reads, ‘they cover their faces with nets woven from horsehair, so thick that they can easily see others, but cannot be seen by them’. Both accounts cited by Vogelsang-Eastwood 1996a, 53. For the dating of the picheh and for further discussion see Scarce 1975, 6.
15 A beaded face-veil. Numerous beads and silver ornaments are hung on strings from a headband. See Vogelsang-Eastwood 1996a, 54.
16 A kind of mask made from stiffened cotton or shiny silk often reinforced down the middle with a wooden stick. It is commonly worn by women in Oman and the United Arab


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Emirates. Patricia Holton, who visited the region in the 1980s, described this type of veil, being worn by the women of Dubai, as a ‘stiff, black burnished gold canvas veil…[a] black harlequin mask’. See Holton 1991, 13, 111. Further discussion can be found in Wikan 1982, 107–8.

17 In the archaic period in particular, Athenian, Korinthian, and Spartan evidence suggests that women uniformly wore the pharos-veil. This trend is harder to substantiate in later periods due to the increasing paucity of Spartan and (to a lesser extent) Korinthian iconographic evidence.

18 Strabo Geog. 3.4.17, transl. Jones (Loeb) with amendments. It appears that some kind of wire support holds up the veil. Tozer 1893 believed that it refers to a kind of ‘calash’ hood (or sun bonnet), as was worn by fashionable women in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries AD. Photographs of Armenian women in the late nineteenth century reveal that wired head-dresses supporting an overhanging veil were still to be found. I would suggest that Strabo has this kind of construction in mind more than any kind of bonnet. See Vogelsang-Eastwood, 1996b, 15. The tympanion to which Strabo refers suggests the shape of a kettle drum and could mean either a cylindrical head-dress which as it rises to its top gradually spreads out, or, more likely, a kind of turban which fits tightly over the head and ears but spreads out over the top of the head, similar in shape to the turbans worn by women in west Africa. A vertical rod inserted into a knot of hair and covered by a veil may well be the prototype for the classic Spanish mantilla and comb.

19 This could be an example of the tympanion head-dress.

20 See Oakley and Sinos 1993, 40 and figs. 124–7.

21 See below, Chapter 4.

22 Since it appears that the Minoan and Mycenaean worlds were influenced by Egyptian New Kingdom styles of dress and coiffure, the lack of the veil is not surprising. The veil is never attested in Pharaonic Egyptian monuments, but instead it is the elaborately coiffured wig that is the focus of Egyptian artistic and erotic attention. For Egyptian wigs see Dayagi-Mendels 1993, 60–6, and Robins 1993, 183–5.

23 A good discussion of Minoan and Mycenaean hairstyles can be found in Nilsson 1968, 127–30.

24 For a discussion of the fresco see Marinatos 1984, 64–8 and 1987, 123–32.

25 See Il. 8.1, 19.1, etc. Hes. Th. 273, 358. However, it should be borne in mind that Minoan and Mycenaean art is dominated by scenes of cult and ritual; ‘daily life’ scenes, even of the court, are probably almost entirely absent. For a general study see Higgins 1981. The representations of women that we see in these scenes are all connected with a ritual function and may depict specific forms of cultic costume that are far removed from daily dress. While Egyptian influence on the palace civilizations is undeniable, the presence of Near Eastern forms of fashion in dress and court protocol should not be ignored. The veil was a vital part of female wardrobe in the Near East, although Near Eastern goddesses and priestesses are rarely depicted veiled. Could this be the case with the women of the palace civilizations? According to Marinatos, the Minoans treated their women along the lines established in the Near East and the institution of the harem, a form of female seclusion often symbolically linked to the veil, was known in both Near Eastern cities and, for example, at Knossos. See Marinatos 1989, 38–41. On the symbolism of harem and veil see Ahmed 1982.

26 I follow Boardman’s dating system. See Boardman 1998, 271.

27 This has been particularly well discussed by van Wees 1998, 10–53. For a general discussion of iconographic motifs in Geometric art see Rombos 1988.
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28 van Wees 1998b, 20–1 and fig 1.1.
29 See Ahlberg 1971, vol II, fig. 53, with comments.
30 Lang 1910, 84–6. In his discussion of the construction of the hooded cowl, Lang is a product of his time, insisting that women’s garments in the Greek Dark Age were composed of tightly fitting bodices and separate tailored skirts. Similar theories were still in use in the 1940s: Houston 1947, 9 ff., argued that Minoan dress was created from tailored bodices and separate skirts supported by a crinoline frame. Her theories are still propounded in non-specialist fashion histories. See, for example, Batterbury and Batterbury 1977, 31–2.

31 Egyptian shaal veils are generally made from fringed cotton, rayon or even velvet; they measure around one and two metres square and are normally folded diagonally and then draped over the head and shoulders. In Upper Egypt they tend to be square and folded in half before being placed on the head. Such a headscarf is a well known element of Islamic hijab, but the main difference with the Egyptian shaal is that it is not tied tightly around the face nor secured so as to completely conceal the hair. For a full investigation into the many forms of simple head veil or headscarves available see Vogelsang-Eastwood 1996a, 33–40.

32 See Sturgeon 1987, 44; Ridgeway 1993, 126–8. A similar style is found on a number of terracotta heads from Rhodes. See Pinney and Ridgeway 1979, 235, no. 114, fig. A; Jacopi 1931–9, pl. IV. See most recently Boardman 2000, 95 ff.
33 Sappho fr. 98. If Sappho’s floruit was c. 612–608 then her mother could have been referring to a head-dress worn in the mid-seventh century.
34 Boardman 1998, 145. The same type of veil is found on a terracotta head from Sparta, dated to c. 680–70. The glazed decoration is carried out with a great deal of attention to detail. The veil is divided into bands, but is thin enough to suggest the waves of the hair beneath. The patterned bands are composed of wave patterns and floral rosettes, and a vertical striped border surrounds the forehead. Beneath the veil, carefully arranged curls are visible at the hairline. See Higgins 1967, 51–2.
36 Alkman 1.67–8.
38 These figures are difficult to interpret and come in a wide variety of forms; they can be monumental or minuscule, they can be shown standing still or with one leg advanced, they may hold their arms by their sides or extend an offering, hold a fruit or an animal, or lightly clutch their skirts. They can be veiled or shown with bare heads and long hair, and both styles may or may not be surmounted by a polos crown, a diadem, or a fillet. The best studies of the korai are those of Richter 1968; Ridgeway 1993, 123–79; Boardman 1993, 63–150. The diversity of styles is reflected in the fact that academic debate cannot agree either as to what these statues were or, indeed, who or what they represent. Debate about dress-styles: Harrison 1991; Shaefker 1975; Ridgeway 1984; Boardman 1993, 66 ff. Ridgeway 1993, 129–34; Richter 1968, 6–10. Interpretations: korai as offerings and dedications, see Boardman 1993, 24 ff.; Osborne 1998, 84; Sourvinou-Inwood 1995, 241–52; Richter 1968, 3–4; Spivey 1997, 159. Korai as images of goddesses see Ridgeway 1990, 583–612 and 1993, 147 ff.
39 Historically and linguistically East Greece was split into three main regions: Aeolis in the North, Ionia in the central area, and a Dorian group in the South. Artistically, however, it is better to treat the region as a whole because the regional differences detected in script and language are not so readily identifiable in the iconography. Investigation into the societies that made up East Greece is still difficult, however, some forty years after Cook 1962, 15 made
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the remark that, ‘the history of the eastern Greeks still remains to be written’. Nonetheless, archaeological evidence is beginning to open up the investigation into the cultural interplay between the East Greeks and their Oriental neighbours, particularly in the context of luxury trade and the complex field of religion. See, for example, Villing 1998. The western coast of Anatolia has been particularly well excavated, recorded and published and major sites like Smyrna, Miletos, and Ephesus have yielded a rich treasure of information on many aspects of East Greek life. There has also been frantic archaeological exploration of many of the eastern Aegean islands, particularly Samos, with its rich deposit of treasures located in the ancient temple of Hera. See in particular, Frayer-Schauenburg 1974; Brize 1997; Furtwängler 1974. Major archaeological work has also been undertaken on Chios and other Ionian islands. See Boardman 1967. For the purpose of this investigation into the East Greek veil, however, the most important sites are the Samian Heraion, the Ephesian Artemision, and the temple of Apollo at Miletus. For the Ephesian material see especially Hogarth 1908; Bammer 1988 and Fleischer 1973. For Didyma see Tuchelt 1970.

40 See Bammer 1984, 252 and figs. 86, 115, 139; Hogarth 1908, 115 and pl. 24.3, 10, 5 a and b.


42 Özgen 1982, 137–8: ‘The veil is represented as closely fitting over the forehead revealing only the ears and draped over the back almost to the ankles.’ Richter 1968, 53, no. 78 wrongly interprets it as a solid mass of hair.

43 Such an outfit is worn by a Hittite royal nurse (c. late eighth century) and the women of a family from Maraş (early seventh century). See Akugal 1962, pl. 138; Vogelsang-Eastwood 1996a, 22; Özgen 1982, 39–41. For the modern tradition, found especially in Morocco, Egypt, and Turkey, of tying a kerchief around the head and covering it with a larger veil, see Vogelsang-Eastwood 1996a, 33–8. See further Boucher 1987, 61. The veil of the Maraş women becomes progressively shorter and covers less of the figure, although they continue to wear the veil over a head-cloth or even a cap, while the Ephesian examples retain their length. See Akugal 1962, pl. 139.

44 For the distribution of the korai see Boardman, 1993, 68 ff.; Ridgeway 1993, 128–9 says of the development of the korai type: ‘the distribution chart suggests a very strong tradition for the korai in Asia Minor and Samos, with some important workshops located also in other islands: Naxos, Paros, and perhaps Chios. From these centres the type spread to Greece proper, where Attica was particularly receptive but not the other areas despite an obvious production of female figures in the minor arts . . . Chronologically and iconographically, East Greece is shown to be in the lead, with considerable lag, or lack of evidence, elsewhere.’

45 Although it is doubtful that it represents the goddess.


47 Thus a torso (c. 530) has a narrow veil folded over itself so that it falls down the back in two layers with the upper edge descending in a diagonal line from the left upper arm to the right elbow while the rounded lappets of the veil are visible on the shoulders at the front. See Özgen 1982, 175–7; Richter 1968, 90 no. 153, figs. 491–4. The double-folded veil with the fold high across the back can also be found in Freyer-Schauenburg 1974 no. 22. It can be compared with a korē from Theangela, the only statue of its kind coming from Caria (c. 525), which has a similar diagonal over-folded veil and shoulder lappets. See Richter 1968, 93 no. 167, figs. 532–5; Özgen 1982, 190–2. The edge of the folded veil seems to reflect a Samian prototype.

48 Recent discoveries of neo-Hittite and Phrygian art enable us to examine the continuity of
dress-types worn in Anatolia from the Hittite Empire period, and to assess their relationships to the garments of neighbouring peoples, specifically the East Greeks. Moreover, Neo-Hittite art offers new evidence for artistic conventions utilized by Anatolian artists and craftsmen in rendering dress in relief and sculpture in the round. Anatolian dress-styles prevailed over an extensive geographical area with varying ethnographic and cultural conditions. For a discussion of Anatolian art-styles and their relationship to East Greece see Boardman 1980, 84–102; Hanfmann 1983.

Özgen 1982, 17–38 gives a catalogue of this type of veil and _polos_ combination. See further, Akugal 1962, pl. 115; Seibert 1974, pl. 52. There was a long tradition of representing the goddess Kubaba, an early prototype of Kybele, in a high _polos_ and veil. For the Kubaba-Kybele relationship see Rein 1996, 224. See further, Isik 1986/7, 68. A stele from Ankara also shows Kybele dressed in a pleated linen robe and a high _polos_ from under which emerges a floor-length veil which is pulled around the right side of her torso and is tucked into the waist band. See Rein 1996, 224, 234; Boardman 1994, 26; Isik 1986/7, 44–8, 64 ff., figs. 1 and 2. A marble votive _naïskos_ of Kybele from Sardis shows similar traits. The central figure wears a two-piece garment composed of a veil and a chiton. Traces of the veil are just discernible at the sides of the neck and it descends from the shoulders down the back. See details in Özgen 1982, 116–17. Another depiction of the veil is found on a much restored statue of the goddess from Bogazköy which, according to Boardman, blends elements of local styles with those of Ionian craftsmanship: her long tunic, with its multiple delicate pleats, is certainly suggestive of Greek sculptural styles. Kybele’s extraordinarily high and elaborate _polos_ secures a veil that hangs down her back and is draped around her lower right torso where it is gathered into the belt. The change in direction of the central band of pleats perhaps indicates a loose fold of cloth. Interestingly, depictions of Kybele show that the goddess’ dress styles change with contemporary fashions and are adapted to suit regional variations in dress. See Isik 1986/7, 96 ff., figs. 32, 33. Important evidence for Neo-Hittite female fashion was unearthed as recently as 1988 in the form of ivory figurines dating to the late eighth or early seventh century. Of particular importance is the statuette of a woman who wears a high _polos_ head-dress and a wide veil that hangs down her back and is pulled around the hips and tucked into the belt, with one end of the veil overlapping the other. See Özgen and Özgen 1988, 190 and figs. 46 and 47.

Ridgeway 1993, 150–1. However, we need not necessarily see the Samian _korai_ as divine figures, despite the Anatolian association of _polos_ and veil with the goddess Kybele; enough representations of mortal Anatolian women wearing this type of veil exist to suggest that it was not the unique preserve of goddesses, and its divine heritage should not be forced upon the Samian statues.

The Milesian influence, what Ridgeway terms the ‘International Style’, on the Samian _korai_ also effects the rendering of their mantle folds and the depiction of the pleats on their long garments. See Ridgeway 1993, 135.

‘Fillet’ is perhaps too limiting a word; ‘turban’ might be just as appropriate. In fact the Milesian _korai_ seem to wear one or two strips of rolled fabric wound around the head, giving the veil of Miletus a ‘turban-like’ quality.

Richter, 1968, 51, no. 70, fig. 228; Özgen, 1982, 178–9. An alternative style of veil found at Miletus shows that it is worn over a closely-fitting headscarf or cap, like those worn by Maraš women, although the bulges underneath the veil may represent the hair, and certainly the ears. See Richter 1968, figs. 213–15. Another example of this fashion also comes in the form of a fragmentary wooden statuette again from Samos, although it is doubtful that
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the work was made on the island itself. For a discussion see Özgen 1982, 138–9 and fig. X/120. One further fragmentary and battered head from Samos, dated to the late sixth century, wears a veil that entirely covers the head but leaves the face and thick hairline exposed. See Richter 1968, 91, no. 157, figs. 504–5. The veil is also seen on a series of figures on a column drum from Didyma. See Richter 1968, 60, no. 96, 97, figs. 296–300; Özgen 1982, 141–3. Many of the Milesian korai wear only the veil and the chiton; the Samian mantle is usually absent. For a reconstruction of the column drum see Boardman 1993, fig. 218.1.

54 Worn by a man: Il. 2.43, 8.221, Od. 15.61, Xenoph. 3.3, Phercyd. Syr. Fr. 68 Schibli (DK B2) col. I 14, Hdt. 9.109, E. El. 1221; worn by women: Od. 5.230, Hes. W&D 198, Aes. Ch. 11 etc. Losfeld 1991, 338 defines it as, ‘long manteau de lin féminin et quelquefois masculin’. See also pp. 82–3, 179, 313, 321.

55 Although the pharos is the singular Homeric garment shared by both men and women, it is only members of the nobility who are represented as wearing it. For the pharos, no brooches or pins are mentioned nor does it seem to be used as a blanket at night; it was probably made of linen since the epithet euplunes – ‘well-washed’ (Od. 8.392, 425, 13.67, 16.173) – seems better suited to linen than to a woollen cloak and it does not seem to have been worn so much for warmth as for a conspicuous display of wealth and status.

56 In his study of the classical himation, Repond did not use the term pharos. Instead he classified seven main types of drapery-styles for the himation (although I am not convinced that they fall into such neat categories). My definition pharos-veil best fits his category of himation-type 1. See Repond 1931, 40–59. See also Pollux, Onom. 7.42, 48.

57 Schol. Eur. Andr. 831: τῷ κρηδεμνῷ φησιν. See also Stevens 1971, 195: ‘φάρος generally means cloak, but can be used more widely’.

58 Od. 8.84. Note that the word φάρος tends to be rendered as φαρός by Homer and Aischylus.


60 Eur. Supp. 286–90. Aithra’s veiling recalls Adrastus’ earlier action (110–12) where he also veiled his head in shame and lay on the ground. For a discussion see Rehm 1992, 125.

61 Ar. Thes. 889–90. Elsewhere in the play the word enkuklon is used in place of pharos for the in-law’s ‘Helen’ costume. The enkuklon, a dress (or costume) term unique to Aristophanes, was a type of female himation that appears to have been belted. It is certain that the enkuklon was considered to be a female-only garment, but it is difficult to know that separated it from the male himation; colour, pattern, and fabric could be the answer. See Ar. Lys. 113, 1162–3; Thes. 261, 499–501. Losfeld 1991, 304 argues that the enkuklon is ‘un mantelet’.

62 Soph. fr. 360.

63 See Boardman 1998, 89 and fig. 200. The depiction of the women is extremely rudimentary; their faces are delineated by a chin, a nose and one large central eye. Their mantle-veils seem to be held in place at the chest perhaps by the free hand.

64 See van Wees 1998b, 26. I concur with van Wees that the pharos-veil is defined by being simply draped from head or shoulder to floor, although one end of the mantle can be thrown over a shoulder to secure the cloth and conceal more of the body.

65 Metope 7. It must rank as the single most important source for the Iliou Persis myth and this vignette is the earliest known depiction of the recovery of Helen by Menelaos. See Ahlberg-Cornell 1992, 78–80. See also Anderson 1997, 182–91. The scene continues in popularity well into the third century. Helen’s image alters according to taste and, interestingly, she is always depicted in the height of fashion. See, for example, Austin 1994, 75, fig. 3
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for Helen wearing the short, shoulder-length *shaal*-veil, popular c. 500. Helen is just one of many women depicted on the Mykonos vase, but she is the only veiled figure.

66 Ervin 1963, 48 interprets three layers of clothing (’*peplos*, *himation*, and *shawl*’). While this is understandable, especially because the pattern on the ‘mantle’ changes from lozenges and circles to swirls, the unifying element has to be the long and continuous fringed edge that runs the entire length of the garment. This has to mean that the garment is made in one piece, although it is conceivable that it is worn folded double.

67 Mikroustikos 1995, 131 provides a good colour photograph, but argues that the *mitra* shows Helen and Menelaos. Ahlberg-Cornell 1992, 92–3, believes that it represents Klytemnestra and Orestes.

68 On the possibility of capes see Ridgeway 1993, 130 ff.

69 For an interpretation of this gesture see Chapter 4.

70 The veils are reminiscent of those worn by captive women from the Zargos mountains and from the Israelite city of Lachish. Veiling has a long history in Near Eastern society. By the close of the Bronze Age it is safe to say that certain classes of women in all Mesopotamian, Anatolian and Levantine countries were veiled. The importation of Eastern ideas and products – including dress – into the Greek world is not necessarily detected in Greek texts but rather, as Burkert 1991, 14 has pointed out, in archaeological finds. See further, Osborne 1996; Hurwit 1985. While archaeological evidence in the form of sculpture, bronze statuettes and stone foundations strongly testify to the Orientalizing milieu, textiles leave less of a trace in the archaeological record, and tend to be rather ignored in any case. While a scrap of fabric can tell us little about a style of fashion, careful sifting through the literary sources for evidence of textile trade contracts, coupled with an investigation of the iconographic depictions of regional styles of dress worn by peoples of different nations simultaneously, can help to expand the thesis of the Orientalizing Revolution to include ideas of fashion and textiles that were circulating in the ancient world concurrently and to place them alongside the more concrete finds of eastern influence with equal importance. See in particular, West 1997; Walcot 1966; Penglase 1994. One particularly remarkable ancient text, Ezekiel 27, testifies to the wide-ranging ancient trade routes and alludes to textiles and dyes. On the trade in textiles, especially the flourishing Assyrian textile trade see Barber 1994, 164–84.

71 See Reade 1987; Albenda 1987, 20–1. The most important source for depictions of western Asiatic women in the late Bronze Age and early Iron Age comes from the monumental stone reliefs which covered the walls of the Assyrian palaces of Khorsabad, Nimrud and Nineveh and, despite the unimportance of women within the narrative of these military scenes as a whole, their depiction constitutes a unique record of the appearance of Near Eastern women. For the Assyrian reliefs see Reade 1983, 60–81. On female captives, see Albenda 1983, 82–8 and Madhloom 1970, 73–4.

72 The highly elaborate patterned garments worn by Assyrian royalty and nobility are discussed by Canby 1971; Oppenheim 1949; Guralnick 1989a, 165–9. See also Watson 1987, 54–5. Two further pieces of evidence testifying to the popularity of a wrap-around garment-veil, again recalling the Mykonos *pithos* veil-style, comes in the form of jewellery discovered north of Nineveh in the ancient province of Urartu (late eighth century). The first is a gold medallion that shows two identically dressed women wearing large patterned garment-veils with fringed edgings, while the second is a large gold breast plate depicting a seated woman, unveiled but crowned, receiving homage from a veiled woman. This time the veil might be a separate garment, since it hangs down the back of the wearer’s head and even forms a train. It is certain that the two items depict women of great wealth and high
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social standing, be they royal or divine. Seibert 1974, 61 suggests that the two items were intended to adorn a cult statue of a goddess. It seems that an Assyrian noblewoman would not have been seen in public without a substantial article of top clothing, although in the privacy of her own home she was probably lightly clad. This certainly seems to have been the case with palace ladies in the late second millennium, since the royal harem edicts of that period decree that a palace lady must get permission from the chief eunuch to send for garments to wear for going out. It is likely that the specified garments, making a lady appropriately dressed for an outdoor excursion, were those represented in art, so that indoor garb must have been skimpier. The harem edicts have been conveniently collected together by Roth 1997, 195–209. See further, Weidner 1954–6, 275–93; Kuhrt 1995, vol. 2, 526–7.

73 See Boardman 1988, 130, fig. 252.1,2. For patterned cloth see Riefstahl 1944, 12ff.

74 Boardman 1993, 39, fig. 35, describes it thus: ‘a woman draws [a] cloak over head, a gesture of modesty or rank’. See further, Sweeney, Curry and Tzedakis 1987, 108–9, no. 29.

75 See Pipili 1987, 31. If the female figure is Helen then the veil that she wears has a crucial role to play in her re-captivation of her husband. The cutting of the relief and its preservation is poor, but we are able to discern that Helen’s ἐπόλος is used to veil the back of her head from whence it hangs down over her shoulders and upper arms. No indications of the colour or pattern of the veil that were originally picked out in paint now survive.

76 Behind the goddess is painted her name: Ἄφροδιτη, which probably means the man accompanying her is Ares. The relationship between Ares and Aphrodite has been described in different ways by early Greek authors; in the Iliad Aphrodite is mentioned as the sister of Ares while in the Odyssey she is the consort of Hephaistos and the mistress of Ares. See Ahlberg-Cornell 1992, 141, no. 160 and fig. 252; Boardman 1998, 111 and fig. 249.

77 This is a very unusual depiction of the warrior goddess who is more familiarly shown in her armour and aegis. Here her ἀφάρος is draped over her torso with one end of it flung over her right shoulder. The excess fabric is pulled over her head to form a veil, which still allows her hairline to be seen. See Ahlberg-Cornell 1992, 115, no. 124 and fig. 207. On another contemporary vase, a goddess-figure makes a veil-gesture with her ἀφάρος-veil, as she appears to raise part of it with her hand. There are no identifying details in this fragment, but the sword suggests that the man is a deity of a martial nature, probably Ares, while the woman’s ἄρας, balanced incongruously on her head, suggests that she is a goddess, probably Aphrodite. The veil, which she pulls forward with her hand, is dark but edged with a light, patterned stripe. The veil covers much of the goddess’ hair, but a row of chevron curls are depicted on her forehead. See Ahlberg-Cornell 1992, 141, no. 161 and fig. 253. Likewise, a Melian vase dated to around 630 shows a woman, adopting a similar pose, wearing a dark ἀφάρος over a chequered gown. See Ahlberg-Cornell 1992, 70–1, no. 47 and fig. 106. Boardman 1998, 111 and figs. 250.1, 2. A δίνων of c. 570 shows Amphitrite and Hera riding in chariots and veiled in ἀφαρία, which they lift in the same gesture. See Boardman 1973, 18.

78 See Boardman 1998, 183 and fig. 401. Helen wears a similar patterned ἀφάρος-veil on a belly amphora of 555, see Symons 1987, 20, fig. 19. See also Ahlberg-Cornell 1992, fig. 125; Carpenter 1991, 20 and fig. 36, with comments. Helen’s elaborate ἄρας is woven with an intricate ῥίση (feather) pattern and a striped and spotted hem. Her large ἀφάρος, which is folded in two and draped over her shoulders is drawn over her head and held from her face with her right hand. The veil itself is made from a patterned fabric, composed of a small geometrically designed hem and a series of large rosettes spread randomly over the otherwise plain cloth.
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The sculpture known by tradition as Aspasia (Fig. 2) wears a huge *pharos* as a robe that entirely shrouds the body and head, as its left side is draped over the wearer’s right shoulder. The statue is also known as ‘Europa’, ‘Sosandra’, and ‘Amelung’s goddess’, the sculpture has been dated to c. 460. A statuette version, similarly dressed and dated to c. 410, is inscribed ‘Europa’, which is probably the correct identification for the full sized statue. See Boardman 1985, fig. 75. See Boardman 1998, 185 and Richter 1987, 273–88. The fashion for tossing a section of the *pharos* over the opposite shoulder can actually be traced back to the mid-seventh century. An Athenian funeral plaque (c. 540–530) shows the private grief of eight women who mourn the death of a loved one and comfort a young child. The central figures, seated on low chairs, have been interpreted as the mother and wife (or perhaps the sister) of the deceased. The female sitting on the left has her head veiled with her patterned *pharos* which she has drawn around her body to completely envelope her arms and hands. The most interesting figure stands at the far left of the composition and offers a rare observation of a woman adjusting her dress. She seems to be in the act of throwing the end of her *pharos* around her left shoulder. She then has the choice of leaving the excess fabric to hang down her back or to draw it up over her head as a veil in the manner of the seated woman. See Fantham *et al.* 1994, 49.

A good collection of material is provided by Bieber 1928a, 63–8, figs. XXIX–XXXIII, and reconstructions at figs. LII, LIII.

This style of draping the mantle-veil remains popular during the Roman period; in fact, the Roman *pallium* is draped in exactly the same way. It is well attested on the so-called ‘Small-Herculaneum’ type of statuary and can be found on the Ara Pacis Augustae worn by Antonia Minor. For details see Repond 1931, 43–59 and Davis 2002. It should be noted that although the Greek *pharos* tended to be draped across the body during the classical and later periods, it could still be worn in its archaic style. Thus, the female figures represented on the base of the sculpture of Nemesis at Rhamnus are shown in the process of veiling with *pharē* in the old fashioned way. See Boardman 1985, fig. 123. Similarly, a cup dated to c. 440 by the Painter of Berlin 2536 depicting the Judgement of Paris has Hera and Aphrodite wearing their *pharē* hanging down from their heads and over their shoulders in the simple archaic style. See Boardman 1989, fig. 244.2.

See Theoc. 15.39. Higgins 1986, 120 believes that even though the straw hat is seldom found in other branches of Greek art, it was probably worn by women daily.

Ibid. 124–40 for the development of Tanagran drapery. See further examples in Kriseleit and Zimmer 1994, 84–5 fig. 1, 87 fig. 5, 94–5 figs. 12 and 13, 99 fig. 17, 101 fig. 19, 125–6 fig. 46. A good introduction to the hellenistic terracotta figurines is provided by Uhlenbrock 1990.

The *himation* is the basic outer garment for men and women and is always draped around the body but never fixed in place with pins or brooches. It seems that the *himation* could be used as bed-sheets, and that an Athenian man, upon waking, would simply wrap the garment-sheet around him. See Ar. Eccl. 535–8. Appearing out of doors without the *himation*, for both men and women, was considered most unusual, and the word *gymnos* (naked) frequently means ‘without *himation*’ (i.e. ‘without clothes’). Draping the *himation* was a delicate operation that needed to conform to notions of fashion, dignity, and, for women, modesty. In contrast to Repond’s seven variations for draping the *himation*, Bieber 1928a, 24 notes nine possible methods for a man and a remarkable twelve for a woman. See further pp. 60–3 and figs. XXVI–XXVIII, with reconstructions at figs. XLVI, 1 and 2,
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LI, LII 3, 4. Repond’s type 4 can be considered the archetypal himation style. See Repond 1931, 77–104. It is important to remember that men had been wearing the himation from at least 650, although its size and the subsequent complexity of wearing it continued to increase in the classical period. For a good discussion see van Wees 1998a, 333–78, esp. 347–52. For the contrast in the styles of draping the male himation and the female pharos, see his figs. 17 and 18.

The woman is dressed in an unusual outfit, which appears to straddle the archaic and classical periods: she wears a sleeved chiton that seems to be covered by a patterned peplos, at least to judge from the depiction of the skirt. She is wrapped in a huge himation which is depicted in two colours with a series of patterned stripes at the hem. To judge from the depiction of the himation, it seems that the double folded cloth was first placed over the woman’s head as a veil, then draped once around the entire body, partly concealing the right arm then draped over the left arm in heavy folds and finally thrown over the left shoulder. For a further discussion of the vase see von Bothmer 1985, 147–9.

The grave stele of Ampharete, dating to the late fifth century, depicts the Athenian noblewoman holding her young grandchild as she sits on an elegant and expensive high-backed chair. As is typical of the period, Ampharete’s himation is drawn around her torso, up onto her right shoulder and onto her head to form a veil. The skilful rendering of the flimsy billowing cloth seems to capture an imaginary breeze wafting around her. See further Sears 1993; Keuls 1985, 138–9; Clairmont 1970, 91–2, fig. 23.

C. 400. The stele is an excellent example of the ‘transparent style’ of depicting the clothes of fashionable women of the period. Her himation-veil is closely assimilated to her head and body, although in antiquity its structure would have been made clearer by the application of paint. For the effect of Hegeso’s see-through clothing see Stewart 1997, 120 ff.

Dated to c. 380–360, Theano sits in the presence of her husband Ktesilaos. Her himation-veil has slipped off her head although she fingers its end in a ‘veil-gesture’ (for a discussion of this term see Chapter 3). See Boardman 1995, 116 and fig. 127.

Mid-fourth century. As she stands one is clearly able to see that her himation-veil is draped over the head, under her right arm and has slipped from off her left shoulder. For details see Repond 1931, 92, 94.

Late fourth century. Both sisters wear himation-veils and both adopt the ‘veil-gesture’. On this see below, Chapter 3. For details about the stele see Boardman 1995, 115 and fig. 119.

A votive relief from the sanctuary at New Phalerum shows the dedicator, a woman named Xenokrateia, standing amidst a host of deities; two goddesses stand at the centre and converse while another watches. The goddess on the far right has her body and head swathed in the folds of her himation-veil, but it is allowed to swag beneath her breasts, affording the viewer a glimpse of her divine form. This contrasts with the chatting goddess standing in front of her whose pharos-veil completely envelops her body. See Boardman 1985, 186 and fig. 169; Repond 1931, 86.

The gravestone from Thespiae (Boeotia) was re-cut c. 410 for Diodora. Following Athenian fashion, she is dressed in a light chiton over which is draped a himation that bunches in heavy folds across her lap. Diodora has veiled her head with the end of the himation, although much of her waved and crimped coiffure is still visible. See Boardman 1985, 185 and fig. 164.

See Weller 1970.

This sculpture was probably created as a companion piece to the naked Aphrodite of
Knidos. See, Boardman 1995, 71 and fig. 49; Boardman (ed.) 1997, 139–40. A statue tentatively identified as Artemisia from the Mausoleum shows her in the act of donning her himation, although the back section is not pulled over her head but rests on her shoulders. See Boardman 1995, 27ff. and fig. 19. Themis wears one in much the same manner as Themis (although here the excess fabric only falls on one shoulder). See Repond 1931, 82, 84. An image of Aphrodite (late fifth century) affords a rare view of the himation-veil from the back and demonstrates how it was ideally required to fall in heavy (but somehow controllable) folds around the hips before it was pulled up over the back and onto the head. For a full discussion see Bieber 1928, 61–2 and fig. XXVII, 2–3. The statue certainly makes one consider just how impractical a garment the classical himation was. Nonetheless, it continued in popularity well into the Roman age; the Roman pallium was similarly used in the manner of the himation-veil and can be found, for example, worn by Livia on the Ara Pacis Augustae. It was used by the empress frequently when she wanted to be associated with (Greek) divinities. For Livia’s use of the himation-veil and Roman use of Greek dress in general see Bartman 1999, 40–6, 86–92. For a general discussion of the draping of the Roman pallium see Repond 1931, 89–96. A clear interpretation of the draping of the pallium and its use as a veil is provided by Scholz 1992, 27.

96 Boardman 1989, 98 and fig. 247.
98 Although one figure of a standing woman, excavated at Tanagra, shows her wearing a himation, as indeed does a tambourine player from the same site. Both are dated to c. 350–330. See Higgins 1986, 109–11 and figs. 131, 132, and Merker 1990, 54–62, esp. 56 and figs. 41, 42.
99 See, for example, Kriseleit and Zimmer 1994, 102, figs. 21 and 22, 114, fig. 33, 116, fig. 38, 126, fig. 47, 145, fig. 76, 146, fig. 77.
100 From a fragment by the Kleophrades Painter that depicts the exploits of the komasts commonly associated with the residency in Athens of the Ionian poet Anakreon. See Frontisi-Ducroux and Lissarrague 1990; Boardman and Kurtz 1986; Boardman 1975, 92–3 and fig. 131.2; Immerwahr 1965, 152–4 and pl. 42.
101 That the woman should be identified as a hetaira is well argued by Robertson 1980. See further, Schäfer 1997.
102 For comments on the Makron cup see Childs (ed.) 1998, 107. For the identification of the dwarf as Eros, and the whore as Aphrodite, see further Dasen 1993, 228–9.
103 See Austin 1994, 72–5.
104 Cup by Douris portraying Hera and Prometheus. The goddess appears to wear a head-scarf tied around her head over which she has draped the shaal-veil. The veil covers the back of her head and descends down her neck and rests on her shoulders. See Boardman 1975, 139 and fig. 295.1. See further Buitron-Oliver 1995, 83 and pl. 100 no. 178.
105 Fragmentary cup by Douris showing Amphitrite, Poseidon and other deities. The goddess’ shaal-veil is transparent, although Douris suggests the concertina pleats by depicting the chevron hem of the cloth. The under-head-dress looks complicated and puts one in mind of Andromakhe’s head-dress, see above, Chapter 2. See further Buitron-Oliver 1995, pl. 47 no. 64 with comments in the text.
106 See Werner 1986, 14; Oakley 1995, 67–8. Edwards 1984, 62, n. 18, suggests that ‘the short veil…may be exclusively bridal’. This is certainly wrong.
107 Ibid. 71. See also Buitron-Oliver 1995, pl. 31 no. 47. A vase painting of Iphigeneia, also by Douris, wears the same sort of veil. Ibid. pl. 30 no. 46 with comments in the text.
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108 Gravestone of Krito and Timarista, from Rhodes, c. 410. See Boardman 1985, 185 and fig. 160. Xenokrateia’s votive relief from New Phalerum (see above, n. 92) shows the central female figure facing to the right and chatting to a himation-veiled goddess. The central female wears a shaal-veil that hangs in soft undulations from her head and onto her shoulders where it ends in gentle folds.

109 By the Sabouroff Painter, c. 460. See Boardman 1989, 37 and fig. 52. The seated woman could be spinning or examining an item of jewellery.

110 The statue, a Roman copy of the fifth-century Greek original, probably represents Demeter or Hera. See Boardman 1985, fig. 74.

111 Davidson 1997, pl. 7. Davidson suggests that the veiled woman is a hetaira.

112 See below, Chapter 8.


114 For details of the vase see Barringer 1995, 40–1.

115 Careful study of the statue at the Museo Nationale Romano has revealed this anomaly. Further discussion of the statue can be found in La Regina (ed.) 1998, 77 ff. I am grateful to Merrill George for the photograph.


117 Heuzey 1922, 168–74, 191–6 (‘repli servant de voile’). As he stated, p. 170: ‘J’ai même réalisé immédiatement le motif dans plusieurs poses de mon cours sans avoir encore, pour ce péplos-ouvert servant de voile, aucun exemple tiré des monuments.’

118 From Boeotia, c. 400. She is possibly a priestess, although that is insignificant as regards her dress. See Boardman 1985, 185 and fig. 163; Heuzey 1922, 170–3. Polyxena’s peplos is pinned in such a way that the kolpos hangs as a triangular over-fold at the front. Its formation into a kolpos-veil is clearly seen under her raised left arm where the cloth continues in one elegant curve from her hip to her head.

119 Heuzey 1922, 191–3. Here the peplos is double-belted (as can be seen from the back of the statuette) and the kolpos is shorter. The construction of the kolpos-veil is easily discernible on this piece.

120 Occasionally his reconstructions stretch the limits of probability. See Heuzey 1922, 194–5. He suggests, for example, that Hera as depicted on the Parthenon frieze wears a veil that is constructed from the kolpos of her closed peplos. I think that it is clear that she uses a separate piece of fabric (the pharos variety of veil, I suggest) for two reasons: first, if this were the back kolpos, then it would be very long indeed and it would not match the length of the kolpos at the front of her dress. Secondly, there is no indication that the front of the peplos is swept up to form the veil in the way that occurs on the Polyxena stele and the Louvre bronze statuette.

121 Nolan Amphora (Phiale Painter?). This remarkable scene has received surprisingly little comment. Keuls 1985, 87 believes that the monkey is in fact a child dressed in a costume, but this is probably an over-reading of the artist’s inaccuracies. It is hard to know what is going on in the scene, but I suggest that the woman possibly veils her face to avoid contact with the animal. The monkey was often considered to be ill-omened and lacking in sexual restraint (like goats and dwarfs). See Lucian, Pseudolog. 17. Alternatively, the woman’s veiling gesture could be interpreted as an act of reverence. She looks as though she might
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have come to consult the monkey seated on the rock (or altar) rather as one would consult an oracle. Maybe the explanation of the scene lies in a folk-tale or a fable. Aesop, *Fabulae* 38, 39, 304–7, makes the monkey a figure of fun and a crafty untrustworthy manipulator, while for Semonides the monkey-woman was the worst of a bad lot. She is hideous, a comic figure, but crafty and scheming and capable of great harm. See Lloyd-Jones 1975. Further discussion on the iconography of the ape is provided by Brijder 1988.

122 An examination of the gesture of veiling the face follows at Chapter 4.

123 See Vogelsang-Eastwood 1996a, 22 and fig. 14.

124 Red figure column krater by the Eupolis Painter, c. 450–440. See Galt 1931, 374. I am grateful to Wendy M. Watson, the curator of the Mount Holyoak collection, for providing me with information about this rarely discussed vase.

125 e.g. *Od*. 1.333, 10.559, 11.64; *Ar. Nu*. 1126, 1488, 1502; *Men. Sam*. 246; *Hdt*. 3.40; *Xen. Cyr*. 7.

126 τεγείδιον (i.e. τεγίδιον): κοσμάριον ποιόν γυναικείον.

127 The *niqab* is worn in many Arab countries (it is often called a burqaa, although technically this is wrong). It is derived from the Arabic word *naqab* meaning ‘to perforate’. See Scarce 1975, 13. The earliest known surviving *niqab* was discovered at the Egyptian site of Quseir al-Qadim and can be dated to c. AD 1250–1350, and another has been found in Nubia and is dated to a slighter later period. See Vogelsang-Eastwood 1983, 35–6. The modern *niqab* varies in design, but is usually made from a single piece of cloth that is folded double to produce an extra thick veil, and can range in length from 30 cm to 1 m long. It can be left plain or can be highly decorated with braids, coins, disks etc. See further Vogelsang-Eastwood 1996a, 57 ff.

128 From Alexandria c. late third century. See Thompson 1963, 52 and fig. LX d. As far as I am aware, it is only from Alexandrian evidence that the veil is ever shown down over the face.

129 Reinarch 1899, 75, line 38 and comment pp. 97 ff. A woman named Xenokko dedicates two short cloaks and a white ‘little-roof-veil’. The Greek text calls it τεγέιδιον (sic.) λευκόν, which Reinarch translates as either ‘un chapeau de paille (?) blanc’ or ‘une voilette’.

130 Heraclides Criticus (?) 1.18. The author of the work is unknown and is sometimes described as Ps. Dicaearchus and sometimes as Heraclides Criticus; it is sometimes thought that he was of Athenian origin. See Pfister 1848, 254–61 and Müller 1855, 97–106. A convenient collection of excerpts is provided by Austin 1981, 151–4. I am grateful to Andrew Dalby for first drawing my attention to this passage.

131 It is not dissimilar to the Pharaonic Egyptian nemes headcloth. For details see Vogelsang-Eastwood 1993, 171–8 and pls. 43–4.

132 Thomas Burgon (1747–1858). His notes that accompany the watercolour state: ‘Handkerchief which serves as a head-dress’. Higgins 1986, 122 comments briefly on this type of veil and Thompson 1963, 50–1 suggests that there were two stages to the development of this veil-type: the first variety, found in the fourth century, is rarely decorated with a brooch; the second, developed in the third century, is wider and softer than the first type and hangs in drooping folds from the temples. She suggests that the change occurs because of the difference in materials used and suggests that the first variety was made of wool, while the latter type was created from stiff linen made on a narrow loom. She states, ‘that a thin face-veil was made of wool seems not impossible, for the *tarantinon*, a popular wool shawl with a fringe, was nevertheless very thin and fine’. There is nothing to suggest, however, that the *tarantinon* was necessarily made of wool (or, indeed, that it was a shawl).
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All we know of it was that it was come kind of fine garment worn (exclusively) by women. See Athenaeus 622b, Schol. Ar. Lys. 45. For the diminutive tarantinidion, see Luc. D. Metr. 7.2. See further Rayet 1881.

While the terracottas are the best source of information on the tegidion, I would suggest that the garment is also shown on a Roman wall-painting copied from a third-century Greek original. It depicts a seated woman wearing a head-dress with a distinctly discernible folded back flap which is perhaps the face-veil. It is suggested that the veiled figure is interpreted as a personification of Persia. However there is nothing Persian about her dress, although Robertson 1955, 62 suggests that she wears on her head the Persian tiara and that she represents royal Persia. But the head-dress looks nothing like the royal Persian tiara, which was stiff and shaped to form a rounded protuberance.

The letter lists among a range of garments produced by two brothers, their mother and a wife (wives?): ‘Apollonphanes and Demetrios, brothers, craftsmen in all the skills of weaving women’s clothing, to Zenon, greetings. If you please and you happen to have the need, we are ready to provide what you need. For hearing of the reputation of the city and that you, its leading man, are a good and just person, we have decided to come to Philadelphia to you, we ourselves and our mother and wife (?wives). And in order that we might be employed, bring us in, if it pleases you. Should you wish we can make cloaks, tunics, sashes, mantles, sword-belts, shrouds; and for women: split tunics, ‘little roof’-veils (τεγιδία), robes with trains, purple-bordered robes. And we can teach people, if you wish. Instruct Nikias to provide us with a lodging. And, to save you wondering, we will provide you with guarantors, men of substance, some from here and some in Moithymis. Farewell. Year 30 (of Ptolemy II), Gorpheion 28, Thoth 28, Apollonphanes and Demetrios, brothers.’ Trans. Rowlandson 1998, 265–6, with amendments. She is unable to translate the word tegidía, and merely states that it is, ‘an item of female clothing, but it is unknown what it is’.

The connection if fully explored by Kleiner 1942, 43 ff.

On the statuette see, most importantly, Thompson 1950. For a further discussion of veiled dancers see below, Chapter 10.

See Thompson 1950, 375–81 for a discussion of the transparent garments. A good illustration is provided by Richter 1987, 205 and Grimal et al. 1998, 265.

See Thompson 1950, 384 for a discussion of the make-up.

The word prosōpidion is certainly located in later Byzantine texts, a fact that has led ben Miled, 1999, 224, to state that, ‘Le voile non seulement du corps mais aussi de tête et de visage se prolongera dans l’empire romain d’Orient. A Byzance, le voile du visage portait le nom de ‘Prosopidion’. Le port du ‘Prosopidion’ était très rigoureux, car son absence distinguait la prostituée de l’honnête femme. Seuls les femmes considérées comme étant de mauvaise vie n’en portaient pas. Il était impossible pour une femme de Byzance de sortir dans la rue sans cacher son visage sous le Prosopidion.’

See further, Günther 1988, 227–8. The list of clothing dedication from Miletus (c. 274–272) mentions 18 prosōpidia in total. Heraclides Criticus (see above) notes that the women of Thebes wear ‘little masks’ (and I have linked these to the tegidia).


Fr. 151 K.-A.

See Pickard-Cambridge 1968, 179.

Noted by Adriani 1948, 7–8, and pl. III 1 and 4. He also noted seeing two other examples of this style of veil on statuettes (although the veils were folded back onto the heads of the figures) in the hands of a Cairo antiques dealer and in the British Museum (c. first
Veil-styles in the ancient Greek world

century AD). As yet I have been unable to trace these.

144 For details of the maghmuq and sheshaf veils see Vogelsang-Eastwood 1996a, 51.

145 The most famous forms of the lithma are worn by Tuareg men. The Tuareg veil (tagoulmost, teguelmost) is a combination of a veil and a turban and is made from lightweight cotton, which varies in width between 25 and 50 cm and 1 and 5 metres in length and is characteristically dyed a vivid indigo blue. The fabric is wound around the face and head leaving only the eyes (and a patch at the rear of the head) revealed. The lower edge of the veil is usually folded in two and is drawn tightly over the nose to prevent it from slipping. See Vogelsang-Eastwood 1996a, 47. A good discussion of the technique of draping the tagelmust is provided by Hawad-Claudot 1992, 200–5.

146 For the statuette see Mollard-Besques 1963, pl. 130, with comments.
REVEALING THE VEIL:
PROBLEMS IN THE ICONOGRAPHY OF VEILING

The aim of this chapter is to discuss how iconographic sources portray clothes, especially the veil. Greek iconography, especially vase painting, tends to be used arbitrarily by scholars to illustrate aspects of ‘daily life’; too rarely are questions asked about the medium in which those pictures were created or the clientele for whom they were made. Frequently the images found on vases are used by historians as faithful, almost photographic, depictions of evidence for ancient life. Moreover, they are often used to augment our understanding of the literary evidence. But this is a mistake. As Sian Lewis has demonstrated,

The images on pots are not in harmony with literature, neither are they in simple counterpart: we cannot look to pottery to fill the gaps left by classical writers, because painting was a different medium, and painters worked to a different agenda.

The routine veiling of women is a familiar feature in Greek literature, but it has to be acknowledged that the veil is often conspicuously absent in art. Certainly most women on pots are unveiled, even in scenes where we would expect them to be covered, such as outdoor fountain-house settings or images of visits to family tombs. There is an imbalance in our source material and it is the aim of this chapter to explore this dichotomy and to re-evaluate the visual evidence.

Where women are shown veiled in art, however, scholars are prone to interpret the images incorrectly. Many representations show veiled women performing a gesture with a section of the veil which is held out by a raised hand – the so-called anakalypsis or ‘unveiling-gesture’. I argue that the usual interpretation of this act is flawed and a reappraisal of the ‘anakalypsis-gesture’ can throw light on use of concealment, exposure, and focus in Greek art, as well as on ideas about artistic representations of the female body. In addition, a study of the development of the motif provides a good example of the evolution of artistic skills in naturalism.

There are two parallel pulses running throughout almost the entire corpus of Greek art (at least pre-hellenistic): the erotic and the idealizing. Sometimes the erotic is more evident (as in the blatantly pornographic vase-paintings created during the period 530–460) and sometimes the idealizing can outdo the sexual, but for a large proportion of Greek artworks the two appear concurrently. While images created by Greek artists are not necessarily purely fantastical (they do, of course, provide selected
and invaluable glimpses of reality), many components of an artistic composition are given specific twists that can render scenes quirky or abstractly symbolic. Greek art (and vase-painting in particular) is as much a cerebral construct as a reflection of actuality.

A similar artistic construct was at work among the burgeoning photographers of the Victorian age. Photographs which purportedly showed Near Eastern ‘daily life’ (such as women at wells or preparing food within the home – images that were especially popular as postcards representing ‘scenes that Christ knew’) were often specially constructed in the photographer’s studio amid the correct sprinkling of props. They were aimed at creating a stereotypical image of the East and, more importantly, of Eastern womanhood. Victorian Orientalist photographers increasingly pandered to the erotic whims of European taste and constructed scenes in which naked or semi-nude Oriental women became the focus of the male European gaze, as they were, ‘draped, posed and clamped at the photographer’s pleasure (Fig. 77).’

Orientalist photography was directed at male fantasy, but the eroticizing and the idealizing trends of Greek art are overt for both the male and the female viewer, although its impact is more obvious in the case of the male gaze. The Greek male is able to see at will a mass of images which depict women (and men) naked or semi-nude as he takes upon himself the role of voyeur and stares into scenes set within, for example, private homes, public brothels, and other men’s symposia. Much of Greek art was specifically designed to cater for this male voyeuristic inclination in much the same way that today movie images of women are frequently transformed into erotic exhibits by the controlling male gaze.

Representing dress in Greek art
What is worn by human figures in Greek art is largely taken from real-life practice. Nevertheless, the depiction of clothing in Greek art is an excellent example of how the ideal and the erotic trends of representing women can be united, since Greek artists constantly modify their depictions of clothing, especially when worn on the female body, in all the media of art.

Garments were created at home within Greek households of all classes, through every stage of production from carding to weaving, and it is important to remember that clothes were woven into rectangles to fit the wearer according to length, but they were never cut or stitched nor did they attain a close-fitting, let alone a skin-
Revealing the veil: problems in the iconography of veiling

tight, shape. Nonetheless, it has often been observed that Greek (and to a certain extent Roman) clothing, so often classed under the heading ‘drapery’, exists to expose the body to its best advantage and to accentuate its curves and its movements. The Greeks’ fascination with ‘imaginary’ or ‘abstract’ clothing is, of course, most conspicuous in archaic female sculpture, where bodies and clothes are assimilated into one shape. However, separate conventions existed in classical art for the painted two-dimensional rendering of dress, and so in Greek vase paintings the lines denoting hanging pleats or bunched material often appear unnatural when compared with sculptured solutions to the same problems dating from the same period. What occupies the vase painter’s attention therefore is the transparency of garments. From the latter half of the sixth century to the closing years of the fourth, artists developed techniques of rendering clothing invisible or suggestive in a variety of ways.

The development of the method for portraying the clothed female body in an overtly sexual way began with the close assimilation of the dress and figure which emphasized the torso, the curve of the buttocks, the thighs and legs and, most importantly, accentuated the breasts to such a degree that they appear like torpedoes sticking out of the torso, where they culminate in detailed nipples which are also often exaggerated (Fig. 78). The loose-fitting clothing of reality is either rendered into an imaginary skin-tight body-stocking that reveals every curve of the torso, or in such a way that it suggests invisibility.

Thus, the depictions of dress do not necessarily give a fully authentic picture of ‘real life’ but instead meet certain artistic and social mandates centring on the essentially erotic and idealistic constructs of Greek art. The highlighting of areas of sexual attention is achieved by the visual enlargement of the breasts and genitalia and by the repetition, framing, and outlining of folds of cloth. Clothes become genital maps.

Divesting the veil

There is a strong and recurrent desire on the part of the Greek artist and the spectator of his work to remove obstacles that obscure the idealistic view. The veil is specifically designed to make the female form socially invisible (as we shall argue), but corporal invisibility was not a part of Greek art; on the contrary, the body – ‘the Greek Miracle’ – was central to hellenic culture and subsequently came to dominate Western artistic tradition. If dress was an obstacle to a perfect vision, then the veil must have been regarded as a real barrier to artistic sensitivity, no matter how necessary it was considered in daily life to ensure a civilized society. The Greek artist
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was able to depict veiled women, but more often than not he chose not to. This means that we must envisage a remarkable dichotomy between what women wear in real life and what they wear in the artworks. On the streets of Greek towns and cities women were covered up; in art they are, for the most part, uncovered and on display. Greek art does not give us the reality of life – at least not very often.\textsuperscript{22}

The paucity of images of veiled women in Greek art can be explained by a desire to reveal what is usually hidden, and that requirement can express itself in two basic forms so that either the veil can be ignored entirely, or it can be \textit{suggested} as being present although it is not overtly worn on the head or face. The two categories can be interrelated and can be played off against each other.

In most painted scenes the veil is entirely absent; this is not too surprising perhaps for compositions set within, say, the domestic space of the home, or where there are female-only groups, or where male presence can be demonstrated as non-threatening (if the man is an immediate member of the family, for example).\textsuperscript{23} However, other scenes which have an undeniable setting out of doors can also show women unveiled. Particularly striking are the seventy-five known fountain-house scenes where women frequently interact in an animated fashion as they fetch and carry water in a genre that clearly appealed to a number of artists and their clients. It is much debated whether these scenes show ‘respectable’ women or slaves, but whatever the case may be, the women are dressed in fine clothes, reminiscent of those worn by the Athenian \textit{korai}, and are, as far as I am aware, \textit{always} unveiled, despite the presence of men (sometimes in loincloths, sometimes in voluminous robes). It is recognized that fountain houses (ideal spots to find groups of women) were places for romantic assignations or even for full-on sexual attacks and the artist deliberately accentuates the erotic tensions by utilizing non-realistic artistic devices.\textsuperscript{24} The veil has no place in these scenes or, in fact, in any representations of domestic work where, instead, eroticism often dominates the picture.\textsuperscript{25}

The idea that the veil is present and can be created from several elements of female clothing, although not overtly worn on the head or face, is a \textit{very} common device, especially in vase painting. In fact there are only a few instances when one can say with certainty that the veil does not have at least the \textit{possibility} of being worn: certain types of female dress – in particular short tunics – do not require any further type of covering and the absence of a \textit{himation} or \textit{pharos} severely limits the possibility of the wearer veiling herself. Furthermore, I have not been able to find any instance of a woman wearing a \textit{chitoniskos}, or skimpy tunic, in combination with, say, a \textit{shaal}-veil. After all, the wearer of the \textit{chitoniskos} is not usually principally concerned with modesty.\textsuperscript{26}

It is important to observe that vase-painters frequently create scenes in which many women are unveiled, but where one is either \textit{definitely} veiled or where an allusion to the veil is made. Such is the case in, for example, \textit{Fig. 79}, where a group of women are outdoors collecting apples, although only one figure is veiled (second from right). The scene relies on the interaction of the figures and a shared sense of
communal activity, but is the one veiled figure to be regarded as representative of all the women? It is a possibility, although we could find other explanations: the apple harvest is perhaps secluded from the public gaze so that veiling is not a strict requirement and the one veiled girl could be a new arrival on the scene, just coming into this private world, for she does not seem to be picking apples or holding fruit baskets. The artist allows us to envisage a world beyond the scene shown on the pot, a more public place in which women must be veiled.

This device is employed on several vases: a pyxis by the Eretria Painter, for example, places a veiled woman next to a door while the other women in the scene are unveiled but set at a greater distance from the entrance or focus their attention upon the seated bride at the ‘centre’ of the pot (Fig. 80). The most interesting representation, though, is that of the Marsyas Painter on a red-figure lebes gamikos: the oddly-veiled lady in Fig. 14 seems to come almost at the extremity of a procession of women who bring gifts to a newly-wedded bride. Even though she is followed by two other female

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Fig. 79. Women picking apples in an orchard setting. Only one woman is obviously veiled. Cup by the Wedding Painter, c. 460. Musée Antoine Vivenel, Compiègne, L. 1090.

Fig. 80. Line drawing showing a veiled woman standing close to an outside door. Detail from a pyxis by the Eretria Painter, c. 420. Nat. Mus. Athens, 1250, 34.
figures who move towards the left, she does not take an active part in the gift giving and removes herself from the action by turning out of the scene to face the viewer of the vase (Fig. 81). She is balanced, at the beginning of the procession, by another veiled woman who is wrapped in an equally complicated *himation*-veil and who also views the procession (moving to the right) without actively participating herself (Fig. 82). At the centre of the scene sits the elaborately veiled bride, the focus of the attention (Fig. 83). Here the painter has carefully constructed his composition and has deliberately placed the two veiled women near the extremities of the picture to frame the scene and to suggest that the bride is safely confined within her new *oikos*, while simultaneously suggesting that the world expands beyond the limits of the vase, and that even if *outside* women need to veil, in the safe confines of the home they can appear as slender scantily-clad beauties. The possibility that one woman sheds her veil while the other is scrupulously covered emphasizes the contrast.

Of course the scenic composition of a vase cannot explain the lack of veils in numerous other pictures, including those set outdoors. However, the erotic and idealistic trends in Greek art are more potent, even than the sense of narrative or of location. Veiled women are part of a daily reality; when they appear in public they are veiled, when they are glimpsed in the home of a friend they should veil themselves. So why would a man bother buying a vase showing a veiled woman if the main point of having artists was to improve on normality? Surely the vase-buying customer pays for the veil to be removed, and it is the deed of rendering
the woman unveiled that grants him further privileged access to the private world of women. Certainly, the Orientalist photographers played with images of veiling and exposure and they quickly realized that one way of breaking the taboo of the veil was to use paid models to pose for them, which gave the photographer the power to decide what should be exposed and what should be covered.29

Veiling the veil
The veil is very often manifest in scenes even though it is not depicted by straightforward means. It can be found in the iconography in several characteristic ways: draped in folds at the nape of the neck, hanging in swags over the torso, clutched in the hands, and even represented as a kind of ‘halo’ encircling the head.

There is a marked tendency among artists to depict the excess cloth of a mantle, which had the capacity to be used as a veil, gathered in folds at the nape of the neck. In fact, the pleated folds of the himation or pharos swathed around the neck are by far the most popular way of suggesting that the veil is present, although not worn on the head or face. Hundreds of examples from a variety of iconographic sources could be used as evidence, but typical of the genre is a scene showing seated Amphitrite from the tondo of a cup by Douris: the goddess wears a fine pharos that arches over her shoulders and up towards her head in regular pleats which clearly have the potential of being unfolded and pulled fully over the head as a veil (Fig. 84)30 while a vase by Makron (Fig. 85) actually shows the process of lifting the folds of the pharos onto the head. Similar neck-folds are
worn by a variety of women and it should be noted that with figures of long-haired females (as is the case in Fig. 86), the *pharos* is used to conceal the hair that hangs down their backs and further suggests that the folds can be actively used to veil the head. It is also worth noting that young men and boys can also wear the veil off their heads and in pleats at the nape of the neck as the situation demands.\textsuperscript{31}

The *himation* is frequently utilized in the same manner and the diagonal folds that cross the one shoulder are often stylistically rendered and frequently include the customary fold of cloth at the nape of the neck. More unusual, however, is a very feminine figure of Artemis from a vase by the Andokides Painter (Fig. 87) who is shown wearing a pretty *peplos*, an elaborately woven *pharos*, which is worn over the shoulders and, most interestingly, a *shaal*-veil with a delicate patterned boarder which has slipped off her wreathed head and has gathered in irregular folds at the nape of her neck.\textsuperscript{32}

Sculpture and relief follow the same trends and regularly show the *himation* and *pharos* folded around the nape of the neck. A late archaic grave stele, for example, shows a young woman in a *pharos* with the distinctive back folds and curve of cloth (Fig. 88)\textsuperscript{33} and corresponds closely to one of the Akropolis *korai* whose uncommonly arranged *pharos* covers the back of her neck and her thick fall of hair in deep pleats. As far as I am aware, this is the only mainland *koré* ever to hint at wearing a veil (Fig. 89).\textsuperscript{34}

It is obvious that the *himation* and *pharos* utilized an enormous amount of material in their arrangement and it is clear that the careful draping of the folds was a mark of sophistication and elegance. As it was thrown across the torso and over one shoulder,
the disposal of the complicated pleats of the *pharos* frequently resulted in a multitude of gathers swathing themselves in heavy folds around the collar. The excess folds at the back of the neck were often pulled over the head to form a veil and were worn as such by both sexes (*Figs.* 90 and 91)\textsuperscript{35}, but artists repeatedly chose to leave the veil off the head and simply to render the deep wrap of cloth around the collar, thereby hinting that it had the possibility to be used as a veil (*Fig.* 92).\textsuperscript{36} The restrictive nature of a well-wrapped *pharos* is demonstrated by the popular depiction of individuals who pull the folds of the collar loose and manage to work free an arm in order to hold a walking stick, a necklace, or a flower, or simply to gesticulate.\textsuperscript{37}

It is clear that the folds swathed around the collar are malleable and it is no surprise to find that the pleats are occasionally shown pulled up to veil the lower face while the head is left bare. Most interestingly a Panathenaic prize amphora bearing the

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**Fig.** 89. *Kore* wearing a *pharos*. Marble sculpture from Athens, c. 480. Acrop. Mus. Athens 688.

**Fig.** 90. Young man veiled in his cloak. Tondo of cup by the Euaichme Painter (detail), c. 460–450. Ashmolean Mus. Oxford 277.

**Fig.** 91. Woman veiled in a *pharos* with deep folds created around the collar. Hydria, c. 450 bc. Unknown provenance or location. After Boardman 1975.

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name of the archon Theophrastos (340/39 or 313/12) shows Olympia, the spirit of Olympic victory, who, leaning against a pillar, is entirely shrouded in her pharos which is drawn up over her mouth, like a yasmak (Fig. 93). The scene is difficult to interpret, but it might be suggested that she veils her face in order to display her modesty and her symbolic removal from the scene, despite the fact that, by her very nature, she has to stand and watch two naked boxers compete for a prize. The discreetly veiled appearance of the Spirit of the Olympic Games at a naked sporting event seems somewhat contradictory. More unusual is the image, in Fig. 94, of a woman who is in the act of raising part of the swathed fabric that surrounds her neck in order to veil her face. Dating to the second century AD, this detail of a Roman sarcophagus probably presents a gesture that was also practised many centuries earlier throughout the classical world.

Sometimes a form of face-veiling is practised which does not necessarily involve the complete covering of the head: in archaic art women are often shown holding their pharē in ways which conceal their upper bodies and arms; the pharē appear to be held out from the torso at virtually an arm’s-length (Fig. 95). The pharos is wrapped around the shoulders and that the two ends are pulled up between the hands and slightly elevated (thus explaining the frequently depicted uneven arched hem-line). These pharē can either conceal the arms and hands or they may be an indication that they are held together in the two hands by revealing the fingers. The extended arms tend to be drawn close to the body, as though they are bent at the elbows, although fully extended examples are not unknown. It might be thought that this motif could be best explained as a gesture of wrapping the body in the mantle and holding it in place, were it not for the fact that it is occasionally made explicit that
one end of the *pharos* is raised higher than the other, while the back of the garment veils part of the head. This raised portion, found in many examples, is equivalent to the outstretched arm, and both gestures mean the same thing – that a section of the *pharos* is being raised to cover the face.

This gesture finds, perhaps, its last presentation in the work of the Amasis Painter and does not seem to have made an appearance in sculpture or relief, although the motif does not strictly die out at this point. An amphora in Würzburg shows the re-invented motif and depicts a young woman, shrouded in her *pharos*, who raises her covered hand to her mouth in order to veil her face (*Fig. 96*) and the same gesture is performed by a number of women in a variety of scenes, mythical and ‘real’. Red-figure also uses the gesture, and a particularly good example shows Iokaste drawing up her veil with her concealed hand to hide her face (*Fig. 97*); here a particularly good visual depth is achieved by the artist, an effect entirely absent from the black-figure examples, because the veil is depicted crossing in front of (and thereby obscuring) Iokaste’s face, whereas in the earlier black-figure scenes (where it is difficult to represent three-dimensional depth) the veiled hand is only lifted to the front of the profiled-face to suggest concealment. In fact, relief sculpture actually uses both of these modes of representation: a fragmentary relief, said to depict Ariadne, shows her raising her veiled hand to the front of her face like the black-figure examples (*Fig. 98*), while the red-figure technique finds reflection in one of the sculpted figures on the hellenistic ‘Sarcophagus of the Mourning Women’.

It appears, then, that from the early archaic period through to the hellenistic age artists had experimented with a very familiar motif of depicting women raising
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their covered hands to veil their lower faces. Two different ways of exhibiting the gesture developed, one showing the covered hand brought up in front of the profiled face, and the other trying to depict more naturalistically the veiled hand concealing the face.

We have already noted that late-fifth- and early-fourth-century relief sculptures tend to assimilate female body and dress into one form, and that even the veil is depicted with the customary ‘wet-look’ so that it also hangs limply around the heads and shoulders of Ampharete (Fig. 40). But even in the case of Ampharete we see an early attempt to push the veil as far back on the head as possible, so that it does not obscure her face, while in the case of Hegeso (Fig. 99), however, her diaphanous veil merely covers the back of her head and her large chignon and does not obscure any of her face or her elegantly arranged coiffure. A further extension of this reluctance to cover explicitly the head is found on a relief from the Athenian Asklepieion, dated to c. 410, which shows Asklepios accompanied by his daughter Hygieia (Fig. 100), who wears the customary wet-look chiton that reveals the outline of her breasts and a delicate veil (either a shaal or a kolpos type, it is difficult to tell) which she fingers daintily. Interestingly, though, the veil is depicted in such a way that it does not obscure her face, hair, or head; it is almost as though Hygieia’s face is sculpted in profile whereas the veil is represented frontally so that it merely acts as a halo to outline the goddess’ features. The same ‘halo’ device of representing the veil is used for the heroine on the well known Orpheus and Eurydike relief of roughly the same date (Fig. 101) and can even be found in vase-paintings of the late fifth and fourth centuries.
The most extreme cases of obscuring the veil occurs in images in which it is only made apparent because of an accompanying gesture, a particular conceit only found in sculptural reliefs, although, interestingly, it can located mainly in Lakonian and East Greek examples. Dating to the latter half of the sixth century, the so-called ‘hero reliefs’ of Sparta show a bearded male figure sitting on an elaborate throne and holding out a kantharos as he gazes directly at the viewer. He is accompanied by a woman, rendered in profile, who often holds a pomegranate in one hand and, with the other, raises her veil (Fig. 102). Yet there is nothing to suggest that the woman is veiled (with a pharos?) were it not for the accompanying gesture, as the sculptor is keen to depict the uninterrupted view of her delicate ringlets and curls (Fig. 103). The veil is only represented being held aloft behind the woman’s profiled features (in fact the veil, which was probably originally brightly painted, is used to highlight her profile); the veil is not represented covering the part of her profile immediately visible to the viewer. Similarly, but dating to the opening decades of the fifth century, a relief from the famous...
Revealing the veil: problems in the iconography of veiling

‘Harpy Tomb’ from Xanthos in Lycia depicts three young women dressed in the familiar fashion of the korai and walking in procession to a seated noblewoman or goddess (Fig. 104). Each of the girls carries a different object as an offering to the main figure, but all three of them wear their hair hanging down their backs in a mass of wavy tresses, and strands of curls flow over their shoulders too. The figure heading the procession is the most interesting: as she reaches the enthroned woman, she raises her veil – the delicate pleats in the fabric are recorded in some detail. However, were it not for this gesture it would appear that the girl was unveiled, since the veil is not represented being worn by her in any other way; it does not cross the section of her profiled head visible to the viewer nor does it enshroud her lower figure. We can presume, therefore, that the other two korai are similarly veiled, although it is impossible to know what type of veil the artist has in mind.

Veiled or unveiled? Re-thinking the ‘anakalypsis-gesture’

In about 1632, as a tribute to one of his wealthy patrons, Antony van Dyck painted a double-portrait of a pair of sisters à la antique (Fig. 105). Seated towards the front of the scene is Dorothy, Viscountess Andover, a newly wedded bride, whom van Dyck portrays holding a basket of flowers, symbol of fruitfulness, offered to her by Eros. Behind stands her sister, Elizabeth, Lady Thimbleby, also a recent bride. Van Dyck depicts her touching the end of a flame-coloured cloth which she delicately raises off her shoulder. The colour, according to van Dyke’s notes, is meant to put one in mind of the Roman flammeum, the bridal veil, but the gesture of lifting a section of the cloth was inspired by Greek prototypes. For van Dyck the motif encapsulated the essence of wifely virtue, and he used the gesture to announce to the portrait’s admirers that here we have a married woman. His explanation of the pose is perfectly acceptable today, and scholars widely use the same interpretation of the so-called anakalypsis-gesture, especially in the study of the Greek wedding, where it is generally used in the context of the ‘unveiling of the bride’.
The *anakalypsis*-gesture is one of the most frequently encountered motifs in Greek art. In fact, there are so many examples that a close study is well beyond the limit of the present work. The *anakalypsis*-gesture is usually performed by women, but examples of men adopting the pose are not unknown, though these tend on the whole to be figures of gods and heroes and the gesture itself can be absurdly abstract, especially when performed by a male hero who is almost naked. The motif is very ancient and is first properly encountered in the early seventh century; and from then on it becomes a standard part of the artistic repertoire in the archaic period and remains a very popular device throughout the classical age and well into the Roman era. Moreover, the *anakalypsis*-gesture can be found throughout the Greek world from Sparta to Asia Minor, and from the Aegean islands to North Africa. In fact, Spartan examples are some of the earliest available which suggests that not only was the veil a facet of archaic Lakonian society, but also that the artistic motif may have had its origins in Spartan (or at least Peloponnesian) tradition.53

The motif always incorporates the gesture whereby a woman raises part of her veil with one arm which she apparently extends in front of her so that the veil forms a large and distinctive flap of cloth which frames her face (*Fig. 106*), although sometimes the gesture is reduced to a mere delicate touching of the veil, particularly in later classical examples (*Fig. 107*). It is clear that painters and sculptors relished the opportunity that the gesture gave them to experiment with the depiction of the hands and fingers and the range of effects that could be created by the veil falling in a variety of folds around the face, head, and shoulders. Furthermore, there are frequent variations on a theme and the *anakalypsis*-gesture is found in many images
where the veil is not worn on the head, but instead it can be performed with another article of clothing such as the sleeve of a chiton (Fig. 108), a section of the kolpos of a chiton or peplos (Fig. 109), the back or front folds of a himation or pharos when worn off the head (Fig. 110) or else it might be performed with an indistinct and ambiguous item of dress – perhaps a veil, a sleeve, an overhang or something else entirely. All of these actions are said to be an anakalypstarthai – an act of unveiling – and the gesture is consequently (and routinely) given the title anakalypsis.

Because the anakalypsis-gesture is such a familiar artistic motif, it has received considerable attention in scholarship, albeit in a cursory and sometimes superficial manner and I believe that much of the work that has alluded to the ‘anakalypsis’ as

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![Image 2](https://example.com/image2)

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![Image 4](https://example.com/image4)
a definite ‘unveiling’ is fallacious and unsubstantiated by any solid textual evidence; traditional scholarship fails to do justice to the term.\textsuperscript{58} It appears that scholars frequently conflate the text-based act of unveiling (\textit{anakalyptesthai}) with the iconographic gesture of the \textit{anakalypsis}, and the ritual of the \textit{anaka\-lypt\-e}ria, the ‘unveiling of the bride’, without care of the ancient sources. Thus Margaret Mayo, in a brief published abstract to an unpublished conference paper, noted that, ‘The derivation of the gesture from the ‘\textit{anaka\-lypt\-e}ria’, the unveiling of the bride in the marriage ceremony, is evident from its appearance in early black-figure wedding scenes.’\textsuperscript{59}

In a similar vein, Kontoleon argued that women performing the gesture on stelai depicting banqueting scenes were undoubtedly meant to evoke the \textit{anaka\-lypt\-e}ria.\textsuperscript{60}

But we need to remember that the terms \textit{anakalypsis}, \textit{anakalyptesthai}, and \textit{anaka\-lypt\-e}ria are distinct and separate entities, albeit ones sharing a common lexical root.

Of course acts of unveiling \textit{are} found in the sources but it is surprising to note, perhaps, that when verbs such as \textit{ekkalypto} and \textit{anakalypto}\textsuperscript{61} are encountered, they generally have the meaning of ‘disclosure’ or ‘revelation’ (sometimes used metaphorically),\textsuperscript{62} or else they refer to the uncovering of an object,\textsuperscript{63} or, if related to physical human unveiling at all, it is usually confined to a male context.\textsuperscript{64} Rarely do texts record women in the act of unveiling, and when they do it is usually in the context of a command to uncover their faces after an outburst of grief: thus Orestes tells Elektra to unveil her face, and Theseus implores Aithra to uncover her head.\textsuperscript{65} More often women are unveiled by another person, usually a man, in a gesture that speaks of her vulnerability: brides undergoing the ritual(s) of the \textit{anaka\-lypt\-e}ria put themselves into a very passive position of dependability and defencelessness.\textsuperscript{66} Similarly, the heroine Callirhoe, the protagonist of Chariton’s hellenistic novel, is unveiled (\textit{apokalypsas}) by the pirate Theron and presented that way, with bare head and loose hair, to the gaze of the slave-dealer Leonas who likens her to a goddess but nonetheless arranges to purchase her uncovered and vulnerable beauty.\textsuperscript{67}

Unveiling was not a natural display for ‘proper’ female values and was not the kind of action that women readily and willingly performed, certainly not in public. It is essential to note that, generally, when the sources explicitly connect women with veiling, they emphasize the \textit{covering} of the face and \textit{not} the uncovering. Despite this, Rush Rehm maintains that, ‘unveiling…occurs frequently in epic and plays an important role in [tragedy]’ but, oddly, only cites examples that specifically refer to \textit{veiling} and not to the removal of the veil.\textsuperscript{68} As we will see, unveiling is undoubtedly an essential aspect of the female experience in epic, but it is the casting off, tearing, and abandoning of the veil that is stressed in the Homeric context, not a mere lifting of the veil or a peering from behind its folds; raising the veil and casting off the veil are two separate issues.

So the word \textit{anakalypsis} is problematical. Despite its common translation as ‘unveiling’, it is important to remember that it is not encountered in Liddell and Scott’s main Lexicon, and it makes only one appearance in the revised supplement, where it is given the correct meaning ‘disclosure’.\textsuperscript{69} I have yet to encounter a reference
to the word being used to describe the gesture of unveiling a woman’s face or head, that is to say, anything that makes clear that ‘in art the motif of a woman holding up a flap of her veil is called ‘anakalypsis’. While ‘anakalypsis’ may be a term of art routinely used in the modern study of Greek iconography, it has no authority in the ancient sources; it is a modern invention designed to lend validity to a particular reading of the iconographical evidence.

Because the anakalypthêria is an identifiable ritual in the marriage ceremony, a time when we know that the removal of the bridal veil was a central element of the proceedings, scholars have been keen to link the event to the iconographic evidence. Thus they frequently assume that the anakalypsis-gesture has to be a logical extension of the ceremonial rite found in literary sources, and that it too focuses on an unveiling. Of course, no Greek text categorically states that the raised arm holding out a veil equals ‘unveiling’, but then that is one of the fundamental problems of interpreting and naming the varieties of gesture found in ancient art: text and image do not necessarily correspond despite scholarship’s best efforts to force them together. Thus, Oakley and Sinos place considerable emphasis in their discussion of the bridal veil, on a passage from the Images of Philostratus which describes a painting of the wedding of Pelops and Hippodamia:

[The bride] is dressed in a wedding garment, and has just unveiled (anakalyptousa) her cheek, now that she has won the right to her husband’s embrace.

Oakley and Sinos argue that Philostratus’ text is clearly a reference to the ‘unveiling’ gesture found in modern studies of Greek art, and that the motif has to be connected with the marriage ceremony. They take it for granted that the description Philostratus provides of Hippodamia’s ‘unveiled cheek’ has to correspond to the so-called anakalypsis-gesture in modern iconographic terminology, even though Philostratus does not categorically say anything like, ‘she holds a flap of her veil aloft with her hand’. He merely points out that Hippodamia’s face is uncovered, not that she is unveiling in any formal action that can necessarily be related to any iconographic motif, and he certainly does not state that she performs an unveiling gesture that has a specific name. Indeed, the fact that we do not have or know the picture that Philostratus was describing (or imagining) has to be regarded as a flaw in Oakley and Sinos’ argument.

For Gerhard Neumann the anakalypsis-gesture is a symbol of greeting, and one moreover that was used in daily life (he classes it under his heading Gesten Des Lebens, ‘gestures of daily life’). He states,

Of the many and varied rules of polite behaviour, which belonged firmly to everyday life, art has only preserved very few. These are usually gestures of greeting, which are however not represented with the same frequency in different periods, but tend to occur sporadically. Examples are the polite unveiling of the face of veiled women, the giving of a flower as a sign of gratitude and as a greeting, or the friendly greeting with arms wide open.
I find it hard to accept the idea that a ‘polite unveiling’ was in fact a way in which a woman could perform a greeting (Grußgesten) in Greek society, although Neumann is not alone in his belief. What is interesting, though, is his conviction that the artistic convention is specifically an unveiling.

For Keuls the gesture has connotations of female nubility and sexual surrender, and Reeder likewise interprets it as a signal of sexual submissiveness, especially when encountered in pursuit scenes where it becomes, ‘the traditional gesture of the submissive bride’. In fact, the anakalypsis-motif is usually regarded as the marriage gesture par excellence, so much so that Oakley and Sinos state that,

The bride is distinguished by the gesture that she makes with her veil, holding it out from her face…her gesture belongs to the sphere of the wedding and allows us to identify easily the occasion of the procession.

Sue Blundell expands on the notion when she notes that,

Because it was so much associated with weddings, the unveiling gesture was used in art to denote not just a bride, but also a wife…[On] the Parthenon Frieze [Hera’s] pose tells us that she is married to the male by her side.

These scholars are correct to emphasize the connection between the gesture and marriage, since the motif is a fundamental feature of wedding iconography and of the married wife who often performs the gesture in the presence of her husband (Fig. 111). In fact, as a sign of married status the anakalypsis-gesture can be identified in several distinct categories: it is adopted by brides in general, both mortal and divine, and by Helen in scenes of her recovery by Menelaos (where she is additionally frequently led by the hand in another familiar bridal gesture). The gesture is frequently performed by Ariadne and other mythical brides and, indeed, concubines (Briseis, for example). It is also employed by one of the goddesses of the Delian triad, usually Leto, no doubt in her role as the sexual partner of Zeus (where Leto and Artemis appear together, one of the goddesses is usually veiled even if the gesture is not part of the scene). In the mortal sphere, the anakalypsis-gesture is seen performed by women at departure scenes (presumably wives and mothers), women at tombs (again, presumably wives and mothers) and by women seated at a (funeral) banquet, or Totenmahl (a wife who accompanies her husband, it is to be supposed).
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However, the *anakalypsis*-gesture is not the sole preserve of wedding imagery or of the wife. It is frequently encountered in scenes that have no direct marital allusions. The *anakalypsis*-gesture is found enacted by women who appear alone (especially in free-standing statues which invariably lack any context), women who are accompanied by children or other relatives, and the pose is even performed by two women who share each other’s company in the absence of men (Fig. 41). Unmarried women, mortal and divine, are also depicted in the *anakalypsis*-posture and many divinities adopt the gesture as an element of their iconography when the occasion calls: Hygieia, the unmarried virgin goddess of health, for example, is sometimes veiled and occasionally uses her veil in the *anakalypsis*-gesture although there does not appear to be any hard and fast rule about where and when she should adopt the pose.

To understand the variety of depictions and the persistent appearance of the motif we have to conclude that Greek women were habitually veiled, at least when out of doors, and that the covering of the face with a fold of the veil was not just an occasional fashion. The veil can therefore become the iconographic property not only of the married but, more importantly, of the modest and the circumspect.

Re-reading the gesture
The *anakalypsis*-gesture cannot always be read as an unveiling; rather, we should consider whether the gesture could as easily portray the veiling of the face. As we have already noted, the gesture is very ancient and from its earliest incarnations it depends on the motif of the raised arm holding aloft a section of the veil, but given the limitations (or apathy) of archaic artists concerning painting in three dimensions as well as their indifference in attempting to define perspective, perhaps we should think that the arm which holds the veil is not sticking out aimlessly into the air, but is being crossed over the torso to allow the veil to cover the face. As we will see, during the fifth century, when artists began to turn their attention towards perspective and greater naturalism, the artistic representation of the veiling of the face becomes a little easier to interpret. The rationale for the gesture is one that supports veiling as much as it does unveiling and, given the fact that lexicographical evidence cannot support the idea of a specific ‘unveiling-gesture’, I propose that the term ‘*anakalypsis*-gesture’ be abandoned in favour of the more neutral ‘veil-gesture’.

Certainly the context of some scenes can help the viewer decide whether veiling or unveiling is intended. The artist of the Mykonos *pithos* (Fig. 27) chooses to depict the moment when Helen famously unveiled her face and body in front of her estranged husband Menalaos. Blundell has suggested that the fifth-century scenes of male-female revelry in which a woman (probably a hetaira) flourishes part of her sleeve as a veil, ‘will surely announce to the viewer that this is an unveiling, and that the transition foreshadowed will involve the exposure of the whole of this woman’s body’. Conversely, it is likely that in the scenes showing the departure of a warrior (Fig. 109) the wife’s veil-gesture is one of covering, an action which stresses
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Fig. 112. Amphitrite (second from right) lifts a section of her pharos. She stands in between Dionysos and a seated Poseidon. Skyphos by Makron, c. 480. BM, London E 140.

her modesty and is designed to display to her husband the fact that she will remain chastely concealed whilst he is absent from home.

But in a way, the ambiguity of the gesture is its most striking and interesting feature, so that the woman adopting the pose could be seen as either covering her face, or preparing to uncover it.\(^90\) If the gesture is indeed a frozen moment then viewers of a vase painting or a sculpture are allowed to decide for themselves whether the gesture is about covering or divesting. Thus, for example, a red-figure skyphos of c. 490 (Fig. 112) shows an assembly of deities, among them Poseidon (seated at the right) and his wife Amphitrite who performs the ‘veil-gesture’. If this static moment is to be interpreted as a veiling, then in effect Amphitrite could be pulling the veil over her head as if she prepares to leave the scene while reassuring Poseidon that, ‘I’m going into the outside world, but don’t worry, I’ll be properly covered up.’ Conversely, if she is unveiling then she is preparing to display herself to the only man who can legitimately look at her – her husband. However, it should be noted that Poseidon is not the only man looking at her (in fact his face is turned away from her, while Dionysus, standing on the goddess’ left, looks directly at her). Besides the other participants on the pot, the question of the gaze of the real viewer of the vase, he who handles it, has to be acknowledged. In a way, no painted or sculpted female is ever really alone or ever allowed to share an intimate moment with her spouse, for the voyeuristic gaze of the outside viewer is always present. Therefore the idea that the veil covers the head or face of the modest woman is essential even if the veil is not explicitly shown in that way. The artist, like Makron who created the skyphos of Fig. 112, is caught in the dilemma of reassuring the viewer that here we have a good and modest woman, while simultaneously stressing her idealized beauty and her erotic charms.\(^91\) How does he meet the challenge? He simply creates an iconography that suggests the woman is properly covered by her veil, even though she appears unveiled.\(^92\)

The Greeks were reluctant to cover one image with another; if a viewer is meant to focus on the beauty of Helen or Ariadne or Aphrodite or a young bride, why
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cover her face (or figure) with a veil? The viewer should be able to realize that the veil is there and that it enforces the sense of *aidōs*, but it should be taken for granted that it is drawn across her face (or wrapped around her body). The focus is on her physical beauty.

The veil-gesture is just one more facet of the trend that privileges the face and body in Greek art. This reluctance to hide what should be the focus of the gaze finds expression in some depictions of famous myths. Thus, in the artistic representations of the struggle of Peleus to win Thetis, the couple are usually shown clinched in a tight embrace (*Fig. 113*). Thetis is shown fully anthropomorphic, and her incarnations as a lion or a snake (among others) are only hinted at by the additions of those creatures around her. To show Peleus wrestling with Thetis in her lion- or snake-form would take away the very essence of the goddess because she needs to be recognized as Thetis for the depiction to work, and the viewer is asked to read the figures of the animals around her as further aspects of the goddess’ incarnations.93

Similarly, vases representing the death of Aktaeon usually show the huntsman being brought to the ground by his hounds who tear him apart. In the myth, of course, Artemis has transformed him into a stag, but the artists often depict him in human form, wearing a deer-skin around his shoulders, in an attempt to merge the two elements while highlighting the human tragedy of the story. To depict Aktaeon as a stag would deny the viewer the full *human* horror of a particularly gruesome, not to say ironic, death.94 The theme is also taken up in the depictions of Kallisto’s transformation into a bear and the ambiguous replacement of Iphigeneia by a hind at the sacrificial altar.95 As Penelope Murray notes in her study of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, ‘To deprive individuals of their human shape is to deprive them of their humanity.’96

*Fig. 113. Line drawing of Peleus’ struggle to woo Thetis. The shape-shifting goddess is represented as a woman and as a lion. Cup in the style of Douris, c. 480. After Carpenter 1991.*
On the more mundane level, the Geometric artistic device in the familiar ekphora scenes has the shroud that covers the body of the deceased artificially suspended above him like a canopy so as not to obscure the view of the corpse. The frequently employed artistic device of raising the warrior’s helmet off his face may also relate to the Greek reluctance for artistic concealment. The ‘Leonidas’ head found in Sparta, with the helmet’s cheek-pieces in place, is an exception to the rule where the helmet was usually either pushed back onto the head, as in the case of Perikles’ famous portrait bust, or the cheek-pieces were raised to show the face clearly.

With these thoughts in mind, perhaps we may accept the idea that an artist wished to represent a woman with her face veiled without actually depicting the veil. However, one further piece of artistic evidence deserves special attention, for not only does it provide some of the earliest iconographic evidence we have for veiling, but it is also the most puzzling. The artist who created the archaic bronze mitra from Olympia (Fig. 28) places Klytemnestra underneath an arch of elaborately worked cloth. She holds her veil with one hand, a device which surely supposes her to be veiling her face and her body in a protective move that wards off the threat of violence from her son. The fact that she is shown underneath the arched veil is an artistic device which allows the viewer to see the queen despite the fact that her body is intended to be entirely shrouded within her veil. The concentration is on the figure underneath the clothing.

Interestingly, another veil-related artistic genre concentrates on the iconography of Herakles’ reintroduction of Alkestis to her husband, Admetos. According to the story, a pivotal moment in the proceedings was Admetos’ inability to recognize his wife beneath her veil and his reluctance to unveil the ‘stranger’ who appeared in front of him. When Euripides presented his tragedy in 438, the mask of the actor playing Alkestis must have been veiled at the crucial moment of her return from the dead in order for the scene to work and for Admetos to unveil her at line 1123. While iconography from the late sixth century onwards frequently depicts the reunion of the husband and wife or the return of Alkestis from the Underworld, there is no example of her face being hidden beneath the veil realistically; instead she always performs the standard artistic veil-gesture to suggest the idea. Later hellenistic and Roman examples of the same scene also display a reluctance to cover the heroine’s face, despite the requirements of the story. We may propose, therefore, that in the many cases of brides adopting the veil-gesture, they are in fact to be understood as scrupulously veiled, as Alkestis is supposed to be, and that unveiling is not part of the iconographic language of bridal scenes.

Development of the veil-gesture
The form of the veil-gesture does not remain unaltered over time but evolves with artistic maturation. While archaic black-figure evidence for the veil-gesture depicts the veil as a two-dimensional flap of cloth that frames the profiled features of the wearer, by the early classical period developments in red-figure perspective meant that artists...
were able to experiment with the representation of the pose.\textsuperscript{104} This consequently produced a more intelligible, less stylized, representation of the veil-gesture.

The context of a red-figure amphora showing the abduction of Leto by the giant Tityos must certainly be understood as an act of veiling: Leto is shown pulling her pharos in front of her face, and the artist, Phinitas, clearly attempts to suggest that she submerges her visage within its folds (Fig. 114). This is accomplished by depicting Leto holding the veil above her head and allowing the folds of the cloth to fall over her inner-arm, and even though the scene lacks any kind of shadow, the representation of depth is extremely successful.\textsuperscript{105} The theme is repeated on the tondo of a cup by the Penthesilea Painter which also shows Leto in the process of veiling, but this time with a shaal-veil (Fig. 115).\textsuperscript{106} Here too it is clear that the goddess is pulling her veil across her face.

The same technique was still in existence at the end of the fifth century, as witnessed by a squat lékýthos showing the goddess Hygieia (Fig. 116). Again, despite the lack of shadow, the impression of veiling is apparent in the artist’s skilful depiction of foreground (the folds of the veil falling \textit{in front} of the raised
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While it is true that there exists in many scenes an ambiguity as to whether a veil-gesture refers to a veiling or unveiling, it is clear that when Greek artists want a gesture to be specifically read as unveiling they have a device to show it; evidence for this is limited, but important nonetheless. A red-figure lekythos by the Phiale Painter in Boston (Fig. 118) has been interpreted as a representation of the ritual anakalyptēria. It depicts a seated bridegroom who faces his bride and looks at

Fig. 116. Hygieia veils with a star-spangled himation. Line drawing taken from a squat lekythos by the Meidias Painter (?), c. 410–400. BM, London E698.

Fig. 117. Bride veiling with a himation. Terracotta plaque, c. 400. Ashmolean Mus. Oxford.

arm) and background (the veil disappears behind Hygieia’s profile). From the same date, a terracotta plaque shows a bride veiling with her himation, which is depicted as a wide arch that does not obscure her face in any way (Fig. 117). Her hand is concealed within the folds, and tension-creases in the fabric are created as she pulls the veil around her head and across her face.  

Fig. 118. Wedding scene. Fragmentary loutrophoros-hydria by the Phiale Painter, c. 430–420. MFA Boston 10.223.
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her as the bridal veil is being removed from off her face. However, it is important to notice that the bride does not perform the unveiling herself. Unveiling oneself in public is not part of the image or daily habit of a modest woman; instead, the bride is unveiled by her bridesmaid (nymphutria), while she herself remains a passive participant in the ritual. Greek artists clearly have an explicit way of representing unveiling, although it is seldom used. Representing a moment of the anakalyptēria ritual afforded artists a unique opportunity to represent a ceremonial unveiling, and in doing so they stress the notion that the bride herself does not perform the action. The gesture of unveiling is alien to the Greek concept of femininity, but the action of veiling is fundamental to the construction of the modest civilized woman.

In Roman art the veil-gesture is employed in artistic representations of women on the fringes of the classical world, such as those at Palmyra (Fig. 119). Even outside the classical context it can be demonstrated that artists working in different traditions tend to use the same devices to depict standard subjects: an Indian miniature painting, for example (Fig. 120), depicts an elegant court lady holding part of her veil in a gesture reminiscent of that found in ancient Greece. The same veil-gesture is also found time and again in modern veil societies, but particularly noteworthy are the glossy photographs of Indian fashion models and Bollywood starlets wearing designer wedding saris. These professional beauties are frequently dressed as modest brides in order to sell new wedding-sari designs to a world-wide market. They are shown with their made-up faces in full view, although they gently clasp a segment of their veil between their delicate fingers in a manner that evokes the ancient Greek artworks (Fig. 121).
Veiled frontal faces
We have already noted the frequent occurrence of terracotta female figurines whose faces are veiled. It was suggested that from the latter half of the fifth century such statuettes became commonplace. They form an invaluable source of information on styles and techniques of veiling in the classical and hellenistic periods because they display, without pretension or complication, the daily dress of Greek women. Because the terracotta statuettes were inexpensive, coroplasts were not under the restraint of idealizing their subjects to the same extent that makers of more important, large-scale, works were. The coroplast was at liberty to display female dress as it really appeared, although in the case of the tegidion, as we have seen, the artist remained reluctant to depict it hanging down over the face of his subject. However, with the himation and pharos—veils the situation was clearly different.

Terracotta statuettes of veiled women are first encountered in the archaeological record at the close of the fifth century where they form part of a series of figurines of characters from comedy who are clearly recognizable stereotypes: the slave, the old man, Herakles, and so forth. The stock characters are instantly distinguishable by their masks and by their costumes that, despite the heavy padding and addition of leggings and obligatory phallus for the male characters, are modelled on dress worn in daily-life by both sexes. Because of their inexpensive material and subject-matter, these terracotta comedy figurines are good sources for understanding the everyday dress of the later classical period (and the hellenistic era) and they also indicate how dress was used in daily-life, even if the dress-related-gestures tend to be very stylized.

Five types of female statuette are of particular interest: veiled nurse with baby (Fig. 122), veiled old woman (Fig. 123), woman raising her veil (Fig. 124), young woman veiling her face (Fig. 125) and a courtesan raising her veil (Fig. 126). The majority of the female statuette-types depict some kind of veil-play, but the most common motif, even for the nurse and the hetaira, is the veil-gesture.
Trendall and Webster suggested that a set of seven fifth-century terracottas found in a tomb in Athens depict characters from the Middle Comedy *Auge* by Eubulos. Included within the group are Herakles and the old woman and young veiled woman of Figs. 123 and 125. It is clear that the modest girl, most likely Auge herself, raises her *pharos* in order to veil her face in what was probably a stock gesture for this type of character, and it is interesting to compare it with a scene from a *kalyx-krater* of c. 340 (Fig. 127),\(^{115}\) where Auge, attended by her nurse, is assailed by Herakles. Notice, however, that her hand holds out her veil in the typical vase-painting veil-gesture that surely can be correlated to that found on the statuette at Fig. 125. The two veil-gestures in fact show one and the same thing and the same character adopts the stock ‘modest-maiden’ pose, although the two artists working in two very contrasting media were under constraint to depict it differently.
A very small but noteworthy corpus of vase-images breaks with this convention and depicts women with their faces veiled either staring directly out to the viewer of the vase or, alternatively, they are shown in three-quarters-view and look in at the painted scene. In these scenes the painter clearly has a different agenda to that of the traditional veil-gesture compositions: here the veiling of the frontal-face is of fundamental importance to the scene. It proves that the Greek artist was not only capable of realistic portrayals of daily dress, but was also able to adjust his perceptions of ‘reality’ to suit his (or his clients’) needs. The veiled face of the frontally staring woman immediately connects with the viewer of the vase and we are irresistibly drawn into her gaze. Fig. 128, a Chalkidian amphora of c. 530, shows Oedipus sitting in front of the Sphinx and surrounded by eight heavily-veiled women who squat inelegantly on the ground. These are the mothers whose sons have been carried off by the creature; they represent the fearful population of Thebes who long for revenge over the monster. They are depicted as a united group, a motif that is emphasized by their veiled faces, which are necessarily devoid of individuality. They sit and brood as a group, but as the woman in the bottom register turns and faces out, the viewer is brought into the scene through the connection with her gaze and is asked to identify with the painted participants.

While the frontal-veiled face of the Chalkidian vase enlists the viewers’ gaze and sympathy, other scenes are no doubt erotic in content. The veiled women on a krater now in Mount Holyoak (Fig. 66) are unquestionably meant to tease the viewer, and the stare from the eyes of the central figure, the only features that can be discerned among the heavy swaths, hits the spectator with force. In Greek imagination the unveiled eyes of an otherwise covered face contained an immense power.

Conclusion

Although the veil may appear to be absent in many female-related compositions, closer examination reveals that it is often worn in a position that does not make it the central focus of a scene. This may have something to do with the Greek desire for eroticism and idealization in artistic representation in which articles of clothing were often rendered with a special ‘twist’ that removed them from reality.
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In addition, the pose that has for so long been known as the *anakalypsis* (unveiling)-gesture proves instead to be a misinterpretation of a shorthand artistic motif that might as easily show an act of veiling. The reluctance to show the artistic female form hidden beneath layers of clothing may account for the unwillingness to represent women entirely veiled, although artistic developments throughout the classical period show that artists were experimenting with more realistic depictions. In contrast terracotta figurines regularly show women with veiled faces and a small corpus of vase-paintings reflects this trend, but here the artists are working towards a different agenda.

Notes

1 See, for example, Fantham *et al* 1994, vi.68–127; Bérard 1989; Rawson 1973; Keuls 1985. More recently however, interpretations of Greek vases have begun to question the reliability of the images and scholars have contemplated the idea that iconography can be receptive to a mélange of readings depending on the archaeological context (although vases depicting women are almost persistently read in the ‘daily life’ setting). See, for example, Moon (ed.) 1983; Spivey 1991; Lissarrague 1992. Moreover, it is now beginning to be recognized that the clientele for whom the vases were created had a fundamental effect on the creation of the imagery and it is becoming evident that many scenes of Athenian ‘daily life’ were specifically created for the Etrurian market and were exported to Italy to satisfy the inexhaustible demand for Athenian pottery among Etruscan purchasers. Certain themes, such as erotica and depictions of working women, were particularly popular in Etruria, while wedding scenes and funerary motifs were more popular in Attica (although the divergence in taste is rarely a feature raised in scholarship) and indicates that the Etruscan clients were able to choose the scenes they enjoyed the most and found relevant to their own life-experience, and could ignore the scenes that had little personal or cultural meaning. On the problem of the Etrurian provenance of Athenian pots, see Spivey 1991. For an examination of female-related iconography see Lewis 1997, 141–54; she suggests that if we assume that the viewers of these pots are not Athenian, then the questions we ask of them (are the women real? where does the scene take place? is the scene to be considered erotic?) are inappropriate; instead Lewis suggests that we place the pots created for the Etruscan market in a funerary context and re-read the images of women as relating to the idealized world of the dead. As she has stated, ‘This means that we must look at some well-known scenes with an Etruscan eye.’ Further discussion can be found in Shapiro 2000.


3 See above, Chapter 1.

4 As defined by Kilmer 1993, 1.

5 For a full discussion see Llewellyn-Jones 2002a.


7 Graham-Brown 1988, 45 ff. I am grateful to Keith Hopwood for this reference.

8 Ibid. 40.

9 In much the same way that Orientalist photography, and Orientalist art in general, concentrated on images set within the harem, the private world of women and the family. See ibid. 70 ff., and Croutier 1989.

10 I am very grateful to Sue Blundell for sharing her thoughts with me on these issues and
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11 German scholars often use the term *Daseinsbilder*. See, for example, the discussion by Himmelmann 1998, 105.

12 See Barker1922, 410: ‘It must always be remembered that the Greek rarely fell to the level of mere representation; his art was always design and even pattern-making in his most literal moments. This affects the value of all evidence as literal statement, but especially in this transformation of fact into design-motives apparent in vase-paintings. The sculptured costumes are rarely difficult to decipher [I cannot agree]; those of the vase paintings are often baffling [very true].’

13 On the process see especially, Barber 1991. Linen was used as well as wool, and even in the fifth century there is evidence for the use of silk that would certainly have provided artists with the opportunity to recognize and record endless varieties of thin, soft folds, worn in layers. See, Miller 1997, 77–9; Barber 1991, 32, 204; Kübler 1936. Sophistication, sexual allure, power, and austerity could all be expressed by the style in which simple rectangles of fabrics were disposed around the body, and numerous and sometimes elaborate conventions developed, receded, and co-existed both for wearing these clothes and, more intriguingly, for representing them.

14 An investigation into artistic styles of representing dress in art from the ancient world to the early twentieth century is provided by Hollander 1975. This is still the primary study of artistic representation of ancient dress despite the fact that Hollander herself is not a classicist but an art historian. On the idea of drapery, Clark 1993, 105, perceptively notes, ‘“Classical drapery” has been so prevalent in European art that classicists tend to think of it not as clothing but as an aspect of Greek and Roman art’.

15 I do not want to suggest that all women are necessarily represented in transparent garments, but it is noticeable that even the most conservative depictions of women will often hint at the shape of the breasts beneath their clothing or attempt to delineate one or two legs hidden beneath the gown. For a good discussion of transparency in Greek art see Losfeld 1994, 371–99.

16 According to Stewart 1997, 128, this, ‘looks like a classic case of wish fulfilment’.

17 Compare Stewart 1997, 105 fig. 63. For a discussion of the eroticism of breasts in Greek art see Llewellyn-Jones 2002a.

18 The more restrictive black figure painting could also suggest the female shape by deliberately emphasizing the female contours, especially the buttocks and the legs. See, for example, Boardman 1974, figs. 221, 222, 288, 294; see further, Llewellyn-Jones 2002a.

19 See Hersey 1996, 12 ff.

20 Stewart 1997, 3 ff.

21 Of course it is utilized as an erotic garment in its own right. See Chapter 10.

22 See, most significantly, Lewis 2002.

23 As suggested by Galt 1931, 388.

24 The women in these scenes always look tall, handsome and dignified (almost goddess-like) and are sometimes given lovely (nymph-type) names. Sometimes they are accompanied by deer or other feminine-related motifs. Gloria Pinney, in a paper entitled ‘Myth and Genre on Athenian Vases’ presented at a conference on Greek Iconography at Reading University in August 1999, argued that the fountain-house scenes are set in some semi-mythical Athenian past and depict an ‘imaginary daily life’. I find her arguments very persuasive. Less credible is Keuls 1983, 210–14.
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25 See Llewellyn-Jones 2002a, 177. Of course, it may also be supposed that fountain houses were areas of female segregation, places where women could commune in public without the presence of men and that male intrusion into these places was seen as unacceptable – which would explain why the fountain houses are so frequently alluded to in scenes of sexual assault.

26 For the *chitōniskos* see Losfeld 1991, 49, 203, 247–50.

27 Bérard 1989, 93. While he agrees that the scene could have a ritual significance, Bérard sensibly prefers to interpret it as the private exploits of women assembled in an orchard.

28 Boardman 1989, 98 and fig. 234.


30 See Robinson 1992, 48–9, 85.

31 See Boardman 1975, 132 and fig. 214.2.


33 Richter 1968, 105, no. 194, notes that, ‘the back of the mantle is pulled up to form a loop’. Dated to c. 470.

34 Ibid. 102–3, no. 184 and figs. 587–90.

35 See Boardman 1975, 195. See also, Marcadé 1982.

36 See Boardman 1975, 112; Keuls 1985, 260.


38 Ibid. 286. See also Hoppin 1906, 388–9.

39 The sarcophagus is in the collection of the Capitoline Museum in Rome, but is currently on display in semi-permanent Collezioni alla Centrale Montemartini. I am grateful to Ruth Rees for the photograph from which the line drawing was made.

40 See Boardman 1998, 109 and fig. 226.

41 The shape created by the *pharos* has led to the wearers being dubbed ‘Penguin Women’.

42 See Bérard 1989, 46.

43 See Trendall and Webster 1971, 67, 69–70, 114–15; Mikroutsikos 1995, 102–3. A red-figure *hydria* dating to c. 410, however, shows an elderly woman (possibly the nurse from Euripides’ tragedy *Aiolos*) covering her face with her veiled hand in the manner of black-figure representations. See Trendall and Webster 1971, 74, fig. III.3,4.

44 See *LIMC* Ariadne 73; Mikroutsikos 1995, 112.

45 Weller 1970.

46 Carpenter 1991, 102, fig. 141; Robertson 1979, 135.

47 See Carpenter 1991, 159, fig. 234; Trendall 1989, 248, fig. 432 (top); Boardman 1989, fig. 244.2.

48 For a discussion of the reliefs, see Fitzhardinge 1980, 80–2; Hafner 1968, 98–9; Boardman 1993, 165.

49 For a discussion of the tomb, see Ridgeway 1993, 227, 243, 397; Boardman 1995, 189 and fig. 211; Richter 1968, 104–5, no. 192 and fig. 612.

50 On the portrait see Ribeiro 1986, 82–3.

51 McNiven 1982 has made a study of ancient gestures and has catalogued hundreds of
examples of the *anakalypsis*-gesture performed by women, but there are only 24 representations of men adopting the pose. See also Miller 1999, 240, n. 52.

53 See further Raftopoulou 1993.
54 A further examination of the motif can be found in Blundell 2002.
55 See also Boardman 1989, figs. 238, 352, 381, 383.
56 See also Reeder 1995, 159, 360.
57 See also Boardman 1975, fig. 353; Reeder 1995, 161.
58 See Cairns 1996a, 153, n. 22. Galt 1931, 380–9 attempted to analyse the gesture but only gave a greatly abbreviated list of examples of sculpture, relief and vase paintings in which it is found.

59 See Mayo 1973, 220. See also Reeder 1995, 125.


61 LSJ s.v. *έκκαλύπτω*, *άνακαλύπτω*.

62 e.g., Aes. *PB* 193 (πάντες έκκαλύψαν καὶ γέγονεν ἠμῖν λόγον); Eur. *IA* 321 (μών τρέσας οὐκ ἀνακαλύψαν βλέφαρον, ἢ ἀγέγος); 872 (ἐκκάλυπτε νῦν ποθ' ἠμῖν οὐσίνας λέγεις λόγος); 1146 (ἄκουε δὴ νυν· ἀνακάλυψα γὰρ λόγος); Plut. *Arist.* 2.2 (ἀπὸ τῆς φιλονικίας ἐκείνης ἀνακάλυπτεσθαι); Plut. *Arist.* 13.2 (ἐγὼ μὴ ἔαν ἁμελευμένον τὸ πράγμα μὴ ἀπαν ἐκκαλύπτειν); *Lys.* 30.2 (καὶ γὰρ ἡ πενία τοῦ Λυσάνδρου τελευτησάντων ἐκκαλυφθεῖσα φανερωτέραν ἐποίησε τὴν ἀρετήν); *Per.* 16.9 (ἐκκαλυψάμενον οὖν τὸν Ἀνάξι- αγόραν εἰπεῖν πρὸς αὐτὸν).

63 e.g., Strab. 6.2.3 (ὡστε λατομίας εἶναι χρείαν τοῖς ἀνακάλυσαι βουλομένοις τὴν εἰς ἀρχῆς ἐπιφάνειαν); 7.4.1 (οἱ γὰρ ἀνεμοὶ τὰ τενάγη ραβίδως ἀνακαλύπτουσιν); 9.2.16 (ἀνοίχ- θέντων δὲ τῶν αὐτῶν ἢ ἄλλων ἀνακάλυπτεσθαί); Xen. *Anab.* 1.2.16 (ἐξών δὲ πάντες κράτη χάλκα καὶ χιτώνας φοινικοὺς καὶ κνημίδας καὶ τὰς ἀσπίδας ἐκκαλυφθησέναι).

64 e.g., Eur. *HF* 1202 (ἀλλ' εἰ συναλύγων γ' ἡλθον, ἐκκάλυπτε νυ); 1226 (ἀνίστασα, ἐκκάλυψαν ἄθλιον κάρα); 1231 (τι δητά μου κράτε ἀνεκάλυψας ἠλίως); Aeschin. 3.55.11 (ἐκκάλυψεν μὲ φησὶ προσελθὼν καὶ ἢξειν ἐπὶ τὸ βήμα καὶ ἀναγκάσειν ἀποκρίνεσθαι); Paus. 4.18.6 (τρίτη δὲ ὑπερ' ἡμέρα ψόφου οἰδαθάνεται καὶ ἐκκαλυψάμενος).

65 Eur. *Orest.* 294; *Supp.* 111. In itself the exhortations to unveil the face may only be dramatic necessities to allow the dialogues to proceed so that the scenes may continue.

66 For a full discussion see Chapter 8.


68 Rehm 1994, 40, 169–70, n. 50.

69 LSJ (rev.sup.) s.v. *άνακαλύπτως*. Plutarch (*Mor.* 518D), for example, speaking about secrets, uses it thus: οὕτω δ' ἐκάστῳ λυπηρόν ἔστιν ἢ τὸν περὶ αὐτὸν κακῶν ἀνακάλυψις, ὅπως πολλοὺς ἀποθανεῖν πρότερον ἢ δειξαί τι τῶν ἀπορρήτων νοσημάτων ἴατροῖς. (’So painful for all of us is our own troubles that many die rather than reveal to physicians some hidden malady’). See also, Plut. *Mor.* 511D 8; 70F 11; 456D 2; 471A 9; 516F 3; 599C 3; 1012D 7. A play by Philemon entitled ‘Ἀνακαλύπτοντες’ (fr. 6), could be translated ‘Unveilers’, but more probably has the meaning ‘Revealers’; it does not necessarily refer to a bridal unveiling. See Edmonds 1961, vol. IIIA, 9, n. c. The word can also be used for the uncovering of an object, e.g., Ar. fr. 136 K.-A. (ἀθάρης ἀνακάλυψασα μεστὸς τρόβλιον).

70 Some of the difficulties encountered in the study of ancient gesture are highlighted by Bremmer 1991.

Besides, we need to remember that Philostratus was not an art historian or a travel writer intent on recording what he saw. He discusses paintings as if they were works of literary art and the beauty of the picture lies in the overall emotion that it exudes, not in the technical details. As Fairbanks stresses in his introduction to his Loeb translation (1941, xxi–xxii), ‘No reader can forget that Philostratus is a sophist, that his first preoccupation is the literary form in which he writes his descriptions. Whatever the paintings themselves may have been, it is his aim to emphasize and develop the sentiment, be it epic, tragic, or idyllic, which he found in the paintings. The very subjects of the paintings show that the sentiment existed, and that all the powers of his literary art were used in exploiting it… Nor are we to expect technical data about the paintings. Rarely he speaks about draughtsmanship … or of perspective.’

Neumann 1965, 41: ‘Von den mannigfaltigen Höflichkeitsformeln, die zum festen Bestand des alltäglichen Umgangs gehören, hat die bildende Kunst nur wenige überliefert. Es sind vorzugsweise Grußgesten, die aber nicht zu allen Zeiten gleich stark dargestellt sind, sondern oft nur sporadisch vorkommen wie das höfliche Enthüllen des Antlitzes bei verschleiernten Frauen, das freundliche Darreichen einer Blüte als Zeichen des Dankes und der Begrüßung oder das herzliche Empfangen mit ausgebreiteten Armen.’

See further, Kenner 1960, 17 and Schefold 1964, 90, both of whom endorse the idea of the anakalypsis-gesture as freundliches Grüßen. Clement, LIMC s.v. Helene, nos. 210, 228, 281, also sees the gesture encountered in the ‘recognition’ scenes as one of greeting.

Keuls 1983, 222.
Reeder 1995, 339.
Oakley and Sinos 1993, 30.
For the motif see in particular Dipla 1997.
Ariadne’s wedding imagery is well discussed by Hedreen 1992, 31–66, esp. 36. Again the gesture is interpreted as an unveiling.
I am grateful to Timothy McNiven for kindly sharing this information with me. For further details see his Ph.D. thesis, ‘Gestures in Athenian vase-painting: use and meaning, 550–450 bc.’ University of Michigan 1982, 103–5.
See especially, Dentzer 1982, 484–9. He tentatively notes that the detail of the gesture found on some banquet-reliefs could link them to the Spartan hero stelai and thus to a funerary cult, but that the gesture may also be typical of the epiphany of a goddess or a deceased female. I find this unconvincing.
See, for example, Sourvinou-Inwood 1991, 69 in regard to ‘pursuit-scenes’: ‘Some of the pursued girls wear the mantle over their head, or partly cover their head. This element is itself polysemic, and cannot define the scene in any particular way. However in the context of this theme it may contribute to the nuptial allusion by calling up the figure of the bride with the himation over her head. But the comparative rarity of such consensual elements in erotic pursuits is correlative with the playing down of the semantic facet ‘consent’, for it is the wild rather than the cultural/institutional side of erotic relations and marriage that is stressed in this theme.’ See also Kron 1988, 299–300.
See Shapiro 1993. The deity most strongly associated with the veil is without doubt Hera. She is frequently depicted in the anakalypsis-posture.
I follow Dentzer 1982, 488 in his classification of the pose as one routinely encountered in la vie quotidienne.
For a discussion see below, Chapter 6.
See also Dipla 1997, 121. The veiling of the face is still inherent in all of the variations
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of the veil-gesture. The ample amount of fabric contained within a sleeve, an overhang of a dress or a mantle would easily facilitate the covering of the nose and mouth.

The tradition of Helen’s unveiling is comparatively late however: the scholia are consistent in stating that the story of Helen’s unveiling and revelation of her breasts in front of Menelaos originated in the poetry of Ibycus and Lesches in the sixth century. The scholiast of Euripides’ *Andromakhe* (630) in particular seems to focus on three essential elements of Ibycus’ treatment of the story: Helen’s flight to the temple of Aphrodite, her meeting and conversation with Menelaos, and his action of dropping his sword ‘because of love’ (εἰς γὰρ Ἀφροδιτῆς ναὸν καταφεύγει ἢ Ἐλένη κάκείθεν διαλέγεται τῷ Μενελάῳ, δ’ ὑπ’ ἔρωτος ὄφησι τὸ ξίφος: τὸ παραπλήσια <τούτως καὶ Ἱβυκὸς>). For details see, most importantly, the excellent account of Dipla 1997.

Some veil-gestures, such as that found on a well-known *tondo* of a red-figure cup by Makron are truly ambiguous. See Blundell 2002, 161 and fig. 11. It might be that the veil-gesture can also be read as a typical feminine or feminizing gesture and that its adoption in art signifies ‘a good woman’. On this see Llewellyn-Jones, forthcoming (b).

The theme of *aidōs* and its relation to the veil-gesture is discussed below, Chapter 5.

For the iconographic tradition of Peleus and Thetis see Reeder 1995, 340–51. For a general discussion of Thetis as a classic shape-shifter see Forbes Irving 1990, 181–4.

Ibid. 197–201. A moving account of Akteon’s transformation is provided by Nonnos, 5.287 ff.


Murray 1998, 80–96. Plate 51b is particularly noteworthy.

Garland 1985, 31 ff. A terracotta model of the *ekphora* shows the shroud in place over the corpse. See also p. 33, fig. 9.

Gantz 1993, 195 notes that the literary tradition for Alkestis facing death is scarce. There is nothing preserved before Phrynichos’ lost *Alkestis*, Sophokles’ lost *Admetos*, and Euripides’ surviving *Alkestis*. We know nothing of Sophokles’ text, but we have evidence that Phrynichos’ play included a scene in which Alkestis cut off a lock of her hair in ritual preparation for her death (fr. 3 Sn). Presumably Euripides borrowed from these earlier sources. Gantz notes, however, that the episode of Herakles wrestling with Thanatos for possession of Alkestis may not be canonical and that the incident may be an invention of Euripides. However, black-figure vase painting does attest to Herakles’ introduction to the story by at least the late sixth century. It has been noted that Euripides was keen to assimilate the ideas of marriage and funerary ritual in his version of the story and that he perhaps over-indulged the wedding imagery used in the play, but again vase-painting reveals the earlier trend to depict Alkestis as a veiled bride since she also often carries a typical bridal garland. On the
conflation of wedding and funerary imagery in the play see Rehm 1994, 84–96.

101 See, *LICM* s.v. Ἀλκεστίς, no. 58.

102 Ibid. 15 (where Admetos appears to perform the veil-gesture too), 16, 21, 24, 30. For a discussion see Wood 1978.

103 See further Chapter 8. Blundell 2002, 159 sees it as an ambiguous gesture: ‘When a bride is led in procession to her husband’s *oikos* the rite of passage referred to is her own; and the ambivalence of her gesture neatly expresses the dual character of the role awarded to an Athenian wife.’

104 See Richter 1970, 21–9. She notes (p. 21), ‘for the first time in the history of art the artist became conscious of the visual aspect of things and tried on a flat surface to suggest spatial depth’. Even then, there was some notable hostility to the development of artistic realism. Plato famously propounded in his *Republic* (10.596E–597E) that art should stay illusionary and not attempt to be ‘real’. See further Gombrich 1960, 83–6, 99.

105 The introduction of shadow and shading into Greek art came late: South Italian vase painting sometimes depicts individuals where the shape of the head is ‘highlighted’ on one side with white paint to suggest light, and ‘shaded’ on the other side to suggest shadow. Mosaics of the late hellenistic and Roman eras are frequently given a sense of depth by the addition of shadow. On depth and shadow in Greek art see Gombrich 1960, 35–7. Of course, Roman copies of original Greek paintings attest that Greek artists showed considerable flair in realistic representations. For a discussion of the Phinitas vase and the identification of Leto see Cairns 1993, 319, n. 203; 1996a, 152–3, 156–8.

106 See Keuls 1985, 55.

107 See Richter 1987, 239. A Roman copy of an original Greek painting of c. 330 BC, shows the culmination of the artistic response to the veiling-gesture: standing to the far right, the delicate stooping figure of Briseis is led towards Akhilleus; as she moves forward she looks out to the viewer but raises her veiled hand to her face as she does so. The artist’s excellent use of colour, light, and shadow leaves little doubt that the concubine’s face is being shrouded in a fold of her *pharos*, but despite this, even at this late stage of artistic development, he is still concerned that the female face should remain uncovered. See Hafner 1968, 209.


109 See below, Chapter 8.


111 On the use of the veil in Indian popular cinema see Shirazi 2001, 62–82.

112 See further Galt 1931, 382.


114 On the meaning of the hetaira’s gesture see below, Chapter 10.

115 For a discussion of the Athenian terracotta collection see Pickard-Cambridge 1968, 214–15; Trendall and Webster 1971, 127. They are surely mistaken in their opinion that the young woman is ‘pulling her himation away from her face’.

116 A recent study of the frontal face in Greek art is that of Korshank 1987. However she does not discuss the veiled female frontal face. A brief discussion of the motif is provided by Frontisi-Ducroux 1995, 124.

117 See Keuls 1985, 87. She suggests that although women commonly went around veiled, their faces were not covered.

118 See below, Chapter 9.
WHO VEILS?
VEILING AND SOCIAL IDENTITY
IN THE ANCIENT GREEK SOURCES

The history of veiling in the ancient Greek world is connected to issues of female social status and identity. The evidence suggests that the earliest forms of veiling located in Homeric epic possibly stressed the high social rank of the veiled woman (or at least of her male kin) but that by the classical period, more and more women from lower (or less ‘respectable’) walks of life were perhaps veiling too. This development might be explained by the comparatively restricted nature of the sources which do not provide an overall view of who veils in Greek society. For the Homeric period at least, our sources all but ignore women of the poorer classes. But we should be open to the idea that female rank in various Greek societies may have been endorsed or affirmed by the use of veiling, and that the veil itself became such a clear indicator of social status that it came to be used by women aspiring to social ‘position’. Of course, the use of the word ‘status’ should be qualified here: veiling as a status symbol seems to have been associated with female ‘respectability’. A woman’s relationship with a man, whether her father, brother, husband or son and the ‘respectability’ which those relationships bestowed on her was endorsed by her use of the veil. A married woman or a woman living under the protection of a male guardian (even a high-class hetaira) was given a social standing (regardless of wealth or title) which was automatically denied to the unmarried or unprotected female slave and prostitute.

In his monumental study, *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World*, de Ste Croix argued that for all periods of ancient Greek history, women, or at least married women, should be taken as a social class in their own right. They may not have had autonomous control over finances or property rights, but as guarantors of legitimate offspring with a monopoly on reproductive functions, citizen women, at least, were given a special role in the reproductive processes which made men want to dominate and possess them and their offspring. However, going beyond de Ste Croix’s theory, a wife’s position in society depended on her economic and legal condition as a woman. Her sex determined her class through her relationship with her father, brothers, husband, and sons. A woman of the upper class could claim high social status, but in reality she did not necessarily have any effective (certainly public) power, or wealth, or influence at her disposal, since this resided in the hands of the men of her family. The peasant woman, though, would not necessarily be in
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such an inferior position to her male kin, who would have owned little property and had no outlet for the practice of social power. Although male ideology about female ‘respectability’ may have permeated into lower-class life, the fact that a peasant woman would no doubt be expected to work the land alongside her men-folk (as far as childbearing and child-rearing and domestic duties would permit), her membership of the peasant class might have been a far more significant determinant of her social position than her sex.

To place a woman in a social position independent of her male kin would do injustice to the ancient concepts of female rank. A woman’s class was defined by her husband’s social status and could change with his fortune. Independent women, such as hetairai, operated in a system outside of the norm, but could make bids for social recognition by a variety of devices, including allying themselves to individual wealthy clients and even wearing the dress-styles (and therefore the encoded messages) of ‘respectable’ women. Dress is a relevant factor in the classification of female social roles. Xenophon’s Iskhomakhos rebukes his wife for wearing make-up, clothing, and shoes that conceal her true form and character and makes reference to a common belief in the potentially deceptive and disruptive nature of a woman’s external appearance on social harmony.2 Ideally, external appearance should reflect social worth and moral value; economic status was not distinguished from ethical behaviour in Greek civic ideology.3

Social status enhanced by an idealized moral worth, is reflected by outward appearances, and dress is an important visual clue to cracking the social code. Female social rank was a matter of male concern, for legitimacy of heirs was an issue of intense anxiety and, consequently, the chastity and sexual control of women was a crucial factor in social structure. Sexual segregation and veiling were ways in which female respectability and male honour could be preserved since, when women emerged from their homes, they were more often than not circumspectly veiled in an attempt to render them socially, and consequently sexually, invisible. The veil marked out a woman as sexually inviolate and the property of one man whose honour was reinforced by her veiled invisibility. She was not the public sexual property of all men – that was left to certain types of prostitutes and to some slaves who were, on the whole, probably unveiled and therefore marked out as sexually available.

This chapter will look at the nuances of female social status and ‘respectability’ by way of examining when and where the veil was worn and what type of women are found veiled in the evidence from the Homeric period to the hellenistic age. It is likely that there were distinctions in veiling that reflected social class, much as we find in contemporary veil-societies. Ancient Greek societies may have been alive to the nuanced messages contained in the act of veiling when performed by different types of women.

Homer’s women: epic veiling?
The historicity of the Homeric poems is a thorny issue. There are clearly features
of the Homeric poems that provide epic ‘distance’ (the use of bronze in the poems is the most famous example) and we need to keep in mind whether the veiling of the head (and face at certain moments) might be another example of epic ‘distance’. In other words, we must ask if veiling is a practice which is intended to distinguish Homeric society from later Greek societies rather than identify Homeric society with later Greek societies? The same question can be posed for later evidence taken from Athenian tragedy, of course, where the deliberate aping of the features of epic society also needs to be considered as a possibility. If this is the case, then the use of classical literary evidence needs to be carefully ranked, with evidence of prose sources generally (and orators in particular) being given preference over poetry and drama.

Fortunately, veiling is well attested in classical prose literature (including oratory) as well as in the social comedies of Aristophanes, Menander and their contemporaries. Tragedy, it has been observed, presents us with fifth-century ideologies masquerading behind a heroic veneer (the same can be said for many works of classical art, especially in the public sphere), but the principles and social practices found in drama must have held a relevance to contemporary audiences, otherwise why did dramatists include them? Tragedies rarely explain to their audience why certain actions – like veiling – are presented, which surely leads us to believe that no explanation was necessary, since those actions are part of the audience’s contemporary discourse. The same can be said of Homer and his society. The poet never explains the rules of the social system he draws on; he never, for example, explains why his female characters are veiled or how they gesture with their veils. His audience must have been familiar with the ideology behind veiling and with the veiling actions too since they are customs that ‘belong to a culture that had existed in the recent past or still existed so that the poet’s audience was able to understand them’. If the same veil-gestures and veiling ideology continue to be found in the classical period (and beyond), that surely attests to a long and continuous tradition of female veiling in the hellenic world. Even though veil fashions might have changed with time, attitudes to veiling did not. What is presented about the actions and perceptions of veiling in Homeric poetry is essentially taken from real-life practice, but given a particular poetic gloss which elevates it out of the mundane and commonplace.

Much the same can be said of the depiction of women in Homeric epic as a whole, although the women we meet in Homer tend to perform all the traditional duties that can be found in later classical sources – they satisfy men’s sexual needs, they are solicitous of their children, they perform household tasks, they spin cloth, and they perform the religious rites traditionally reserved for women, and only function in conjunction with men. Nevertheless, Homer accords his women characters a remarkable place of prestige, as Marilyn B. Arthur has demonstrated:

Nowhere in the Iliad or the Odyssey do we encounter any disparaging remarks about women’s roles, nowhere do we encounter the expressions of misogyny which appear so frequently in later Greek literature… The Homeric poet focuses almost exclusively on the positive side of women; [epic poetry] emphasises women’s inclusion in society as a whole,
rather than exclusion from certain roles; it celebrates the importance of the functions 
women perform, instead of drawing attention to their handicaps or inabilities.\(^5\)

So women rank highly in Homer’s opinion, and none occupy so lofty a position 
as the many noblewomen of the epics. There appears to be a connection between 
high female social status and veiling in Homer and from the poems it seems that 
(certain) women were routinely expected to cover their heads, at least when out of 
doors, whilst face-veiling could be employed in front of unrelated men (although 
specific face-veils are not attested in Homer). This habitual veiling could be explained 
merely as an expression of female modesty, but this interpretation does not do 
justice to Homer’s shrewd perception and use of female veiling. It is unnecessary, 
for example, to see Helen’s action of veiling as she appears before the Skaean Gates 
in *Iliad* 3 *simply* as a mark of her shame. Instead, her reasons for veiling encompass 
many emotions and arouse several simultaneous responses. It appears that as she 
leaves her chamber the veil gives Helen (in addition to other things) an increased 
sense of social status.\(^6\)

In Homeric epic, we find the veil worn by Helen, Hekabe, Andromakhe, 
Penelope, Nausikaa, Thetis, Hera, Ino, Kirke and Kalypso – daughters, wives and 
mothers of kings and princes, or else divine women. So does this mean that in the 
Homeric world only noblewomen had the right to veil? It is difficult to tell, given the 
fantastic nature of Homeric society. It is certainly the case that only goddesses and 
elite women are *described* as veiled in the Homeric epics, but whether this is purely 
an artistic conceit on the part of the poet is difficult to know.

It is clear that in at least one early historical Near Eastern society – Assyria 
– veiling was used as a mark of female social status since, remarkably, veils are at the 
centre of a civic law code used by the Assyrians from at least 1250 BC. In his study 
of the legal rights and marriage customs of Assyrian women, Claudio Saporetti has 
demonstrated that during the Middle Assyrian period (c. 1400–1050), the sexual 
regulation of women of the propertied class became increasingly entrenched, and 
the virginity of respectable daughters became a financial asset for the family.\(^7\) What 
evidently became problematic for the Assyrians, however, was how to distinguish 
clearly and permanently between respectable and non-respectable women; this was 
accomplished not merely by a social policy of conformity as we appear to have in 
the Greek world, but by the enactment of Middle Assyrian Law 40, a law code that 
seems to have been applied and accepted throughout the several centuries of Assyrian 
rule. The law itself begins thus:

Neither wives of lords nor widows nor Assyrian women who go out onto the streets may 
have their heads uncovered… The daughters of a lord…whether it is [with] a shawl, 
robe or mantle, must veil themselves…\(^8\) When they go out onto the streets alone, they 
must veil themselves. A concubine who goes out on the street with her mistress must 
veil herself… A prostitute…must have her head uncovered on the street; she must 
not veil herself. Her head must be uncovered… He who has seen a harlot veiled must 
arrest her, produce witnesses and bring her to the palace tribunal; they shall not take
her jewellery away but the one who arrested her may take her clothing; they shall flog her fifty times and pour pitch on her head.⁹

This harsh law is highly symbolic, since the covering of the head with pitch gives the harlot the only kind of veil she is entitled to wear. Practically speaking, it must have rendered her unfit for earning a living, since the removal of the pitch would necessitate the shaving off of the hair, leaving her disfigured for a long time. The law goes on to state that the slave woman who is caught wearing a veil would have her clothes taken away and her ears cut off, although, interestingly, the law also stipulates that if a man fails to report a violation of the veiling law then he will be beaten, his ears will be pierced, threaded with rope and attached to his hands, which will be tied behind his back with the same rope and, trussed up like an animal, he will be forced to perform hard labour for a month.¹⁰

Class formation demands this visible means of distinguishing between those who belong to different strata of society; clothing and ornaments are visible marks of status in all societies. In communities with sharp divisions of caste or class, adornment that represents the most desirable symbols of social worth can often be exclusive to the upper class elite. In China up until the 1940s, for example, the wives and daughters of the noble and middle classes bound their feet as the primary indication of their rank, since living with these tiny, crippled feet would have been (theoretically) an impossibility for lower-class women who worked in household industries or on the land.¹¹ In Assyria it was the veil that was adopted as a symbol of a woman’s high social status; the veiled wife, concubine or virgin daughter was visually identified as a woman of rank who was under the protection of one man and, as such, she was marked off as inviolate. Conversely, the unveiled woman was clearly labelled as unprotected and therefore, in theory, could be fair game for sexual violation by any man.

Is dress, and veiling in particular, used by Homer in any specific way and does he reflect a real social practice? Does the Assyrian evidence stand as a model for Greek practices? It is difficult to tell, although it must be said that there are no comparative veiling laws known from the Greek world on a par with Middle Assyrian Law 40, which suggests that the Assyrian model cannot be used with absolute confidence. Yet the privilege given to the veil by Homer as a mark of honour for his upper-class female characters does perhaps indicate that Homer was creating his poems in a society that at least understood (and participated in) the social values of veiling. Law 40 may be a useful analogue, but a correlation between Assyrian and Homeric culture should not be taken too far since analysis of how female clothing functioned in early Greek society is very difficult, given Homer’s obvious unwillingness to mention the dress of his lower-class female characters. That reluctance stands in sharp contrast to his detailed descriptions of elite female attire so fully exploited in the various toilette scenes throughout the poems (which correspond in their attention to detail with the male arming-scenes). We have no descriptions of lower-class female dress to compare with that of the female nobility, nor do we have any information
on how dress is used by lower-class women, or even if they were allowed to share in
the veiling ideology which is so evidently the possession of Homer’s noble women.

Homer’s treatment of the old slave Eurykleia makes for an interesting case in his
presentation of non-elite women: she is a fully rounded and believable character
who, we are told, is loyal, affectionate, and intelligent. Nevertheless, despite her
prominent position in the households of Laertes and then Odysseus, Eurykleia is not
necessarily accorded any particular honours, and her several epithets used throughout
the poem tend to praise her good sense and loving nature or her old age, not her
nobility. Unfortunately, but typically, her physical appearance and her clothing are
not described and we do not know if she is entitled to wear a veil and participate in
the symbolic shelter that veiling offered.

Our knowledge of the social organization of women in the period from the tenth
to the late sixth centuries is notoriously limited and the Homeric epics offer only an
imperfect, semi-imaginary glimpse of a peculiar kind of reality and give us a puzzling
mixture of social practices. The world of mortal women seems to be split between
those who are married to, or are blood-kin of, kings, princes, and noblemen and
those who perform menial tasks as slaves. In between those two social categories there
seems to be a class of women who find themselves in concubinage, but the stratum of
free working women seems to be almost entirely absent from the poems, although at
Iliad 12.433–5 we hear of a virtuous woman weighing wool in her scales in order to
earn a living and support her children. The slim archaeological evidence we have for
the lives of non-elite women (from the late archaic period at least) may suggest that
they attempted to imitate their wealthier sisters in dedicating religious votives and
can perhaps be imagined conforming or aspiring to the same standards of praise and
blame that regulated the behaviour of the female elite. As participants in the game
of honour, free working-women may well have had a right to wear the veil.

Slaves, however, being ‘socially dead’, stand outside the system of honour and
shame. Because reputation and the preservation of male honour is not the concern
of any female slave, it might be reasonable to suppose that female slaves in the
Homeric world appear unveiled and unprotected – just as we find in the Assyrian
evidence. At first sight this appears well and good, although it is suggested by Homer
that slaves of the rank of amphipoloi do seem to be veiled. Why is this so?

The word amphipolos has the meaning of ‘handmaid’ or ‘waiting woman’ and
is used in epic to contrast with the more familiar term for a female slave, dmōē.
While their name does not imply that these women enjoy free status or that they
operate as ladies-in-waiting of the Medieval variety, the amphipoloi are usually
connected with the great ladies of epic; they are personal servants and may have
enjoyed a more elevated position within the noble household than other slave
women. Certainly personal access to their mistresses may have given them some
reflected status. Sometimes they are named: Helen’s amphipoloi at Troy are called
Aithra and Klymene, while at Sparta she is served by Adraste, Alkippe, and
Phylo. On one occasion the father of an amphipolos is named: Aithra is said to
be the daughter of Pittheus of Troezen, although this detail is not in itself unusual since Eurykleia’s father and grandfather are named and even the wanton slave girl Melantho is mentioned as the daughter of Dolius. What is unusual about Aithra is her pedigree, for her father was a son of Pelops and therefore a brother of Atreus and Thyestes. Aithra is linked to several heroes, including Bellerophon and Aegaeus, but she is chiefly remembered as the mother of Theseus and is often mentioned in his exploits. Her mythology, however, always places her in a subservient position, and she appears for most of her life as a slave, nurse, or (as in Homer) as a companion to the great and the good. She never seems to have enjoyed any real independent power despite being connected to two royal houses. According to Pausanias, Aithra was represented in bondage to Helen on the chest of Kypselos:

Pittheos’ daughter Aithra is dressed in black and has been thrown down to the ground under Helen’s feet; the inscription on them is in single hexameter verse with one name left over: ‘The sons of Tyndareos take Helen and drag Aithra from Athens.’

Unfortunately Pausanias says nothing about her appearance or her clothing (except its colour) and we cannot know if she was envisaged and represented as veiled, although, interestingly, Bacchylides lays considerable stress on Aithra’s veil and Euripides mentions her veiled in a pharos.

There is a possibility, then, that the amphipoloi (or at least some of them) could be genteel ladies fallen on hard times and taken into captivity, although it is just as possible to see them as born into bondage and specially reared to serve as waiting women to elite females. Nagler has proposed that the amphipoloi who accompany respectable women everywhere are symbols of chastity, and indeed the decorous Nausikaa even sleeps with a handmaid on either side of her. But while these women may act as moral guardians for young princesses (although once again there is nothing in the texts that specifically states that), their presence at Homeric courts can be explained beyond the confines of their perceived role as chaperones. They are conspicuously present in the company of noblewomen, perhaps, not simply to protect and enhance their mistress’ aidōs, but to emphasize her nobility too.

The amphipoloi who accompany Nausikaa on her journey though the city to the riverbank (we are not told their number), seem to enjoy a friendly relationship with their young mistress and they all chip in with the chores of washing the laundry and with the pleasures of bathing and anointing their bodies. The noteworthy detail at Odyssey 6.100 reveals that at the commencement of their ball game all the women, servants and mistress, throw off their veils in order to play unhindered by cumbersome head-dresses. Thus, like Princess Nausikaa, the amphipoloi had been discreetly veiled for their journey through the city and into the countryside. Perhaps we should envisage the amphipoloi who serve Penelope and Helen as veiled in a similar manner. So we seem to have evidence to imply that a certain type of Homeric slave was veiled. The veiled amphipoloi could operate in the same way as the veiled Assyrian concubines mentioned in the Near Eastern law code (‘a concubine who goes out on the street with her mistress must veil herself’): the Homeric slaves are not veiled as
Chapter 5

...a mark of their own status, but they boost the rank of those they serve. Veiling is not the privilege of the *amphipoloi*, but a mark of esteem for the noblewomen they serve. It may be no coincidence that the word ‘chaperone’ (or ‘chaperon’) appropriately derives from the Medieval French ‘chape’, meaning a hood, veil, or protective covering.\(^{21}\)

Since Homer does not provide any information on the dress of lower-class slave women, it is impossible to make a judgement as to whether or not they were veiled, but the routine sexual availability of female slaves (even if they are only ‘used’ by the master of the household and not even loaned out to his male friends) should class them among the unveiled of the Assyrian model, together with prostitutes, another society of women entirely absent in Homeric poetry, although no doubt found in real life. If women of lowly social rank were veiled in this period (and later times) – and we should certainly not completely rule out the possibility – it is not the concern of the poet to show them as such. Homer reserves the veil for use by his noblewomen and goddesses alone and for a certain category of (skilled or genteel or privileged) slave women who are prominent because of their close physical proximity to their noble mistresses.\(^{22}\)

We also need to ask whether the conspicuous appearance of the veiled Homeric noblewomen runs counter to the idea that the veil promotes female invisibility. Not necessarily. According to the iconographic evidence of the seventh century, the type of veil most probably worn by Homer’s noblewomen would have been the bright and richly patterned *pharos*-type inspired by Near Eastern prototypes. Such veils no doubt looked expensive and were intended to be eye-catching with their brightly coloured, tasselled and fringed hems. In fact, women’s veils of all periods in Greek history may have been brightly coloured or at least woven with coloured stripes or other designs, for there is ample evidence, especially from epigraphic sources, to show that clothing could be vividly coloured in a wide variety of hues and patterns.\(^{23}\)

Indeed, at the other end of our time scale, Artemidoros’ *Dream Book* attests that it is a good thing for women to dream of wearing colourful clothes, especially if they are noblewomen or, interestingly, hetairai.\(^{24}\) There is no suggestion in any source that Greek veils were designed to be colourless garments in the manner of the modern black *chador*. More relevant may be contemporary media images of Afghan women wearing bright blue, yellow, green or lavender *burqaas*. Even though women may be strictly required to wear all-concealing garments, there is no contradiction in the idea that the veils can be brightly coloured or patterned and, as van Bremen has noted in regard to the brilliant but concealing fashions of hellenistic women (in an argument that holds for Homeric women too),

> It is perfectly possible to be covered and conspicuous at the same time... The public image of elite women was partly shaped by tension between the modestly retiring and the opulently conspicuous.\(^{25}\)

As has been observed, on several occasions in the *Odyssey* Penelope enters the great dining hall to confront her son, her suitors and, ultimately, her husband,
always scrupulously veiled and accompanied by two (veiled?) amphipoloi. The poet is keen to stress that she is the mistress of the household, for she does not appear in mourning for her lost husband but instead she holds herself with the dignity and poise of a queen. Penelope hides her face behind her veil not simply as a natural reaction to express modesty and to instil a feeling of shame in others, but also because the veil distances her from her social inferiors – to some (significant) extent she veils because the suitors are unworthy to look on her and because her rank of queen is stressed by her deliberate and eye-catching act of veiling. The visual effect produced by Homer is striking: Penelope suddenly appears in the _megaron_, standing at the doorway and accompanied by her two _amphipoloi_, both of them there to bolster her appearance. Then, in a deliberate action, she takes a corner of her head-veil and draws it forward, thereby covering part of her face. These actions are clearly designed to magnify her status.

In fact, Penelope’s veil is a vital link in the chain of her characterization, for she is associated with textiles and their opaque quality on several occasions. For the queen, textiles (and even the loom on which they are created) act as masks for the concealment of her true suffering. She even hides behind her loom, which can be interpreted as an immovable veil, deep within the confines of the domestic quarters. Her veil and her loom protect her from the snooping suitors and symbolize her hidden resources, her equivocal messages, her multiplicity and strength of purpose and her status as the wife of the ruler. Commenting on the importance of Homer’s use of disguise and deception, Lateiner has noted that,

The _Odyssey_ shuffles and masks disguises, supplementing costumes and postures with assumed social identities… Penelope…hides behind cloth… She shelters her marital fidelity behind weaving Laertes’ shroud for three years, and she dons a veil when she condescends and descends to the suitors.

In the famous ‘Toilette of Hera’ sequence of _Iliad_ 14, the goddess’ use of the veil, like Penelope’s, can be interpreted in a number of ways. It is, for example, an erotic prop, but, just as importantly, the veil is a symbol of Hera’s respectability as the wife of Zeus and the queen of Olympus. Homer has no intention of besmirching the moral character of the goddess in this highly charged sexual scene and so he arms her with the proper accoutrement of the noble wife – the veil. So too, Helen’s act of veiling as she approaches the Skaean Gates in _Iliad_ 3 does not emphasize her questionable modesty, but her social importance as a royal wife, for she leaves her chamber veiled in shining linen, accompanied by Aithra and Klymene, and arrives at the Gate to be hailed by the old men who surround king Priam and who liken her to the immortal goddesses. The veil serves its purpose by giving Helen both sexual appeal and status, and the scene is reminiscent of the Penelope incidents in the _Odyssey_ – with shining veils, waiting-women, and admiring men. Homer’s main concern is to emphasize the dignity of Helen and certainly not the depravity of which she later accuses herself.
Veiling as a symbol of status is a pertinent idea in contemporary veil societies too, where a woman’s bid for social recognition is often endorsed by the use of her veil, although the rules are usually complex and a woman’s propensity to veil is often strictly dictated by her relationship to the men of her family – as was no doubt the case in antiquity. The wife of a Brahmin man in India, for example, will not veil herself before a man of lower caste in her husband’s community, even though he may be older than her husband and call him ‘nephew’; while a woman of Berber caste (slightly down the social ladder) will veil herself before a Brahmin man of the same age or senior to her husband, but in cases where two castes in the same community are accorded equal status there appears to be veiling on both sides.30

We have noted that Penelope’s veiling before her suitors (men who are almost her husband’s social equals) could interweave ideas of modesty with a notion of self esteem and social position. During her meeting with the beggar (the lowest caste character in the epic), however, she remains unveiled. Likewise, Helen and Arete are unveiled in their spouse’s courts when their husbands are present. This could be an indication of a Homeric code of veiling on a par with the modern ethnographic evidence, but it is hard to take the idea any further. Issues of social status and respectability are obviously in play here, but it is almost impossible to tease out the subtle meanings of veiling etiquette from such sparse evidence. What can be said with some certainty though is that Homer is concerned to show that his noblewomen are respectably connected to some man of high status who offers her protection and bestows on her a certain rank, and that the concept of her social station is enforced by the notion that she carefully adheres to the rules of veiling.

Veiled battlements
Perhaps the clearest indication we get from Homer for the veil being used to signify a woman’s rank through her familial association with a nobleman comes in Iliad 22 (442–72) with the death of Hektor. When news reaches Andromakhe of his tragic and bloody end, she is discovered at home weaving a robe for her husband and ordering him a bath. The impact of his death is heightened by Homer’s reminding us of how it will utterly destroy Andromakhe’s identity as a wife, a role in which she is fully immersed as the grim news arrives. Accompanied by her personal serving women (who are once again there to emphasize her position as a wife and a princess), she runs to the city wall like a frenzied maenad to witness Akhilleus dragging Hektor’s corpse behind his chariot.31 Andromakhe swoons and then, as we have seen, in a pitiful act of desperation, she tears from her head the various coverings that conceal her hair, including the krëdemnon that had been given to her by Aphrodite on her wedding day.32 It is a vivid symbol of the intense grief she feels at her sudden loss.33 But it is more than just a routine gesture of mourning; with the death of her husband Andromakhe is suddenly unprotected and acts out her downfall symbolically with the removal of her veil. She knows that what lies ahead for her is the threat of sexual violation and slavery and the fearful prospect of becoming a concubine to one of her
conquerors. The removal of the veil takes with it Andromakhe’s rank of princess and wife as well as the safety she had enjoyed under the sexual protection of one man.

In a deft acknowledgement to the power of the Homeric passage, Euripides’ Andromakhe, living as a concubine in the home of Akhilleus’ son, Neoptolemos, bemoans the deaths of her beloved husband and her only son, and her loss of status. Standing beneath a statue of Thetis, the mother of her husband’s slayer, she cries out in anguish, ‘I have thrown hated slavery around my head.’

Of course, the servitude which shrouds her head is like an invisible covering, the only ‘veil’ Andromakhe has a right to wear. Like the Assyrian slaves and harlots, the widowed Andromakhe has become fair game for violation, and just as the Assyrian harlot is veiled with pitch, the only veil that Andromakhe will be entitled to wear is that of slavery and shame.

In a similarly dramatic gesture in the Iliad, which is meant to correspond to Andromakhe’s action, Hektor’s mother, queen Hekabe, throws the veil from her head and shrieks aloud when news reaches her of the death of her son:

And his mother tore her hair and flung far her shining veil (kaluptρēn) and let out a terrible loud cry at the sight of her son.

When we examine the powerful images of the two unveiled women, mother and wife, and recognize that the word krēdemnon (used for Andromakhe’s garment and inferred for Hekabe’s) has a meaning that extends beyond ‘veil’ and also translates as ‘city walls’, ‘towers’, or ‘battlements’, then the effect of their unveiling is even more devastating: the female veil and the defensive walls of a city-state are as one. The theme is also apparent in another veil-word glossed by Hesychius – eruma – which is synonymous with the word for ‘fence’, ‘fortress’, or ‘bulwark’ and more generally for ‘protection’. In fact, Sophokles uses the word to describe the walls of Troy in his tragedy Ajax.

In its Homeric context, with its high walls flanked with towers and gates, Troy is described as ‘well-crowned’ (eustephanos) and is envisaged as covered with a sacred veil (hiera krēdemna) of battlements, but the walls are vulnerable and the Iliadic phrase krēdemnon luesthai, ‘to loose a veil/covering/wall’, is used as a vivid metaphor for the sacking of a city and for the breaching of a woman’s chastity. Zeus is described as

[He who] has unbound the heads of many cities and who will in the future unbind still more.

With this image in mind, Agamemnon praises Nestor by declaring that, with men like him, the city of Priam will soon be ‘tottering’ (ēmuseie), and the verb he uses – ēmuō – literally means ‘nod, droop, bow down’, like heads of wheat at harvest time. The image of the drooping head strengthens the notion that the city walls are like head-coverings; at the sack of Troy both heads and veil-walls will fall. Thus it is to Zeus that Akhilleus prays for strength in order to be able to loosen the sacred veil of Troy’s towers (ophr’ oioi Troiēs hiera krēdemna luōmen); his request is granted and Homer poignantly anticipates the rape of Troy through the gestures of Hekabe.
and Andromakhe who, as they cast their protective veils afar, open themselves up to sexual violation. In fact the metaphor implicates the entire female element of the city contained within its walls: wives – fertile, modest, and chaste – await violation when the walls are breached. In the ancient world, the seizure, abuse, and shame of the women would automatically follow the taking of a city and, as Nagler has pointed out,

It is partially an artefact of translation that separates both krēdemna, ‘battlements’ from krēdemna, ‘veil’, and aidōs, ‘shamefastness in sexual decorum’, from aidōs, ‘shamefastness in battle’.

For women, sexual maltreatment marked the very characterization of enslavement, and in Euripides’ *Trojan Women*, each captive woman is depicted as coming out of the tent of the man to whom she has been allocated as they tell of how they were taken from their marital bedrooms after their husbands had been killed. In the *Trojan Women* the repeated question is, ‘Whose wretched slave shall I be ordained?’ Euripides’ *hommage* to Homer’s noblewomen is additionally expressed in his desire to represent the captive Trojan women as aristocratic and chaste, themes that emerge not only in the *Trojan Women* itself, but also in the *Hekabe* and the *Andromakhe*, where personal greatness shines through in the women as though it was inborn and prevents them from behaving in an abjectly slavish manner. Of course, these are not realistic portrayals of classical Athenian slaves, but Euripides’ treatment of the female Trojan captives, drawing so much on the Homeric example, does emphasize the notion of class that permeates the treatment of the Trojan women in the *Iliad* itself.

The symbolic act of casting off the veil, alluded to by the Euripidean Andromakhe’s reference to a hated veil of slavery, is one of the many detailed *Iliadic* features used by the dramatist to emphasize his point. So in the *Iliad*, Hekabe’s and Andromakhe’s unveilings take on added dimensions that portend the collapse of the walls of Troy and the violation of the sacred city. The women’s actions of throwing off their veils (not simply lifting them, but casting them off) denotes their own loss of social status, the social displacement of the royal women, and of the Trojan women as a whole, and the desecration of sacred Ilion herself. The self-imposed gesture of unveiling tells of a blurring of female social roles and opens up the women to abuse, defilement, and impending slavery.

In a less overtly threatening vein, on their day-trip to the riverbank to wash the laundry, Nausikaa and her companions are similarly open to the sexual advance of strangers. Outside the walls of the city and with their protective veils discarded, devoid of the fortification that the krēdemnon of walls and the krēdemnon of cloth provides, these young women are exposed and vulnerable as they play their ball-game. It is no wonder that at the appearance of the nearly naked Odysseus the *amphipoloi* flee the scene, leaving the brave (and perhaps brazen) Nausikaa to confront the alien.

It is interesting to note that the image of the veil as a protective wall has continued to be a popular literary motif. It is encountered in late second century AD Christian
writings of Tertullian (no doubt utilizing Homer as a model for Christian ethics), for example, in his *De Virginibus Velandis* (*On the Veiling of Virgins*) in which he implores women to,

Put on the armour of modesty, surround yourself with a rampart of chastity, cover your sex with a wall which neither allows your eyes beyond it nor admits others in.  

In Western tradition, the idea that the veil acts as a barrier usually involves negative associations of veiling and seclusion, and thus, in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century travel writings, a constant theme arises from the observation of Muslim women walking veiled in a public space which likens them to imprisoned creatures, forcibly jailed behind the secure walls of their clothing. Among many such literary works is that of the Comte de Paris who in his 1861 work, *Damas et le Liban*, compared the city of Damascus to Oriental women who conceal their charms behind walls and veils:

Damascus is like the women I see every morning passing in front of our camp, covering their embroidered dresses with a miserable cotton veil. They hide their treasures and show themselves in a dismal light.

Clearly the author envisages that beauty and sensuality awaits him behind the shabby walls of the city and cotton veils of its women, and hints that the removal of those obstacles will reveal the anticipated ‘treasures’. Interestingly, though, the concept of treasure hidden by the veil or wall is a theme reiterated by modern Islamic feminists who see veiling as the ultimate guarantor of female respectability and, indeed, of empowerment. The gradual rise of Muslim fundamentalism has led prominent Islamic feminist authors, such as Zahra Rahanavarad, to use the veil as a rallying call for women to return to the ‘proper’ values of Muslim life. What is fascinating about Rahanavarad’s argument for ‘(re)taking’ the veil, however, is her reliance on the imagery of the veil as a walled city, a sacred fortress in fact, that contains a woman’s precious sexuality and her identity as a wife, mother, or sister. She writes,

Accept *hijab* [and] under its protective shield edify yourself… It is not a prison! It is a sanctuary of decency and chastity… It is a weapon, a fortress… which enshrines not only your physical attributes, but also the divine essence of your womanhood, the essence which endows you with power to be a mother, a sister, a sweetheart of your husband.

Veiling gives a woman a social identity by allying her with protective men who safeguard her sexuality and, in Rahanavarad’s view, her divine womanhood. Consequently, unveiling is not a practice that is taken lightly by women themselves, because the act of uncovering can remove the fortress-like protective barrier that the veil affords and may render a woman defenceless to the exploitation of other men as well as imposing a loss of self-identity. Homer’s attitude to the veil seems to operate on similar lines and it is particularly interesting to note how he makes frequent use of metaphoric veils to ‘clothe’ the noblewomen of his epics and give them a sense
of divine protection. These metaphoric ‘nature veils’ of clouds, mists, darkness and waves tend to settle over women at times when they are shown out of doors without their physical veils and they ensure that the unveiled noblewoman or goddess is kept respectable in the minds of the poet’s audience.

The ‘nature veils’ are used when the fortress-sanctuary that the physical veil offers is notably absent: thus, when the goddess Ino leaps out of a wave and hands her physical veil to Odysseus (an act which thereby saves his life), she is, of course, unveiled, and her head is deliberately made bare. The act of unveiling thereby exposes Ino to the demeaning circumstances and inferences suggested above, and consequently to save her from this threat (and a rather compromising position too), Homer interposes a poetic substitute:

With these words the goddess handed him her veil (*krêdēnnon*) while she dived back into the swelling sea in the likeness of a gannet; and a black wave veiled her (*melan de’ he kum’ekalupsen*).\(^{48}\)

Ino’s physical unveiling and subsequent re-veiling with a wave are only temporary; Homer allows her to be re-veiled again a few lines later:

In time, as he got the air back into his lungs and warmth gathered around his heart, [Odysseus] unbound the veil (*krêdēnnon*), letting it drift away on the estuary downstream to where a white wave took it under and Ino took it back into her hands.\(^{49}\)

The two symbols – the veil and the wave – are clearly intended to be closely assimilated (*kum’ekalupsen- [a] wave veiled her*), a theme which is even more evident at *Iliad* 24 (93–6) where Thetis goes through an almost exact reversal of the substitution of the wave for a veil when she ascends from the sea to join her fellow gods on Olympus. In her watery home beneath the sea, out of sight from mortal eyes, Thetis is to be imagined without a physical veil, although the veil of waves which entirely engulfs her assures her propriety, and it is only when she arises from the depths of her watery kingdom that she requires the formal protection that a physical veil offers.

For Andromakhe, though, we find that Homer gives her a far more abstract metaphorical veil than those bestowed on Ino or (in reverse) Thetis. As she looses her physical veil and other head-coverings she is engulfed in a wave of unconsciousness:

Then the darkness of night came and veiled her eyes (*ophthalmôn erebennê nux ekalupsen*), and she fell backwards and gasped forth her breath of life.\(^{50}\)

Remarkably, it is Andromakhe’s grief itself that becomes her veil, a covering of darkness that shrouds her unveiled frame. So concerned is Homer to depict Andromakhe as the quintessential devoted wife and worthy noblewoman, that even at the moment of her most intense despair and in her own symbolic (perhaps unconscious) action of discarding her veil, he cannot abandon her to the ravages that await her or to the message that unveiling contains, and so he re-veils her with a veil made of mist.\(^{51}\)
‘Conspicuous consumption’
Why was the veil such an effective symbol of rank for Homer – poetically, if not necessarily realistically? What was it about this simple garment that made it an efficacious emblem of female social status both in the epics and, perhaps, in real life? I suggest that in an age when clothing was one of the primary indicators of social worth, even more so than today, the more layers of clothing worn next to the body and the more impractical their use, the higher was the perceived social standing of the wearer. For women, all that was necessary to work in the fields was a simple dress, anything in addition to that could be regarded as inessential – long cloaks, wide sleeves, fine pleated linens, mantles, and accessories such as flywhisks and fans could all be regarded as fripperies and objects of unnecessary self-indulgence. Free women who aspired to social respectability could wear the veil while working in an attempt to boost their perceived social status, but slave women who did the hard and monotonous grafting should be unencumbered by anything as tiresome as the veil. This type of attitude still survives in some modern veil societies.

Following the Biblically-based ‘Adam-and-Eve-theory’ of the origin of dress, Victorian anthropologists firmly believed that the root of the function of clothing lay in its aspect of modesty, but by far the most widely accepted view today on the origins and function of clothing sees clothes primarily as a means for the individual to enhance his or her position – over spirits, animals, and peers.\(^{52}\) The result of this desire for self-aggrandisement is a psychological ambivalence towards dress, and over the centuries almost all societies have struggled to simultaneously display superiority while trying to hide (varying notions of) shame. The result has been the advancement, historically, of a variety of forms of condemnation for asserting oneself too overtly by means of clothes.\(^{53}\) The ability to buy, or have created, articles of clothing that are not only superfluous to one’s needs, but, moreover, hinder movement and practical living, is the ultimate mark of the process of self-aggrandisement through dress. Headgear in particular is often thought of as \textit{de trop}, very often having no practical reason: crowns, tiaras, judicial wigs, mortar boards, and top hats are not practical accessories but do say a great deal about the wearer’s social attitude; so does the veil.\(^{54}\) By its very nature, the veil is an impractical garment. It requires constant

\textbf{Fig. 129.} A woman from Gujerat Bhuj, northern India, adjusts her veil. With kind permission of Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood (Textile Research Centre) and the RMV, Leiden.
attention to keep it securely on the head or drawn across the face and incessant vigilance is needed to ensure that the veil is worn correctly and decorously and not allowed to slip, twist or fall off (Fig. 129). A large piece of fabric used as a veil (like the modern sari and chador and the Greek pharos-veil and himation-veil) is a difficult article to keep under control, while the niqab and its Greek equivalent the tegidion can be difficult to wear if the covered face means that sight is diminished. Today female agricultural workers in the Middle East and Asia, bound by social norms, religious regulations, and caste taboos, often wear the veil even when working in the fields, but the impracticality of the garment is revealed by the fact that in order to free their hands for work, the veil is held on the head by holding a corner of it in the mouth. It is no wonder that the Homeric noblewoman is aided by amphipoloi who fetch and carry for her. Ideally, the veil is suited only to the most relaxed form of life-style; it is not a practical garment and it does not fit comfortably into any work situation, although practicality is not usually the first concern of modern veiled working-women.

In Homeric Greece the veil was an aid to displaying a nobleman’s status; the veiling of his wife, daughter, unmarried sister demonstrated to the world that he was wealthy enough to keep his womenfolk separated from society and in a comfortable enough financial state that they did not need to labour. His veiled wife and female relations were also components of his display of sexual prowess and social control, because the veiled women confirmed the fact that his line would continue with legitimate successors. It is possible that a nobleman’s veiled women could accompany him on public occasions, such as funerals and wedding ceremonies, to confirm his wealth and station in the eyes of his peers. Certainly in the epics the Homeric nobleman cuts an impressive figure and his veiled women make an equally imposing sight as they stand on the walls of Troy overlooking the battlefields below or as they process through the city streets bearing offerings to the state gods. 55 Dressed in rich clothing or armour and surrounded by veiled women, the Homeric nobleman marked himself out as a figure of wealth and prestige. When a man competitively displays his possessions – chariots, horses, arms, plate, clothes, and richly dressed and conspicuously veiled women – he must also convey the idea that he himself does not need to toil, but that he exploits somebody else’s physical work, he is too preoccupied with affairs of state, the warrior ethos, and with fighting. Veblen famously analysed this type of behaviour and came to the conclusion that it represented ‘conspicuous consumption’ and ‘conspicuous leisure’, in other words, what a man attempts to communicate when he spends his money is the fact that he has plenty of it and does not need to work.56 What Veblen and others do not note, however, is the fact that a man’s spending power and social position are often enhanced by the way society perceives his womenfolk.57 To have more than one wife or to have a number of concubines and other female dependants is a mark of prestige in itself, but when those women are dressed in a splendour equal to or exceeding his own (as was the case in the nineteenth century when it was left to the female members of a family to appear as
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an appendage to the family males and literally to wear the family wealth on their backs) and, moreover, when they do not need to work out of doors, then his own social worth is multiplied in the eyes of society. Furthermore, when his women are veiled and thereby distinguished from women of lower social and economic worth, then his social authority is heightened once more.\textsuperscript{58}

A democratic veil?
While comparatively prominent in Homeric poetry, the veil is only sporadically found in archaic literature; there are few texts that can be compared with the earlier interest shown in veiling. Hesiod mentions the veil but rarely, although his references to the garment are important indications of how it might have been perceived and used in early Greek practice. Firstly he notes that Pandora was given a shining veil as part of the correct accoutrement for her role as the first bride, which indicates that the wedding veil played a part in early marriage ceremonies and suggests that veiling may have subsequently been used to mark out a woman as respectably married.\textsuperscript{59}
Secondly, in a more metaphorical vein, Hesiod (in dealing with the larger issues of moral and immoral behaviour) refers to the veil being worn by the abstract female personifications of Aidōs and Nemesis, which suggests that the notion of veiling was closely assimilated with these qualities, but in particular the concept of feminine aidōs.\textsuperscript{60} A theme that pulsates throughout Hesiod’s work is that of the male dependency on women to provide heirs to the estate and to continue the family line. As a result of this reliance on female procreative powers, women’s uncontrolled sexuality emerges as a threat and requires extensive supervision and regulation by the men of the community.\textsuperscript{61} The control of women whose sexuality or chastity was affiliated to one man in this period may have been furthered by the use of veiling, although fear of wayward female sexuality was not a Hesiodic invention, of course, and is hinted at in Homer too, where it has already been suggested that the veil was a hallmark of a ‘respectable’ woman.\textsuperscript{62} If we take Hesiod’s autobiographical information seriously, there may be glimpses of real life (of an early seventh-century farming community) interwoven with the poetic fantasies of the ‘myth of ages’.\textsuperscript{63} It is possible to view his detailed information on the minutiae of community life (especially in the Works and Days, lines 618 ff.) as reliable; even his references to the wedding veil and to the desirable female qualities evoked by veiling might be regarded as an accurate representation of the use of the veil in his own contemporary community and not necessarily as merely a Homeric hommage. The veiling of all ‘respectable’ women (that is to say, mothers, wives, sisters, daughters, and any other women connected to one man) could therefore be seen as a commonplace practised without interruption throughout the Homeric period into Hesiod’s age and through into the archaic era too, but it is hard to take the available evidence any further.
Reliable information on veiling practices in the period leading up to the early classical age is sparse: Sappho does not even speak of Andromakhe’s wedding veil when she describes the nuptial celebrations of Hektor, although there is talk of
golden bracelets and purple robes. But in contrast to the paucity of archaic textual references to veiling, archaic art, as we have seen, offers ample evidence for veiling. Moreover, the iconography traces a variety of veiling techniques which demonstrate that the veil was an adaptable article of fashionable attire, although archaic iconography (especially in the early period) does tend to concentrate on mythological scenes and primarily depicts the veil worn by goddesses and heroines. But the clothes worn by divine and heroic figures on the vases, reliefs, and sculptures are taken, I believe, from daily practice and reflect the fact that the same clothes were worn by noblewomen (or women from wealthy families) of the seventh and sixth centuries.

That there is a change in the type of veil worn by women in the late sixth and early fifth century is certain, but judging from the iconography (much of which stems from Athens, which necessarily now becomes the focus of our attention), the categories of woman found veiled also appear to be expanded to incorporate different levels of female society. By the end of the archaic age we finally have definite confirmation that the veil was not simply the prerogative of noblewomen, although once again we should be open to the possibility that veiling in earlier periods had been open to married women or guarded women from lower social orders, like the women of Hesiod’s community. Whether the artistic evidence reflects a sudden change in the social perception of women is difficult to say, but we may begin to find an explanation for the sudden appearance of veiled working women and even prostitutes if we take into account the changes taking place in both the Athenian political scene and the fashionable form of men’s dress throughout this period.

Ann Geddes has noted that there was a distinct change in the fashionable clothing of the Athenian male from the archaic age into the fifth century. She argues that while archaic noblemen took pleasure in fine clothing (often inspired by styles from the East), their late-sixth-century and fifth-century successors took a different line, believing that Eastern-style garments were effeminate, barbaric, and tyrannical. By the late sixth century, Athenian men were wearing plain clothes, a facet which made it almost impossible to tell whether or not a man was wealthy. As Geddes states,

The impression given by the artists is...of standardisation – an impression that is confirmed by derision, in literature, for people who deviated. The [clothes] like the [‘Chairman Mao’] suits of the Chinese in the 1970s suggest, to an outsider at any rate, an evenness and equality in dress. They do not convey the message that the wearer can afford conspicuous consumption.

In the archaic period, wealthy Athenian men had taken great pleasure in fine clothes, a gratification that was entirely compatible with Homeric military prowess, but somewhere along the line the finery had lost its attraction and its association with courage and heroism and, instead, plain clothes became admired. Power in the archaic period had been in the hands of noblemen who had a complete monopoly over military power (at a time when fighting equipment was expensive). Their burials reveal that they had been interred with splendour befitting their social rank.
and were mourned by warriors who conspicuously paraded the deceased’s horses and chariots at the funeral to awe the crowds. These men were influenced by Near Eastern dress styles and wore long linen robes and gold jewellery that heightened their dignity. Of course, these Athenian noblemen did not disappear overnight; indeed, despite a decline in power, they did not disappear at all. The works of Aristophanes and Plato are full of old-style nobles: Perikles and Alkibiades were connected to the ancient Alkmaeonids, and Kallias was a member of the distinguished old family of the Kerykes. However, in the fifth century their means of controlling power had changed, thanks to a gradual process of modification throughout the sixth century, which culminated in the reforms of Kleisthenes. As military strength came to reside with a larger group of hoplite soldiers, so the aristocrats who sought political power realized that they needed to win the support of these warriors. Appealing to this element of society forced the old-style aristocracy to change its ways; they could not be seen to live in an extravagant and expensive manner but now had to live a more simple life, like everyone else. This slow and complex process had an equally slow and complex effect on fashionable dress, as clothes responded to the socio-political changes. What emerged was an Athenian ‘New Look.’

Essentially the message that the Athenian New Look conveyed was one of equality. Equality was the primary characteristic of the hoplite democratic state and the absence of any formal authority in society was reflected by Athenian clothing, as aristocrats ceased to wear extravagant dress which easily and completely distinguished them from poor men. While the draping of the classical himation could reveal good breeding and a certain aristocratic nonchalance, essentially this style of garment had no pretensions towards rank, wealth, or prestige and was, to all intents and purposes, a classless fashion.

It is plausible to argue that the political and social changes that were reflected in the change in male dress must also have profoundly affected the clothing of women. Despite the harsher restrictions placed on the public appearances of women throughout the sixth and early fifth centuries, women were still expected to be present at great social occasions, and in particular at religious events, which provided them with unique opportunities for the public display of personal adornment. A change in attitude to ostentatious dressing is evident in women’s apparel from a series of sumptuary regulations, which forced women to abandon some of their more extravagant items of dress in favour of more demure styles. In Athens, Solon’s legislation covering many aspects of female life, including dress, was perhaps aimed at strengthening the harmony of the polis and, since women were often the source of conflict among men, his answer to the problem was to keep them out of sight and regulate their influence. The first signs of a restriction placed on female movement outdoors comes in the Solonic laws, forbidding, as they do, a woman to leave her house with more than three outer-garments, or more than an obol’s worth of food. His legislation, which limited ostentatious female display at funerals and feasts and in their clothing (including bridal trousseaux), was intended to prevent a woman
from moving freely through her society (as Homer’s Nausikaa does) and to limit the power of the late archaic Athenian aristocracy as a whole.  

Certainly from the late sixth century women’s dress as depicted in the Athenian iconography loses much of its Eastern opulence, as figured designs are abandoned in favour of plain-weave cloth. But figurative decoration on clothing was never to die out completely, and early fifth-century pots attest to the presence of figured tapestry woven clothing, albeit usually depicted worn by deities. Epigraphic evidence attests to the regular use of figured and patterned clothing throughout the classical period.

Once the Near Eastern veil-modes disappear, the predominant veiling style found throughout the archaic period becomes the pharos-veil, although by the 520s (coinciding with the first appearance of the himation-veil) there was a popular return of the short shaal-veil, which is commonly found in the iconography worn by goddesses, heroines, mortal brides and married women (both mortal and divine). What is notable about the shaal, however, is that it is also frequently found worn by women who can be identified with some certainty as entertainers or prostitutes. The delicate depiction of the aulos-player in Fig. 46, for example, shows her head covered by a finely pleated shaal-veil, similar to that worn by the (ostensibly) rather grand hetairai (?) of figures 47 and 54. The trend towards depicting veiled hetairai, as we will see, continues throughout the classical period when we are given more evidence, both visual and literary, that the veil was becoming a more democratic garment, worn by women of several social strata, although still, perhaps, denied to slaves. If the veil had indeed been a garment that supported and demonstrated the division of female rank in the Homeric period as suggested in epic, then it seems to have lost its class-conscious connections at this time as it became the property of progressively more women. From about 490 the himation-veil, the pharos-veil, and the shaal-veil are worn by women of almost all classes in the iconography to such a degree that distinguishing social rank through dress alone becomes an impossibility. Goddesses, heroines, female Athenian citizens, hetairai, and female entertainers are all depicted as veiled in a kind of social free-for-all, with only slaves marked out differently in the iconography by their unveiled heads.

Female slaves: veiled or exposed?
It is conceivable that the Athenian slave woman ideally needed to be visually differentiated from her mistress – after all, what upper class woman wants a slave to look just like her? Indeed, there is a good fifth-century reasoning behind the demarcation of class, since according to Herodotus, before there were slaves, young Athenian women would fetch water from a spring outside the city walls but they ceased doing so when they were raped by a band of Pelasgians, and so slavery was instituted in order to safeguard the vulnerable chastity of decent free women.

The protection and sexual segregation thought necessary for citizen women operated with the aid of the veil. It would be logical to expect that female slaves,
therefore, were denied this security. The notion that slaves as a distinct and noticeable ‘class’ had some kind of ‘uniform’ or ‘uniformed look’ is comparatively easy to find in the literary sources, as least as far as male slaves go, but the practical reality of such an idealization is difficult to visualize.\textsuperscript{78} As Lewis has recently argued, Athenians may have believed that status \textit{ought} to be determined by appearance, but in practice social rank was difficult to determine merely through outward show, and Athenian legal cases frequently attest to the confusion of identifying individuals of varying status.\textsuperscript{79} In the artworks, slaves are most commonly identified not by appearance but by the task they undertake and, in fact, commenting on the artistic depiction of class, Lewis notes that, ‘status, the fact of being slave or free, is not something which can be represented visually’.\textsuperscript{80}

The blurring of social status is most famously expressed by the Old Oligarch who comments on the near impossibility of distinguishing Athenian citizens from their slaves, and notes that because of the mode of wearing ‘humble’ clothes, a wealthy man can often be mistaken for a slave.\textsuperscript{81} The Old Oligarch refers to male dress, but female slaves may have followed suit and aspired to dress not too unlike that of their mistresses. Maybe they adopted the veil accordingly. The absence of veiled slaves in the iconography might be explained by the need to endorse accepted social conventions within the idealizing conventions of Greek art, so that unveiled female slaves in the artworks conformed to the ideology of demarcating status through outward appearance. As Beard puts it, ‘Stereotypes are most insistently stressed in areas where they are most difficult to establish and where they are least self-evident.’\textsuperscript{82}

So it is possible that female domestic slaves \textit{may} have veiled regularly and they may have veiled with society’s approval or with its censure – unfortunately there is no evidence for either case. \textit{If} female slaves of the classical period did veil in direct contradiction to desired social conventions (as in Assyria), it is difficult to know how they were prohibited, policed, or punished. The silence over such matters may suggest that there was no impediment to the veiling of female domestic slaves (any more than there was to the veiling of prostitutes) in the classical Athenian veiling free-for-all. In artistic terms, however, the ideology of a model society continued to mark out female slaves as different from their mistresses and persistently showed them unveiled, a facet that is particularly noticeable on public monuments such as grave stelai.\textsuperscript{83}

Nevertheless, if females slaves did veil themselves in public, they \textit{may} have been making a deliberate attempt at upward social mobility and it is interesting to note that until recently, the wearing of the \textit{burqaa} in Oman was a sure statement of belonging to the ‘middle class’. Slaves (once 15 per cent of the female population of Oman) were prohibited from veiling, for that act was the uncontested prerogative of free women, but with the abolition of slavery in 1950, many ex-slave women adopted the \textit{burqaa} as an initial statement of their newly experienced liberation, although it rapidly became a marker of their having moved upward socially and their new-found leisure that only someone of wealth could afford. The \textit{burqaa}
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not only indicated a free woman, but one whose husband’s, or family patriarch’s, wealth allowed her some leisure instead of keeping her fully occupied working in agriculture. This phenomenon is strikingly similar to the situation in early twentieth-century Egypt as described by El Guindi, who notes that, ‘When unveiled peasant women ventured into the city… they were eager to wear a veil as a symbol of urbanizing and “moving up”.’

Veiled prostitutes

Greek women may have conscientiously used the veil, a one-time class-conscious dress item, to blur the social perceptions of women who were not immediately identifiable as either street-walking prostitutes (a type of slave), as female domestic slaves, or as elite wives. This is certainly a notable phenomenon of classical Athenian social order, as James Davidson has noted:

For the men of Athens the women of Athens are in various stages of undress. The extreme exposure of the brothel prostitute and the complete invisibility of the decent lady force all other women to dance a striptease on points in between.

This ambiguity is expressed in the well-explored case of the pseudo-hetaira Neaira, but also in that of Theodote, a woman who is neither a respectable citizen-wife nor of the ranks of the public whores. Xenophon relates how she came to the attention of Sokrates:

At one time there was a beautiful woman in the city whose name was Theodote. She was the sort of woman who consorted with anyone who persuaded her. One of Sokrates’ companions mentioned her and said that the beauty of the woman was beyond expression. He also said that painters went to paint her, and she showed them as much of herself as was proper. “We should go”, said Sokrates, “to look at her. For it is not possible to know fully by hearsay what is beyond expression.”

Theodote is not associated with a male guardian, but she does not work as a pornē either; nor does not sell herself for money. Instead she is cast in the role of a truly grand hetaira who needs to be persuaded to offer her services. Like a noblewoman she only displays of herself what it is fitting and proper to display. Expensively apparelled and attended by an entourage of her mother and well-groomed maids, Theodote deliberately distorts the margins of respectability and availability and she supports herself by accepting the kindness offered to her by friends who are willing to give her gifts in return for ‘gratification’. Xenophon’s language deliberately locates Theodote’s sexual ‘favours’ within the economy of aristocratic gift exchange and, expanding on this, Kurke has argued that the hetaira is the product of an aristocratic lifestyle and was deliberately ‘invented’ for the sympotic space. Within the world of the symposium, she argues, the category of ‘hetaira’ served several functions: first, she was removed from the explicit moneyed sphere of public life and therefore helped to divide the sympotic world from the public space of the agora. Secondly, as a sexually available female, she introduced an important element of sexuality into
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the symposium and, as such, became part of the fixtures of sympotic space and, like the couches and cushions, she served the needs of the male symposiasts and created the right atmosphere. Lastly, and perhaps most interestingly, there was a deliberate mystification of her social status as every effort was made to play down the differences between the symposiasts and their female companions. The consciously indistinct social standing of the hetaira assisted in erecting a barrier between those within the symposium and those outside it.

The distortion of social boundaries could be emphasized by what hetairai wore. Iconography frequently shows them engaged in their ‘work’ at symposia and lying on couches with their clients, engaging in conversation or sexual horse-play. To all intents and purposes, hetairai and symposiasts look like equal partners, and they even share open and splayed gestures as they hold out wine-cups or stretch up their arms. Hetairai and symposiasts are frequently dressed the same, and very often both have their long hair caught up in a filet, wear garlands around their heads, and share the fashion of draping their himatia around their lower torsos to display their naked chests or breasts. But the social waters are further muddied by what hetairai wear outside the symposium space, for while pornai who ply the streets and public brothels are available to the gaze of all and sundry as they stand displaying their naked or semi-nude bodies, the great hetairai are more like wives, and thus either remain concealed within their homes or, when in public, take cover behind their veils. One is able to catch a glimpse of the great hetaira, like a married woman, at public festivals or as they take trips through the streets, but like respectable wives, when outside, hetairai cover up.

Machon tells how Gnathaena, a grande madame, and her (grand)daughter Gnathaenium were once eyed up in public by a general whose passions were roused when he studied the young girl’s movements within her clothes, and according to Hermippus of Smyrna, the courtesan Phryne rarely exposed herself to the public view and, in fact, endorsed her charms and her mystery by keeping herself clothed. Tying with the notion of the veiled but inherently deceptive whore displaying a sham aidos, the fourth-century parodist Matron of Pitane lampoons the Homeric formula ‘holding up to her cheeks her shining veil (lipara krēdemna)’ which is used frequently in connection with the circumspect Penelope, and instead draws a picture of a prostitute employing roughly the same device, since she is depicted ‘holding up to her cheeks her filthy veil (rhupara krēdemna).’ Maybe this is why the little girl-piper of Fig. 46 is veiled too: she is clearly in a symposium and so her sexual availability and social position are distorted by the mixture of her transparent gown and her modest veil. One marks her out as available, the other as inviolate – an indistinctness that corresponds with the general conception of female aulos-players who, together with acrobats and dancers, comprise a significant grey area of women of uncertain status who provide the largely unmarked backdrop to the symposium. When they were musicians, were they also hetairai? When they provided sexual services (as they apparently usually did), were they pornai? The ambiguity could be hinted at by the artist of the red-figure fragment
who plays with the idea of sexual accessibility in the way in which he dresses the young woman who is concealed but yet revealed. The dichotomy of images of the demurely veiled head but revealed body of the pipe-girl puts one in mind of fragment 8 of Praxilla (the possible inspiration behind Asklepiades 3):

You who look prettily in through windows: virgin in your head, bride below.96

The dichotomy intrigues other authors too: writing in the first century AD, the philosopher Philo, for example, speculates on the effect that the veiled face of a prostitute has upon the male gaze. Likening a veiled courtesan to the Biblical pseudo-prostitute Tamar, who, while veiled, touts for business at the roadside, he declares that,

Her wish is that enquiring minds may unveil and reveal her, gaze upon the glorious untouched beauty, undefiled and truly virginal, of her modesty and self-control.97

Here, in a typical motif in which the veil is utilized as an object of feminine trickery, Philo plays up the notion that the veiled prostitute is inherently deceptive and deliberately presents the illusion of the chaste and modest virgin, even when the concealing veil is removed. After all, he notes, it is man’s nature to explore things that are beyond his grasp and to unveil things that are veiled.98

Xenophon’s description of the Theban coup of 379 makes it clear that the sight of veiled hetairai was nothing out of the ordinary, for no comment is made when three men disguised as hetairai (together with a number of other men disguised as their maids) arrive at a symposium heavily veiled. They enter the Theban pole-marcheion where the polemarchs are celebrating the Aphrodisia and coyly ask for the servants to leave the dining room before they enter. It is only when they sit beside the symposiasts that they unveil their true identities, draw out their knives and kill the assembled guests. Xenophon describes the incident thus:

Phillidas was making all the necessary arrangements for the polemarchs with regard to the feast in honour of Aphrodite which they celebrate at the end of a period of office. For some time he had been promising them that he would bring them some of the grandest and most beautiful (semnotatas kai kallistas) women in Thebes and now, he said, was the time that he would really do this. As for the polemarchs, they were anticipating spending a very pleasant night indeed. That was the type of persons they were. Now when they had finished dining and, with the willing help of Phillidas, had quickly got drunk, they kept on asking him to bring in the hetairai. He went out of the room and came back with Melon and his men. Having dressed three of them up as the mistresses (despoinas) and the rest as their attendants, he brought them to the ante-room of the treasury in the polemarchs’ building, and then went in by himself to Arkhias and the others and told them that the women would not come in if any of the servants were in the room. The polemarchs immediately ordered them all to leave and Phillidas, after giving them some wine, sent them off to the house belonging to one of them. He then brought in the hetairai (tas hetairas de) and conducted each to a seat besides the polemarchs. The agreement was that as soon as they sat down they should unveil themselves (anakalup-samenous) and stab the men at once.99
We are probably dealing here with high-class courtesans (or at least men dressed as high-class call girls). Although the words *semnotatai kai kallistai* might at first sound like a reference to respectable women, the run of Xenophon’s narrative implies that the polemarchs see no inconsistency between *semnotatai kai kallistai* and the category of *hetaira*. It may be one thing to acquire flute-girls and other professional riff-raff, but to procure the costly services of *les grandes horizontales* is another. So Phillidas is promising the polemarchs something unusual: a night with Thebes’ classiest whores. These *hetairai* are, like Theodote and Aspasia, respectable unrespectable women; professionals, as it were, not manual workers. Therefore they arrive with a cortège of serving girls and Xenophon gives them the haughty title ‘mistresses’ (*despoinas*). The polemarchs are represented as expecting classy *hetairai* and will not, apparently, be suspicious when at least twice as many women turn up as they might require.

The three veiled ‘*hetairai*’ are accompanied by an unspecified number of ‘female attendants’ who, we can contend, in order for the plan to work, must be as circumspectly concealed as their ‘mistresses’. The maidservants who wait on the veiled ‘*hetairai*’ put one in mind of the *amphipoloi* of Homeric epic who attend veiled noblewomen as a mark of respect for and authority of the women they serve. These classical Theban maids therefore bolster the image of the high-class courtesans. Alternatively, of course, as has been suggested, maybe there was no social restriction on female slaves’ use of the veil in daily life. But whatever the case, owing to the fact that they are veiled, these women – mistresses and maids – are able to traverse the streets of Thebes without arousing comment or drawing attention to themselves, a device that obviously suits the needs of the conspirators.

However, in his account of the Theban coup, Xenophon unusually expresses a doubt about the reliability of the ‘*hetairai*’ story and offers the suggestion that an alternative account has the murderers dressed as *komasts*. It is left to Plutarch to pick up the separate traditions in his two treatments of the incident contained in his *Life of Pelopidas* (11) and *De Genio Socratis* (Mor. 596D–597A). The shorter account in the *Pelopidas* has the conspirators dress in a type of female clothing which discreetly covers their breastplates and has them wear garlands on their heads which are heavy with pine and fir sprigs, so that they hang down and cover their faces. But in the fuller version contained in the *Moralia*, Plutarch divides the company of conspirators into two: some of them are dressed as *komasts*, wear semi-breastplates and are crowned with bushy garlands of either silver fir or pine, while others are dressed as women, so that the party resembled a group of drunken *komasts* in the company of some *hetairai*. In this longer account, the ‘women’ are not envisaged wearing garlands, but are well veiled (*ampekhomenoi*) by their clothing, a detail that fits more closely with Xenophon’s account. Plutarch stresses the notion that the faces of the conspirators are concealed as much as possible, so that the dense foliage of the garlands casts a deep shadow over the features of the male *komasts* and that the enveloping garments of the ‘*hetairai*’ conceal their faces too. The plot rests upon this point.
It is worth speculating a little further on the nature of this veiling: the band of ‘women’ could be veiled in *pharē*, with the cloth carefully draped over their heads and across their mouths and noses so that only their eyes are revealed, although Xenophon could have a more complete form of concealment in mind. Considering that the action takes place in fourth-century Thebes, it is not impossible that the ‘hetairai’ and their ‘maids’ are veiled behind *tegidia*, the face-veil which, as we have seen, is certainly attested in this city at this date. Wearing a *tegion* beneath a *pharos*-veil would certainly mean that the face would be in no danger of exposure since a complete form of veiling is guaranteed; it would also leave the wearer’s hands free and therefore capable of carrying weapons.\(^{104}\)

**Hellenistic veiling**

It is clear that veiling trends known from the archaic period – and modified in the classical age – continued into the hellenistic era too. The wide variety of hellenistic female statue-types attests that the veil (in an assortment of styles) was used by royalty, the aristocracy (many of whom had civic or priestly roles), respectfully married women and their daughters who lived domestic lives out of the social gaze, by hetairai and (perhaps) royal courtesans who functioned in the hazy area between respectability and indecency,\(^{105}\) and even by working women such as wet-nurses and dancers who earned a living in the public glare. However, specific evidence for veiled slave-women is still lacking in the hellenistic period, and those slaves who appear on the public monuments continue to follow the classical model and appear unveiled.\(^{106}\) Nevertheless, the new hellenistic artistic interest in portraying individuals from the lower echelons of society resulted in an increased awareness of working-women, their lifestyles and their clothes, and a variety of veil-styles are found worn by a number of working class women.\(^{107}\) Standing alongside the realistic portrayals of older working women are the delicate young girls of the Tanagra figurines, the large-scale standing sculptures of elite city women, and the gold and silver coin portraits of royal women, all of which testify to the variety of veil styles worn by a wide range of women in the Greek world during the hellenistic age. Of course, the quality of cloth used for veils no doubt helped transcend the classless attributes of the garment and, in an inversion of the classical drapery, it is common to find large-scale sculptures of elite women wearing a very fine veil over a thicker opaque dress, instead of a heavier veil over a semi-transparent gown. The fine *pharos*-veil is usually draped in a way that accentuates the sculpted body, and the dress folds beneath the veil are often rendered larger and simpler, being made to run counter to the pull of the fine veil draped over them. This is not simply an example of autonomous development, but reflects reality. Egyptian linen and even Koan silk (the *Coae vestes* referred to by Roman writers) were types of fabric available to the wealthy households of the hellenistic age. Such material was costly and was depicted on statues specifically to express status because, ‘a change in real dress fashions and in patrons’ wishes prompted this brilliant formal innovation’.\(^{108}\)
Conclusion

It is clear that the veil is attested in the Greek evidence from the earliest periods through to the hellenistic era (and beyond). While, unfortunately, no ancient text speaks about veiling in any depth, enough remains to be teased out from the sources to testify to the widespread and enduring use of the veil. Moreover, there may be indications in the textual record (supported by artistic evidence) that the veil signified social status among females and it appears that there are two ways of regarding the transmission of veiling practices in the ancient Greek world. Firstly, it appears that if the Homeric bias of exclusively depicting noblewomen beneath the sanctity of the veil can be accepted at face value, then the exclusive use of the veil by elite women (and to those who serve them on a personal level) is well and truly shattered by the fifth century when women from many walks of life had their social position as wives, daughters, or even as the entertainers of men, endorsed by the veil. Secondly, though, we must be alert to the possibility that women from many classes of society were veiled during the Homeric period and that the use which Homer makes of the (head-) veil within the epic tradition is both biased and unrealistic. In that case, we must see the later classical evidence for a wide variety of women veiling (mainly with head-veils) as pointing to an uninterrupted tradition for the veiling of all (or most) classes of women from the Homeric period onwards.

All that can be said for certain is that in the late archaic and early classical periods, evidence for the use of the veil increases and begins to support the notion that women outside the aristocracy were veiling themselves. Prostitutes of various social stations are a particularly interesting case, although the evidence for veiled female slaves still constitutes a problem. It is fair to assume though, that by the classical period (in Athens at least), the veil was not a garment worn solely by high-status women who were affiliated to one man, be it a husband or a father, or a guardian. Nevertheless, issues of status and wealth probably continued to be expressed by the quality of a woman’s dress and the jewellery and accessories she chose to wear and, no doubt, by the fact that elite women were often assisted in everyday tasks by slaves. Even the fabric, colour and decoration of the veil probably reflected varying degrees of the social hierarchy and a woman’s access to money, whether her own or (more probably) that of her guardian.

Notes

1 de Ste Croix 1981, 98 ff.
2 Xen. Oik. 10.2 ff.
3 de Ste Croix 1981, 425–6: ‘The Greeks, from archaic times through the classical and hellenistic periods and on into the Roman age, habitually expressed political complexion and social status in a fascinating vocabulary which is an inextricable mixture of socio-economic and moral terminology, with two sets of terms applied more or less indiscriminately to the propertied and the non-propertied classes respectively. On the one hand we have not only words which mean property-owning, rich fortunate, distinguished, well-born, influential, but
also, as alternatives for the same set of people, words having a basically moral connotation
and literally meaning the good, the best, the upright, the fair-minded, and so forth. And
on the other hand we find applied to the lower classes, the poor, who are also the Many, the
mob, the populace, words with an inescapably moral quality, meaning essentially bad.’
5 Arthur 1973. Of course, there are more negative portrayals of Homeric women
(Klytemnestra and, to a certain extent, Kirke and Kalypso). For general studies on Homeric
women, including discussions of their social status see Arthur 1981; Naerbout 1987; Beye
1972; Farron 1979.
6 Il. 3.139–45.
7 Saporetti 1979.
8 For Assyrian veil-verbs see the Chicago Assyrian Dictionary, s.v. katamu.
Another translation is provided by Roth 1997, 167–9. See also comments by Gastrow
1921.
10 It is noteworthy that the veiling law provides punishment only for de-classed women
and non-conforming men and that there seems to be no punishment for women who failed
to denounce violators of the law – a strange phenomenon given that ancient Near Eastern
law held women fully accountable for their deeds in other cases. Lerner 1986, 138–9 has
found an explanation for this anomaly in the supposition that respectable upper class women
would need no incentive for co-operating with a law that was written, after all, for their own
benefit and that, therefore, they may have been keen adherents of the legislation. The shame
of being unveiled to the public gaze is similarly aimed at the high-born women of Babylon
by the Hebrew prophets of the first millennium BC (from the rare appearances of women
in Babylonian art, it would seem that the women of Babylon inherited the styles of dress of
Assyria. See Watson 1987). The vengeance of Yahweh, they state, will fall upon Babylon and
its haughty daughters who will be forced to perform menial tasks or hard labour and they will
be stripped of their rich apparel and their veils; see Isaiah 47.1–3. The veil was commonly
worn by Israelite women, at least to judge from the Assyrian reliefs depicting the capture of
the city of Lachish (for a reconstruction see Watson 1987, 47 and pl. 6.), although Gastrow
has argued, with justification, that Biblical evidence suggests that among the Hebrews veiling
was never imposed upon women as an obligation. Instead it was a foreign, that is to say
Assyrian, fashion, adopted by many women throughout the Levant. See Gastrow 1921, 229,
contra Marmorstein 1954, who argues that the veil was never worn by Hebrew women.
Veiling is referred to in Isaiah’s famous inventory of clothes worn by the women of Jerusalem
(Isaiah 3.18–23), but here the veil is one of many garments that are meant to catch the eye
and to allure; it is not a garment of modesty. The clothing list can be compared to Aristophanes’ elaborate inventory of female dress articles in Thesmophoriazusae II. An incident
that does bear reference to the Assyrian veiling practice, however, is related in Genesis 38
– the story of the patriarch Judah and his daughter-in-law Tamar. The tale is a piece of tribal
tradition set in the remote past but bears the hallmarks of Yahwist narrative dating to the
first millennium. It certainly shows traces of a culture far more advanced than its patriarchal
setting. Background and discussions found in Bach 1997, 62–5; Bird 1999, 101–15; Kirsch
1997, 100–44. The story tells of how Tamar sits at the side of the road, disguised as a harlot
looking for trade (v. 14) and covers her face with her mantle-veil (sa’if) as Judah passes by
(the two Hebrew words used for veil are sa’if[Gen. 24.65, 38.14 and 19] and sammah [Song
of Songs 4.1, 3; 6.7; Isaiah 47.2]). But he accosts her and they negotiate a price for sex. It
is often mistakenly assumed that the act of veiling her face informs Judah that the woman before him is a prostitute, but in light of the Assyrian veiling law, only married women, or those affiliated to a man, were veiled in public, not prostitutes. Tamar covers her face to prevent Judah from recognizing her, not to indicate her status as a whore. Her trade is announced by the fact that she sits on the road side and, perhaps, by other items of clothing or jewellery (such as nose-rings and head pendants) or make-up or even by a bag of myrrh lying between her breasts (Kirsch 1997, 135.). The veil is only used as a disguise. Of course Assyrian understanding would find both Tamar and Judah equally guilty of violating Law 40; Tamar the whore veils herself and Judah, her client, knowingly has sex with a veiled prostitute. The twist comes in the fact that the audience of the story knows that Tamar is actually a ‘good-girl-fallen-on-hard-times’ who would, in normal circumstances, have the right to wear the veil in public. Interestingly, the Book of Numbers (5.11–31) recounts a ceremony performed by a priest with a wife who had been suspected of adultery. In the ritual the priest uncovers the woman’s hair – she is a married woman, so we can therefore assume that it was normally covered with some type of veil. The word used for her unveiling is pawra, which actually has the meaning of ‘to make naked’, with the idea of casting off a garment. The act is of course a humiliating event for the accused wife, whose jeopardized social standing is strikingly emphasized by the removal of her veil. The passage suggests that even if veiling was not enforced in ancient Israel, the idea of the veil as a symbol of female respectability and a sign of social status for the married woman was important.

11 For Chinese bound feet see Ebrey 1993, 37–43. See further Steele and Major 1999, 37–44.

12 See Od. 1.428, 438, 19.346, 353, etc. For a full list of her epithets see Karydas 1998, 60–3.

13 Outside of the Homeric evidence, two unusual dedications from the Athenian Akropolis dated to the early seventh century suggest that working women were able to afford religious dedications. See Lazzarini 1976, 47–54. Nos. 46 and 666.


15 The amphipoloi tend to be represented doing lighter work than other female slaves. Helen sits and superintends her amphipoloi as they weave; Nausikaa is only served by amphipoloi, just as Penelope is accompanied by two of them in the megaron. For a good discussion of the role and status of this group of female slaves see Thalmann 1998, 62–4. For the possible origins of this group of workers see Hiller 1987. See further Wagner-Hasel 2002.

16 Il. 3.144.

17 Od. 4.123–5, 133.


19 Paus. 5.19.3. See also Paus. 10.25.7.


21 See Roche 1994, 40, who also notes that the domestic servants of the French ancien régime were often well-dressed and affirmed the powers of their masters, but frequently exploited their reflected glory. They often acquired the clothing habits of their masters too.

22 We must be prepared to accept, however, that there really were no visible distinctions between the dmôē and the amphipolos; the terms may be interrelated and refer to identical status.

23 The clothing dedications at the sanctuary of Artemis Brauronia on the Athenian Akropolis attest to the variety of patterned and coloured clothing worn in the fifth century and put paid
to the notion that Greek clothing was pure white. See especially Linders 1972.

24 Artemidorus, *Oneir.* 2.3.
25 van Bremen 1996, 144.
26 See above, Chapter 2. Further discussion of Penelope’s veiling follows below. For Penelope’s veiling see *Od.* 1.334, 16.416, 18.210, 21.65.
27 Lateiner 1995, 257.
30 Sharma 1978, 224.
31 For Andromakhe as a maenad see Seaford 1994, 330–8.
32 See the discussion in Chapter 2.
33 For veiling and grief see Chapter 10.
34 Eur. *Andr.* 110. See further, comments by Anderson 1997, 133–55. Stevens 1971, 109, has noted that the word *amphibalousa* would be better in the middle voice, but that it is also used at *Il.* 17.742. For a discussion of the characterization of Andromakhe see most recently, Allen 2000, 86 ff., esp. 176.
36 LSJ s.v. ἐρυμα; see also Soph. *Aj.* 467.
39 See also *Od.* 13.388. Odysseus claims that the Achaeans 'loosed the shining veils of Troy'. For the link with the female see Scully 1990, 334.
40 Nagler 1974, 54.
41 Eur. *Tro.* 185. See also lines 203, 240 ff.
42 For a discussion of the Trojan women and class see Rabinowitz 1998.
43 For further comments on female violation and the breeching of city walls see Chapter 8.
44 As noted by Garvie 1994, 106: ‘the girls take off their head-dresses…to give themselves greater freedom of movement. By doing so they unconsciously render themselves more vulnerable to any sexual advance.’
46 Cited in Marbo 1991, 44.
47 Rahanavarad 1990. For a discussion of veiling and feminism see El Guindi 1999, 177–85. Similarly, the Arabic term *satr* means ‘to cover’, ‘to protect’, and also ‘to veil’. In the Arabic-English dictionary synonyms for *satr* include ‘hijab’, ‘niqab’, ‘burqa’, ‘lithma’ - all terms of dress denoting head- or face-cover. The derivative noun *sitara* means veil, curtain and screen, and like ‘hijab’ is used in conversation and literary texts. See further El Guindi 1999, 88.
51 Lucan, in his *Pharsalia* 6, perverts the image as he clothes his witch Erictho in a mist of darkness: ‘She wrapped her sinister head in a veil of murky fog and moved among the bodies of the slain’ (625–6).
52 See Laver 1969, 7.
53 In many societies men are usually condemned for elaborate dressing on economic principles, while women tend to be denounced on moral grounds. See Ribeiro 1986.
Who Veils? Veiling and social identity in the ancient Greek sources

54 See Roach and Eicher 1965, 20–4.

55 Il. 3.146 ff., 6.286 ff.


57 e.g., Davidson 1997; Geddes 1987.

58 Which perhaps accords with Davidson’s idea that economics are at the heart of almost all Greek socio-political relationships. See Davidson 1997, 213–77.


60 Hes. W&D 197–200. For veiling and aidōs see Chapter 6.


63 See Osborne 1996, 140 ff.

64 Sapph. 44.


66 See, most famously, Thuc. 1.6.3–5. See further Frontisi-Ducroix and Lissarague 1990.

67 Geddes 1987, 313.

68 See Davies 1981, 105.

69 For a discussion of class see Davidson 1997, 227 ff.

70 Geddes 1987, 323 has commented that, ‘A “look” is what all members of a community choose to exhibit at the same time. When the “look” can be seen to change, as it can be in Athens, when wealthy men abandoned the chiton and wore more “moderate” clothes instead, the explanation will lie in changing social structure, life style and values… Clothes express an ideal but they do not necessarily tell the truth… But they do tell us what other people want us to think.’

71 It would appear that the increasing plainness of clothing coincided with an increase in humble living conditions and a vogue for simple houses, at least according to Demosthenes who looks back on the lifestyle of his ancestors and comments on the plain houses of the fifth century. See Demosthenes Olynth. 3.25–6, On Org. 29, Against Arist. 207.

72 On the notion of social change being reflected in dress see most recently and most importantly van Wees 1998a.


74 Barber 1991, 360 ff.

75 Linders 1972.

76 The dress of metic women, if and when they are represented at all, does not seem to be any different from that of Athenian women. On the whole, even slave women tend to wear the same type of garment as their mistresses, although sometimes they wear sleeved tunics. See Miller 1997, 165 ff. She notes, however, that the same garment was considered an appropriate offering to goddesses by citizen women. Could the tunic have been a slave livery that advertised the wealth of the slave-owning family? The heads of female slaves do not need to be uncovered, their hair can be bound by fillets or enclosed in sakkoi, but they are not veiled. For a discussion of the iconography of slaves with reference to aspects of dress and hair see Oakley 2000.

77 Hdt. 6.137.3. See further Rabinowitz 1998, 57.

78 See, for example, Ar. Lys. 1150–6.

Chapter 5

80 Ibid. 81.
81 Ps.-Xenophon, Constitution of the Athenians 1.10.
82 Beard 1991, 27.
83 On the similarities between female slave and mistress see Lewis 1998/99, 87–8.
84 See Chatty 1997, 143.
85 El Guindi 1981, 475.
86 Davidson 1997, 128.
87 Dem. 59. The bibliography on Neaira is extensive, but see most recently, Kapparsis 1999.
90 Kurke 1999, 185 ff.
91 See Dalby 2000.
92 Machon 336–7 (Gow): …μετά τῆς Γνωθαίνης ἐξ Ἀφροδισίου τινὸς, τὸ τ᾽ εἰδὸς αὐτῆς τούς ρυθμοὺς τε καταμαθὼν... For their relationship, see Gow 1965, 9.
93 Athens 590e–f; cf. Hermippus of Smyrna FrGH IV A3 fr. 46a (= 68aI Wehrli) with Bollansée (383–90) ad loc.
94 See below, Chapter 10.
96 For a discussion see Cameron 1981, esp. 278–81. For female aulos-players see Davidson 1997, 81 ff.
97 Philo, De cong. er. gratia. 124.
98 Ibid. 125: τίς οὖν ὃ ἐξεταστικὸς καὶ φιλομοθῆς καὶ μηδὲν ἄσκεπτον καὶ ἀδιερεύνητον τῶν ἐγκεκαλυμμένων πραγμάτων παραλιπέσαν .ajaxόν έστιν.
99 Xen. Hel. 5.4.4–6. For comments see Tuplin 1993, 147 ff.; Dillery 1995, 228 ff.; Soklowski 1964, 1–8. DeVoto 1989, 112, questions whether women, even hetairai, would wander the streets of Thebes at night. Whatever the normal practice, given that the events of the coup take place at the Aphrodisia, there was probably an open licence for hetairai (especially if veiled) to wander around without censure.
100 From the interpretation offered above, I prefer to see these ‘women’ as hetairai, although there is another, radically different, way of looking at the evidence: In Xen. Mem. 1.2.24 Alcibiades is said to be pursued by lots of γυναικεῖαι—‘noble women’ or ‘haughty women’. Does this refer to the over-sexed daughters of citizens? Or the Athenian and foreign courtesans who, according to Plutarch (Alc. 8.4), were such an irritation to Hipparet? LSJ s.v. σεμνός is not particularly helpful: since the word seems to have the secure meaning ‘noble’ or ‘haughty’. Neither translation is quite à propos for the Xenophon passage but, if taken at face value, ‘σεμνοταται και καλλισται’ might well refer to the noble and beautiful wives or daughters of Thebes. If this is the case, then Phillidas is promising the lustful polemarchs something very special indeed, viz, the prostitution for their pleasure of respectable women. Xenophon clearly intends to portray the polemarchs as disreputable renegades; they anticipate debauching the noblewomen with eager relish because ‘that was the type of persons they were’. They subsequently refer to the women as ‘whores’, which alerts us to the way they intend to use them. As for the women themselves, when they enter the symposium they are reluctant to unveil in front of the male slaves. Again, two interpretations can be offered here: either these women are, indeed, modest and respectable girls who will not display themselves to any men beyond the terms already agreed with Phillidas, or, they are highly-paid hetairai who will only strip for the paying guests. In fact, whether we see Phillidas’ men masquerading
as good-girls or whores, Xenophon’s text is still important evidence for the use of the veil. In a way, the real status of the ‘women’ is immaterial; as has been stressed, the boundary between hetairai and respectable women is blurred. Veiling only adds to that uncertainty. I am grateful to Christopher Tuplin and Anton Powell for their valuable thoughts on this debate. I sincerely hope to return to this interesting question in future work.

101 Xenophon draws on a literary topos involving the deception of an enemy through the device of female disguise. See Hdt. 5.20. The motif of men disguised as women to deceive the enemy is also found in Paus. 4.4.3, Herakl. Pont. fr. 32, Plut. Sol. 8.5–6, Polyain. Strat. 1.20.2, 2.3.1, 2.4.3.

102 Xen. Hel. 5.4.7.

103 For textual details and Plutarch’s variations see Georgiadou 1997, 118 ff.

104 It is as well to remember that in the autumn of 2001, male American and European journalists managed to infiltrate into Taliban-held territory in northern Afghanistan using exactly the same ruse. The grey-haired six-foot tall BBC correspondent John Simpson was the first to don a burqa for this purpose. He recalls that, ‘We ourselves got into Afghanistan with the help of some of the cross-border smugglers who operate the full length of the border with Pakistan. The smugglers insisted that the cameraman and I should wear burqas… Merely putting on the burqa, I found, has an extraordinary effect. It seems to make you disappear. At roadblocks, guards may look closely at the men in a car but they simply ignore the women who are mostly immune from being searched, though in one or two places, it is said, women searchers have been recruited now. In our case, the tactic worked superbly’ (The Times. Saturday, 22 September 2001).

105 There are no explicit references to veiled royal courtesans, although the authority they could often wield, together with their wealth and obvious pretensions towards ‘respectability’, possibly led them towards veiling on a regular basis. For the lifestyle of the royal courtesans of the hellenistic age see Ogden 1999, 237 ff.

106 See, for example, a stele of a seated woman accompanied by an unveiled slave from second-century Delos discussed by Hannestad 1997, 289 and pl. 25. The depiction of slaves follows the classical tradition and resemble the types of compositions found on Attic grave stelai. For veiled dancers see below, Chapter 10.

107 See Robertson 1993, 91 ff.

108 Smith 1991, 85. In addition, it is worth speculating on the idea that social status was reflected in the way that the veil was worn and utilized by women of different classes. The elite woman may have worn her veil with a sense of style beyond the grasp of the peasant woman and because of her high rank she might have used it to conceal herself far more than a woman of a lower class. There are many references to the critiques aimed at poorer individuals who aspire to dress well. As far back as the archaic period, Sappho criticizes the peasant girl for not lifting her dress with refined elegance, while classical literature attests to a variety of ways in which class differences can be expressed through the minutiae of dress and deportment. See Ar. Ecc. 631–3, Av. 1567–71, Vesp. 1131–71. See further Donlan 1980, 162 ff.
There is no single or definitive answer to the question ‘why did Greek women veil?’ Nor is there one model which we can follow to explain the complexities of veiling. Issues of modesty, honour and shame, social invisibility, pollution, and sexuality are all components in understanding the veil, but the relative importance of these cannot be established. Veiling is a variable, not a constant, and no single fact accounts for this variation.

The multivalence of veiling is shown by a well-known example from the *Iliad* where, compelled by Aphrodite, Helen veils herself and leaves her bed chamber to visit the walls of Troy:

The goddess filled her heart with yearning warm and deep for her husband long ago, her city and her parents. Quickly veiling herself (calupsamênê) in shimmering linen, out of her rooms she rushed, live tears welling up, and not alone – for two of her women followed close behind, Aithra, Pittheus’ daughter, and ox-eyed Klymene – and they soon reached the Skaian Gates.

Here, as she throws on her veil, Helen reminisces about her former husband, her parents, and her Spartan homeland, and her veiling emphasizes the shame she feels for abandoning the people and the places she once loved. In addition, sorrowing for her present unhappiness in Troy, she weeps and her veiling simultaneously conceals her tears, hides her suffering, and symbolically separates her from those around her. Yet as she leaves her chamber and walks into the public space, she is accompanied by her amphipoloi, and this time her veil confers upon her respectability and social standing as she conforms to society’s rules.

Likewise, when Odysseus observes his crew foolishly opening the bag of winds given to him by Aeolus, his reaction is to veil his head with his cloak. But the action is taken not simply out of anger, but for a variety of reasons. His veiling is also performed to express his shame, his fear, and his dissociation from the foolish actions of his crew.

So, who veils? For whom do they veil? How and why do they veil? An attempt to answer these questions will encounter ideas of what the veil communicates about social interaction, especially in regard to the presentation of the self and issues of male–female interaction. Female veiling can be seen as an attempt to reduce fears of and for women which relate to wider concerns about social relations. The physical use of the veil (how it is raised and lowered) as an item of social interaction and as
a purveyor of social meaning is therefore of immeasurable importance. After all, ‘the gestures which we sometimes call empty are perhaps the fullest things of all’.4

The veil is controlling on the personal level as well as on the inter-personal level; it works as a private symbol because it does something to the female body which it covers, while the physical and visual reaction that the veiled female figure evokes in others is intimately locked within external perceptions of the wearer as either seductive, and hence potentially shameful, or as embodying social prestige and upholding the social values and, by extension, the honour of the male members (in particular) of that woman’s family or society. Honour and shame are essential components in the ideology of veiling.

**Veiling and aidôs**

Aidôs is a central component of the reasoning behind veiling as a symbol of modesty (of course), sexuality, invisibility, pollution, and status, and its influence on these issues (and others) cannot be over emphasized.5 In its most simplified form, aidôs means ‘shame’ and ‘reserve’ and ‘modesty’ and ‘respect’, and it is frequently related to the concept of honour and self-awareness.6 Cairns encapsulates the idea by defining aidôs as, ‘an inhibitory emotion based on sensitivity to and protectiveness of one’s self-image… [The] verb aideomai convey[s] a recognition that one’s self-image is vulnerable in some way, a reaction in which one focuses on the conspicuousness of the self.’7

Cairns also notes that aidôs is not only something that one feels and subsequently responds to, but it is also something that others feel and something that others respond to: aidôs is reciprocal.8 The feelings of shame or reserve can stem from an action being witnessed by others, and from a reaction to how viewers might perceive one, so that a feeling of shame can be brought about by an external audience who act as a catalyst for any feeling of aidôs. Alternatively, or in addition, shame can come from within and does not need an external audience, or it can come from the viewing of oneself in the role of an ‘other-self’, one who is purely internalized yet still acts an observer of the self, since, ‘the structure of shame is the same in all cases – where there is a real audience, where an audience is present in fantasy, and where the role of the audience is played by oneself’.9

It is important to remember that many societies, including those of the ancient Greek world, set standards of morality and behaviour for their women which were different from those they set for their men and that, as in many societies, the major social requirements for women were faithfulness and chastity. A man’s honour is intrinsically bound up in the sexual purity of the women of his family and it is for his reputation that women need to be socially and sexually controlled. Therefore men lay down the rules that women have to observe and the subsequent sense of shame with which they are associated is essentially a male construct. A Greek woman could deserve the title aidôië, ‘deserving aidôs’, if she observed and adhered to the standards of modest behaviour imposed by men. Thus, ‘in maintaining her
own honour and that of her male protector a woman merits honour, which is recognized by *aidōs* in return’.  

A particular facet of a woman’s *aidōs* is concerned with her loyalty to her male guardian (usually a father or brother) and her careful avoidance of any kind of sexual impropriety which may reflect badly on her male relatives. This is best ensured by her complete evasion of male company. In Euripides’ *Herakleidai*, Iolaus, the male protector of a group of girls, expresses his *aidōs* at the thought of their appearance in public in the sight of men, while Antigone’s tutor also feels shame because his charge insists on showing herself in public. Thus, a woman’s failure to display the required degree of modesty results in shame among her kin and a tendency for her to be labelled *aischra* – ‘shameless’ – a charge hurled at Helen with some frequency. A modest woman should abjure the company of men or run the risk of being called ‘shameless’. In fact, the orators of the fourth century could observe that, as an ideal way of behaving, some women were so modest that they would not allow themselves to be seen even by their male relatives.

*Aidōs* is particularly expected in young women, and Euripidean maidens such as Iphigeneia, Makaria and Antigone display the degree of *aidōs* which corresponds with their age and sexual innocence. When Iphigeneia encounters a group of men and learns that her proposed future husband is among them, then realizes that she has been duped over the matter of her non-existent betrothal, her sense of *aidōs* is so heightened that she desires to hide herself completely.

Strictures of honour and shame expressed in Greek texts of all periods resemble those placed upon women in modern veil-societies. The ancient Greek idea of feminine *aidōs*, the notion of respectful modesty with strong overtones of sexual shame, can be likened to the Bedouin concept of female *hasham* and the widespread Islamic notion of *fitna*, a conception that female sexuality could destabilize society unless successfully controlled and contained, a theme that is particularly apparent in the ancient Greek sources as well. *Fitna* is deeply feared in Muslim society, since it is a word that not only means ‘disorder’ or ‘chaos’ but also ‘a beautiful woman who makes men abandon self-control’. This dread of female sexuality is at the core of Muslim culture where women are seen as having a more rapacious appetite for sex than men and are skilled in luring men away from the path of righteousness.

Women have to struggle to overcome their natural sexual desire and need instead to cultivate a sense of shame that will, in turn, reflect upon the honour of their menfolk. But because women are weak-willed and cannot control their own passions from within, they must be controlled from without by men who are naturally adept at mastering the self-control which brings about personal honour. This is all very similar to the ancient Greek conception of womanhood, since women were seen as a race set apart from men and fundamentally lacking in self-control. It was therefore necessary to cultivate within them a sense of shame in order to uphold masculine honour.

In Bedouin society *hasham*, or ‘modesty’, is associated with femininity, while honour is the preserve of masculinity. By denying her sexuality through careful
observance of the strict code of hasham, a woman may show respect for those men above her in the hierarchy and for the social system as a whole. Moreover, as a woman’s sense of hasham intensifies, so the men of her community increasingly respect her societal role because, in effect, her shame serves them well.21

Among the Awlad ‘Ali (a Bedouin people of Egypt and the Sinai), to describe a woman as someone who tabashshams (a derivative of hasham) means that she knows the emotion that motivates the sexual decorum of hasham and that she acts to observe it by avoiding male sight or covering her head or face with a veil. It is the highest compliment that can be paid to a woman since it recognizes her chastity and her sexual removal from society. Conversely, a woman who does not tabashsham is known as a sharmuta (whore) or a qhaba (slut).22 A woman who tabashshams avoids the sight of men as far as possible; she does not visit the market place nor does she appear before strange guests when they visit her home. She does not use make-up to attract men, nor does she draw attention to her beauty by means of her dress. Neither will she eat, talk or laugh in front of men; instead she adopts a series of self-effacing and formal acts that are correlates of modesty. Veiling is a fundamental act of the tabashsham woman.

In Greek thought, female aidōs is closely connected to the concept of sōphrosynē, an idealistic standard of dignity and discretion. A Greek woman displaying sōphrosynē and aidōs, like a Bedouin woman who tabashshams because she understands the nature of hasham, should be silent, submissive, passive and virtuous, and she should not draw attention to herself in any way.23 An example of these wifely virtues is Euripides’ Andromakhe who, following the standard first set by Sophokles’ Tekmessa, describes by the word sōphron her life beneath Hektor’s roof; she stays at home and does not indulge in female gossip but keeps herself to herself.24

This is all very well for a woman in the confines of the home, but when out of doors the pressures to conform to the rules of respectability are multiplied. It has been demonstrated that among the Pirzada women of northern India, sexual apartheid is exaggerated in public by a woman’s deliberate actions of bowing the head and averting the eyes from any male passer-by. Pirzada women have internalized their sense of shame and the importance of maintaining distance between the sexes to such an extent that it has become a natural physical reaction. Women unquestioningly accept that they should not talk loudly, or laugh or draw attention to themselves in any way and they know that men and women should not mix freely and that women should stay indoors whenever possible. In mixed company within the house, women should be reserved and modest and signal their respect to the hierarchical superiors. In their behaviour Pirzada women continually draw attention to their abject submissiveness.25

Similarly, sōphrosynē and aidōs are expressed by an exaggerated display of self-devaluation and overt submissiveness reflected in the acts of lowering the head and the eyes. In many artistic representations the feminine aretē (excellence) of aidōs reflected in downcast eyes and bowed head is exaggerated, although sometimes
a sense of curiosity is fixed in the eyes which are allowed to glance up as high as physically possible (Fig. 109). Andromakhe’s submissiveness towards her husband is emphasized by such a deportment:

I gave my lord’s presence the tribute of hushed lips and eyes quietly downcast. I knew when my will must have its way over his, knew also how to give way to him in turn.27

Iphigeneia’s embarrassed wish to hide herself from public view is also a characteristic reaction of a woman living in this type of ‘honour-shame’ society. In fact, a feeling of shame frequently conjures up the desire to become invisible or to remove oneself from the sight of others. Eibl-Eibesfeldt’s study of withdrawal in social interaction has revealed that the desire to hide is very strong among humans, and that even very young infants will turn their heads away from strangers as a signal of discomfort or shyness.28 The need to maintain distance is one of the characteristics of human society and the violation of personal space, which does not need to be necessarily overt or aggressive, frequently results in one of two people backing away and registering that an intrusion is taking place. The most familiar way of doing this is by lowering the head and looking at the ground (this is especially noticeable in a meeting of two persons of the opposite sex), but even in more comfortable situations an awareness of physical space and a slight desire for removal from a situation can be expressed with the raising of the hands to mask the face. Covering the face with a hand (and the simultaneous averting of the gaze) is a natural reaction to shyness and modesty, even when they are tinged with pleasure, in all societies and for people of all ages.29 Interestingly, when a person is in the position to utilize some kind of ‘prop’ (like cloth or clothing) to show social removal, it is usually employed to cover the face. Clothing can also be used to maintain distance and individuality in dress will often be subsumed beneath coverings that allow a person to become hidden within the mass of society.30

Clothing is inextricably connected to the idea of modesty, at least in Western thought (and from as far back as ancient Greece).31 But the conditions and constrictions of modest dressing are gender-nuanced. When a Western man takes off his jacket in public he is not immodest, but he is if he should remove his trousers. Generally men need to strip off more layers of clothing than women before they are considered immodest, and it is usually the case in Western history that men have been inclined to wear headgear and clothing that can be removed at will and, in the case of the ancient Greek male, van Wees has shown how the conscientious slipping off of the himation and the meticulous care of the posture of his semi-naked body expressed that the wearer was a member of the leisured class and the dominant male elite. Thus the half-clothed body became an element of ‘dress’ in its own right.32

Women, on the other hand, have had a tendency to be placed beneath head-dresses and clothing that are either fixed in place or are not easy to remove (at least not by a single person; we think of corsets, laced-up gowns, pinned-in sleeves, powdered wigs, and jewelled head-dresses) or, if they can be removed effortlessly (as must have been the case with the female peplos and chiton), women are strongly
discouraged from doing so. The veil (a head or face type) is a good example of such a garment, although it should be remembered that there is an element of reverse thinking operating here too, since, because the veil is prone to slipping off, it requires constant vigilance and so it keeps women's attention persistently occupied on adjusting the cloth.

The veil is also symbolic since it marks out people's intentions about moral issues. Veils are not covers intended to make women unfeminine. As will be suggested later, they emphasize femininity by covering up female imperfections like pollution and sexual shame, which in turn often highlight aspects of alluring female sexuality. Veils offer women endless opportunities for the wearers to drop, adjust, tighten or loosen the cloth, thereby making full use of the potential of the garment as a symbol of female self-expression. The veil provides the illusion, if not the reality, that a woman is chaste and morally attentive.

Garment-veils and outer-wrap-veils (like the Greek himation and pharos-veils) rarely conceal more of the flesh than that which is already covered by the clothing worn underneath. It should be observed that the peplos and the chiton cover much of the female body and, once we disregard the artistic trend towards transparency, only reveal to any great extent the arms (less so in a chiton), the neck, face and hair. The fact that garment and outer-wrap veils do little to secrete the figure beyond what is already accomplished by ordinary dress, indicates that these garments should be considered more as symbols of modesty and morality rather than as guarantors of that morality.

Nevertheless, strictures about female modesty are deeply rooted in a woman's expected propensity to veil. It is not considered unusual in the Muslim world for men to be semi-naked when engaged in certain laborious tasks, but women should never take off their clothing even when work makes it inconvenient for them to be so heavily dressed. A woman washing clothes at a river bank or canal may hitch her clothing round her knees so that she can bend down to fill her water jug, and she may wind up her veil to stop it from dragging in the mud, but that is the limit of her undress. Throughout the world, women in veil-societies continue to work at their chores well covered by their veils.

Ancient Greek society expected male nudity at specific occasions, permitted it at other events, and appears to have tolerated it at a more pedestrian level, but female nudity was not acceptable, at least not if a woman wanted to maintain her good name or give an impression of a morally upright character (as we will examine later). The issue of feminine modesty was intertwined with her clothing, so much so that aidos is sometimes envisaged as a type of garment that can be put on to cover womanly shame or pulled off to reveal it. As stressed in the Herodotean story of Gyges' wife, the fact that a woman undresses for (or is undressed by) her husband (or unveils and exposes herself for him), means that she simultaneously sheds her aidos, which normally acts as a barrier between her and the world at large.
society a proper regard for her own honour and that of her [guardian], and meriting the respect of her community in return; for a woman to be unveiled or unclothed is for the everyday system of honour to be disturbed – except when she undresses or unveils for her husband.37

A passage by Diogenes Laertius purportedly recalls advice given by Theano the wife of Pythagoras:

She advised a woman going in to her own husband to put off her shame with her clothes, and on leaving him to put it on again along with them. Asked, ‘Put on what?’ she replied, ‘What makes me to be called a woman.’38

Theano envisages the removal of clothing as an action that leads to shame, the loss of ἁίδος, and the control over the sexual (and similar) emotions that ἁίδος usually encompasses to such an extent that undressing should only be performed for one’s husband in the privacy of the home.39

In his treatise ‘Advice to the Bride and Groom’, Plutarch notes that the Moon (Selene), though beautiful in her own right when she has the opportunity to shine, knows that she must disappear and hide herself when the Sun (Helios) draws near to her. But, he argues, contrary to the cosmic couple, a virtuous wife should appear beautiful in front of her husband when he is with her, but she should completely hide herself when he is away. Plutarch disagrees with Herodotus’ assessment that a woman lays aside her modesty with her clothing and suggests instead (in a sentimental way characteristic of the pro-marriage Plutarch) that a virtuous wife retains her modesty even when naked if she is loved and respected by her husband.40 The allure and charm of the wife that Plutarch transposes onto the heavenly world of Helios and Selene evoke the image, I think, of the newly married bride, and can be related to the nuptial rituals of the anakalyptēria which centre on the play between the bride’s visibility and invisibility and the corresponding gaze of her groom.41

Dress and its intrinsic merits are also the focus of a discussion by Xenophon who recounts the story of Herakles’ meeting with Virtue and Vice, personified as beautiful if divergent women.42 Virtue is fair, noble and dressed in white, while Vice (or Happiness) is buxom and blousy and wears a dress that shows far too much of her ample flesh. Moreover her eyes dart around as she keeps looking to see if she has been noticed. But Virtue keeps her eyes fixed in place, her eyelids are lowered and, if her dress is taken to be the opposite of Vice’s skimpy shift, then we must imagine it as veiling as much of her body as possible.43 Virtue is covered up.

When, in Euripides’ Andromakhe, Hermione loses all self-control and lets down her virtuous preserve of ἁίδος, her jealous anguish over the concubine Andromakhe and the anxiety she feels about her own status as mistress of Neoptolemos’ household are reflected through reference to her dress. At line 830 she unveils her head (which had obviously been so decorously and richly covered with a pharos-veil at her first entrance at line 147) as part of an agonized display of her loss of ἱσοφροσυνή:

Woe! Woe! Away from my locks fine-spun pharos-veil, into the air!44
Hermione’s unreserved lack of shame is intensified by the fact that she not only exposes her head but also her breasts.\(^{45}\) Her dazed nurse begs her to re-veil her body but the Spartan princess replies, with a resignation that contrasts vividly with her first entrance when her gorgeous costume expressed and heightened her sense of her own status and dignity,

What is the point of veiling my breast with robes (\textit{sterna kaluptein peplois})? What I have done to my husband is plain and evident and unhidden.\(^{46}\)

In Muslim thought, a woman like Hermione who appears unveiled in public – but especially before a man, \textit{even} her husband – is considered ‘\textit{aryana}’ (naked),\(^{47}\) but if she appears unveiled before a stranger her good name is seriously compromised and she is generally regarded as inherently immodest and vulgar.\(^{48}\) At the heart of the Muslim ideology of veiling, and the Greek ideology too, is the idea that a woman should only unveil for those men most closely related to her, in particular her husband, and that unveiling in front of any strange men is regarded as a violation of the marital or familial bond or the husband’s or father’s authority.

\textit{Aidōs} and face-veiling

Specially constructed face-veils, such as the \textit{tegidion}, make a dramatic impact by covering what is usually left exposed by conventional clothing, a reason why Muslim face-veils are so frequently regarded in the west as de-humanizing. The evidence for the use of constructed face-veils in Greek society (as we have seen) stems from the mid-fourth century onward, although from the snippets of texts available and the wealth of artistic representations of the veil-gesture, face-veiling with a section of a head-veil seems to have been practised regularly as a woman’s individual reaction to a social situation. If a woman is required to veil her head by a set of social mandates, then the veiling of her face as a signal of her awareness of \textit{aidōs} becomes an almost inevitable consequence. Thus Iphigeneia’s mortification at the sight of strange men at Aulis is recalled later in Tauris by her description of her reaction to her approaching marriage: ‘I hid my face in my fine-spun veil.’\(^{49}\) Here the veil is a container for Iphigeneia’s \textit{aidōs}, and its use can be compared with Antigone’s lament that she will never know marriage or the \textit{aretē} of containing her own sexuality in a display of respectful \textit{aidōs} through veiling:

\begin{quote}
No modest veil covers the curling hair and soft cheek; no virginal reserve hides the blush under the eyes, the hot forehead, as I come, a Bacchant of the dead, tearing loose the veil (\textit{krēdemna}) that enclosed my hair, flinging free my fine-spun saffron robe, to lead the march of mourning for these dead. Wail aloud, \textit{aiiie}!\(^{50}\)
\end{quote}

The notion of feminine \textit{aretē} through veiling is also found in Aelian’s account of a chance meeting between a man and his ex-wife. In fact, the woman at the centre of the incident is appropriately named Arete, and is the daughter of Dionysius I of Sicily and the divorced wife of Dion, his chief aide. Aelian recalls how, one day, Dion was approached in public by his sister, Aristomakhe, who happened to be accompanied
by her ex-sister-in-law; straightaway Arete veiled herself out of modesty and shame (aidous egkalupomene) because she did not dare look upon on, let alone speak to, an unrelated man in public, even if he were a man who had once legitimately shared her bed. When he divorced her, Dion had straightaway reverted to the status of a stranger and now Arete has to respond accordingly. Aelian seems to envisage a complete form of veiling for Arete, and we are no doubt meant to visualize her covering much of her head and face.

But the locus classicus of the connection between feminine shame and veiling is Euripides’ Hippolytus. When the Phaedra first appears on stage, supported by her nurse at line 170, her head is obviously veiled since she calls for her head-covering (epikranon) to be removed at line 201. Then her shameful words pour forth as she imagines herself running wild and free in the meadows and mountains until, at line 239, she is overcome with aidoš and longs to be veiled again:

O, I am miserable! What is this I have done? Where have I strayed from the highway of good sense? I was mad. It was madness sent from some god that caused my fall. Oh! Oh! Nurse, cover my head again. I am ashamed of what I have said. Cover me up. The tears are flowing and my face is turned to shame.

The stage action suggests that the nurse replaces the veil on the queen’s head and that Phaedra draws it over her lower face. Her aidoš is both internal and external, for she is not only concerned with her reputation but also feels an intense revulsion towards her own passion. Her re-veiling demonstrates to her audience the awareness of her moral dilemma of how to preserve her timē and suggests that she feels the aidoš deep within and reacts according to custom.

Plato makes a definitive connection between veiling and aidoš: ‘veiled and ashamed’ (hyp’ aiskhunēs egkekalummenos) is the phrase he uses as he prepares to cast off previous inhibitions and decides to make a forthright recantation reviling Love, and he testifies that the association between the two can be just as pertinent for men. Nevertheless it is female aidoš that is particularly well served by veiling, and especially by the veiling of the face.

The covering of the face or head with a veil, even if the veiling is only temporary, is a typical female reaction to feeling shame and expresses desire for social invisibility; it is practised in veil-societies worldwide, and a further examination of reasons behind veiling in modern veil-societies might expand the understanding of the ancient evidence. So just as veiling promotes and expresses aidoš among the Greeks, for the Awlad ‘Ali veiling the face with a section of a head-veil is synonymous with hasham (or at least is an index of it) because it symbolizes sexual shame at the same time as it covers it. Veiling is a perceptible act of exhibiting modest reverence and its intimate connection to chastity and sexuality is evident in the fact that Bedouin women never veil for other women and only begin to adopt the veil at that crucial stage in life when they are transformed from girls into women at menarche and are eligible to become sexually important. Conversely, when a woman ceases to be sexually fertile she is less likely to veil. Veiling and hasham generally indicate
a woman’s acknowledgement of her sexuality and the place of that sexuality in the social system and advocates her wish to separate herself from her own sexuality. Likewise, the women of Ghanyari in north India take the ends of their head veils (duppata) and draw them across their faces in a gesture known locally as ghungat, an act which is only incumbent upon married women. The expression ghungat nikalna means ‘to draw the edge of the veil over one’s face to cover it completely’, and so like the Awlad ‘Ali, Ghanyari social distance and sexual modesty are particularly emphasized by the veiling of the face.

But because a woman is not expected to veil for everyone all of the time, the veil is in a constant state of motion, being drawn up, pulled down, adjusted, withdrawn, and redrawn in such a variety of ways that it becomes an extension of the female frame. In fact, in a study of Indian dress codes, it has been noted that a woman moves her veil with the same self-consciousness as she moves her body. Greek texts alert us to the idea that women’s veils are similarly in a constant state of motion and the act of pulling the veil in front of the face is a gesture that is particularly prominent: Penelope, Hera, Helen, and Demeter are all shown in the act, while classical texts tell us that, among others, Iphigeneia, Medea, and Phaedra are all concerned with drawing their veils up over their heads or across their faces. Iconographic sources are equally concerned with this act, for it is the very movement of the veil that renders it an interesting artistic (as well as literary) motif.

Greek sources give no details of how the veil was held across the face or to what extent the face and head were hidden by the garment. This is unfortunate, since ethnographic evidence attests to the importance of using the veil to indicate varying degrees of respect, modesty, and self-abasement. Thus, in north Gujarat women refer to the observance of ghunghat by veiling as laj kadvu or laj karvu, literally, ‘doing shame’ and there are a number of ways in which ‘shame’ can be expressed, starting with a simple laj whereby the head-veil is quickly pulled sideways across the face; this is commonly practised outside when women suddenly encounter men who may wander by (Fig. 130). This stage is sometimes performed as an intermediary state before going into a complete form of laj if the person who is approaching is someone who must be avoided. Where women need to walk through a public space, they generally leave their veils hanging down over their faces, but with enough of a gap to allow them to trace their footsteps. If they are carrying heavy loads they tend to keep one hand on their veil so they can lift it slightly without allowing people to see behind it. The act of drawing the veil over the face and down to waist level is called
ardhi laj (literally ‘half shame’) and is usually performed at home in the presence of a senior relative and is meant to symbolize complete invisibility and silence. The strictest form of laj is known as akhi laj (‘complete shame’) and involves pulling the veil forward at an angle that obscures the arms and bosom; its aim is to mask as much of the female body as possible and it is particularly common among Brahman wives and brides (Fig. 131).

While (pre-hellenistic) Greek veiling styles allowed for a variety of gestures that could well have corresponded to modern Indian practice, our ancient sources are silent on the intricacies of veiling and we do not know whether veils were worn in ways that expressed varying degrees of deference or shame. However, several depictions of classical Athenian brides show them covered by their veils in a type of veiling that corresponds very closely to the strictest form of akhi laj, and no doubt reflects the very humble and deferential status of the bride during the wedding rites.59

Laj is something that women do in response to the feeling of shame (expressed by the word sharum); women are considered the responsible agents for their own actions and if they fail to ‘do’ laj, they take the consequences for their disobedience and neglect of the social order. Being overcome with sharum is supposed to occur to women for a variety of reasons and in numerous situations and while the response to it can be learned, the feeling itself should be natural and intrinsic. While failure to do laj is considered a disgrace that brings dishonour to the men of a family, a woman’s inability to feel sharum is seen as an unnatural perversion and is considered inhuman in the same way that failure to feel thirst or hunger is thought of as being abnormal. Similarly, women in ancient Greece were expected to have an inherent sense of aidōs, and the practice of veiling was probably thought to be a logical extension of that natural feeling. The denial of aidōs and a reluctance to veil was therefore a breach of social convention.

Veiling, aidōs and social nomoi
Veiling as a display of the observance of, and feeling for, aidōs is a nomos, a convention in tune with society.60 As a custom, veiling is as necessary in a display of aidōs, as is the careful avoidance of the gaze of strangers and the lowering of the head, a notion that Euripides’ Hekabe makes clear: ‘Custom (nomos) forbids that a woman look into the eyes of men.’61
Veiled and ashamed

Aidōs and veiling are part of the ancient Greek social order as much as sharum and laj are in India, or hasham and tashasham are in Bedouin Egypt. These feelings of shame and the subsequent acts of veiling adhere to unwritten prescriptions and rules of behaviour that transcend legal codes in much the same way that, while veiling is not demanded of Muslim women in Koranic teaching, it has become part of Islamic culture through other, less authoritative, routes. Veiling became an imposed social custom that protected male honour and while (at first) no law code could be cited to force women to veil, the pressure to conform to society’s wishes quickly became paramount. Even today, coercion to observe custom can often transcend the desire to uphold any written law, for custom is a weave that helps create and strengthen the fabric of social order. It is stronger than the law which it frequently exceeds and surpasses; people who fervently adhere to social convention often chose to ignore the limits of the law.

Ancient Greek judge-made laws were very important and custom may have played only a minor role as a legitimate source of law, but this does not rule out the possibility that social convention and even family-law occasionally bypassed the formal city-laws in what has been termed ‘extra-legal forms of sanctions and controls’. It is known, for example, that adulterous women were severely dealt with by the law: an ‘adulterers’ was to be divorced and ostracized from public life (that is to say she was deprived of her religious duties because of her self-imposed pollution), and could be beaten to within an inch of her life by anyone who took it upon themselves to perform the deed. The severity of the punishment was intended to instil a sense of fear within women and encourage them to be chaste, although it is interesting to note that some men preferred not to make public the sexual scandal of their private lives, perhaps, it has been suggested, out of desire for financial gain, or love for their wives, or to preserve their personal honour. While punishments for adulterers have been widely discussed in scholarship, it has only occasionally been proposed that male members of a household might take the law into their own hands and punish a transgressing female according to a family-based set of nomoi.

Yet domestic violence against transgressing females was probably routine, and so much the norm that (like the veil itself) it hardly receives a mention in the male-biased sources. Fisher has demonstrated how Athenian society (and probably Greek culture as a whole) was propelled by a system of honour-driven violence which permeated every social stratum, and he has noted that casual violence against slaves, children, and women was no doubt commonplace. Early Greek literature makes the occasional allusion to domestic violence. According to Homer, even goddesses can suffer abuse at the hands of their husbands, as his description of Zeus’ punishment of Hera makes clear. The very nature of Semonides’ ‘bitch-woman’ compels her husband to knock her teeth out with a stone. Fifth-century dramatic texts recount similar threats: Medea laments the life that awaits a newly wedded bride who leaves her family home to marry a man she does not know and whose temper and habits she can only guess at. According to the Lysistrata, an over-talkative wife might be
threatened with brutality by her husband after a bad day at the Assembly and so she should be wise and keep quiet.\textsuperscript{72} A maxim delivered by an anonymous (but probably male) character from Euripides’ \textit{Melanippe}, suggests that punishment is the right treatment for a troublesome woman, but that only her death will ensure a happier future.\textsuperscript{73} A husband may be a bully like Alkibiades, whose rough treatment of his wife, Hipparete, in the Agora nevertheless passed without public comment because, Plutarch assures us, this type of violence was not regarded as inhuman or even contrary to the law.\textsuperscript{74} A trend towards a more blatant portrayal of domestic violence begins in the late hellenistic period when Chariton has the character Chaereas, the hero of his novel \textit{Callirhoe}, kick his young and innocent wife with such jealous ferocity that he thinks her dead.\textsuperscript{75}

It appears from these fleeting and widely-spaced glimpses of intensely private life is that women may have taken beatings of various degrees of severity at the hands of their male kin, and that women were punished for offences which compromised male honour or upset the ideology of male domination over female inferiority. The standard ideological attitude was that husbands should be able to persuade their wives to obey or conform, but physical chastisement was seen as necessary if the wife refused to kowtow. The Greek tendency to see women as naturally inferior and lacking self-control promoted the need of the stabilizing threat of male violence to keep them under guard, and can perhaps be compared with a recent Jordanian newspaper column that propounded the familiar Arab (but not Koranic) \textit{nomos} that,

\begin{quote}
It is permissible to beat a woman if she disobeys her husband’s instructions. Beating does not hurt a woman’s dignity. That is impossible, because woman is born without dignity.\textsuperscript{76}
\end{quote}

Domestic violence in antiquity (as today) did not necessarily entirely operate around charges of female adultery or wantonness, but flared up whenever ‘manliness’ was at stake. The ancient examples cited above suggest that violence or the threat of violence was used if a woman spoke too much, questioned male authority, or appeared in public too frequently.\textsuperscript{77} Moreover male pride is, and probably was, further endorsed by having access to the hidden faces of the women of a family, and the hadith (religious teaching) that the face of a wife is for a husband alone is commonly heard in Muslim society, while fathers and brothers like to keep their daughters and sisters veiled as a guarantee of their sexual purity which in itself is a source of familial pride.

In modern patriarchal societies, provocative dressing is high on the list of reasons behind attacks on women by outraged husbands, brothers or fathers who believe that their womenfolk are confronting their authority and honour by displaying too much of their bodies, using excessive make-up or failing to veil at the correct time and place. The same may have been true in antiquity.\textsuperscript{78} In fact a Roman source tells of the perceived detriment for male honour when proper veiling is not observed:

\begin{quote}
Gaius Sulpicius Gallus…divorced his wife because he had caught her outdoors with her head uncovered: a stiff penalty but not without certain logic. ‘The law’, he said, ‘prescribes for you my eyes alone to which you may prove your beauty. For these eyes
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you should provide the ornaments of beauty, for these be lovely: entrust yourself to their more certain knowledge. If you, with needless provocation, invite the look of anyone else, you must be suspected of wrongdoing.\(^{79}\)

And this from a supposedly less restrictive Roman viewpoint.

While no ancient Greek source specifically connects female unveiling with abuse or punishment, the strong association between the veil and \textit{aidōs} suggests that deliberate (or perhaps even unintentional) public unveiling might have been regarded with hostility by men and, no doubt, by other conforming women.\(^{80}\) The threat of retribution, including physical chastisement, and the need to maintain and uphold personal and familial honour kept women securely underneath their veils.

The ancient Greek paranoia about female dress, and the inherent respectability which specific types of clothing bestowed on women is shown in a series of formal written law codes dating to the hellenistic period in which females are labelled either ‘respectable’ or ‘disreputable’ by what they wear.\(^{81}\) At public festivals in Syracuse, for example, a ‘proper’ lady was forbidden to wear gold jewellery, embroidered clothes, or dresses with purple borders unless she professed to be a prostitute.\(^{82}\) There may also have been dress regulations enforced at Thasos where all women except prostitutes were banned from wearing purple and embroidered clothes.\(^{83}\) If dress becomes the focus of written law, it is conceivable that it was also at the heart of unwritten social and domestic \textit{nomoi} too.

As a container for and protector of feminine \textit{aidōs}, items of clothing, and veils in particular, were fundamental social necessities and the fact that veils are not mentioned in Greek dress laws can easily be explained: because veiling was so customary in daily life there was no need to mention the institution in any formal law. Social rules were all that were needed.

It was unthinkable for a woman to appear uncovered in public, especially at a festival or at a holy place unless religious regulations \textit{specifically} commanded it. At Rhodes, for example, ritual purity demanded that women entering a sanctuary wear clean white clothes, be bare-footed, not wear leather articles, or wear belts around their waists and should not use any kind of head-covering.\(^{84}\) We are well informed about clothing in the cult of Demeter by the inscription of Andania which prescribes that women participating in the rites of the goddess should refrain from wearing gold jewellery, make-up, sandals, braided-hair, or headbands, and a similar law from a sanctuary at Lykosura in Arcadia explicitly commanded women not to bind up their hair or cover their heads.\(^{85}\) Religious occasions must have provided women with unique opportunities to display their personal adornments by wearing colourful and elaborate clothing, and these occasions would probably have been important events for women, given their limited access to the public life of the state and the marketplace. But these sacred laws do not reflect the social norm; they required women either to wear clothing that they would not usually employ in daily life or to modify their usual appearance during their visit to the shrines. Therefore women are told to appear in pure white robes with their hair hanging loose and their heads unveiled in
direct contradiction to the standard daily custom. Bare feet, spotless white clothing, and uncovered heads emphasized that the religious rites enacted at the sanctuaries took place outside everyday experience. Therefore, a woman’s unveiled appearance in a public religious ritual was unique because, for a limited period of time, she dressed in a specific way to honour the deity. It is probable, therefore, that women initiated into the mysteries of Demeter, Dionysus, or Orpheus were unveiled in religious rites. From the fact that the initiate is fully veiled during the initiation, one could conclude that those already initiated are unveiled.

Normally, to appear publicly unveiled labelled a woman as ‘shameful’ and the men of her family were consequently perceived to be ignominiously dishonoured and lacking control over their females. No doubt the consequences for a woman appearing unveiled in public or before strangers could be harsh. In modern veil-societies a woman’s reluctance to veil or inability to veil quickly or thoroughly enough becomes the cause of much domestic strife and often of subsequent physical abuse. The following quotation, from a young Iranian woman, shows a brother’s control over his sister and his anger at her unveiled but fleeting appearance in public:

I’ll never forget an incident which had a great impact on my life. I was peeping through the front door trying to see who was making such a commotion in the street. Suddenly someone hit me from behind and jabbed the door handle into my eye. I had to be treated in hospital. It was quite painful. My brother was sorry for what he had done, but he also blamed me for interfering in what was happening outside the house without putting my veil on first.

In veil-societies unveiling can result in disastrous consequences for the woman who defiantly unveils or is neglectful of her veiling-duties. Her family’s reputation (and not just the men’s but also the women’s) is at stake, her honour is questioned and her morality is compromised. She may be accused of insanity (or possession), wickedness, impropriety, promiscuity, or of being contaminated and she may be convicted of heresy and sedition. Unveiled women have been stoned or burned to death, have had acid thrown on them or have been imprisoned. Women have been ostracized from society – a terrible fate in cultures where interdependence of family members is essential for survival. In ancient Greece, similar actions may have persuaded women to remain beneath their veils, in security.

**Aidōs and the veil-gesture**

It is clear that the Indian action of _laj_ is reminiscent of the veil-gesture found in Greek iconography. The ancient iconographic motif itself is strongly related to the concept of _aidōs_. It has become apparent that veiling is a distinctive response to (and display of) feeling _aidōs_, and the covering of the face is a natural reaction to express, contain, or rebuff sexual shame and to preserve a sense of modest detachment. The scene of Tityos’ attempted rape of Leto, discussed earlier, clearly shows the goddess veiling her face (_Fig. 114_; see also _Fig. 115_) and has been well-described as, ‘a typical response of the recipient of unwanted erotic attentions’. 
The red-figure vase of Fig. 114 contains an inscription where the letters spell out the word AΙΔΟΣ (AIDOS). Cairns convincingly argues that they are no doubt related in some way to Leto’s act of veiling and do not make up part of the longer genitive word A[ΡΤΕΜΙΔΟΣ (Α[ΡΤΕΜΙΔΟΣ) – thereby relating to the figure of Artemis who stands gesticulating wildly at the far right of the scene. I suggest that the use of the word in this context can be taken slightly further, for a frequent device found in red-figure vase painting is lettering that spells out a word or two uttered by the person(s) portrayed in the painted scene, rather as in a cartoon ‘speech-bubble’. The same use of lettering is possible on the Phinitas vase where the word AΙΔΟΣ could in fact be a cry from one of the participants of the action. Such a shout is not infrequently found in Homeric epic where the simple exclamation ‘Aidōs!’ can be sufficient to inflate a hero’s horror of the slur of spinelessness and to incite warriors on to acts of glory. If this is the case then on the vase, the cry could come from Leto who thereby not only allows the audience to understand her inner feelings, but also spurs on Apollo to defend her modesty and his honour. Alternatively, if aidōs is used as an appeal to an individual’s concern for personal honour, then the utterance could emanate from Apollo himself who thereby bestows upon himself the courage and will to slay the giant and thus display a proper filial regard for his mother. After all, ‘aidōs involves living up to standards of bravery and manhood and having regard for other people…[and] consideration for…dependants’. Whatever the case, the appearance of the word ΑΙΔΟΣ near the figure of a woman covering her head and face with a veil is highly significant and the value of this scene as a tool in interpreting the iconographic veil-gesture is very great.

The very fact that the veil-gesture is found in Greek art with such regularity (and over such a long period of time) must give it some kind of significance and it is sensible here to follow Ferrari’s suggestion that, ‘what is commonplace is packed with meaning’. Aidōs is often described as something visible: Pandora is created with the appearance of a modest virgin and Aphrodite rises from her birth-foam showing the correct feminine demeanor of aidōs. The visibility of aidōs is, as has been suggested, augmented by clothing and it is no surprise to find that when Hesiod envisages the personification Aidōs, she and her companion-deity Nemesis are veiled in white phare. Their white veils, spotless and unblemished, reveal their inner purity while concealing their feminine beauty. As an abstract concept, aidōs is visualized beneath a veil or as a veil.

Moreover, aidōs is best displayed by the self-aware action of veiling, and this is where the veil-gesture comes into its own, for it is the conscientious movement of raising the head-veil to cover the face that enables the viewer to recognize that a woman knows the honour-shame code and plays by it. As a result, the viewer too participates in the game. In contemporary veil-societies, when a woman ‘does’ laj or ghungat or tahashshams before another individual, the action signals her awareness of her shame and desire to preserve honour and to arouse respect from the viewer. I suggest that the veil-gesture found in Greek art asks the viewer to observe similar
Veiled and ashamed

social rules. The stylized veil-gesture is an artistic record of the habitual every-day practice of Greek women.

The legendary origin of the gesture centres on an act of feminine betrayal, when Penelope abandoned her father for the sake of Odysseus and veiled her head in shame. According to this story, the veiling of the heads of all modest women can be associated to Penelope’s sense of shame.\(^98\) According to Pausanias, a statue of Aidōs he saw in Sparta relates to the tale:

The image of Aidōs, some thirty stades distant from the city, they say was dedicated by Ikarius, the following being the reason for making it: when Ikarius first gave Penelope in marriage to Odysseus, he tried to make Odysseus settle in Lacedaemon, but failing in the attempt, he next pleaded with his daughter to remain behind, and when she was setting out towards Ithaka he followed the chariot, begging her to stay. Odysseus endured it for a time, but at last he told Penelope either to accompany him willingly, or else, if she preferred her father, to go back to Lacedaemon. They say that she made no answer, but covered herself with a veil (\textit{egkalupsamenēs}) in reply to the question, so that Ikarius, realizing that she wished to leave with Odysseus, let her go, and dedicated an image of Aidōs; for Penelope, they say, had reached this point in the road when she veiled herself (\textit{egkalupsasthai}).\(^99\)

There is a strong supposition that the statue, which is not described, showed a woman veiling and perhaps performing the veil-gesture, and a speculative identification has been made with a fifth-century seated statue-type of Penelope (Fig. 132).\(^100\) I am not convinced, however, that aidōs is the emotion being portrayed here; the seated statue-type, which can be compared to the figure of Penelope in the famous Chiusi Vase (Fig. 44), shows her wearing a veil, but it is not held in the conventional veil-gesture. Instead the vase painting and the sculpture shows Penelope’s hand touching her chin in a gesture that is usually thought to indicate grief\(^101\) or possibly pensive thought\(^102\) or, less likely, ‘sexual decision-making’.\(^103\) It is more difficult to assign Penelope’s imagery the standard veil-gesture pose.

In their commentary on Pausanias’ Book 3, Musti and Torelli have suggested that his explanatory tale may relate to a popular tradition attached to a statue of a veiled woman set up, perhaps, on a Spartan tomb. Alternatively, or in addition, his story could well have been inspired by the Lakonian hero-reliefs which, as has been demonstrated, frequently show a female in a veiling act.\(^104\) It is apparent that women at Sparta were veiled and that the influence of aidōs, expressed in the hero-reliefs and other monuments, was just as prevalent in Lakonian society as it was in other parts of the Greek world.\(^105\)

\footnote{Fig. 132. Line drawing of a seated statue of a veiled Penelope. Roman marble sculpture, copy of a Greek original of c. 460. Mus. Ch. Vatican 754.}
It has been noted that Roman art uses the Greek veil-gesture, and perhaps its most notable use is in the iconography of Pudicitia, the Roman equivalent of the Greek personification Aidōs. A standing statue of Pudicitia (Fig. 133, possibly deriving from a hellenistic original), is heavily draped within a pharos which veils her head; her clothing covers much of her body and only reveals her toes, neck, face, and one hand. Her left arm is bent at the elbow and her forearm rests across her torso above her waist with the hand enclosed within the thin drapery, but the other hand is raised and she fingers her veil at face-level, which emphasizes the idea that she is veiling. This commonly found pose displays a markedly closed body posture, one which is not only modest, but defensive. Women in this posture shield themselves as if they are aware of the gaze that falls on them. Even goddesses succumb to this trend and statues such as the Aphrodite of Knidos and the Capitoline Venus tell us much about how men think a woman (even a love-goddess) should behave if caught unawares by a male stranger.

The Vatican Pudicitia combines the closed posture of defensive body language with the veil-gesture of modesty and reserve, devices which are frequently found in earlier Greek art. We have already observed how women in Greek art are laid open to the common gaze and that viewers want to see the female body, but wish to be assured of the respectability of the model. The idea is given a further twist in images of women carved into grave stelai where identifiable, sometimes named, women are frequently shown holding onto their veils as they are exposed to the public gaze – even though the scenes often attempt to be domestic vignettes. The grave stelai frequently invite the passer-by to stop, read, and remember, but the compulsion towards female modesty remains, even for the dead. In a society where women were not supposed to have a public identity, the existence of portrait statues of women seems anomalous; therefore, the sculpted bodies of women on the grave stelai invite the gaze, but simultaneously rebuff it and they deny the viewer the privilege of looking at them by adopting the veil-pose. The veil-gesture as a defensive signal of blockage, a barrier to unadulterated viewing, is perhaps best encapsulated on the fourth-century grave stele of the sisters Demetria and Pamphile from the Kerameikos (Fig. 41) where the women face the viewer and are not engaged in any domestic task (as is the case with most other stelai), which makes it very tempting to interpret their veil-gesture as a response to their awareness of being seen. In turn the viewer is placed in the uncomfortably ambiguous position of a voyeur who has been discovered looking.
Properly regulated, women could be put on display as statues and reliefs and painted images and even celebrated in coin-portraits and could be open to the public view. Modesty expressed through dress and pose was one way of demonstrating that women were conforming to the established social nomoi and that they were under control. The veil-gesture in art, like the physical motion of veiling in real life, displayed a woman’s self-awareness of aidōs and in return demanded the aidōs of others.

Veiling as communication
A major property of the veil is its dynamic flexibility, which allows the wearer to change its form instantly. The veil allows a woman to reflect her awareness of social regulations and to conform to them. In modern veil-societies the flexibility which veiling affords is used by women as a means of communication; veiling becomes a non-verbal language that can be both nuanced and suggestive but also outspoken and plain.

In ancient Greek society women were considered movables. While the oikos (family unit) may have been permanent, its members were not. The residential make-up of a household was constantly changing and women in particular were frequently incorporated into its structure on either a permanent or semi-permanent basis. This resulted in the conception that a woman was a stranger in her new home, and one not to be completely trusted. Such an attitude must have had a fundamental effect on her treatment: if she was well behaved and quickly produced a son, some of this distrust might eventually disappear, but that was not necessarily the case. Several Greek texts alert us to the idea that a bride remained a stranger in her new household and that she was never fully assimilated into its ways. What can be taken for granted, however, is the notion that the sight of a married woman or an unmarried daughter or sister was (ideally) for the eyes of the family alone and that no strange man should be allowed to view the women of another man’s oikos. This attitude endured for centuries. Thus, when in the Odyssey Penelope covers her face with her linen veil whilst in the company of her suitors, she becomes part of that long tradition of woman’s social conformity through the act of veiling. Indeed, so fundamental is this act to the construction of Penelope’s character, that Homer allows his audience to witness the episode four times, and for each occasion the same repeated formula is used: ‘holding before her face her shining veil (lipara kredemna)’.

The motif is first encountered in Odyssey Book 1 (334) in a scene set within the great hall of Odysseus’ palace, where Telemakhos and the suitors are listening to the doleful song of the minstrel Phemios. Penelope enters the megaron having descended from her private quarters and interrupts the song, begging the bard to stop. But she is rebuked by her son and sent back to her chamber. All the while, she has held her shining veil in front of her face. The phrase is then repeated in Book 16 (416), but this time the mood in the hall is considerably altered: the suitors are restless and are plotting the death of Telamakhos. Penelope descends into the hall and reprimands
Antinoos until, her anger apparently quelled by Eurymakhos’ reasoning, she returns to her chamber. Again she observes, it seems, a strict form of veiling.

The queen’s entrance into the _megaron_ in Book 18 (210) is inspired by Athene. Penelope admonishes her son and the suitors, but returns to her room a wealthier woman, taking with her rich gifts from her prospective husbands. This is all enacted while her (lower) face is veiled. Finally, she issues the archery challenge to the suitors in Book 21 (65) whilst standing in her familiar spot and once more holding her shining veil across her face.

Throughout these tense scenes Penelope acts within the confines of expected social behaviour. As mistress of the household, Penelope has every right to enter into the _megaron_ while the men dine, even though her husband is absent. Yet, just like women in contemporary veil-societies, she veils her face in front of men who are non-kin, thereby confirming what has been described as, ‘her good sense in dealing with an awkward situation’ as well as stressing her heightened awareness of _aidōs_.\(^{111}\) It is clear that Penelope works within the boundaries of an established social _nomos_ and she most likely feels that her act of appearing before unrelated men could compromise her reputation and so to help defuse the situation (and the inherent highly-charged sexual atmosphere), she is accompanied on each of her visits to the hall by two maidservants who, in conjunction with her veil, serve to uphold her _aidōs_ and family honour, and to dispel the erotic tension.\(^{112}\) Penelope possibly anticipates that her veiling and the appearance of her _amphipoloi_ will stir a suitable sense of _aidōs_ in her suitors too, although the outcome of her display of modesty has the opposite effect.\(^{113}\)

Observing other Homeric banqueting scenes in which women are present, we note that Helen does not apparently veil herself at the feast held in honour of Telemakhos at Sparta, nor does Arete in the scenes set within the Phaiakian court.\(^{114}\) As queens and wives who accompany their husbands within the confines of their homes, neither Helen nor Arete need have any inhibitions at sitting in the company of other men and, being under the safeguard of their husbands, they need not veil. Similarly, when the suitors are absent from the great hall, Penelope displays no anxiety about sitting in the hall with the male guest brought into the house by Telemakhos (Odysseus disguised as a beggar) since he is of a low status (unlike her powerful suitors) and she is under the protection of her son who is also present.\(^{115}\) The fact that her hands are occupied with spinning fine thread clearly shows that she cannot be holding her veil over her face, although her head may be (in fact probably is) covered.\(^{116}\) The working of wool is a proper attribute of a wife seated at a male banquet, and van Wees has noted that wives do not eat or drink, but rather ply their wool and make light conversation. Furthermore, daughters and daughters-in-law seem to be entirely absent from Homeric banquets, with the result that the attention is focused on the mistress of the household.\(^{117}\) At the banquet in Sparta however, the women who serve the stranger-guests are the wives of the Spartan nobles who are conspicuously, if beautifully, veiled as they carry out their duties.\(^{118}\)
When Nausikaa persuades her father to allow her to leave the confines of the palace and take the family laundry down to the river for washing, she circumspectly veils herself for the journey through the city into the countryside. It is only when she is at a safe distance from the palace and out of sight of any strange men that she throws off her veil and indulges in play. Following her remarkably composed encounter with the naked Odysseus, she returns with the stranger to the palace (although he is asked to walk some distance off for the sake of decency) and we are meant to assume that Nausikaa re-veils for the homeward journey.

Post Homeric sources occasionally mention events when it was considered appropriate for women to veil, but most authors tend only to highlight the more dramatic or unusual circumstances surrounding veiling and usually attempt to offer an explanation. Plutarch twice has reason to recount veil-related incidents as emblematic of the more abnormal aspects of the societies he studies. In his *Quaestiones Graecae* he asks,

Why have the women of Chalkedon the custom, when they meet strangers and particularly officials, to veil one cheek (parakaluptesthai pareian)?

and provides the answer thus:

There was a war between them and the Bithynians to which they were incited by every provocation. When Zeipoetes became king of Bithynia, the Chalcedonians, in full force and with the addition of Thracian allies, devastated the country with fire and sword. When Zeipoetes attacked them near the so-called Phalion, they fought badly through rashness and lack of discipline and lost over eight thousand soldiers. It was only because Zeipoetes granted an armistice to please the Byzantines that they were not completely annihilated at that point. Since then there has been a tremendous lack of men in the city and most of the women were forced to consort with freedmen and resident aliens. But those women who preferred to have no husband rather than this type of marriage, acted for themselves in business with the judges or the officials, drawing aside part of the veil that covered their faces (apagousai thateron meros tou prosopou tes kaluptras). And the married women, feeling ashamed, followed their examples of those who they thought were better than themselves and adopted the same custom.

It would be wrong, of course, to suggest that Plutarch is trying to account for the origin of female veiling here, and it is also mistaken to assume that, because he emphasizes that the women of Chalkedon were veiled, that this was something out of the ordinary in Greek life and that he was more used to seeing women walking about publicly unveiled. No, in this passage Plutarch stresses an unnatural and cruel perversion of the social order where, because of the lack of high status men within the city, certain honourable women choose to remain as widows or spinsters rather than compromise their social standing by marrying beneath them. They have no men to defend them and so they must venture out into public to conduct their business affairs themselves but, being modest women of good breeding, they will only go outside if properly veiled. When they need to conduct business with men – magistrates, judges and probably shopkeepers too – they keep their veils tightly
over their faces but temporarily lift a section of them in order to speak and transact their affairs. Subsequently, out of shame, the women who had married beneath their social class began to emulate the unmarried women and also started to make public transactions, and so the sight of women publicly unveiling part of their faces soon become an established custom.\textsuperscript{123} It is not veiling itself that Plutarch finds anomalous among the Chalkidian women, but the fact that in the absence of men they are compelled to partially unveil and conduct ‘male’ business.

In a similar vein, attributed to Plutarch is a rather avant-garde veiling tradition that was practised in early Sparta at the time of king Kharillos, a contemporary of Lykourgos. In the Sayings of the Spartans it is stated,

When someone asked why they [the Spartans] took their girls into public areas unveiled (\textit{akaluptous}), but their married women veiled (\textit{egkekalummenas}), he [Kharillos] said, ‘Because the girls have to find husbands, and the married women have to keep those who have them!’\textsuperscript{124}

The story does not suggest that Spartan veiling is necessarily out of the ordinary but instead he assumes that Sparta is part of a long pan-hellenic tradition whereby women are habitually veiled in accordance with established notions of \textit{sôphrosynê} and \textit{aidôs} (and we have noted that Homer also refers to veiled Spartan wives and that early Lakonian iconographic evidence testifies to the use of the veil).\textsuperscript{125} Kharillos explicitly states that the reason why Spartan wives are veiled is in order that they stay loyally and modestly chaste for their husbands; so the reasoning behind veiling the wives of Sparta is fundamentally no different from any other veil-society, ancient or modern. The shock-factor comes into play with the mention of the Spartan girls (men’s daughters and sisters) who are taken into public areas unveiled in a deliberate bid for them to be seen by men and subsequently married off.\textsuperscript{126} The public display of the faces (and figures) of young women is in accord with Plutarch’s larger agenda of envisioning Lakonian society as being emphatically and essentially different from other Greek communities, a divergence that is well emphasized by the Spartan treatment of women.\textsuperscript{127}

Concerning the wider Peloponnese, Athenaeus (quoting Pythaenetus) notes the startling effect that unveiling had on (male) observers of Peloponnesian girls in general who appeared uncovered in public:

Pythaenetus in the third book of his \textit{On Aegina} says that Periander saw in Epidaurus the daughter of Prokles, Melissa, dressed in Peloponnesian fashion – that is she wore no veil (\textit{anampelkonos}) – but was dressed in a simple chiton while she acted as wine-pourer for the workmen in the fields. And falling in love with her, he married her.\textsuperscript{128}

In contrast to the limited (and early) Lakonian and Peloponnesian iconographic evidence, Melissa, it seems, merely accommodated to typical Peloponnesian (and perhaps Spartan) customs for young women. If Plutarch and Athenaeus can be believed (and there is no reason to dismiss their evidence summarily), the artistic representations may show only married mortal women or goddesses. Melissa’s
appearance in male society without her veil is condoned by Peloponnesian society; the girl appears in close proximity to strange men as she pours them wine, and it is clear that she is ‘on parade’ with the hoped-for result that marriage to one of the men she serves will follow, as indeed is the case, albeit she does not marry a local man, but a Korinthian stranger.

Outside the Peloponnese, the more familiar notion of a woman carefully observing the etiquette of veiling is played on by Apollonius Rhodius, who depicts Medea gazing at the much-desired Jason from behind her veil:

the maiden, looking sideways behind her shining veil (kaluptēn), glanced at him with wandering eyes. Her heart smouldered with pain as he left her sight and her soul crept out of her as in a dream and fluttered in his steps.\textsuperscript{129}

It is clear that women need to be vigilant with their veils and a well-known anecdote from Plutarch (once again concerning Theano) emphasizes the point:

Theano, in throwing on her mantle-veil, exposed her forearm. Somebody exclaimed, ‘A lovely forearm!’ ‘But not for the public’, she said.\textsuperscript{130}

Unfortunately we do not know how or when or to what degree Greek women veiled when confronted by certain individuals (male or female), but enough evidence suggests that women covered themselves in front of strange men, although we can gather little else from the texts or iconographic sources to ascertain some of the more nuanced aspects of Greek veiling. A brief investigation into veiling practices in modern societies may supply ideas on how the Greek veil functioned and what messages it may have conveyed.

Ethnography reveals that veiling is situational and that modern women, just like their ancient counterparts, will automatically veil at appropriate moments, in particular situations, and in front of certain people. Women in Ghanyari have mastered a dozen ways of drawing their veils across their faces to denote a dozen degrees of respect and Sharma even notes that, ‘I have seen the veil used insolently, although it would be impossible to achieve in words just how the effect of insolence was achieved.’\textsuperscript{131}

So while the veil de-personalizes women, it does not leave them without a means of self-expression. Research undertaken on the Tuareg of the Sahara has stressed the role of the veil as a means of communicating an individual’s disposition and social situation and, even though the studies relate to male veiling, the information offered on veil manipulation as a reflection of mood are still pertinent to the study of veiled women. Henri Lhote’s inquiry into the Tuareg has noted that,

There is a psychology of the veil; by the way in which it is set, one can get an idea of the mood of the wearer… There is the reserved or modest style used when one enters a camp where there are women, the elegant and recherché style for going to courting parties, the haughty manner of warriors conscious of their own importance…there is also the detached and lax fashion of the jovial fellow…or the disordered one of the unstable man of irritable character. The veil may also express a transient sentiment. For example, it is brought up to the eyes before a woman or prestigious persons, while it is...
a sign of familiarity when it is lowered. To laugh from delight with a joke, the Tuareg will lift up the lower part of his veil very high on his nose, and, in the case of irritation, will tighten it like a chin-strap to conceal his anger.\textsuperscript{132}

Tuareg men veil specifically for two specific reasons, both of which have more to do with social necessity than with personal feelings: firstly, they always veil in front of women and, secondly, they veil for men who are their social superiors. Outside Tuareg society, the same rules apply to women in other veil-societies; they habitually veil for those higher up the social ladder and generally veil before all men who are strangers or family members who merit respect.

In the Yemen, women relax their veiling when they are alone, when they are with other women, or with men of \textit{mahram} (male kin who are bound by an incest taboo, that is, in a relationship of unmarriageability to the women). Women veil in the presence of ‘strange men’, those who are not \textit{mahram} (as, in the Greek sources, do Penelope, Helen, Nausikaa, and Iphigeneia, to name but a few). A woman’s \textit{mahram} (the plural of \textit{mahram}) comprise of father, brother, son, father’s brother, mother’s brother, brother’s son, sister’s son, and suckling brother (a man who shared the same wet nurse as the woman).\textsuperscript{133} A similar situation is apparent in Afghanistan where the limit of incest prohibition is the beginning of ‘interactional modification’ by veiling, seclusion and other acts. A woman cannot marry (and is therefore not secluded from) men who are ascendant or descendent to her, their brothers, or her sisters’ husbands. These men, among others, are at one time or another \textit{korwala} (‘home-inhabitants’) and within a \textit{kor} context, relations are unveiled. Outside that group, men and women only interact with each other through the directive of veiling and seclusion so that the social arena is sharply divided into those who share the same \textit{kor} (domestic quarters and natal or marital affines) and those who veil from each other.\textsuperscript{134}

The complexities of veiling prescriptions within Bedouin society is both situational and voluntary and women do not necessarily see veiling as an institution forced on them by men. Indeed, if anyone besides a woman herself has the liability for imposing the use of the face veil, it is other women, for, ‘they guide novices (brides) along, teasing young women for veiling for men who don’t deserve their deference and criticizing them for failing to veil for men who do’.\textsuperscript{135} There is a possibility that female groups could have responded in a similar way in ancient Greek societies.\textsuperscript{136}

Ceasing to veil the face can be interpreted as a bid for status and the only category of people for whom women usually veil are strangers and non-kin. Yet in Bedouin society, unlike Afghan and Yemeni traditions, women generally veil for their fathers, elder uncles and cousins and older affines. If a woman’s father is dead and the leadership of a family has been inherited by her elder brother, the woman will most likely veil for him, but women do not generally veil for their husbands, younger brothers and cousins or men of lower rank than their husbands. The principle operating here is that women will not veil for those lower in the social hierarchy, only those who have authority over them merit this respect. The system is flexible, however, allowing women to judge relative status and even to negotiate status.\textsuperscript{137}
In northern India, where the act of ghungat is practised only by a married woman, an unmarried girl is expected to keep her head and shoulders covered with her veil, although she does not have to draw her veil across her face for anyone and it is only during the wedding celebrations that her face is first covered by a cloth. But from that point on she will observe a strict code of etiquette towards the older men of her community. She will never show her face to her husband’s father, to his eldest brother, or to any of his senior male kin. Her husband’s younger brothers and junior kin may see her face although she will veil herself from the husbands of her husband’s sisters and from the male kin of her mother-in-law. She does not veil herself from her children’s parents-in-law, from her own mother-in-law (nor from any other woman) nor from her own sisters’ husbands (although these additional prescriptions can be found in other societies).

It is clear that there are no hard and fast rules about who veils for whom, but generally the operating principle seems to be that women veil for men who are unrelated by ties of blood or domestic bonding and for men of high social status. In the case of the Awlad ‘Ali and Ghanyari women though, these two categories seem to be intertwined and the respect that women show to the senior men of a woman’s marital family reflects the idea that the men are not a part of her blood family and that they are also her social superiors. In most veil-societies as a woman gets older, she will find herself having to veil before fewer and fewer people, since there will be either fewer men alive in the community who are senior to her husband or her own blood-family increases in size. A woman’s progressive incorporation into her marital group is paralleled by a diminution of the depersonalising symbolism of the veil. While young brides may look interchangeable, mothers do not.\textsuperscript{138}

We have little idea if ancient Greek women veiled only in front of unrelated men or whether the convention was extended to include certain male members of the family or even to other women. A bride’s deference to her new father in law, and even her husband, might have been demonstrated by an abject display of strict veiling for the first few months following her wedding, but the sources are absolutely silent on whether a veiled deference was to be observed by the bride towards the other inhabitants of her new household. Nor do we definitely know if a wife or daughter veiled before her kin, but balancing the Homeric and classical sources with the anthropological evidence, I suggest that this would be unlikely. It is impossible to make any firm judgements on the use of the veil in various Greek societies in a way that might correspond to modern evidence, but it is nevertheless useful to speculate on the complexities of veiling that might have been employed by Greek women to convey their social awareness and their individual reactions to social situations. Homeric evidence centred on the characters of Penelope, Nausikaa, and Helen suggest that the reasons for veiling could be highly nuanced, and post-Homeric texts occasionally confirm the use of veiling as an indication of female alertness to social conventions.

As an act within her power, veiling is a woman’s way of encasing her body within the restrictive and protective confines mandated by her culture. She veils her self,
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thereby situating herself in her proper position in the social hierarchy. In veil-societies
the veil is both a signal of a woman’s own authority and power and a sign of her
weakness and powerlessness (relative, that is, to men). But while on the one hand
she retains the power to veil her head or face, in that she veils herself, on the other,
this cannot be allowed to mask the ideology of veiling (ancient and modern) as a way
of effecting the subordination of women. By veiling herself, a woman (willingly?)
implicates herself in the ideology that justifies her separation from male society and
the control placed over her as a weak, dangerous, and polluting element of society.

Conclusion

It is clear, then, that the veil increased a sense of *aides* in women who took it upon
themselves to veil in accordance with established social norms and, in addition,
veiling activated a feeling of *aides* in others. Veiling allowed a woman to respond to
a social situation and, no doubt, differing degrees of veiling performed in front of
a variety of people highlighted female response to issues of status and self-expression.
While no written law codes appear to have forced women to veil in public, a strong
notion that veiling was required and desired for women in public seems to have been
inherent in (male) Greek thought. Women probably acquiesced to that dictum out of
fear of the consequences or out of their own conception that the veil afforded them
respectability and, indeed, a certain degree of independence of expression.

Notes

1 See Anderson 1982, 398.
3 *Od.* 10.48–55.
4 Goffman 1956, 497.
5 Hani 1980, 103–12 notes that the word *aides* is almost untranslatable, like so many other
culturally-specific words that are pregnant with multiple and secondary meanings. The word
contains the concepts of modesty, shame, fear, respect and honour. Cairns’ balanced and
thorough studies have revealed a rich and nuanced word and have exposed a myriad of ways
in which *aides* functioned as a powerful social entity, but it is important to stress that the
ideology of *aides* lies at the heart of female veiling. So much so, in fact, that it is impossible
to separate *aides* from any other reasons for veiling. Further studies of *aides* are provided by
6 The words ‘reserve’ and ‘respect’ are preferred to ‘modesty’ and ‘honour’ by El Guindi
1999, 83. I think that all four words are equally applicable and that one set of terms does
not cancel out the other.
7 Cairns 1993, 2.
8 Cairns 1996b. 79: ‘*aides* is . . . fundamentally at home in reciprocal relationships.’
9 Ibid. 18. This present study is particularly concerned with the connection between
women and *aides*, an association that emphasizes feminine coyness and modesty and diverges
from masculine connotations of the term, since, in the Greek conception, women of all
classes can be described as *aidoi*ē, or ‘deserving *aides*.’
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10 Cairns 1993, 121.
14 Lys. 1.22–3; Demost. 47.53; *Isaeus* 3.3–14.
17 See, for example, Fisher 1992, 111; Ferrari 1990, 185–200; Reeder 1995, 299 ff. The harnessing of female sexuality by means of seclusion, segregation, veiling, or constant surveillance is a fundamental prescript of the kind of society classed by Murdock 1965, 273 as one in which ‘a strong internalization of sexual prohibitions during the socialization process’ operates. Both ancient Greek and some modern Islamic societies fall within his definition.
18 See Amin 1928.
19 See in particular Mernissi 1975 and Brooks 1995. The same fear is expressed in the Greek myth of Teiresias.
20 Abu-Lughod 1988, 78. *Contra* El Guindi 1999 who criticizes Abu-Lughod’s focus on modesty as a distortion of cultural identity and as a reductionist reading. She argues that translating such qualities as *hasham* and *tahshashud* as ‘modesty’ stresses the wrong quality because female sexuality is not as central to the concept of womanhood as are the notions of respect, privacy and identity. She also argues that the word ‘seclusion’ does not adequately account for female separation in Muslim society and prefers the word ‘sanctuary’. But I suggest that this is to oversimplify and make over-optimistic the Islamic view of dangerous female sexuality.
22 Ibid. 152.
26 Mature men are sometimes depicted with bowed heads and lowered eyes when standing before gods or altars, while younger men might adopt the pose in front of their male elders. The main difference was that men were not expected to keep their eyes and heads lowered at all times. In Muslim tradition the conspicuously lowered eyes of a woman is referred to as ‘eye modesty’ or ‘eye purdah’. See Chowdhry 1994, 287.
28 Eibl-Eibesfeldt 1989, 170. He emphasizes (p. 335) that human social interaction is simultaneously both arousing and frightening, although the latter quality is not always subject to a negative experience, since ‘we react with shyness to specific characteristics of the other party, and the disposition to behave this way is one of the universals of human behaviour’.
29 Japanese women in particular are prone to this action, which clearly relates to the Japanese concept of the ‘silent woman’ and to the ancient belief that the female voice and laugh are polluted. The Japanese language has terms for laughter thought appropriate only for women: *oboko* is a female-only laugh of great restraint, which is made with the hand over
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30 See Eibl-Ebesfeldt 1989, 337.

31 Langner 1959, 76 understood the link between modesty and clothing as ‘conditions where sexual modesty comes into play, where something is revealed in public, and something is covered up. Uncover that which is usually covered up in public, and you become immodest.’

32 van Wees 1998a, 347 ff.

33 In much the same way that fans were used in Europe in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries.

34 The literature on male nudity is enormous, but see in particular Ridgeway 1996, 90–1; Spivey 1996, 112–13; Stewart 1990, 79, 106 and 1997, 26 ff.; Bonfante 1989, 543–70; Osborne 1998, 80–104. I follow Osborne’s argument that male nudity in Greek art is a symbolic construct that represents the heroic and mature male and works alongside the image of the beardless youth. I do not agree that men generally walked around naked in daily life, but that nudity was an accepted part of athletic society at the gymnasia and other sporting events and no doubt was a central element of the public ritual of looking at boy’s genitals which so delighted Philokleon (Ar. Wasps 578). It is highly likely that people even turned a blind eye to an open robe or carelessly wrapped himation at a night-time revel, but I find it hard to believe that naked Athenian males paraded alongside vulnerable maidens up to the temple of Athene during the Great Panatheneia. Male nudity was acceptable in controlled contexts: where the Athenian council inspected the bodies of young men, or at places where women were banned from entering. Moreover, the Greek word aidoia used for sexual organs (like the Latin pudenda) testifies that male nudity was not totally accepted. LSJ s.v. ἀιδοία. See further Ferrari 1990, 189.

35 See Ferrari 1997. She states (p. 6) that ‘the most theatrical display of aidōs is made by the all-enveloping mantle, which covers a variety of characters on painted vases and in sculpture. Although it is worn by males in particular states of grief, shame, or participation in rituals, this is most often the garb of females and boys and, in its extreme form reaches up to the mouth’. It is unclear whether she regards the mantle (she does not use the word ‘veil’) as an item of daily dress, since the closing paragraph of her 1990 article (p. 200) says confusingly, ‘there remains one last point to be made…although it may now be obvious: the picture of the enveloping mantle does not refer to clothes but to the figure it covers’. This seems to suggest that she understands the image of the mantled figure to be a symbolic construct but not rooted in real-life experience.

36 See Hdt. 1.8.3–4 and the discussion by Cairns 1996a, 81.

37 Ibid. See also Ferrari 1990, 198.

38 Dio. Laer. 8.43:

39 As Ferrari 1990, 199–200 notes, ‘Aidōs…does for the social persona what the mantle [i.e. veil] does for the person wearing it: within, it conceals the shame, the consciousness of being at fault that engenders respect and submission; in its outward presence, it shields, by setting a boundary not to be transgressed.’ The Roman notion of pudicitia was likewise embodied in a woman’s dress, especially the stola which was designed to indicate the modest respectability of the wearer. From the reign of Augustus, the stola became the correct costume for matrons and was seen as the female equivalent of the male toga. Like the veil, the stola also carried a message, for it pronounced clearly the inherent respectability, chastity and marital fidelity of the wearer, and donning the garment conferred esteem upon a woman. Illustrating the importance of pudicitia in Roman history, Valerius Maximus (6.1) begins
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his study with a hymnic invocation to the personification of the concept and declares that, ‘Because of your guardianship the matron’s stola has its value.’ For the ideology of the Roman stola see Sebesta 1998. For a discussion of pudicitia see Williams 1999, 97 ff.


41 I am grateful to Anastasia Serghidou for allowing me to read her unpublished paper ‘Men’s cloaks and women’s robes: the politics of dress’, delivered at the conference on Women’s Dress in the Ancient Greek World at Hay-On-Wye in May 1999, in which she discussed the relevant Plutarchian passage. For the unveiling of the bride, see Chapter 8.

42 Xen. Mem. 2.1.21–2.

43 See Ferrari 1990, 189.


45 Ibid. 832.

46 Ibid. 833–5. See comments by Allen 2000, 187. He is wrong in thinking that Hermione’s action of unveiling and disrobing eroticizes her and places her in the position of a concubine.

47 See Mernissi 1975, 144. In northern India an unveiled woman is said to ‘go about exposing her breasts together with her face’. See Chowdhry 1994, 283.


51 Aelian, Varia Hist. 12.47.

52 On this passage see in particular, Cairns 1993, 321–40, esp. 322 n. 212 for previous interpretations. He argues that aidōs is one of the fundamental elements of Phaedra’s motivation.

53 Eur. Hip. 239–47. The word ‘again’ (palin) suggests that although Phaedra’s head must have been veiled when indoors, her face was unveiled as she entered the scene because the chorus notes her colour and facial expression (172, 180). But, as Barrett 1964 (1992), 206 suggests, now the queen ‘seeks to hide her tears and her look of shame’, and ‘seems to envisage a reversion to a veiling more complete than she can have had at 175 and 172’.


56 Abu-Lughod 1986, 165 notes, ‘to show respect for that social order and the people who represent it, women must deny their sexuality’.

57 Sharma 1978, 218–33, esp. 226, notes that veiling as a symbol of social decorum is strongly didactic, but that individual instances of veiling do not necessarily need to have any ‘meaning’; a woman will veil herself from men (and sometimes even from other women) simply because she is feeling shy, although the complex rules of veiling-etiquette will have been made clear to her and will have taught her that there are certain (usually public) occasions when it is proper for a woman to ‘feel shy’. Much the same is true of Bedouin women, as Abu-Lughod 1986, 161–2 suggests: ‘The final indication of veiling’s association with sexuality is that women resort to it when embarrassed by references to sexuality even in the company of men for whom they ordinarily do not veil. During my first visit to the Bedouin household in which I was later to live, I naively pulled out my notebook and asked the head of the household who was married to whom. All the women present blushed and pulled their veils over their faces. I realized I had done something wrong, but it was
a long time before I understood what... At a gathering of kinswomen brought together by a wedding, an older woman began teasing her nephew...about his marital life. At this point in the conversation, the younger women, who had been sitting apart with their backs to the man, suddenly veiled and moved to another room. In another instance...[a woman] suddenly paled and pulled her veil over her face when the one-and-a-half-year-old daughter of the senior lineage head with whom she was sitting revealed a bare bottom as she played nearby.'

59 See below, Chapter 8.
60 For *nomos* see Plato *Laws* 700b, 722e, 734e, 775b, 799e. A good definition of *nomos* can be found in Cartledge, Millett and Todd (eds.) 1990, 231–2. Cf. LSJ s.v. νομός.
62 The development of the early Islamic patriarchy is well discussed by Mernissi 1987, 238 ff.
63 Cohen 1991, 98. *Contra* Todd 1993, 63, who argues that ‘religion and the *oikos* exist only within the limits of the polis’.
64 On this see Cohen 1991, 99.
66 See, for example, Aesch. *Against Timarchos* 107; Arist. *Rhet.* 1373a35.
67 This is a common feature of life in Greek mountain villages in the recent past. See in particular Campell 1964, 160–1, 240, 265–9, 308. For a treatment of Athenian punishment see Allen 2000.
68 Fisher 1998, 77. He argues that while wife-beating is not explicitly referred to in the sources, ‘it seems unlikely that it did not occur pretty routinely’. That is not to deny that good marital relationships and happy family homes routinely existed. Obviously a balance needs to be struck. We should remember that law (written or customary) by its very nature emphasizes prohibition and consequently fails to emphasize the positive and thus the arguments for female chastity are always presented negatively. For a discussion of good marital relationships and loving family groups see Lefkowitz 1996, 67–82. It is interesting to note, however, that in Muslim thought women should be the object of male sexual pleasure but should not be objects of emotional involvement. Allah requires the true believer’s total love: ‘Emotional attachment divides a man’s heart, and Allah hath not created man with two hearts in his body’ (Koran 3.4). Love between a husband and wife is dangerous to the believer’s religious devotion.
69 *Il.* 15.16–33.
70 Semonides 7.
73 Eur. *Fr.* 497.
75 Charit. *Call.* 1.4.12. Roman authors tend to speak more bluntly about the physical abuse of women and Valerius Maximus (6.3.9–12) in particular eulogizes the by-gone days when wife-beaters were regarded as noble upholders of public morality. The most remarkable evidence for wife-beating (astonishing because of its intensely personal nature) comes from the *Confessions* of St Augustine whose mother, Monica, suffered years of abuse at the hands of her brutish husband Patricius. Yet she bore her suffering well, not least because she
was not alone in her torments for Augustine makes it clear that many wives and daughters in Thagaste endured similar lifestyles: ‘Many women… bore the disfiguring marks of blows even on their faces… And so… they used to meet together and complain of the behaviour of their husbands’ (Augustine, *Confessions* 9.19. Trans. Pine-Coffin 1961). A good treatment of the subject is provided by Clark 1998. See also Power 1995, 71 ff.; Arjava 1996, 130–2.

Cited in Goodwin 1994, 264.

In northern India a commonly heard maxim is ‘beat up the shameless hussy’, and it is often used as advice to a husband who has a non-conforming wife. Beating of women is very much part of Indian rural culture and is accepted by women as a matter of course. To understand this ideology, another proverb is useful: ‘A quarrel between a married couple is of no consequence.’ Therefore neighbours rarely (if ever) interfere with domestic violence and, in fact, the wife herself resents outside intervention. For details see Chowdhry 1994, 278 ff. Abu-Lughod 1986, 89 puts an interesting spin on the situation and reveals that among the Awlad ‘Ali, male toughness is admired and, to a certain degree, women like the concept of ‘real men’ and generally share male idealization of domestic power. But both men and women condemn excessive use of domestic violence. In Egyptian society if a husband is known as a ‘real man’ who ‘controls his house’ and jealously guards his wife, she has no opportunity to betray him and is therefore honourable. See van Nieuwkerk 1995, 162 ff.

See discussions in Abu Odeh 1993.

Valerius Maximus 6.3.10. Trans. Shackleton Bailey (Loeb) 2000, with amendments. In his ‘*Roman Questions* (Mor. 267C 14), Plutarch makes reference to the Sulpicius Gallus incident but states that he divorced his wife ‘because he saw her pull her clothing over her head’. Whether he has misunderstood Valerius Maximus or is using another source is uncertain. However, Plutarch could be suggesting that Gallus saw his wife publicly unveiled but as she saw him she began to cover her head, although this is unlikely, for he states that ‘formerly [i.e., in the days of Valerius Maximus] women were not allowed to veil their heads at all’. This is rather strange.

The pressure on women to conform to convention is frequently emphasized by other women. Cohen 1991, 161 notes that, ‘women’s information networks play a central role in the politics of reputation… Literary sources… portray women’s gossip as a medium for fostering or destroying other women’s reputations.’

The hellenistic dress codes have been studied by Mills 1984 and Culham 1986. The dress laws are conveniently collected together in Soklowski 1968.

Athen. 521b = Phylarchus FGH 81 F45.

See Pouilloux 1954, no. 155 (late 4th century).

Sokolowski 1962, 91.

Dittenberger 1915, 736 and 939.

Dillon 1997, 197.

However, priestesses of Demeter in Asia Minor are portrayed veiled (usually, it appears, in the *shaal* -veil). This might be because the priestess identifies herself with the goddess. See Pfuhl and Möbius 1977–9 nos. 403, 407, 409, 410. Similarly priestesses in the cult of Isis were covered by a light linen veil. See Apuleius, *Met.* 11.10 and Pfuhl and Möbius, 1977–9 no. 222.

Quoted in Al-Khayyat 1990, 25.

See, for example, Goodwin 1994, 107, 109, 247–8, 282–3.

See Cairns 1996a.

Ibid. 153.
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92 Cairns 1996a.
93 See, for example, Robinson and Fluck 1937 and Boardman 1992.
94 See Il. 13.95, 15.502, 16.422. See further, Cairns 1993, 68.
95 Cairns 1993, 70.
96 Ferrari 1990, 186.
97 Hes. W&D 197–201 (λευκοίσιν φάρεσι καλυψαμένω).
98 The Romans also had a tradition that the bride’s veil was associated with an act of betrayal. Commenting on the custom of veiling the bride’s head, the lexicographer Festus (174.24L, s.v. nuptias) noted that the act of covering the head (and the verb obnubere) was identical to the act of covering the heads of parricides: Aelius and Cincius [on the derivation of nuptias]: since the head of the bride is veiled [obvolvatur] with a flame-coloured veil, [an act] that the ancients termed obnubere. For this reason [they say] that the…law also bids veil [obnubere] the head of him who has slain a parent, that is to say, obvolvere’. Both the bride and the parricide are guilty of breaking the bond with the father.
100 LIMC s.v. Aidōς. The name of the seated woman in the statue type is certain. See Boardman 1985, 51; see also Cairns 1996a, 155 and n.37; Buitron-Oliver and Cohen 1995, 43–8.
101 Neumann 1965, 139 and fig. 69.
102 Buitron-Oliver and Cohen 1995, 46.
103 Ibid. 47.
104 See Musti and Torelli 1991. It is argued that the female figure of Aidōs is linked to the cult of Hades/Aidoneus and that the statue of Aidōs was a vestige of a pre-existing cult of Hades. There may well have been some confusion in fact about the reading and writing of the word ΑΙΔΕΥΣ (Hades) inscribed on a statue. For details see Richer 1999.
105 See also Od. 4.623.
106 For the Roman imagery of Pudicitia see D’Ambra 1993, 56 ff. She notes (p. 57, n. 29) that, ‘As depicted in Attic vase painting, the gesture of lifting the veil (to reveal the face) may indicate sexual availability… In Roman art, however, the gesture of drawing the veil (to cover the face) usually expresses modesty or chastity.’ She therefore suggests that the motif in Greek art stands for unveiling, but Roman art uses the same device to show veiling and that therefore the Greek gesture speaks of sexuality while the Roman one tells of female modesty. This is a rather strange and unnecessary separation of what is obviously a Roman continuation of a Greek device.
107 Davies 2002. I am grateful to Glenys Davies for allowing me to read her unpublished paper ‘The representation of female modesty through pose and dress in classical art’ which contains much of value, including a very good discussion of the imagery of Pudicitia.
108 Contra Osborne 1994 who suggests that the Aphrodite of Knidos ‘says nothing to women’.
109 Even when true portrait statues of women became more common in the hellenistic period, the appearance of the veiled head was an essential part of the acceptable iconography even though the portrait features could not be masked by a veil. See Smith 1991, 83–6, figs. 111–16. For public images of women in the hellenistic period see van Bremen 1996.
111 van Wees 1995, 156. Lateiner 1995, 256 is in agreement: ‘Her tact, a convenient name for verbal and nonverbal social strategies, could not be improved on.’ On Penelope’s aidōs see Od. 18.184.
Women’s sense of *aidōs* should keep them away from sexually charged scenes. In *Od. 8* shyness of sex prevents the goddesses from seeing the consequences of Ares’ and Aphrodite’s dangerous liaison.

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For comments see Halliday 1928, 196–7. He notes that it was a particularly Greek approach to explain all customs as the consequences of a specific legendary or historical event. Vogelsang-Eastwood 1999a, 22 correctly notes that in this passage we have clear evidence that Chalkidian women used a head-veil or mantle which was pulled over the face rather than a specific face-veil which would have to have remained in place at all time when in public.

Owing to the small scale of the city, a military catastrophe may well have had far-reaching consequences and could have resulted in some strange and outlandish social changes.

For the problems of using Plutarch as a source for Spartan women see Powell 1999.

On Spartan notions of πορεύσει and *aidōs*, see Humble 1999 and Richer 1999.

For a discussion of the age of veiling girls see below, Chapter 8.

Since, Plutarch states, the Spartans saw nothing disreputable about female nudity, but actually revered the cult of the female body, the unveiled appearance of young women of marriageable age, we can assume, would not be thought shameful or compromising. His non-Spartan readers were no doubt more astonished by his revelations of Spartan feminine authority, immodesty and the abuse of regular veiling practices. For Plutarch’s comments on Spartan women see especially *Lyc. 14–15*. Mario Bick, in a seminal, but unpublished paper, suggested that an erotic style is not necessarily essentially feminine but one associated with a certain position in what he calls the ‘sexual marketplace’. For Bick, the sexual marketplace has little to do with marriage per se but is essentially, ‘the arena in which premarital and adulterine relationships are contracted’. In his analysis of European peasant women he notes that women are on display before marriage and tend to wear colourful clothing and expose their hair. After marriage their dress tends to become more drab and their hair is generally hidden under some kind of veil or kerchief, indicating that they are not technically available for adultery. Bick’s theory is cited in Gregersen 1983, 121.


Chapter 6

130 Plut. Mor. 142C; cf. Clem. Alexand. Strom. 4.121.2.
132 Lhote 1955, 309. See also the important studies of Murphy 1964 and Hawad-Claudot 1992.
133 Markhlouf 1979. The following Koranic text (24.31) is specific in its designation of who is considered *mahram* to a woman: ‘that they [feminine gender] should not display their beauty and ornaments except what [most ordinarily] appear thereof; that they should draw their *khimar* [head-veil] over their bosoms and not display their beauty except to their husbands, their fathers, their husband’s fathers, their sons, their husband’s sons, their brothers or their brother’s sons, or their sister’s sons, or their women, or the slaves whom their right hand possesses, or male slaves free of physical needs [eunuchs], or underage children’. The definition of *mahram* is elucidated further at 4.23: ‘Prohibited to you [male gender] are your mothers, daughters, sisters, father’s sisters, mother’s sisters, brother’s daughters, sister’s daughters, ‘suckling’ mothers, ‘suckling’ sisters; your wives’ mothers; your step-daughters under your guardianship, born of your wives, wives of your biological sons’. See further El Guindi 1999, 85, 98 ff.
134 See Anderson 1982, 400 ff. He notes that a crucial case is the patrilateral parallel first cousins who are allowed to marry. If a cousin marriage is contemplated however, great care is taken from childhood to prevent any direct interaction and sibling-like bond developing between the two cousins.
135 See Abu Lughod 1988, 159.
136 See also comments in Allen 2000, 182, n. 102.
137 See Abu Lughod 1988, 163.
APHRODITE’S TORTOISE: 
VEILING, SOCIAL SEPARATION AND DOMESTIC SPACE

Images of Aphrodite usually show her standing alone, often semi-naked or swathed in transparent cloth. Sometimes, though, she is represented with birds or animals thought appropriate to her character: the elegant swan, or the powerful goose or the potent billy-goat. On at least one occasion she is represented placing one of her feet on the back of a tortoise (Fig. 134). The image of the powerful love-goddess resting her foot upon the shell of a tortoise is strange. Why is Aphrodite associated with this slow, ancient, and humble creature? What image lies behind Aphrodite’s tortoise?

There are two ancient Greek texts which mention the goddess and her tortoise; both describe a certain statue of Aphrodite crafted by the master-sculptor Phidias and erected in the town of Elis in the north-west Peloponnese. The first, longer, text comes from Pausanias:

Behind the stoa built from the spoils taken from Kerkyra is a temple to Aphrodite; the precinct is in the open air not very far from the temple. In the temple is the image of the goddess whom they call ‘Ourania’; it is made of ivory and gold and it is the work of Phidias; it stands with one foot upon a tortoise.¹

A briefer, but more intriguing, account is provided by Plutarch who comments that,

Phidias represented the Aphrodite of the Eleans as stepping on a tortoise to typify for womankind staying at home and keeping silent.²

Pausanias’ account calls Aphrodite by her cult epithet ‘Ourania’ – ‘Heavenly’ – in contrast to her other title, ‘Pandemos’ – ‘Of the People’ (or ‘Vulgar’).³ As Aphrodite Pandemos she was primarily worshipped as the goddess of sex and lust and associated with prostitution, but as Aphrodite Ourania she was revered as an ancient and respected deity, all in all a ‘good girl’. The

Fig. 134. Fragmentary statue of Aphrodite standing with one foot on the back of a tortoise. Marble sculpture (by or after Phidias?), late fifth century. Staat. Mus. Berlin SK 1459.
Elean Aphrodite is the purer form of the goddess who rejects unlawful and sinful lust in favour of married love and wifely devotion. Plutarch says that the tortoise on which she rests her foot is the symbol of female privacy and silence. It is clear from the outset that the type of woman being represented by Phidias’ image is quiet, modest, and husband-and-home-loving.

But why does Aphrodite Ourania rest upon a tortoise and what does Plutarch mean by saying that it is a symbol of a woman’s silence and privacy at home? The tortoise does not appear to be a particularly inspired icon for Greek womanhood, but on reflection, the notion is particularly apt. The Greeks had a popular assumption that the tortoise was a mute creature, and, moreover, that all tortoises were female. So as a silent sex, the tortoise is a perfect paradigm for Greek women who, according to Greek men, should not speak in public or preferably even in private.

The silent tortoise stands as an example to womanhood to keep quiet and cause no trouble, for it is only in the hands of a man that this mute animal has the power of voice, because the shell of the tortoise was first used by Hermes as the sounding-board for the lyre he presented to Apollo: ‘In death the creature got a voice, in life it had none’, says the nymph Kyllene to the band of satyrs, in Sophokles’ fragmentary play The Trackers. The tortoise sings, but only at the command of a man (or god). Plutarch develops the idea, asserting that,

A woman ought to do her talking either to her husband or through her husband, and she should not feel aggrieved if, like the flute player, she makes a more impressive sound through a tongue not her own.

But more noteworthy, perhaps, is Plutarch’s statement that the tortoise is also the symbol of female privacy. The reasoning behind this idea is obvious – the tortoise carries her house with her and being a rather timid creature, she spends much of her time enclosed within her shell. In fact, an alternative meaning to the Greek word for ‘tortoise’, khelone, is ‘threshold’ – that is to say, the place between the interior of the house and the outside world, an image particularly apt for the tortoise whose head constantly moves in and out of the ‘threshold’ of her shell, just as the woman peeps out from the door of her house or her veil. To be enclosed within the home was central to the Greek ideology of married womanhood, for while men were expected to spend their time out of doors, in the fields, or at the law-courts, and markets, and gymnasia, women were ideally supposed to stay at home, an ideology which is most famously stressed by Xenophon in his Oikonomikos.

Even when she ventures out to find food, the tortoise is physically forced to carry her house with her. Thus Empedokles speaks of ‘stone-skinned tortoises’. Aristophanes was also aware of the tortoise-house motif and lauds the practicality of the design by declaiming,

O tortoises, I envy you your shells! It was good and brainy of you to roof your backs with tiles and so cover your sides.

Interestingly, the legacy of the image of Aphrodite Ourania’s tortoise became
A pertinent theme for seventeenth-century Dutch moralistic artists who believed that, despite Holland’s expansion into the world for trade and settlement in the early Baroque period, peace, virtue, and prosperity were still ideally to be found at home. An engraving of the 1640s called On the Excellence of the Female Sex depicts a torch-bearing Aphrodite standing on the tortoise (Fig. 135); according to Dutch understanding, she has conquered the world–home tension through the solution of the mobile home, and if she should need to leave the house, the virtuous woman should conduct herself as if it were always with her. In the background of the print, Adam diligently works outside while Eve spins within. Another image, this time of the tortoise alone, bears the legend, T’huys best; in other words, East or West, Home is Best (Fig. 136).

The very shell that makes up the tortoise’s ‘body’, her ‘clothing’, is also her ‘home’ where she sits in security and silence. The inter-relation between the Greek house and Greek dress has not received any serious study, notwithstanding the heavy symbolism that is attached to and shared by both. Like the shell of the tortoise that is simultaneously its clothing and its home, the veil also acts as a shell for a woman and becomes an extension of her living-space. Plutarch’s tortoise-motif certainly suggests that the Greeks were aware of this connection between the covering created by dress and the covering created by a house, and further investigation into the ways in which they observed and even named parts of the house and items of clothing will quickly reveal that the association was very much at the front of the Greek mind and, in fact, a component of the Greek subconscious. In the Dream Book of Artemidorus it is noted that all objects that surround a person – for example, cloaks, houses, walls, and ships – signify one another, so that, Artemidoros reports, when a man once dreamed that his cloak was ripped in the middle, his house fell in. Conversely, someone who dreamed that the tiled roof of his house was destroyed, lost all of his clothes and no longer owned what should have covered him.
Chapter 7

House and veil, public and private
Ideas of what constituted public and private in the ancient world can look at odds with our modern Western views. While Western notions of privacy reflect the idea of an individual’s right to non-intrusion by others, many contemporary Arab societies have a more fluid understanding of privacy, based on a specific cultural construction of space and time which is in tune with the dynamics of Muslim gender identification.

The more that is known about ancient attitudes to private and public space, the more scholars incline to believe that Middle Eastern (and some Mediterranean) models of spatial use can be of enormous value in decoding the ancient concepts. In Islamic and ancient Greek concepts alike, a public area can be transformed into a private place almost instantaneously by employing what has been called ‘spaces within spaces’ or ‘overlapping universes’.15

In Muslim ideology, public space and points in time are frequently interwoven and are usually gender-specific so that for a limited time period women can inhabit a public world free of men and men can walk in streets clear of women. This is the paradigmatic notion at least, and even though social practice may be at odds with the ideology, nevertheless the underlying model is so deep-rooted in Muslim thought that the sexes are able to operate in a public sphere while remaining essentially in a private sex-specific space. I suggest that the ancient Greek notion of public-private and male-female could have worked on a similar principle. The ancient Greeks did not understand the concept of ‘privacy’ in the same way as we do and ‘separation from public’ is a term better suited to the Greek understanding of ‘private’ space or ‘privacy’.16

While some Greek texts speak of women being strictly confined to their homes in a type of purdah, others tell of women operating freely, and without notoriety, in the public sphere. Xenophon’s Oikonomikos and some salient passages from the orators give the impression that women were imprisoned behind their outer doors and were rarely to be seen in public, although this contrasts, for example, with Aristophanes whose plays are liberally sprinkled with scenes and reports of women visiting one another, gossiping in the streets, and acting as petty traders and retailers in the markets. Even outside the limits of comic evidence there is a suggestion that high-born ladies could attend public events: according to Plutarch, Athenian women were present at Perikles’ great funeral oration and were even in the habit of visiting the Akropolis to view the works of art housed there.17 Women were undoubtedly present at public funerals and at the rituals surrounding weddings.18 Perhaps the best sense that we can make of this contradictory evidence is that female seclusion was a desirable state and that, if it was at all possible, women were kept within their homes and only brought out at times of social or religious necessity. But many families could not afford the luxury of keeping their women segregated and secluded and instead needed them to carry out domestic chores such as fetching water from the well, or even to have the chance of earning a living by selling produce at the market.19
The word ‘seclusion’ is frequently used in the discussion of Greek women’s domestic space, although the term is actually misused; there is a marked tendency in scholarship to confuse the institutions of female seclusion and separation. That women are expected to lead lives essentially different from men and are meant to follow the principle of female/private/inside and male/public/outside, does not mean they are supposed to live in isolation within their homes. We should not imagine women living in a state of ‘Oriental seclusion’, never seeing anyone but their immediate family, because we know that Athenian women formed close friendships, especially with neighbours, and that women visited one another. True (‘ostentatious’) seclusion, if it was practised at all, was a mark of the highest social order and indicated that a family was wealthy enough not to have its women working outdoors.

In general though, the separation of gendered spheres of activity does not suggest absolute subjection or seclusion for women and does not bar them from having social and public roles of their own – as long as they stay within the excepted confines of correct female behaviour. The ideology behind female separation, like veiling, was to insure that a woman’s good reputation stayed intact because an attack on her character was tantamount to denouncing the honour of the men under whose guardianship she belonged.

The debate as to whether Greek women were secluded or separated from male public society is still a heated one in scholarship and has come to include the interior of the house. Certain texts suggest that it was not enough for women to be separated from public sight by staying within their homes, but that even within the house there were clear demarcations between male and female space, defined as the andron (‘male area’) and the gynaikon (‘female area’). Some historians and archaeologists believe that these areas are easily definable even in the scant archaeological evidence of Greek houses. Susan Walker, for example, argues that female seclusion is clearly visible in the archaeological evidence and accordingly draws up plans to support her arguments. In direct contradiction, however, Michael Jameson argues that there was no distinction between male and female areas in the actual planning or building of Greek houses, which is perhaps too negative a view bearing in mind that one of the most distinctive features of many excavated houses is the men’s dining room, the andron. A more prudent line, however, has been taken by Lisa Nevett who compares the spatial division of the ancient Greek house to that of houses found in the Islamic world. She notes that one of the most widespread house forms in the Islamic world is the courtyard house, comparable to those found in many areas of ancient Greece. Rooms (like the main living room, bedrooms, and storage rooms) are all arranged around one or sometimes two courts that are bordered by galleries. In a few instances in the Islamic house, rooms are mentioned as being of specific use by women (these are usually located upstairs), although they have no special characteristics in terms of architecture or furnishings to single them out as female areas. One striking feature of the Islamic house is the provision of a lobby or of separate guest quarters, to exclude the possibility of outsiders entering the domestic areas.
This prevents the women of the house coming into contact with strange men, and entrances to the house are purposely designed to hamper casual social or even visual interaction. The desire to keep women away from unrelated men is not expressed through a division of male and female rooms within the house but through a far more convoluted pattern: women are not confined to particular areas of the house but instead a far more practical solution of separation exists whereby strangers are not permitted to enter the main living areas of the house at all. This allows the women of the household to move about more or less freely within their homes.

The ancient Greek house probably operated a similar form of ‘asymmetrical spatial organization’, since most houses unearthed are constructed on an inward-looking plan, with rooms grouped around a courtyard which is usually surrounded by a colonnade in much the same style as the modern Islamic house. A similar concern for privacy must have prompted the inward-looking arrangement of Greek houses. Furthermore, any visual contact between the women of the house and visiting men that might conceivably occur in the courtyard could have been avoided either by scheduling of domestic activity or by screens and curtains to shut off areas of the house.

Much of the evidence for the Greek house has not survived the centuries and does not appear in the archaeological record; there are no surviving upper floors, for example, nor evidence for doors, shutters, or any interior décor besides mosaics and floor painting. Wooden and textile evidence rarely survives, but literary and artistic information does testify to the use of shutters, wooden panels and textiles that acted as curtains and screens. Loose covers and textile hangings were a common feature of the Greek house but, being of perishable material, they have all but disappeared and only a few fragments have accidentally survived to our time. But a variety of curtains are depicted on some hellenic reliefs, Roman wall-paintings and sarcophagi and although some of the drapes are linked to funerary practice, others have an undeniable domestic function. In the houses discovered in the classical city of Olynthus in northern Greece there was a total absence of pivot-holes in the paved rooms. This suggested to the excavators that instead of doors, hangings were used. In addition, Pollux refers to ‘curtains at the doors of bedchambers’ and Theophrastos mentions ‘rings for embroidered hangings’, and curtain rings are also mentioned by Pliny and Athenaeus. Such rings have been discovered at a number of excavations ranging in date from the fourth century to the Roman period.

Most of the Greek words for ‘curtain’ are derived from verbs meaning ‘to cover’, but several of them share a meaning with the terminology used for clothing. The word epibléma, as has been seen, has the general meaning of ‘that which is thrown over’ or ‘covering’, but is more specifically linked with a tapestry or hanging while it simultaneously means ‘outer-garment’ and, by extension, ‘veil’. But a variation of the word (epíbles) is used for a cross-beam in a roof, which seems to indicate that there is a correlation between the things that cover a woman’s head: a veil and a roof, an idea which was also present in Artemidoros’ Dream Book. The common word for ‘roof’ in ancient Greek, tegos, is of course the root of the diminutive tegidion, the name given to the late classical and hellenistic face-veil. Moreover, the popular
Aphrodite’s Tortoise: veiling, social separation and domestic space

veil-word *kalumma* is commonly associated with words referring to the house and its decoration: Aiskhylos describes Helen of Troy stepping out of her veiled bed chamber (*prokalumma*), and Athenaeus relates that the king of Persia would view his dinner guests through a fine veil that hung before the palace door and separated him from his subjects. But *kalumma* does not only mean ‘veil’ and ‘curtain’, because it is also applied to roof beams and to window shutters, which amplifies the association between the veil and the house.

The parallel is not confined to ancient literary evidence; Greek iconography can also offer proof of the house-veil connection. The standard depiction of the veil-gesture shows a woman raising one arm to hold out a length of the veil so that it forms a large flap of cloth that frames her profiled face and can be paralleled with another popular artistic theme, the depiction of a woman peeping from behind the door of a house. Greek doors, it appears, were usually constructed in two halves with a central entrance and opened inwards. A common motif shows a woman standing (but sometimes sitting) in such a doorway: the earliest evidence for this is the François Vase from Chiusi of c. 570, which illustrates the goddess-bride Thetis (identified by name in Fig. 137) seated within her house awaiting her bridegroom. Only one of the doors is open and we can see the legs of the goddess who performs the veil-gesture, although much of her face would (if the vase were not broken at this section) have been hidden by the closed door. In effect we catch a quick glimpse of the bride behind the half-opened door and the enveloping veil; the goddess’ outstretched hand that lifts the veil intensifies the effect of the open door and her clothing, like her house, demarcates the privacy of the female body, a space ideally removed from the public gaze.

A fifth-century Athenian pyxis in the British Museum shows a wedding scene and depicts the bride’s mother sending off her daughter from her family home (Fig. 138). The mother stands back from the opened door and well within the house...
(only her hand protrudes outside). An interesting variation on the theme, from a fourth-century South Italian vase, shows a woman (or at least an actor in female costume) peering out from behind the closed portion of the door that masks off half of her face (Fig. 139). There is an analogy working here between the door and the veil; the one closed shutter and the portion of the veil that is symbolically held up to indicate that the wearer has veiled her face seem to say similar things. The image is strengthened in a scene from another fourth-century South Italian comedy scene (Fig. 140) where a modest ‘maiden’ peeps out from behind the door that veils half of her face while she simultaneously raises her long veil in front of the exposed portion of her visage to avoid the stare of the strange man hovering about outside. It can be compared to a scene that shows another young woman gazing out from behind an open shutter of a window as she raises her veiled hand to conceal her mouth (Fig. 141).

A remarkably incisive discussion by Plutarch entitled On Being a Busybody, makes clear the direct correlation between that which clothes the body and that which houses the body:

It is not customary to walk into a house of someone else without first knocking on the door; but nowadays there are doormen and formerly there were knockers to be struck at the door and give warning, so that the stranger might not catch the mistress of the house or the unmarried daughter unawares, or a slave being punished or the maid-servants
screaming. But it is for these very things that the busybody slips in. A sober and respectable household he would not willingly enter as a spectator even if he were invited to come; but the matters to conceal which keys and bolts and street-doors are used – these are what he uncovers (anakaluptôn) and communicates to outsiders. And yet, ‘the winds with which we are most vexed’ as Ariston says, ‘are those which pull up our garments’, but the busybody does not strip off the robes and tunics of those near him, but their very walls; he flings the doors wide open and makes his way, like a piercing wind, ‘through the tender-skinned maiden’ and creeps in, searching out with slanderous intent drunken revels and dances, and all-night festivals.\footnote{Plutarch draws particular attention to the women of the household and emphasizes the distress of having the uninvited presence of a stranger behind the private walls of a house. It is the equivalent to the shame of having one’s body stripped of clothing and unwillingly exposed in public. As the busybody penetrates through the door of the house he ‘unveils’ its occupants to his unwanted and shaming gaze and defiles the sanctity of privacy that the house usually offers.}

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In a decisive statement on women’s veiling, Menander informs us that women need to be constantly vigilant with their veils even inside the house.\footnote{In his comedy \textit{Perikeiromene}, the long-lost son Moschion muses alone to himself on how he will visit his estranged mother and the girl of his dreams and he imagines himself and his slave calling on them within their house and delivers, in a matter-of-fact way, a crucial piece of evidence:}

\begin{quote}
She’ll be embarrassed when we go in, that is clear, and she’ll veil herself, for that’s quite normal.\footnote{The attestation that women veil their faces in front of strangers as a matter of course, as an inbred reaction to a social situation and a collective \textit{nomos}, is nowhere better stated than here. Moschion’s honest and simple description of female behaviour should be taken at face value: when women feel embarrassed or self-conscious, for whatever reason, they veil themselves.\footnote{A similar testimony, from Aristaenetus’ collection of Greek \textit{Letters} (c. fifth century AD), inspired by an earlier genre, is provided by a young man who, having been caught looking at a girl at a shrine, writes to her, noting that,}}
\end{quote}

You, seeing me looking at you (as happens with respectable girls), lightly veiled yourself (ērema parekalupsō).\footnote{It is interesting to compare this with the reaction of anthropologist Patricia Jeffery who, whilst sharing a purdah household with a group of women, had an unexpected male visitor:}

Only under exceptional circumstances do unrelated men enter the homes…and their arrival always puts the household into disarray… Screens and curtains are erected…if guests or workmen hang around… [Once] some ‘guests’ walked in with little warning and the woman I was talking to burrowed under a blanket and left me exposed and confused about my own feelings of embarrassment.\footnote{197}
Makhlouf likewise demonstrates this point as she recalls an instance when a man unexpectedly came into a house and, even though he has first signalled his entry, the women rushed to put on their *lithmas*. But some women who had taken their veils off completely and were unable to drape them back quickly enough, had to grab any available piece of cloth or share a veil with another woman. 47

For men like Plutarch’s Busybody to enter into a space that is currently in use by females is a discreditable act that brings dishonour on the violated family and particularly shames the women. The theme is also found in an oration of Lysias:

I think it proper that you should hear the numerous offences that [Simon] has committed against myself. Hearing that the boy was at my house, he came there in a drunken state, broke down the doors, and entered into the area the women use. Within were my sister and my nieces who had lived such well-ordered lives that they were embarrassed even to be seen by their relatives. This man, then, carried insolence to such a level that he refused to go away until the people who appeared on the spot and those who had accompanied him, thinking it an terrible thing to intrude on young women and orphans, drove him out by force. 48

The veil-house analogy was part of the ideology of Greek perceptions of women and space.49 For evaluating Greek ideas of separating the sexes, we may be helped by the anthropological evidence of female space in Muslim culture, where society is divided into two strict spatial divisions: the world of men (the *umma*, the sphere of religion and power) and the world of women, the environment of domesticity and sexuality. In order to prevent sexual interaction between members of the *umma* and the members of the domestic universe, separation and veiling – which is after all a symbolic form of separation – are observed. The ideal place for the woman is within the house because, traditionally, women who use public space are seen as trespassing on the *umma* universe and it is only by wearing a veil when they leave the house that women are able to walk through the predominantly male space of the street. Wearing the veil means that the woman can be present in the men’s world although she remains symbolically invisible (*Fig.* 142). If the woman was to appear unveiled in the male sphere then a serious predicament would result and the status quo would be severely breached; as noted earlier, in Arabic thought an unveiled woman is ‘naked’ and so for a woman to appear without the
A veil in a male public space would constitute an open act of exhibitionism and lead men to label her as ‘wanton’.

In ancient Greece the women who attract the most notoriety are those who are conspicuously uncovered to the public view. Lower-class prostitutes who are at the call of all men and do not enjoy the protection of a husband or guardian, come in for particular attack. These women stand outdoors, half-naked, in the sun; they are women it is permitted to look at. As one comic fragment attests, ‘Their door is open.’ But the majority of women in the Greek sources arouse no criticism for their appearances in the public sphere.

Cohen correctly notes the contrast of the ancient sources hostile to the idea of women’s public appearances and those that speak of them participating routinely in public life. Scholarship, he notes, does not know what to make of the dichotomy and the tension in the sources, he says, ‘is not resolved’. This is not satisfactory. Cohen, and others, fail to consider what women wear when they leave the security of their homes and enter into the man’s world. I suggest that the conflict in the ancient sources can be at least partly resolved in the use of the veil.

The *tegidiōn* and female visibility in the Hellenistic world

Although a social requirement for a woman to cover her face is an extension of the ideological complex that obliges women to cover their heads, it is a drastically greater step to have an item of clothing *specifically* designed to cover the face. Face-veiling is undeniably significant. If there is not a general social obligation for a woman to cover her face, then for her to do so can have a host of other significances which may vary from emotional expression to social manipulation of her own. The introduction of the *tegidiōn* at the close of the fourth century is a facet of female life that has passed virtually unnoticed in scholarship but must have had a profound influence upon the lives of Greek women. It is hard to tell just how widespread this fashion was, but it does not seem to have been centred upon one locale (Thebes) because the *tegidiōn* is found in East Greece and Egypt, and might well have been worn in Athens too.

A veil specifically designed to cover the female face was a significant move towards the public control of female sexuality as a guarantor of male honour, yet the *tegidiōn* first appears at a time when it is generally assumed that women’s lives were literally opening up as they began to take increasingly confident strides into public life. Evidence from Hellenistic Alexandria in particular supports this suggestion and it is hard to disagree with the data which so strongly suggests that women were becoming increasingly ‘visible’. But how far can we take the idea of female visibility in the Hellenistic world? Van Bremen has suggested that even though the women of Hellenistic Asia Minor were actively beginning to participate in civic roles, they continued to operate strictly within the confines of a male framework as representatives of their families. Correspondingly, Nevett’s investigation into Hellenistic housing has revealed some remarkable finds: she suggests that from the mid-fourth century a new group of
exceptionally large and elaborate houses begin to appear. Most significant for house and household structure was the rise of wealthy and influential individuals who began to use their homes as centres of personal power as the gap between public and private began to widen. Soon the private house began to offer an arena where men could compete for prestige as individuals began to subvert democratic power.\textsuperscript{56}

There developed, from the late fourth century, a division of the house into private areas for domestic activity and public areas where guests could be received in style. Each area had its own courtyard and for the first time we can probably use the terms \textit{andron} and \textit{gynaikon} in the manner of the ancient sources.\textsuperscript{57} In this new double-courtyard house domestic tasks seem to have been carried out in seclusion from the rest of the house. Women were probably more restricted in this new type of house than they were in the one-courtyard model. Were women more tightly controlled from the fourth century on?\textsuperscript{58} This suggestion certainly corresponds with the introduction of the \textit{tegidion}. If the veil is indeed an extension of domestic space, then the increasing separation of women from the male world reflected in the two-courtyard house finds a remarkable parallel in the use of the face-veil in the same period.

This is also the time at which Greek art employs its first use of full-sized nude female statuary in the form of a variety of Aphrodite figures. But nudity did not transfer from the divine realm to the world of mortal women. In fact, heavy drapery around the body and the closed ‘Pudicitia’ pose are also features of public statuary of hellenistic women; furthermore the origin of the pose is thought to date to c. 300. So, as Aphrodite was shedding her clothes, her mortal worshippers were putting on more layers.

On a more mundane level, the introduction of the \textit{tegidion} could have allowed women more freedom to participate in society and the frequent reports we have of Alexandrian women shopping, visiting friends and public places, and attending festivals could have been facilitated by the use of the face veil. After all, a veil specifically designed to be tied around the head in order to conceal the face allowed the wearer more freedom of movement with her arms and hands, for she no longer had to hold a length of fabric across her face or on top of her head. This small detail could have had a profound effect upon women’s access to a more active lifestyle and her amplified participation in public life could have been tolerated by men because her \textit{tegidion} made her even more socially invisible.

\textbf{Portable separation and the ‘harem within’}

As an extension of the domestic space and a symbol of separation, the veil enables women to move out of their homes in a kind of portable domestic space and as a result, despite the Western perception of its negative aspects, the veil can be considered a liberating garment that frees a woman from the confines of \textit{any} form of purdah and lets her operate in the public sphere. The veil is viewed this way by many women themselves.\textsuperscript{59} In fact, a single sentence in a brief fragment of the sixth-century poet Theognis of Megara actually hints at this belief. In it he has a female
character voice her opinion of the kind of lewd men who ogle respectable women in the street, saying that,

"I hate a bad man, and pass by veiling myself (kalupsamenē), keeping my mind as light as a little bird’s."\[^{60}\]

In other words, ‘I don’t let vulgar men get me down; I simply veil myself and pass by, untroubled.’

That a woman takes her symbolic separation with her into the public domain solves the practical problems of living in a society where there are rigidly enforced restrictions on interaction between marriageable adults. The veil makes a woman socially invisible, allowing her to enjoy privacy and to be in public. But to ensure that their invisibility works, women have to observe social conventions and remain silent when out of doors, or at least abstain from talking to men and shattering the illusion of their non-presence. Women need to be cautious in public to ensure that they are always properly covered and silently respectful in front of strange men, because consequences of failing to observe the modesty code can be severe.\[^{61}\]

In Greece, the civic body known as the *gynaikonomoi* may have ensured that in some Greek cities women’s clothing was both modest, sober, and concealing.\[^{62}\]

But control over women’s behaviour and movements may have emanated from the family and community. Tragedy hints at such behaviour, and Euripides’ *Elektra*, for example, is sharply warned by her husband that, ‘It is shameful for a woman to be standing around with young men.’\[^{63}\]

In Islam, a sense of propriety can extend beyond the confines of the house and the veil. Female seclusion or sexual separation does not necessarily need walls or veils because once everyone knows the rules of what is forbidden (‘haram’) between the sexes (such as talking) and what is proper (such as lowering the eyes and turning away) then one is able to carry wherever one goes a sense of, what has been called, ‘the harem within’.\[^{64}\]

The idea of an invisible harem, ‘a law tattooed in the mind’, is a potent force in Muslim society where walls are needed only where there are streets. In rural communities women tend to come and go more freely because there is less chance of seeing strange men in the remote countryside than there is in a crowded town. If by chance a woman should meet with an unknown man in the fields, and he sees that she is unveiled, he will cover his own head with the hood of his *djellaba* to show that he is not looking at her or else he will turn his back on her. Both of them acknowledge what is ‘*haram*’.

This raises an interesting point: the veil is accompanied by an assemblage of other behaviours which have equivalents or counterparts for men. Social separation cuts both ways; men ‘veil’ too. Sometimes this is a physical veiling, but more often men psychologically veil themselves from women; they ‘cover’ from non-related women by actions which are analogous to women’s.

Ideologically speaking, men are kept as much on the outside as women are on the inside, but when unrelated men and women meet, restraint applies equally to
both. To avoid awkwardness within the home, upon entering a room a respectful and considerate man should make some kind of noise (usually a cough or even a formal announcement of his intention to enter) to alert the women inside of his presence and imminent entrance (although judging from Menander’s *Perikeiromene*, Moschion does not appear to regard this as a necessity; he is ready insolently to burst in on the women unannounced). Moreover, in an attempt ‘not to notice’ an unrelated woman, at the very least a respectful man will avert his eyes, or cover his face, or turn to face a wall exactly as a woman does. He will certainly cover his mouth and avoid eye contact, just as she does, if they cannot avoid speaking to one another.

This seems to have been a natural reaction for Greek men too. Akhilleus’ response to meeting Klytemnestra in the *Iphigeneia at Aulis*, provides a good example of respectful *aidōs* ordinarily shown towards the opposite sex. With the first appearance of the main female characters on stage at line 607, there begins a lesson in correct behaviour and Agamemnon, for example, is keen to stress to his wife and daughter that women should stay out of public view (line 735), although it is Akhilleus who most rigidly enforces the concept that women should not be seen in public and should certainly not converse with unrelated men. Klytemnestra’s words of greeting immediately contradict the established *nomos* as she steps out of the tent (her temporary domestic space) to address the young hero. Immediately Akhilleus’ cry of ‘Oh Lady *Aidōs*’ reveals his shocked recognition that he stands alone in front of an unrelated and unaccompanied woman. His sense of *aidōs* is so acute that Klytemnestra is forced to admit that his response shows correct *sōphrosynē*, but Akhilleus’ *aidōs* persists and he starts to leave, explaining his action by stating that, ‘It is shameful for me to be exchanging words with a woman.’

Cairns has noted that ‘Achilles’ shyness at being in the company of a woman is both an inner ethical attitude, in that it operates in him instinctively and is part of his upbringing and social role, and a response to the external standards of convention; he feels that it is wrong to associate with another man’s woman and fears disapproval for doing so.

‘Seeing’ and visibility

It was crucially important for a Greek man to be ‘seen’ because his whole social persona was linked to his public life as he functioned in the law courts, gymasia, market places, and theatres. A man was only as important as his perceived public lifestyle and within the face-to-face-societies of the ancient Mediterranean, men needed to be recognized by how they looked and how (and what) they spoke, for, as Gleason’s study of the ancient art of physiognomy has revealed, the classical world was one in which the scrutiny of faces was no mere idle pastime but a vital skill where issues of gender differentiation were of utmost importance.

A man’s face was supposed to be uncovered for all to ‘read’. The prominence of portrait sculpture in Greek art from the late archaic period on, attests to the importance of individual male facial features not only of contemporary eminences, but of long-dead individuals (like Homer) whose facial identities were invented in
subsequent periods. Additionally, the sculpted and painted male body was also supposed to be unrestricted by clothing and even in daily life, the naked male body was exposed to the admiring and approving gaze of other men at particular times and places.

This notion of visibility is strongly connected to the Greek perception of light, for to be in the light, to be brightly lit and fully visible, is regarded as a positive trait, whereas to be concealed, hidden, and in darkness is a negative characteristic. In Sophokles’ *Oedipus Tyrannus*, for example, Kreon deliberately attempts to remove the shamed Oedipus from the sunlight, while Oedipus’ own self-blinding and subsequent life of darkness has the same symbolic connotations as veiling. When in the *Hymn to Demeter*, the goddess decides to reveal her true divinity to Metaneira, she throws off her mortal disguise and allows light to flash forth from her body.

So the converse notion of a man assiduously covering his head must therefore have been regarded as suspect. In Plutarch’s account of the death of Demosthenes, therefore, the Orator, having been hunted down by Archias into the temple of Poseidon at Kalauria, has a prophetic dream of his defeat by Archias at a dramatic festival. The dream almost becomes reality when Archias confronts Demosthenes who, as if relenting to Archias’ power, begs him to be allowed time to write a letter to his family:

*[Demosthenes] retired into the temple and taking a scroll, as if about to write, he put the pen into his mouth and bit it, as was his custom when thinking about what to write, and kept it there for some time, then veiled and lowered his head.*

The soldiers who are charged to guard Demosthenes laugh at his cowardly and feminizing action. But unbeknown to them, Demosthenes has actually used his veiling to hide his purposeful action of sucking poison from his pen. Once he begins to feel the effect of the potion he unveils his head and fixes Archias with a resolute and mannish stare, utters his final words, and staggers out of the temple to die. His act of veiling, which his opponents were ready to take as a symbol of his dishonour and subservience, was only a ruse for his own personal victory enacted in a honourable suicide.

It has been said that veils carry a sinister connection, since they put the wearers outside the provisions of normal society and it is not possible to tell who they are or what they are up to. Certainly Greek literature attests to an analogous and widespread belief that a man who takes pains to cover himself too assiduously with his clothing must have something to hide. Consequently male veiling, an inversion of the norm, is frequently mentioned in connection with the notion of concealing a dark secret, or a misdeed, or a negative trait. In addition, judges in a legal case who fail to recognize the truth set before them are said to have their perceptions veiled. There are other occasions when men literally veil themselves in order to escape notice, and adulterers in particular are depicted sneaking away under the cover of a robe. Aristophanes notes the ruse used by a woman and her lover to ensure his safe getaway from her marital home:
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And this one he’s never told about either, how this woman was displaying her mantle to her husband so he could see what it looked like against the light, and by doing this she got her lover out of the house with his head veiled — he’s never told about that.\(^{78}\)

The idea here is that the veil, even when worn by a man, confers on the wearer an invisibility that allows him to function unnoticed, like a woman.\(^{79}\) In fact, Philo states that a deceitful man is like a wayward woman who outwardly displays a sense of shame and propriety and veils herself accordingly, but beneath her modest coverings she is wicked and treacherous. This notion that the veil might contain something inherently bad and may be utilized by those who have something to conceal, can be traced back to Hesiod who has Pandora, the ‘beautiful evil’, covered by a shining veil.\(^{80}\) Therefore honest men should abstain from veiling themselves, apart from times of crisis when they want to emphasize their social invisibility; otherwise a man’s action of veiling has to be regarded as suspect.

Because the veil enforces a concept of invisibility on the wearer, it also confers a loss of identity; this may be all well and good in the case of a woman whose own name was usually submerged beneath that of her male guardian, but for a man to lose his individuality was unthinkable.\(^{81}\) Lucian stresses the point in his satirical dialogue \textit{Philosophies For Sale}, a text which recounts a meeting between a Stoic who is keen to sell his thoughts like a market trader and a man simply identified as a buyer. One of the thoughts the Stoic puts up for trade is an argument over the issue of visibility and invisibility, and recognition and anonymity, a musing which he entitles \textit{The Elektra and the Veiled Figure}. The dialogue between the seller and buyer runs as follows:

\begin{quote}
\textbf{Buyer}: What do you mean by the Veiled Figure and the Elektra?
\textbf{Stoic}: The Elektra is the famous Elektra, the daughter of Agamemnon, who at one and the same time knew and did not know the same thing; for when Orestes stood beside her before the recognition she knew that Orestes was her brother, but she did not know that this was Orestes. As to the Veiled Figure, you shall hear a very wonderful argument. Tell me, do you know your own father?
\textbf{Buyer}: Yes.
\textbf{Stoic}: But if I put a veiled (\textit{egkekalummenon}) figure before you and asked you if you know him, what will you say?
\textbf{Buyer}: That I don’t, of course.
\textbf{Stoic}: But that veiled figure turns out to be your own father; so if you don’t know him, you evidently don’t know your own father.
\textbf{Buyer}: Not so: I should unveil (\textit{apokalupsas}) him and find out the truth!\(^{82}\)
\end{quote}

The discussion suggests that if a man is veiled then he cannot be recognized, not even by his nearest and dearest, because the veil takes away any sense of individuality and personality, so much so, that Aristotle ascertained that a veiled man lacks any identity at all: if, he says, a man named Koriskus is seen walking towards one, then one knows who he is, but if a veiled man walks towards one, he is unknown, even if the veiled figure is in fact Koriskus. Koriskus needs to be identified as Koriskus for Koriskus to exist, otherwise he is just a man with his face covered (\textit{prosionti \(\varepsilon\) egkekalummen\(\dot{o}\)}).\(^{83}\) Lucian questions further whether a veiled figure can even be recognized as \textit{human},
but suggests that if one was shown only the hand of a man who was otherwise well veiled beneath layers of clothing, then one could know that the covered figure was human even though most of the body was concealed. One can, he asserts, make judgments from samples.\footnote{84}

When, according to Xenophon, the joker Philippus arrives at Kallias’ symposium to find the other guests in a sober and reflective mood and not prepared to listen to his jokes or laugh at his antics, his immediate reaction is to cover his head with his cloak and to lie on the floor in a gesture that demonstrates his removal from his surroundings and parodies tragic conventions, such as those observed by Herakles.\footnote{85} But the act of making himself invisible has the intended opposite effect, and straightaway Kallias gets up and walks over to Philippus to enquire what the matter is. Philippus replies that with laughter gone from the world he might as well be dead, and blows his nose and cries. Everyone present then assures him that they will laugh on cue next time; reassured, he unveils his head, rejoins the company, and continues with his dinner.

It takes an exceptionally good physiognomist, like Polemon of Laodikeia, to infiltrate behind the veil and read any signs of humanity in a face covered by cloth.\footnote{86} Thus, a vignette recorded in his second-century AD treatise on Physiognomy is set at the Temple of Artemis at Perge in Pamphylia where local women clearly go about the city completely veiled (a longstanding Greek custom which Dio Chrysostom tells us was upheld at Tarsus too),\footnote{87} although we are not informed of the exact nature of the veiling. From inferences in the text, it appears that the women of Perge wear himation- or pharos-veils pulled over their heads and across their lower faces, so that their eyes and noses remain in view. However the tegidion, so frequently found in this area of the Greek world in the hellenistic period, is unlikely still to be worn at this late date, because the tegidion would probably not reveal the nose which, as will become clear, is a vital piece of evidence in the story.

In the narrative, Polemon scrutinizes a group of veiled women making their way into the temple and almost immediately picks out one shrouded figure who, he declares, will soon suffer a dreadful fate. He recalls:

Great was the admiration of the assembled bystanders (for they all wondered how I was able to pass judgment on her merely by observing her eyes and a part of her nose) when I exclaimed, ‘how huge is the disaster bearing down on that woman and how soon it will strike!’ There had been a sign, because her nostrils and nose had become darkened and agitated, while her eyes had turned green and were opened abnormally wide; her head showed too much movement and her feet, as she went about the temple, moved about as if she were in pain. These signs, unless you see them in a lunatic, you may be sure to portend imminent disaster.\footnote{88}

Polemon has barely finished speaking when another woman rushes screaming into the temple and tells the veiled woman that her only daughter has fallen into a well and drowned:

When the woman heard this, she threw off her head-dress, veil, jewellery, and all her
clothes, to stand naked, with beaten breast. In grief she ran off down the road, crying out as she ran, ‘Oh my daughter!’

As she rushes out naked from the temple, a group of men chase her and cover her up in ritual vestments from the temple’s storerooms. Polemon’s exceptional physiognomic gift is even able to penetrate behind the protective barrier of the veil, or at least is able to ascertain something of a woman’s emotional state from the sparse areas of flesh that the veil allows him to see. Such tasks are beyond the capabilities of most men who regard the veil as a blockage to understanding, or the need to understand, the female psyche.

Playing by the rules
In Muslim thinking any space has its own invisible rules and whether one is in a courtyard, a terrace, or a room, or even in the street, wherever there is social interaction there is a qa‘ida, an invisible rule of decorum. Playing by the rules ensures harmony but breaking the rules brings about punishment and often violence. Often the qa‘ida is much more severe than walls or gates, for with walls and gates at least women know that they are being segregated and what is expected of them. The notion of qa‘ida finds a close reflection in the issues of Greek social nomos of aidôs, which establishes the rules of the game which all self-respecting individuals must follow. Many examples from Greek literature and art attest to the notion that the men and women of Greece had their own version of the ‘harem within’. In the Heracleidae, for example, Herakles’ daughter, following necessary dramatic conventions by appearing on the stage, nevertheless abjectly apologises for being brazen enough to venture out of doors to speak to men, because she knows that a woman should be silent in front of strange men and that silence augments the sense of female invisibility.

The social rules of invisibility and veiling can occasionally be represented in the iconography. For example, the Dijon Painter’s phlyax scene of the birth of Helen shows a woman (perhaps Leda) loitering at a doorway (Fig. 143). She has stepped over the threshold and stands in the public space outside the house, although the left side of her body is still

Fig. 143. A veiled Leda hovers at the door while Helen is ‘born’ from an egg. Line drawing of a comic scene from an Apulian bell-krater by the Dijon Painter, c. 350. Mus. Bari 3899.

Fig. 144. Line drawing of a veiled woman, wearing high boots, running. Detail from a lekythos, c. 420. Nat. Mus. Athens 17612.
inside, behind the half-opened door. Even in this semi-public, semi-private space the woman emerges from the door correctly veiled.

A more puzzling scene is painted on a mid-fifth-century red-figure lekythos that simply portrays a thoroughly veiled woman running in a pair of cuffed boots (Fig. 144). Beazley believed that the scene shows ‘a woman running after bathing’; whatever the reason for her running, she obviously wants to keep herself hidden as she scurries from one location to another.92 An incident recounted by Makhlouf comes to mind:

I have observed that, should a girl wish to walk the short distance between her house and that of a friend or relative, she may borrow a piece of material to cover her head and shoulders. Then, giggling all the way, she will run the short distance separating the two entrance doors.93

Despite her conspicuous laughter, the girl still adheres to the principle that covering offers her a social invisibility and that some kind of veiling, no matter how makeshift, should be employed to cover even short outdoor trips.

It was noted earlier that certain vase-paintings hint at the concept of indoors-outdoors and that the use of veiled characters in a scene can highlight the contrast. One further scene deserves a brief discussion: Fig. 145 shows a detail of a rather sketchy late-fifth-century vase that to all intents and purposes seems to be a scene set within a private house and perhaps depicts a visit by a group of women to the lady of the house. She stands at the centre of the scene wearing a patterned chiton and a himation which is not pulled over the head as a veil, in contrast with the other three women, her guests, who are well veiled in pharē as though they have just arrived indoors. The women seem relaxed (the seated women sit cross-legged) and animated (the householder gesticulates and the woman on the far-left leans forward) and appear to be chatting. The seated woman on the far right still has her veil drawn across her face, no doubt in the style that she had worn in the street, and she turns to the viewer of the vase in a familiar motif and seems to invite us into the closed world of female gossip. It is the veil that allows the artist’s attention and it is the veil that allows his audience to understand how this home visit came about.

Veiling is not simply a device to render all woman as anonymous figures; in fact, the veil does not prevent women from recognizing each other in the streets or from
chatting together when they meet. Even if women are veiled from head to foot and wearing face-veils, they can still be recognized by other women who identify them by various alternative signs such as stature, gait, and mannerisms.\textsuperscript{94}

**Conclusion**

While it was desirable for the women of Greece to remain separated from male society, when they were allowed out of their houses and provided that they stayed within the bounds of established social custom, their use of the veil ensured their respectability and the honour of their male guardians while enabling them to operate with some autonomy in the public sphere. So the image of Aphrodite’s tortoise is not necessarily a symbol of complete subjugation; in fact the tortoise can present a rather positive picture for womanhood: like the tortoise, a veiled woman displaying the required amount of \textit{aidōs} could carry her domestic space with her and operate with a modicum of freedom in a male society, as long as she played by the rules of space. Just as the tortoise peers from its shell, so a woman could peer from behind her veil. But not too far…

**Notes**

1 Paus. 6.25.1. Trans. Radice 1971, with amendments.

2 Plut. \textit{Mor.} 142D. For Aphrodite standing with one foot on a turtle or tortoise see Boardman 1991, fig. 213. See also \textit{LIMC} s.v. Aphrodite II (1) 28 and II (2) no. 177 (‘Aphrodite mit der Schildkröte’).

3 On the two epithets see Thornton 1997, 55–6. It should be noted that there were two Elean Aphrodites, the first contrasting, or balancing, the second. Thus, the bronze Aphrodite by Skopas sat on the back of a billy-goat (to make the sexual point obvious), although, interestingly, Skopas’ statue was kept enclosed by a walled fence to suggest a curbing of the sexual appetite. See Paus. 6.25.1.

4 The tortoise was a familiar creature to the ancient Greeks, as it was commonly found throughout the whole country. It has a long tradition of appearing in fables and tales and seems to have had a purpose as a teaching-aid; Aesop, for example, uses the tortoise to signify steadiness and patience, and lets it speak the moral of his most famous fable, ‘Plodding wins the race’. χελώνη has the additional meaning ‘footstool’ and the image of Aphrodite resting her foot on the tortoise thus plays effectively on the word’s double meaning. See Sext. Emp. \textit{Adv. Math.} 1.246; Hesychius s.v. χελώνη.

5 Aristotle is more inquisitive and realizes that there are of course male and female tortoises, although the testicles of the male are enclosed within his body, probably accounting for the popular belief. He also declares that the tortoise is not totally silent, because it can make a faint hiss. See \textit{Hist. Anim.} 536a.8 and 509b.8.

6 Soph. fr. 314, 300.


8 Plut. \textit{Mor.} 142D. See further Williams 1978, 28 and Bothwick 1970, 373–87. See also Cercidas fr. 2 Lomiento, and Livera and Williams (eds.) forthcoming. I am grateful to Professor Frederick Williams of the Queen’s University Belfast for these references.

9 LXX \textit{Judith} 14.14ff. See also, Hesychius s.v. χελώνιδος· ούδος τῆς θύρας τῆς σκηνῆς.
For a discussion see Enslin and Zeitlin 1972, 11 n. 14.

10 Xen. Oik. 7.20 f. See du Bois 1988, 103. For her discussion of the female body as stone, a concept that is linked to the internalization of women within the house, see pp. 86–109.

11 Empedokles fr. 76.

12 Ar. Wasps 1292–6.

13 See Schama 1987, 389 ff.


16 The Greeks certainly understood ‘public’ (expressed in words like κοινός, δήμος, and δημόσιος), but they had a far more nuanced attitude to defining ‘private’. ‘Privacy’ derives from the Latin privare (adjective from privus, later privatus). Woodhouse 1910 (1987) includes under the entry ‘Private’ the words ἰδίος and οἰκετής and offers εἰρημένη as a translation of ‘Privacy’, but none of these words convincingly convey the modern ideas of ‘privacy’ and ‘private’. See further Sciama 1993, 91.


18 Isaicos 8.21–2.

19 This was without doubt an option only for those families who were very poor since the texts agree that for women to work in public was a degrading experience. On working women see Brock 1994; Scheidel 1995 and 1996; Herfst 1922. On seclusion in general see Just 1989, 111 ff.; Cohen 1991, 149 ff. The shame felt by Islamic and Hindu women working in public spaces raises the question of whether Greek women found it particularly desirable to leave the home. Conceptions of status and modesty and of maintaining distance and separation between the sexes could have been maintained by the women’s own internalized notions of constraint. Compare the feelings of the pirzade women of India who unquestioningly accept that they should not talk loudly or draw attention to themselves in any way. Men and women should not mix freely and the modest (and respected) woman should not leave her home. In mixed company at home, women should be reserved and show proper respect to the elders of her family, especially the elder men. See Jeffery 1979, 109 ff. Furthermore, as Papanek 1973, 296, argues, purdah-societies operate different types of segregation and seclusion concurrently, from strict observance of purdah to ‘intermittent’ purdah. Much the same was probably true of ancient Greece. See also the comments of Slocum, Akhtar and Sahi 1960, 23: ‘Every woman is expected to cover her head and breasts [with a dupatta worn over a tunic and trousers] to show herself modest and respect-worthy. A woman who does otherwise is thought immodest and vulgar. This is the usual way of observing purdah within the village. In a strict sense purdah is only observed by the women of those families which can manage their affairs without the women going out of their houses. Others may wear a burqa on a visit to relatives or friends or a trip to the city. Observation of purdah is a symbol of prestige and fashion in Punjabi villages.’

20 Cohen 1991, 149.

21 Ibid. 154 ff. See further Rabinowitz 2002, although her arguments for female homoeroticism are perhaps overstated.


Judging from a list of domestic textiles presented by the lexicographer Pollux Onom. 10.42, these seemingly expensive hangings would certainly have provided a brilliant splash of colour in the house; he calls them ‘delicate’, ‘well-woven’ (euuphēs), ‘woven with a fine thread’ (euētrios), ‘glistening’ (stilpē), ‘shining’ (stilbousa), ‘beautifully coloured’ (eukhrōs), ‘diverse’ (polumorphos), ‘purple’ (porphura), ‘sea-green’ (halourgas), ‘sea-purple’ (haliporphuros), ‘green’ (praseios), ‘scarlet’ (husginobaphēs), ‘violet’ (ioeidēs), ‘crocus-coloured’ (krokeridēs), ‘decorated with red flowers’ (kokkoanthousa), ‘with a purple border’ (periporphuros), ‘shot with gold’ (epikhrusos), ‘decorated with figures of animals’ (thēria enegegrapto), and ‘shining with stars’ (astra eneestrapten). Pollux and other ancient lexicographers, such as Hesychius and the anonymous compiler of the Suda, are an invaluable source for the naming of ancient furnishings. From these sources, we are able to name a variety of curtains and drapes: paraplōma, parakalumma, epiblēmata, epibolaia, parapetasmata, ephestrides and khlainai. For a discussion of the importance of costly domestic textiles see Vickers 1999.

Richter 1966, 177 n. 2; Barber 1991, 379 ff.

Although it is conceivable that they worked only on hinges. See Robinson and Graham 1938, 251. See Pomeroy 1994, 297, who suggests that curtains were the usual method of dividing space within the Greek house and that, according to the inventoried list of the furnishings of the Hermocopidae, doors were considered movable furniture. See Pritchett 1956, 233–4.

Pollux Onom. 10.32.

Pliny NH 13.62; Athen. 12.71 (548e).

Richter 1966, fig. 600. Curtains are used as partitions within the house on the so-called ‘Ikarios relief’ in Naples where Ikarios and his wife recline on a couch in front of a large curtain, which is clearly suspended in front of a doorway. See De Caro 1996, 376.

For the crossbeam see Lys. fr. 175S, IG II144 A 58 (Delos, 4th century bc), 2(2) 463.62, 1672.193. Cf. LSJ s.v. δοκός.

e.g. Od. 1.333, 10.559, 11.64; Ar. Nu. 1126, 1488, 1502; Men. Sam. 591; Herod. 3.40; Xen. Cyr. 7.5.22. With the meaning of any covered hall or chamber, see Pi.P. 5.41. See also, ll. 6.248; Emp. fr. 142.

Aes. Ag. 691.

Athen. 4.26 (145b). See also Theo. Char. 10.6.2; Philo Mut. 43.2, Mos. 2.87.5, 2.101.4; Diod. Sic. 19.22.3.3.; Plut. Alex. 51.10.1.

Roof beam: Ar. Fr. 73.1. Shutters: Diod. Sic. 20.91.6 (on a siege engine). The house-veil analogy is pertinent to Muslim belief too, where the traditional Islamic lattice-screened window known as the mashrabiyya prevents people from seeing in and, because of the grid, gives only a restricted view of the world from inside the house and can easily be likened to the burqa-veil which has a grid over the face. The Koran (33.53, 59) certainly equates the veil of a woman with an interior dividing curtain (hijab) that separates women from strange men.

See further Lissarrague 1992, 146–7. Padel 1990, 336–65 has suggested that the half-opened door invites the viewer of a vase, like the audience of a tragedy, to guess and fantasize about what lies behind it; the half-opened door reminds us that we can never see and know all about those that dwell behind it. She suggests that this works on a deeper level too and that every human has their own door to the interior, the soul, and declares that, ‘The mouth is traditionally a fenced door.’

Possibly a scene from Euripides’ Stheneboia. See Trendall and Webster 1971, 101.
Chapter 7

Aphrodite’s Tortoise: veiling, social separation and domestic space

42 See also above, Chapter 1.
44 Gomme and Sandbach 1973, 486, speculate that Moschion means that it is the manner of the ‘demi-mondaine’ to show that she can behave like a respectable lady. In other words, they suggest that the passage has the general meaning of, ‘She will be shy (or pretend to be) after that last meeting of ours. That is the way of women.’ This is an unnecessary addition.
45 Aristaenetus 2.2.7–8. Compare 2.18.1–2 For comments on these texts see below, Chapter 10.
49 Certainly for the Islamic parallel, Papanek 1973, 294 ff., argues for two ‘instruments’ of female seclusion: the segregation of living space from outsiders, and the covering of the face and body with a veil. She argues that the veil is a logical supplement to the use of enclosed living spaces.
50 See especially Mernissi 1975, 144 ff.
51 Philemo 3.12 K.-A. See in particular Davidson 1997, 137 ff. The lack of clothing and corresponding absence of modesty is made explicit in Xenarchos 4.4–6 K.-A.
52 Cohen 1991, 155: ‘Women were…not physically isolated from their community, and their daily activities took them out of their houses and brought them into contact with men, whether in the agora, at a festival or a wedding, or in the house of a friends or neighbour.’
53 Ibid. 162.
54 When this veil-style is mentioned it is usually is in the context of a discussion of Heraclides Criticus. See, for example, Walcot 1998, 169. Burr Thompson’s influential series of studies on the Tanagran figurines has convincingly argued that the variety of modelled figures derive from Attic prototypes and were originally the product of Athenian craftsmen who sculpted the figures from real life Athenian models. If this is indeed the case, then the tegidion could have had a major impact on Athenian womanhood. A convenient account of Burr Thompson’s research is contained in Uhlenbrock (ed.) 1990, 48–53. For the distribution of the tegidion, see above, Chapter 3.
56 See Fisher 1988, 1184; van Bremen 1996, 156 calls this movement the ‘domestication of public life’.
57 Vitruvius (7.1–7) commonly makes these distinctions. For a discussion see Nevett 1999, 18–19, 22–4.
58 Ibid. 158 ff.
59 Papanek 1973, 295. Cf. Jeffrey 1979, 151 ff. The journalist Veronica Doubleday (1988, 10) agreed to be veiled when she was living in Herat in Afghanistan and reported that, ‘Wearing a veil in public initiated an important and subtle change in me, cultivating an aura of modesty and self-containment. It masked my foreignness, enabling me to join
many women’s outings where I would have otherwise have attracted unwanted attention, and it brought a welcome privacy. It was also fascinating and salutary to discover that being invisible is seductive.’

60 Theognis 579–80. As it turns out, the woman may not be as respectable as she first appears since, in the next two lines, a man – presumably the woman’s husband – states, ‘I hate a woman who roams about, and a lecherous man who wants to plough another man’s land.’ Finally, the woman and a man, either her husband or lover, declare that it’s no use lamenting what has been done in the past; they should look to the future: ‘But these things have happened already and it is not possible for them to be undone; the future, for that let us be on our guard’ (583–4).

61 Taliban modesty laws governing the dress of women placed particularly harsh punishments on non-conforming women, including on-the-spot beatings. A disturbing BBC Panorama programme of October 2001 showed this rule being enforced.

62 For a discussion of the gynaikonomoi see in particular Ogden 1996, 364–75 and 2002. See also Mills 1984. While it is difficult to know exactly how this ‘institution’ operated, it is possible that a group of officials acted as ‘women police’ and controlled the movements of women in many Greek states from the late classical period on. I do not want to overstress the importance of this ‘institution’ (if indeed that is an appropriate word) because the evidence for the gynaikonomoi as an active, organized, and established ‘police force’ is fragmentary to say the least. Nonetheless, much of the scant evidence suggests that the gynaikonomoi controlled female behaviour at public festivals and funerals and checked the respectability of female participants in state rituals. In a rather puzzling statement Hypereides (fr. 14 Jensen) noted that, ‘Women without order in the street were fined 1,000 drachmas.’ It is hard to understand what he means by ‘without order’ (akosmousai) but I think that it is perhaps a convenient ‘catch-all’ phrase which hints that gynaikonomoi activity was not confined to festivals and could include the daily policing of women in public with, perhaps, regard to overseeing their modest dress. This was certainly true for women at festivals, but it is conceivable that their control extended beyond the confines of special occasions. The punishment for transgressing the rules of the gynaikonomoi was to have the name of the offender written on a white board and pinned to a plane tree, and to be summoned with a fine that was, of course, payable by the woman’s official kurios. (Hesychius s.v. πλάτανος). The shame brought about by the public display of a woman’s name was a harsh punishment since it brought dishonour on her family and it is possible that a physical chastisement of the erring woman could have followed at the will of her guardian. Of course, Hypereides’ term ‘without order’ could mean that the gynaikonomoi were vigilant in controlling female behaviour in other ways including, perhaps, keeping women from interacting publicly with men or even from speaking to men in the streets.


64 Mernissi 1994, 65 ff. The Arabic word haram (‘forbidden’, ‘taboo’) is the root of the words harem and haremlik which refer to both women’s quarters and to a place which is sacred and out of bounds. For a fuller definition see Llewellyn-Jones 2002b.

65 El Guindi 1999, 118–19, recounts an incident when a male teacher visited a group of female students in the women’s lounge of their student accommodation. His sense of propriety was emphasized by his actions: ‘He pulled his kufiyya (head shawl) over his face and entered very carefully, literally rubbing against the wall trying not to look in the direction of the women until he reached a curtain diagonally hung in the corner of the room. He went behind it and sat facing the women from behind the curtain. That is, it was the man who
both face-veiled when with women and sat behind the hijab (curtain). His shadow showed him lifting his kuffiya off his face and letting it down over his shoulders, but keeping it on his head. He proceeded to discuss Koranic suras, particularly those pertaining to hijab… After about thirty-five minutes he excused himself, and went through a ritualized exit, similar to his entry. He closed the door after him and the women started to relax their head- and face-covers and proceeded with the activities they were engaged in before his ‘interruption’. Some ate, some talked and laughed, some changed…as others rushed to class.’

67 Eur. IA 821. Hippolytus cries out the same invocation at Eur. Fr. 436 N(2). Cairns 1993, 293 suggests that the gesture of veiling his head may have accompanied Hippolytus’ words at this point.
68 Eur. IA 830.
72 A further discussion of brightness can be found in Chapter 10.
74 HH2 278–9.
75 Plut. Dem. 29.4. See further Cairns 2002.
76 Stevens 1998, 398.
77 See for example, Philo Conf. 71; 116. For ‘veiled’ judges see Plato Grg. 523d3; Plut. Mor. 121B 10. A good judge should be able to discern character and truth even if he is veiled. See Plato Men. 76b4.
78 Ar. Thes. 498–501. For a metaphorical use see Plato, Resp. 503a8: ‘Something of this sort we said while the argument slipped by with veiled face in fear of starting our present debate.’ Cf. Phaedr. 237a4.
79 See also Luc. Merc. Cond. 39, Rh. Pr. 21; Plut. Mor. 594E 3. The man who hides himself under a cloak in Soph. Ajax 1145 is trampled upon because, like a veiled woman, he is practically invisible.
80 Hes. Th. 574; cf. Philo Mut. nom. 199.3.
81 On women’s names and individual identity see Schaps 1977.
83 Aristot. SE 179b.2.
84 Luc. Herm. 54.
87 This suggests that strict Greek veiling styles continued to be observed in the Greek East well into the Roman period. See Dio Chrys. 33.48–9.
89 Ibid. 18–21.
90 See further Gleason 1995, 49.
91 Eur. Herakl. 474–7. It was thought shameful for women to hang around at the front doors of their houses: after the battle of Chaeronea in 338, free women stood in their doorways to ask for news of their relatives, thus behaving in a fashion ‘unworthy of themselves and their city’. See Lycurg. 40. In Muslim society, the door is never a neutral space. In Iran, for example, most town and city houses are equipped with two doorknockers; the first is called the ‘soft knocker’ and is used by female visitors and male members of the household.
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The second is called the ‘hard knocker’ and is limited in use to strangers and business people. Women inside the house are therefore able to distinguish who is calling at the door merely by the noise of the doorknocker. If the ‘soft knocker’ is struck, the wife or daughters of the house may open the door (but remain hidden inside until the caller has entered), but if the ‘hard knocker’ is used, a servant or male member of the house will answer. Alternatively, if there are no men or servants present in the house to answer the hard knock, then the visitor will have to wait until a male householder returns before being admitted.

92 Beazley *ARV*(2) 645, no. 7. See also Pickard-Cambridge 1953 (1969), 206.
93 Makhlouf 1979, 34.
94 Ibid. 32.
Chapter 7

FROM PARTHENOS TO GYNÈ:
VEILING AND THE FEMALE LIFECYCLE

In many veil-societies, the veil highlights progression through various stages of female life. A girl reaching puberty is veiled in recognition of her budding sexuality, and a young bride is veiled, among other things, to highlight her sexual ripeness. This chapter aims to investigate whether similar veiling practices accompanied the female life cycle in ancient Greece.

At what age were girls in ancient Greek societies veiled? Needless to say, evidence for this is not easily located in the ancient sources. In the majority of modern veil-societies female infants are not veiled, although the situation changes as the child grows and begins to participate in social activities. The moment when a girl starts to be veiled varies from one society to another although, normally, at the onset of physical maturity, at menarche, veiling marks a change in the conduct of a girl, in how she is perceived socially, and, accordingly, in what she wears. Might this have been the same in ancient Greece?

In some veil-societies the stages of a girl’s physical and social development can be reflected in her garments: a young Bedouin girl in Arabia, for example, wears a small cap (qub’u) until she is about eight years old, when she is expected to wear a hooded garment known as the bukhnuq. At the age of twelve or thirteen a second garment is added, the abaya or sleeveless robe, until, at menarche, these garments are changed for a woman’s veil and abaya. In other words, the older a girl gets, the more layers of clothing she is expected to wear. Moreover, these changes can be identified by bestowing on the girl a variety of titles that reflect her change of dress and correspond with her progress to sexual maturity: among the Rashyda of the Arab Peninsula, the term ‘bint umgargash’ (virgin wearing a gargash-veil) refers to a girl approaching adolescence, while a ‘bint umnaggab’ (virgin wearing a mungab-veil) is a girl whose breasts have started to develop and must therefore be covered by both a gargash-veil and a mungab-veil. Here a girl’s path to maturity is marked both by the number of layers of clothing she wears and by the addition of an extra veil that advertises the arrival of her physical development. An interesting picture of a group of Iraqi women and girls perhaps highlights this notion (Fig. 146): the young girl on the right of the photograph wears no kind of veil or covering. Next to her, a teenage girl covers her head with a temporary veil, a sleeved robe; the woman standing next in line is well covered in a fringed and coloured veil, although her face
(albeit heavily shadowed) is exposed. She is the eldest woman in the group, probably the mother of the girls. Finally, at the far left, is a young woman whose face and body are completely veiled. This costume shows that she is a prospective bride and her visor-like veil, the hailiyi, highlights her sexual maturity even as it paradoxically emphasizes her social invisibility.²

Evidence for the dress of Greek girls is sparse, although it appears that they wore miniature imitations of adult female dress, while for very young children it seems that nudity was commonplace.³ There is little evidence that pre-pubescent girls were veiled, but the silence of the sources should not necessarily rule out the possibility. There are hints that veiling was imposed on (or was even keenly anticipated by) girls who had reached puberty and had experienced menarche. We know that this rite of passage was marked by the addition of at least one ‘grown up’ garment since classical sources tell how the zōnē, or waist-sash, was first worn by a girl at puberty only to be dedicated to Artemis as part of the subsequent marriage process.⁴ On the wedding night the groom loosens the bride’s zōnē and in childbirth a woman sympathetically had her waist-sash untied. The zōnē is frequently eroticized in the textual evidence in much the same way that the veil is fetishized. In fact, the veil and the sash are frequently assimilated in the Greek psyche as sexualizing garments.⁵

Veils often feature in contemporary female rites of passage, particularly when a girl crosses the threshold of womanhood. While we cannot be sure how such ritual transformations were enacted in ancient Greek communities, it is possible that girls reaching puberty were veiled in accordance with social regulations and that the veil
simultaneously protected and sexualized their bodies. Certainly, if we take Plutarch’s statement, that Spartan girls were paraded unveiled in public by their fathers, as evidence of a practice that deliberately went against the social norm for other Greek societies, then we can imagine that ordinarily girls were veiled from a time prior to marriage, perhaps from the onset of puberty, as an indication that they had reached a certain stage in life. From Homeric epic we know that the pubescent Nausikaa is veiled for her public appearances and that the poet clearly considered her old enough to participate in the complex veiling codes that he uses so well throughout the epics. Likewise, in the Argonautika, the young Medea toys with her veil as she raises and lowers it over her face and head, in actions that paradoxically highlight her budding sexuality and her sexual innocence. In the iconographic sources, Helen is veiled at the moment of her abduction by Theseus; at the time she was considered only to have been in her early teens. Numerous young females in tragedy, as we have seen, refer to their veils or are noted by others as veiled and many virgin heroines are shown veiled in the artistic sources, which is probably a reflection of daily practice.

For a girl’s fertility to be beneficial to her community, her sexuality should really be utilized for the good of her family in her capacity as procreator, so female rites of passage surrounding puberty are only preliminary to the rituals celebrating a forthcoming marriage when a girl goes through a life-changing transformation from virgin to wife to mother. The preparations for the Greek wedding were as crucial in the ritual order of things as the wedding-proper; it was fitting, therefore, to find both the bride-to-be and the future groom propitiating the correct deities with sacrifices and offerings before undertaking this momentous step. Knowing which deity to propitiate was vital. Diodorus Siculus tells of the significance of Aphrodite at this time, although it was recognized that to enter into communion with Aphrodite meant that the bride-to-be had to leave the sphere of Artemis, the virgin guardian of the young. But for a young woman to lose the divine support of Artemis, who was also goddess of childbirth, would be fatal; it was therefore critical to retain the link with this most fickle of divinities.

It was recognized that by offering the goddess textiles of their own making, women were especially able to please Artemis, claim her support, and draw the goddess of woods and mountains into the intimacy of the oikos. Garments and textiles dedicated to deities have only survived (on the whole) as inventories carved into stone. Such dedications accompanied every stage of the female life-cycle, so that when virgins had come through their first encounter with menstruation, it was common for them to consecrate examples of their weaving or articles of their clothing to Artemis. The most detailed accounts of textile dedications survive in the form of fifth-century stone-inscribed catalogues offered to Artemis Brauronia on the Athenian Akropolis which may be used in conjunction with (mainly) fourth-century clothing inscriptions found at Miletus and Tanagra to provide us with an insight into Greek clothing terms as well as an invaluable indication of a society’s reaction to life-changing events, especially in the female sphere.
Particularly important in the textile offering lists are sashes and veils. It seems that girls first wore a veil and a sash at the onset of puberty and both were then dedicated to a goddess (Artemis in particular) at the time of approaching marriage – at the moment when their fertility was perceived to be at its height. They were then replaced by differing varieties of the same garment: a specific wedding veil and a special wedding girdle tied with a ritual knot.

In his examination of textile gifts collected in the *Greek Anthology*, Losfeld catalogues thirty-five varieties of clothing and reveals that veils are mentioned four times. Thus, from lines attributed to Archilochus we have,

> Alkibia dedicated the sacred veil (*kaluptreōn*) that covered her hair to Hera, when she reached the time of her legitimate wedding.

Antipator of Sidon provides a more intricate text which lists the offerings of five girls of the same age, who dedicate themselves to Aphrodite:

> Bitinna gives these sandals, a great comfort for her feet, the pretty work of skilled shoe-makers; Philaenias, the net, dyed with sea-purple, that binds tight her long hair; Antikleia, her fan; lovely Herakleia, her face-veil (*kalupteiran prosopou*), as sheer as a spider’s web; and the daughter of Aristotle, who bears her father’s name, her coiled snake, the gold ornament of her slim ankles. We girl companions, all of one age give gifts to Ourania.

The same girls, now identified as living at Naukratis, are also alluded to by Archias:

> Bitinna gives these sandals, Philaenias, the purple net that confines her abundant hair; fair-headed Antikleia, her fan in which waits the strong wind, her defence against the violent heat; Herakleia, this sheer face-veil (*prokalumma prosopou*), wrought like a spider’s web. And Aristotelia, who bears her father’s name, the snake, her beautiful anklet. Girls all of one age, dwelling in low-lying Naucratis, they offer these rich gifts to Kypris, who presides over weddings.

Finally, Nikias provides evidence for the dedication of two veils to Eileithyia by a woman named Amphareta who has survived the ordeal of childbirth:

> The veil (*krēdemna*) and water-blue veil (*hudatessa kaluptre*) of Amphareta rest on your head, Eileithyia; for them she vowed to you when she prayed to you to keep dreadful death far away from her when in labour.

This epigram, although alluding to a woman who has gone forward to the next stage of female experience – apparently by being successfully delivered of a child – nonetheless allows us to witness the act of offering two veils to the goddess of childbirth. The epigram makes it clear that both of the veils had been worn in life by Amphareta who now gives them to the goddess to wear by, perhaps, draping a statue of the deity with the cloths. The practice of draping statues of goddesses with articles of dedicated clothing is well recorded: three *ampekhonai*, for example, are offered to Artemis Brauronia and are draped on the statue of the goddess.
The other three epigrams found in the *Greek Anthology* (6.137, 6.206, 6.207, composed over a long period between 650 and 120) attest the well-established tradition of textile offerings and record veils being dedicated to Hera (by Alkibia) and Aphrodite (by Herakleia). All three epigrams are linked closely to an approaching wedding; Antipator and Archias record the veil as only one of a number of items of adornment that were suitable to offer a deity upon the approaching marriage, but Archilochus makes far more candidly the connection between Alkibia’s offering of the veil that once covered her head and the approaching time of her marriage. By dedicating her veil, Alkibia bids farewell to her life as an unmarried virgin and prepares to take the step into womanhood.

By the time the wedding-day dawned, a young girl would have gone through a transformation, both allegorical and physical; she would have simultaneously given away her childhood clothes (or a proportion of them), and would have removed the sash that had bound her waist since the onset of puberty. She also dedicated a veil, probably one she had been accustomed to wearing since at least her menarche, although it is possible that she offered her ‘best veil’ to the goddess. The result of these preparations left a young woman symbolically stripped of the accoutrements commonly associated with her virgin state as she stood metaphorically naked, ready to be re-clothed in special wedding garments. From the confines of the ritual clothing the virgin would emerge as a sexualized being, a wife connected to a husband by her role as procreator. A metamorphosis would have taken place.

**Veiling the bride**

In addition to the dedication of clothing to deities, the bride underwent a ritual, perhaps on the night before the beginning of the wedding festivities, of bathing her body in spring water, an act that was intended to wash away her former life as a girl and prepare her for womanhood. This was followed by the ritual dressing of the bride on the first day of her wedding. In most societies, ancient and modern, the bridal outfit is a very significant item in the wedding ritual and the clothing of the bride is often packed with symbolic significance. In ancient Athens the dressing of the bride was supervised by the *nymphokomos* who had absolute authority over the bride’s adornment. While the texts note that the groom was also richly clothed and perfumed, most of the attention is given to the dress of the bride and it is clear that the wedding became an occasion for what was probably the most extravagant dressing in a woman’s life. This is in keeping with wider concepts of the wedding garments; after all, the wedding is an occasion of expansion and augmentation and in many societies the bride and groom assume awesome significance during the wedding celebrations and are often regarded as akin to royalty. Consequently, a special and distinctive dress for the bride is commonplace in most societies, while magnificence is characteristic of wedding garments generally throughout world history. Colour, quality of fabric, and layers of clothing help transport the bride and groom from the realm of the mundane to a temporary
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pinnacle of social standing. The bridal wedding dress and the wedding veil are often of the ultimate importance.

Clearly the bride wore an elaborate wedding costume augmented by delicate sandals and masses of jewellery, which sometimes had symbolic designs. Her head was crowned with a stephanē which appears in iconography to be of metal, although Plutarch states that in Boeotia, after veiling a bride, her head is crowned with a chaplet of asparagus. The account of the preparation of the bride Pandora in Hesiod’s Theogony, brings together the elements of ritual adornment. The role of nymphokomos is played by Athene:

The goddess, grey-eyed Athene, girded and adorned [Pandora] in a gleaming silver crown, and down over her head she placed an intricately woven veil (kalyptra), a wonder to see. Around her head Pallas Athene put a garland Fresh blossoming, beautiful, with meadow flowers. And she placed on her head a golden crown which the god himself made, the famous Lame God, making it with his hands, delighting Father Zeus.

A passage from the Works and Days adds to this scene, as Pandora is further adorned with necklaces and floral crowns by Peitho, the Graces and the Horai; she is given skills by the gods and is named Pandora because all the gods of Olympus bestowed gifts upon her. Even though Pandora is created as blight to mortal men, a punishment from Zeus, in outward form she takes on the appearance of a bride, radiant in jewellery, flowers, bright clothing and a glistening veil.

Once her toilette was completed the Greek bride prepared herself to meet the groom. She stood in a costume that exemplified her transitional state. The rite of passage for a bride in ancient Greek society follows van Gennep’s plan of symbolic or physical separation leading to the transitional state and then re-incorporation into a new status. While the wedding rites served to move persons into a new social standing and to bring together the two separate worlds of male and female in the persons of the bride and groom, it did so within the narrow and rigid confines of Greek social structure, ideology, and tradition about female inequality. Even though a bride was decked out like a goddess, she still remained a silent passive object of male control. This was emphasized by placing her beneath the confines of the wedding veil, which, like the veil worn in daily life, kept a woman separated from (male) society. It is clear that the Greek wedding dress was markedly different from female daily-wear, not necessarily in terms of construction, but in regard to colour, decoration, and ornamentation. The decorative bridal veil in particular was imbued with a rich symbolic significance.

The tradition of a bride’s head and face being hidden beneath one or more veils can be found in many societies. Although in modern Western tradition the veil (if worn at all) is simply one thin layer of white netting (which is not really intended to hide the bride’s face), in other traditions so much cloth is used to cover the bride’s
head, face and body (either in terms of length or layers), that the debilitated bride has
to be physically escorted throughout the ceremony. It seems likely that the ancient
Greek veil straddles both of these extremes: while it could be made from a delicate
cloth – linen or perhaps very fine wool, or even silk – the veil was still opaque enough
to hide the bride’s face from public view. It could have been worked with woven
designs. Pandora’s wedding veil is described as ‘intricately woven…a wonder to
see’,\(^ {35} \) which certainly suggests that it was a marvellous example of skilled weaving.\(^ {36} \)
Occasionally vase paintings depict brides wearing veils decorated with star-motifs
or small hatched crosses. A red-figure \textit{loutrophoros} in Boston (Fig. 147) for example,
shows a bride about to enter her new home as two \textit{Erotes} adjust her star-spangled
veil, while Fig. 148 shows a bride about to don her starry veil.

An interesting scene depicting decorated bridal clothing is contained on a red-
figure \textit{alabastron} in Paris (Fig. 149). It represents an idealized scene of courtship
between a prospective bride and her future husband. A young man, identified in the
inscription as handsome \textit{Timodemos}, stands in front of a seated woman, the bride

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{fig147}
\caption{A bride wears a \textit{shaal}-veil decorated with stars, perhaps a representation of the colour of the bridal veil. Line drawing of a detail taken from a \textit{loutrophoros}, c. 425. MFA Boston 03.802.}
\end{figure}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{fig148}
\caption{A bride dons a starry veil. Line drawing detail from a \textit{lebes gamikos} by the Washing Painter, c. 440–430. Staat. Antik. Munich 7578.}
\end{figure}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{fig149}
\caption{Courtship scene. The bride-to-be wears, and is surrounded by, star-encrusted textiles. Line drawing taken from an \textit{alabastron}, c. 470–450. Bibliothèque Nationale 508, Paris.}
\end{figure}
to be, who delicately holds a wreath. Her clothing is decorated with small hatched-crosses, as is a cloth hanging on the wall in front of her. Timodemos extends his hand towards her and offers a veil.\textsuperscript{37} Could this be the wedding veil, a gift from the groom to his bride? It appears to have a spangled decoration and even a fringed edge, which could identify it as a noteworthy garment.

It was probably regarded as socially desirable for the bride to be bedecked in costly attire at her wedding, and the expense would fall to the men who had met at the\textit{ engue} (betrothal ceremony). While the bride’s\textit{ kuriós} (guardian) would no doubt be expected to provide his charge with her wedding outfit, it is not improbable that the groom and his family went some way towards meeting the cost as well. It seems that the public spectacle of a bride attired in costly fabrics and jewellery was an opportunity to make a powerful statement of family affluence. The veil which concealed the bride throughout much of the festivities would surely need to be particularly expensive and memorable. A Muslim bride’s veil is described by one authority as, ‘truly a cloth of gold, dazzling the eyes and taking one’s breath away’.\textsuperscript{38}

A well-known wedding scene created on the body of a\textit{ lékythos} by the Amasis Painter shows women engaged in various stages of wool working, from spinning and weaving to folding the completed cloth (\textit{Fig. 150}). The shoulder of the vase depicts a seated woman adopting the veil-gesture and holding a wreath as she is approached by two groups of four dancing girls, all of whom link hands. These groups are

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{fig150a.png}
\caption{Women spin a textile on a large loom while above a bride sits and adopts the veil-gesture. \textit{Lékythos} by the Amasis Painter, c. 550. The Metropolitan Museum of Art (N.Y.), Fletcher Fund, 1931. (31.11.10)}
\end{figure}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{fig150b.png}
\caption{Detail of Fig. 150a showing a seated bride in the veil-gesture pose.}
\end{figure}
preceded by two sets of two men, one of whom, differentiated by his short cloak, turns back to watch the girls. The scene has been interpreted as a dance in celebration of the weaving of the Panathenaic peplos for Athene, but it is more likely that the performance on the lékythos is not carried out as a religious rite, but as a domestic one. The dance is probably performed as part of a wedding celebration. What has been missed in interpretations of this vase to date is the fact that the veiled woman on the shoulder scene, probably a bride in the making, sits above the great warp-weighted loom on the belly of the vase so that her large veil seems to correspond with the great unfinished textile below. It is logical to suppose that the textile being made on the loom is her wedding gown or, indeed, the veil that she wears in the scene above. The young man in the distinctive short cloak could therefore be the groom who has presented the gift of the veil to his future bride.

It does not appear that the Greek wedding veil took any one specific shape or size. Instead it followed fashionable modes in contemporary life. Therefore pharē are draped over brides’ heads, himatia are used as wedding veils, and shaal-veils are worn by brides, all of which follow the fashionable evolution of veil-styles. While iconography provides indications of how wedding veils may have appeared (although not how they were necessarily worn in the ceremony), the limited colours found on pots and the now-monochrome sculptures are not the most effective sources for trying to determine anything about the colour of bridal veils which, I believe, was a very important aspect of this distinctive garment.

Unfortunately there is no Greek text that directly comments on the colour of the wedding veil, although it is possible that mention of the flammeum in Roman Comedy could derive from a Greek prototype. Roman accounts of bridal attire can be of help, as can anthropological data on wedding garments in the modern Mediterranean and Middle East. Even though the Greek texts do not specifically address the issue of the colour of bridal veils, there are enough hints available to tackle the puzzle.

Of necessity, the investigation’s starting point has to be the famous but perplexing section of Aiskhylos’ Agamemnon in which Iphigeneia sheds her krokou baphas. In his commentary on the passage, Hermann suggested that at the moment of her slaughter, Iphigeneia unveiled her face when she poured her krokou baphas, or ‘saffron dyes’, to the ground and silently gazed into the eyes of the men who surrounded her. Surprisingly, Fraenkel almost ignores the passage in his commentary, but it has more recently received much needed attention by Cunningham, Armstrong and Ratchford, all of whom agree that at her sacrifice Iphigeneia is clearly wearing, and casts off, a veil since the idea is supported in both contemporary iconography and literature.

But Iphigeneia wears no customary head covering; she wears a special marriage veil. By the classical period, Iphigeneia was clearly perceived to have been dressed as a bride at the time of her death. There is no specific reference in the Agamemnon to the forthcoming marriage of the princess, but her presence at Aulis to celebrate her wedding to Akhilleus was an established tradition by the fifth century and we
can assume that Aiskhylos’ audience would have been familiar with the events at Aulis from references to them in epic cycle.47 Euripides certainly uses the tradition of Iphigeneia’s impending wedding to great dramatic effect in his Iphigeneia in Tauris when he has the heroine recollect how she covered herself in her bridal veil as soon as she heard news of her forthcoming marriage while she was still at home in Argos. She was so excited (but also correctly embarrassed) at the prospect of her wedding that she refused to lift her veil even to kiss farewell to her baby brother or little sister before she rushed off to Aulis.48 It is clear from Euripides’ story that Iphigeneia went to Aulis under the illusion that she was to be joined in marriage to Akhilleus, that she arrived there dressed in her bridal finery, and that it was only at the last moment, as she was due to be sacrificed, that she registered what was happening to her and dramatically tore off her wedding veil.

Evidently, in popular imagination Iphigeneia was perceived to have been dressed in bridal attire for her ordeal at Aulis and, therefore, since her garments were particular to the wedding ceremony, the term krokou baphas could be applied to the bridal veil. It clearly implies that the wedding veil was coloured. But what colour? What can be made of the word krokos?

Essentially, it is the word for the crocus flower, but it is also used as a colour term to denote dyed garments. References to clothes dyed krokos are plentiful, and most scholars translate the term as ‘saffron coloured’. For de Ronchaud, saffron was ‘la couleur héroïque’,49 and it is indeed linked with gods and heroes: it is the pigment of the clothing of the Dawn, of the Muses, and of Dionysus. Although it is a colour found worn by men, it is overwhelmingly linked to women: in the Iliad, krokopeplos is an epithet of Eos;50 in the Theogony it is used as an appellation of Enyo, goddess of war;51 it is an adjective applied to Metis, the mother of Athene, to the nymph Eurynome, the mother of the Graces and to Telesto, one of the Okeanides.52 In Alkman, the Muses are robed in saffron garments,53 while in the Hekabe of Euripides the chorus sing of the elaborately worked saffron robe of Athene.54 In Aristophanes’ comedies, Blepyros wears his wife’s delicate little krokos-dyed shift during his nocturnal escapade;55 Kleonike speaks of sitting at home in krokos-coloured dresses and looking pretty as central to the female condition,56 and Lysistrata realizes the erotic effects that a pretty krokos-hued frock can have on men.57

So krokos-coloured garments are certainly suitable for women, especially those undergoing some kind of ritual transformation. Moreover, the colour of the krokos dye (whatever that really was) would have been an expensive commodity, suitable for only the best kind of clothing. It would be an appropriate colour for bridal attire, for the garments of a girl taking the step from parthenos to gynê, with all the medical, magical, social, and symbolic upheavals that were involved. With the bridal veil being a pre-eminent emblem of female passage and a badge of familial wealth, its link to the colour krokos is wholly appropriate.

Since we have the word krokos, it is reasonable to assume that the crocus flower was involved in the colouration of the bridal veil somehow, whether as an actual
dye made from the stamen or simply a descriptive name for a colour or range of colours inspired by the crocus flower’s hue(s). Many scholars translate krokos either as ‘saffron’ or as ‘yellow’, but neither of these terms entirely justifies the ancient usage. I am reluctant to pronounce firmly upon the shade of the Greek bridal veil, yet it is plausible to see it taking on some kind of reddish hue – that is to say, a mixture of the main colour components of krokos. It would be futile to attempt to qualify the exact shade of the Greek bridal veil; in fact, such a task is meaningless. Investigation of the Greek and Latin texts shows that the ancient view of red actually incorporated a colour-band that runs from modern-day yellow to red to purple. In the Attic Nights of Aulus Gellius, after all, Favorinus’ treatise on the red–yellow band of colour confirms that what we would ordinarily classify within the yellow colour stratum, the ancients were happy to see as red.58 For Favorinus, flammaeum, croceum, aureum, xanthos, erythros, pyrros and kirros are all shades of red, and, in this, the Roman philosopher follows a line taken by Aristotle in his Meteorologica.59

The study of abstract hues is frustrating and confusing, although an investigation into the symbolism of the colour of a particular item can be more rewarding and enlightening. In her study of gemstones from antiquity, for example, Meier has shown a subtle understanding of the way in which perceptions of colour may be affected by conceptions of what symbolism the gemstone in question holds; the same material may be seen as variously coloured according to the need for meaning, and this imagined need is what matters, rather than the actual perception of the colour.60 This might work for particular textiles or types of garments too. The bridal veil was imbued with a rich symbolism and the precise colour of the garment, within certain confines, might not have mattered. It could actually take on any of the hues of the yellow–red–purple colour band. What really counted was that the garment metaphorically represented certain things that could be visualized within that particular colour band. Furthermore, the colours themselves had a symbolism which could be reflected back onto the veil. Gem stones naturally change colour according to the light or the angle of viewing; dyed textiles work in the same way of course, as Aristotle famously recalls:

Bright dyes…show the effect of contrast. In cloth the appearance of colours is profoundly affected by their positions next to one another (purple, for example, appears different on white and on black wool), and also by differences of light. Therefore weavers say that they often make mistakes in their colours when they work by lamplight, and use the wrong ones.61

Whatever its precise shade (which was open, then, to change in light and variety in the dyed hue), as a costly commodity, red(dish) dyed clothing made from, say, saffron would of necessity be limited in use to special garments. The wedding veil would fit the bill very well.62

Brides in wedding rites around the world wear red veils.63 Red bridal veils are found in, among other places, Albania, Serbia, Armenia, Estonia, Russia, Mongolia, China, Korea and India. They are also common in North Africa, the Levant, Iran,
Iraq, and many other Middle Eastern countries, including Bedouin lands. Red bridal veils were also to be seen in Macedonia and Greece as late as the 1940s where, it was generally believed by local inhabitants, they had a very long tradition. All these red veils are designed to hide the face entirely; even where specifically red veils are not worn, it is common for brides to be adorned with strands of red silk or red ribbons, which are tied around their necks or arms, or intertwined within their hair or wound around their caps. Hence, the colour red has been an essential ingredient of the bridal attire of many races throughout various historical periods.

The Roman wedding veil was also of reddish hue. The *flammeum* was central to the Roman marriage rite, and it seems to have had its origins in archaic Italian society, as it was part of the daily dress of the wife of the high priest of Jupiter. If we accept that, like the Roman *flammeum*, the Greek wedding veil was indeed a reddish colour, then we need to question why this specific colour was used. What was it about red that was particularly appealing to the Greeks? Certainly, in ancient Greece, red was the colour of the clothing worn by those who stood outside society, or those who underwent a transformation from one state of being to another. Red woven cloths are attested covering corpses at funerals, and in the artworks (on white ground *lekythoi*) red mantles are worn by Thanatos and Hypnos and Hermes and Chairon. Red is also a colour particularly associated with the mantles worn by ephebes. Moreover, the offering of red fillets to beautiful boys at the *euandria* confirms that the youths are in a transitory period of life as well as being at their most sexually desirable, and it is interesting to note the similarity between the red ribbons tied around the naked bodies of the youths and the anthropological data testifying to the red ribbons tied around the limbs of brides. So as a colour which alludes to social transition, red is particularly appropriate for the bridal veil.

For the Greeks, red textiles had a shining quality; this is a constant in ancient descriptions of red, which is repeatedly noted for its brilliance and lustre. Red especially takes on the luminosity of starlight for, according to Aristotle, stars are shiny because they reflect light and make things brilliant. In the *Argonautika*, Jason is given a splendid red mantle by Athene, which gives off an irresistible brilliance, like the light of a star. In the *Iliad* Hekabe offers Athene a robe so beautiful that, ‘it shone like a star’ and the Mykonos Pithos seems to depict this exact episode and shows queen Hekabe and her servants conveying a textile offering towards Athene’s temple. The robes of the women are embellished with star-designs enclosed within circles, which might be an artist’s interpretation of the Homeric simile. More precisely, though, the stellar imagery contained within Apollonius’ description of Jason’s red cloak may connect it to the series of vase paintings examined above, in which brides don wedding veils which are decorated with star-motifs or small hatched crosses. While it is possible that the decoration could be woven or embroidered designs, like those alluded to by Hesiod in his descriptions of Pandora’s wedding garb, the stars might symbolically represent shining or brightly coloured cloth and might be a visual interpretation of the common term *liparokrēdemnos*. 

‘shining veil’. Do we have an artistic shorthand for colour here? Are the artists trying to depict bright red veils? It is very likely.

Red is also the colour most closely associated in nature with ripeness and fertility. Female sexual maturity in primates is often accompanied by a swelling and reddening of the area around the sexual organs, and humans often flush as a sexual response which is both alluring and provocative. References to the ‘blushing bride’ in ancient and modern sources, are more than just colourful images of a young and modest woman about to enter the state of matrimony. The Latin author Macrobius states that in blushing, ‘nature…spreads the blood before herself as a veil’.

Red was perceived to have been a highly charged, erotic, colour, especially when compounded by the epithet liparos, ‘shining’. Thus, Bacchylides’ seventeenth Ode dwells on the sexual awakening of Theseus when he meets Amphitrite and is given the gifts of a red robe and wreath of roses. Interestingly, Bacchylides’ Ode 13 tells of the red veils of the Muses (phoinikokrademnoi…Mousais), which is an apt portrait for divinities so clearly related to the notion of brightness. More notable, however, is his description in Ode 11 of ‘Leto of the red veil’ (phoinikokrademno Latous), an altogether appropriate connection since Leto naturally takes on the attributes of divinity and nobility for which red-dyed clothing is appropriate. But Leto is also a sexual being; after all, she arouses the passions and loses her virginity to Zeus and spills her blood giving birth to the divine twins, although her amorous adventures do not end there. Leto is pursued and almost raped by the giant Tityus, and the iconography of this attempted violation (as we have seen) repeatedly involves Leto’s act of veiling. Bacchylides’ allusion to ‘red-veiled Leto’ is especially apposite to a goddess whose mythology is so closely connected to sexual allure. The same sexual desirability was transferred onto the red-veiled bride.

Red clothing is also symbolically associated to blood, especially the blood of sacrifice. Red cloth was appropriate for military dress, symbolizing as it did the blood spilt in battle, and the bride’s assumption of a red veil could thus be interpreted as a sign of substitute sacrifice. In Aiskhylos’ Agamemnon, therefore, the famous motif of Iphigeneia shedding her krokos-dyed veils is meant to evoke the image of sacrificial virginal bloodshed (it also alludes to the fact that krokos can be directly interpreted as ‘red’). Indeed, the bride-cum-sacrificial-victim motif is a particularly strong theme in tragedy, although the analogy need not be confined to drama and epic, since medical texts also offer ample evidence for a connection between sacrifice and female blood loss. The red veil may well allude to the colour of the blood lost during the bride’s first sexual intercourse or, more intrinsically, to the colour of the perforated hymen. Indeed, as we shall see, the veil–hymen analogy is not to be dismissed lightly.

Unveiling the bride
The Greek wedding ritual known as the anakalyptēria, the ‘unveiling’, gave an important symbolic function to the bridal veil. The ceremony of covering and uncovering the heads of brides transformed them into wives and potential mothers
and was, therefore, central to the ideology of the wedding. Similar ritual acts found in Roman and ancient Jewish rites strongly suggest that the act of unveiling was, conceptually if not technically, the pivotal moment of the wedding ceremony. In its most basic form, the ritual of the anakalypteria was the moment when the bride lifted, or—more probably—had removed for her, the veil that covered her head and face and for the first time the groom was able to view his new wife who had demonstrated by her participation in the unveiling (be it active or passive participation) her acquiescence in her new status. But the issue of the anakalypteria is not as simple as it first appears. To begin with, our ancient sources (and those who have interpreted them) do not agree over the actual timing of the ceremony. Did it take place at the beginning, middle or end of the wedding festival? Was it acted out at the house of the bride’s guardian or at the groom’s dwelling? Was it a private moment between the new husband and wife or was it a public display? Furthermore, the actual gesture itself is open to various interpretations. Was it a symbolic ritual of deflowering, a consensus on the part of the bride, or a rebirth as a new woman, as a wife?

Scholars have debated the actual timing of the ceremony without coming to any specific conclusions. A problem with scholarly accounts of ancient Greek wedding rituals is that many authorities have a tendency to see the ceremonies as inflexible and as having to happen in a certain order, at a specific time, and at a precise location. This is an almost impossible scenario given that our sources for the Greek wedding span an enormous period and cover a wide geographical area. It is unlikely that there was one standard wedding ceremony and that variations over time and place did not occur. Any exploration of the Greek wedding should attempt to free itself from the restraint of having too formal a construction placed upon it. Wedding rituals and wedding etiquette would have varied according to time and place.

Most of what we know of the anakalypteria comes from late lexicographers and antiquarians whose testimonies of the ritual are disappointingly sparse, usually being confined to the barest facts of what the event was (unveiling and gift-giving) and roughly when it occurred. But there is no ancient consensus as to the actual timing of the ceremony. Modern scholarly confusion as to where and when the ceremonies took place can be attributed to the evidence of the fifth-century AD lexicographer Hesychius and the sixth-century BC prose-writer Pherekydes of Syros (two authors who demonstrate the problems of using sources that span such a wide period). Both writers acknowledged the importance of the anakalypteria to the marriage celebrations, but do not specify a precise time or locale. The outline by Hesychius reads:

‘Anakalyptêrion’: When the bride is led out of the bridal chamber for the first time on the third day.

The fuller account comes from Pherekydes who, around 544, gave a mythological origin for the anakalypteria. The surviving fragmentary text reads as follows:

And when it is the third day of the wedding, then Zas [i.e., Zeus] fashions a robe both big and beautiful, and on it he embroiders Earth and the abodes of Ogenos…” [The text
breaks off for many lines and resumes when Zas is speaking:] ‘...since I wish marriages to be yours, I honour you with this. Receive my salutation and be my consort.’ These they say were the first anakalyptēria, and thus arose the custom for both gods and men. And she answers, receiving the robe from him.88

Taking these sources as a starting point, scholarly opinion about the anakalyptēria is divided into two camps. Some, following the suggestion of Pherekydes, argue that it took place during the bridal feast on day two of the three-day wedding at the bride’s father’s house. Alternatively, some, taking what can be gleaned from Hesychius, argue for the anakalyptēria occurring in the privacy of the thalamos (bridal chamber in the groom’s home) on the night of day-two and that the following day, at a ceremony called the epaulia, special gifts of ‘the unveiling’ were presented.89 Whilst both arguments have some logic, much remains problematical. Scholarly reasoning becomes unstuck in the insistence that the unveiling of the bride occurred once and once only.

Going one step further, Carson not only follows the idea that the anakalyptēria was a one-off act, but also believes that the one unveiling occurred as the ‘climax of the ceremony’.90 Such certainty in attributing a timing to the ceremony, considering the confusion of the sources, does nothing to resolve the imposition of our modern prejudices when interpreting the ancient rituals. What may seem right to us now was not necessarily the way things were conducted then. I cannot concur that there was one ceremony, nor that it ended with a discernible ‘climax’. Instead I want to advance another version of affairs that presents the concept of the anakalyptēria not as one definitive unveiling, but as a series of unveilings which began in the public sphere and ended in a wholly private act. This idea may seem to be a fudged compromise, but the contradictory and confusing nature of the evidence compels one to wonder whether different writers were not simply reflecting the somewhat ambiguous order of a set of ancient and changing ceremonials that centred on the bride and her unveiling.

Anthropological data testifies to the frequent use of the bridal veil in wedding ceremonies, which indicates that our (necessary) reliance on entirely male-dominated ancient sources may well have resulted in important female ritualistic elements going largely unreported. Traditional veil-societies whose weddings have parallels with the ancient Greek rituals make use of the bridal veil in a myriad of minor rituals and events that go far beyond our limited notions that its use should be confined to one incident only. While Muslim, Hindu, and Jewish weddings all contain one essentially public unveiling ceremony, they also contain a series of lesser unveilings in which a bride has her veil temporarily lifted, but not removed, so that her face is never fully exposed. Her veil is raised, for example, to allow a cup of wine or some food to be passed to her lips, or in order that someone – usually a female relative – can whisper an instruction into her ear. In addition, family members and honoured guests can request a fleeting glance of the bride’s face and the veil is lifted just enough to accommodate the viewer’s gaze.91
Veil-manipulation is typical of veil-society weddings. There are hints of a similar flexible use of the garment in the ancient Greek wedding ceremony too. One intriguing vase painting in particular alludes to a kind of veil-manipulation: an Attic red-figure pyxis fragment, attributed to the Penthesilea Painter and found on the Athenian Akropolis, evidently shows a moment (or a sequence of events) in the wedding ritual (Fig. 151). Sutton argues that this is a representation of the anakalypteria, although I am not convinced.\textsuperscript{92} If we follow the scene around the body of the pyxis, it becomes clear that the bearded male and the now lost figure of what was probably the groom, address their gaze to one another and not to the bride who is, in any case, out of view on the opposite side of the pot. One needs to revolve the pyxis in order to see the bridal scene. No doubt the bearded man (possibly the bride’s father) is leading the groom into his daughter’s presence, but the groom’s view of his future wife is blocked. The point is emphasized by the father’s frontal stance and twist of his head away from the central scene, and by the pose of the nymphaeutria who stands in front of the bride. But what is of interest here is the fact that the nymphaeutria lifts the seated bride’s veil and offers her a drink from a phiale.\textsuperscript{93} What is being shown on this little pot is not the anakalypteria, but a snatched opportunity for the nymphaeutria to raise the bride’s veil and offer her a drink before the formal ceremonials proceed. The image puts one in mind of Kassandra’s comment on the inevitable demise of her prophetic powers:

No more shall my prophecy peep forth from behind a veil like a new-wedded bride.\textsuperscript{94}

\textbf{The anakalypteria: another chronology}

\textbf{Stage 1}: The bridal banquet at the parental home. There are several ancient texts that suggest that it was here that the public part of the anakalypteria was enacted. Its importance at this juncture is no doubt emphasized by the term \textit{ta anakalypteria}, the definite article \textit{ta} accenting the centrality of the event.\textsuperscript{95}
Thus, at nightfall, the bride’s father gave his daughter to her new husband in full view of an assembly of guests. Lucian records the moment of entering the room that had been prepared for the occasion:

On the right as you enter, the women occupied the whole couch, as there were a good many of them, with the bride among them very scrupulously veiled (akribos egkekalum-menê) and hedged in by the women.96

It is clearly a public event although the guests are divided according to gender, with men on one side of the room and women on the other. The importance of having a large assembly of guests at a wedding is recounted by Plutarch,97 after all, the wedding was a time for an ostentatious display of family wealth, in clothing and furnishings, and especially in the lavish supply of food for the bridal feast. Some lines of a play by the comic author Euangelos describes the preparations for such a wedding banquet. The play itself is called ‘Anakaluptomenê’ (‘The Unveiled Woman’), which meant, presumably, that the bridal anakalypteria was a pivotal element of the comedy which takes place at the house of a bride’s father in the immediate build up to the wedding.98 Although we know nothing else of the play, its title and the theme of wedding preparations gives some reason to link stage one of the anakalypteria with the bridal feast at the natal home.

At some point during the banquet at the parental home, the bride lifted, or more probably had raised for her, the veil which covered her face, and the subsequent exchange of looks between the husband and his new wife was witnessed by the gathered throng. Pollux seems to suggest that, towards the end of the banquet, it was the groom who unveiled his wife, a ceremonial act that thereby gave its name to the following ritual of gift giving:

The gifts which are given are called ‘hednê’, and ‘optêria’ and ‘anakalyptêria’. Not only is the day on which he uncovers the bride so called, but also the gifts for her. And they also call the ‘anakalyptêria’ [and] ‘prosphthegetêria’ [‘the salute’].99

Much the same idea is to be found in a brief passage from the Anecdota Graeca:

‘Anakalyptêria’: Gifts given to the bride when she is first revealed at the marriage feast by the husband and those feasting.100

And again in Harpokration’s lexicographical entry:

‘Anakalyptêria’: gifts bestowed on the brides by the husband and by men of the family and friends when they unveil her for the first time so that she is seen by the men. The same things are called the ‘epaulia’. Among us they are called ‘theorêtra’ [‘gifts of viewing’].101

The Suda follows the same outline:

‘Anakalyptêria’: gifts bestowed on the brides by the husband and by men of the family and friends when they unveil her for the first time so that she is seen by the men. They are also called ‘epaulia’.102
Chapter 8

Schibli suggests that in emulation of Zas and Chthonie, the bridegroom presented his bride with a gift and perhaps even with a salutation similar to the one spoken by Zas: ‘Receive my salutation and be my consort.’ In all probability, the wedding guests then presented a series of gifts to the bride. According to Aelius Theon, who epitomizes two treatises of Lysias called ‘The Anakalypteria’ and ‘The Abortion’, these anakalypteria gifts could be cited in court as confirmation that a woman was legally married and, as witnesses would have been present, the bridal feast would have been the most fitting moment for the ceremony of gift-giving and unveiling.

The public nature of the first unveiling was probably the reason behind the atrocity committed by the fourth-century tyrant Agothokles of Syracuse, whose abduction of his cousin from her wedding to another man at the time of the public unveiling ceremony (ek ton anakalypterion) gave communal witness that the marriage rites were terminated.

Stage one of the ritual was therefore a public unveiling in front of a large assembly of guests that legally and collectively confirmed the union of two people and, more importantly, of two households. Once the groom and the guests had gazed their fill, the veil (which I doubt had been removed altogether) was lowered again over the bride’s face, an act which indicated that the next stage of the marriage could commence.

Stage 2: Leaving the bride’s home and the journey to the groom’s house.
After the public ceremonial unveiling at the bridal feast, the bride was re-veiled in preparation for her journey. There is a clear explanation for this act: now that she had become a legitimate wife and was therefore allied to one man only, the bride had to veil herself in front of all other men. She was the property of one man and a public journey through the streets, even at night, warranted her veiling as a show of reverence towards her new husband and his family. For the sake of honour, the groom required that his bride be hidden from view; from now on his wife’s face was for him and him alone.

There is much anthropological evidence that testifies to the almost universal tradition of completely veiling the bride for her journey to her new home. In traditional Moroccan weddings where gender segregation is strictly enforced, at the feast a bride will sit behind a curtain with her girl friends until the moment comes for her to be viewed by the groom and the male guests and she is led forward with her face veiled (the veil replaces the curtain) and lifted onto a small table. The bride then drinks a little milk from a cup proffered by her mother and takes a sip from other cups brought to her by the female guests in an act of salutation (salaam). She is then covered in layers of clothing, presented with gifts by the women, and is considered ready to leave the house (Fig. 152). It is conceivable that such rites of separation were celebrated in ancient Greek weddings too, since we know that the departure of the bride from her family home was considered to be a moment of intense emotional strain, but evidence for any ritual acts unfortunately do not exist.
According to anthropological testimonials, the bridal veil can take several forms but the majority of veil styles are intended to cover the bride’s face entirely. The bride is kept in this state until her arrival at the groom’s house where the next stage of unveiling is enacted. Given the ancient Greek evidence, it is probable that a similar process would have been followed.

The moment of the bride’s departure has caused scholars much unease and subsequent debate; those who argue for an unveiling at the bridal banquet are wary of the idea that the iconography of the wedding procession clearly shows the bride veiled for her journey to the groom’s house, while those who prefer to see the anakalyptēria as taking place later use the images to support their theses that the bride remained veiled throughout the whole proceedings until she arrived in the thalamos. In fact Sissa is so confident that the bride remained strictly veiled until her arrival at the groom’s house, that she argues for the bridal banquet actually taking place at the groom’s home upon the bride’s arrival and not in her father’s house at all. This scenario is unlikely because the majority of ancient texts make it clear that the procession followed the feast. Thus, for example, in the violent hubbub that ruins a wedding feast attended by Lucian, a battered and wounded bridegroom is bandaged and put into the carriage in which he had expected to take home his bride.

In the iconography, the veil-gesture itself offers little data for the timing of the anakalyptēria, and all that can be said with any certainty is that the depiction of a man, a veiled woman, and a cart betokens a nuptial context for the scene, but any further evidence for the temporal chain of events cannot be found here. There are, however, a number of rare portrayals of brides and bridal processions which at least provide evidence that the veil covered the bride’s head and face as she departed on her journey to her new life. A small Athenian red-figure vase from Bonn, dating to the middle of the fifth century, shows a youth squatting in front of a wedding cart unaware, it appears, that the groom and his bride are ready to depart from the
house. Behind the cart, a naked man carries a torch with which he leads the bridal couple outside. The groom grasps his bride’s hand as he leads her away from her father, who stands in front of his house clutching a staff. With these iconographic elements firmly in place, it is easy to establish the timing of this scene as the moment when the bride departs from her home, but what is of particular interest here is the fact that the bride’s head and face are completely veiled for the procession in direct contradiction to the established rules of wedding iconography (or veil iconography generally). Here is proof that the bride appeared veiled for the parade, and in this instance the veiling is total. The result might not be as visually satisfying as the conventional portrayals (and is far from beautiful) but it seems to indicate that the painter of the little Bonn vase was more interested in reality than aesthetics.  

It is surely this style of veil that is worn by Alkestis in Euripides’ tragedy, for when Herakles escorts Alkestis back to her husband and offers her as a new bride, a gift of his labours, it is clear that she is veiled in such a way that Admetos cannot recognize her and he is reluctant to unveil the stranger in a gesture that would indicate his acceptance of her as a new wife. Alkestis’ veil must have entirely screened her features, even her eyes, since, at this juncture, the plot relies on Admetos’ total inability to recognize his faithful wife.  

Another representation of a fully veiled bride is found on an Apulian bell-krater of the mid-fourth century, which shows two phlyakes with torches escorting Helen of Troy to the home of her bridegroom Paris (Fig. 154). Helen wears a tall Phrygian cap over which is draped a wedding veil that reaches down past her waist and is depicted as sheer enough to show her ugly face beneath, which is in striking contrast to her legendary beauty. Whether the veil was so transparent in reality is doubtful, but here the artist wants his viewer to anticipate the shock of the comic Helen’s grotesque anakalyptêria. A similar hideous unveiling awaits the character Olympio, an Athenian slave who believes that he has married a beautiful slave girl named Casina, the cause of all the fuss in Plautus’ comedy ‘Casina’ (based on a Greek original by Diphilus). In fact Olympio has ‘married’ his rival Chalinus who has switched places with Casina and has disguised himself as the blushing
b rake to be led out into the street for the bridal procession. Unable to see that his beloved Casina is in fact Chalinus because of the impeding veil, Olympio leads his ‘wife’ to the dark bridal chamber where he quickly learns the truth.

In their recent study of Greek marriage rituals from the fourth century to the Roman period, Vérilhac and Vial make the important point that, ‘there is veiling and there is veiling’, that is to say, a general veiling and a complete veiling. In some Greek marriage rites, like those of many ‘traditional’ societies, the bride was totally veiled, as the little Bonn vase shows. However, changing custom, tradition, and personal taste can account for the different veiling techniques found in the sources. A pyxis in Moscow, for example, depicts a bride whose head and lower face are veiled but whose eyes are left exposed (Fig. 155). Additionally, later literary evidence provided by Polemon suggests that in a wedding procession in second-century AD Samos, the bride’s head was veiled but her face was fully visible, and thus it was with her face exposed that she was admired and then abducted from her own wedding by a desire-crazed youth. It would seem, therefore, that the techniques and customs of veiling the bride probably varied by locale and changed with the times and that brides appear to have been veiled in varying degrees of strictness for their journey to their husband’s home.

Stage 3. At the groom’s house.
Upon arrival at the groom’s house the Greek bride was met by her new mother-in-law who stood outside the door holding a lighted torch in honour of Hymen, god of hot desire. She was then conducted to the hearth where she was formally accepted as the newest member of the oikos in a ceremony called the kataklysmata, in which she and her husband were showered with nuts and dried fruit, symbols of wealth and
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fertility.\textsuperscript{123} Once these rituals of incorporation were completed the groom appears to have taken hold of the bride and led her to the \textit{thalamos}. It is probable that throughout the rites performed in the groom’s house the bride remained veiled. As a stranger, surrounded by the unfamiliar men of the groom’s family, the bride displayed her modesty and acquiescence by remaining covered, a typical response of brides in many societies (\textit{Fig. 156}). Covering herself and using the veil as a barrier, in effect making herself invisible, allows a bride to become acclimatised to her new home without imposing her presence on members of the family who have agreed to accept her beneath their roof. The veil becomes a mechanism whereby the newly affiliated bride can avert awkward social and familial situations and keep her alien presence well apart from her husband’s kin.\textsuperscript{124} In Indian society, a bride’s outsider status will be reflected in her action of sitting quietly with her head lowered for weeks following the wedding and her move to a new home. Although she gradually relaxes with her mother-in-law and the other women of the house, it may be many months before she shows her face to her father-in-law or any male relatives of her husband. Jeffery reports how one woman, married for about ten years, explained the custom of veiling in the new marital home:

\begin{quote}
I kept my face hidden from my husband’s father for about two years. Then he said that was enough, and so I just cover my head when he comes in. But the next bride who came into the house after me is a cousin of her husband, and so she only had to cover her face for three or four days at most. But she still covers her head when our father-in-law comes, of course.\textsuperscript{125}
\end{quote}

\textbf{Stage 4.} In the \textit{thalamos}.

Towards the end of the night the groom led the bride into the specially prepared bridal chamber which appears to have been decorated with \textit{krokos}-coloured veil-like hangings and a specific bed canopy known as the \textit{pastos}.\textsuperscript{126} It was here in intimate and less formal surroundings that the final unveilings were performed. After the bridal couple had entered the room the door was closed and guarded while the guests remained outside to sing the \textit{epithalamium},\textsuperscript{127} for the privacy of the chamber was respected by all concerned and there was even a reluctance to depict the intimacy of

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image.png}
\caption{A Muslim bride, splendidly arrayed in an expensive bridal veil, fixes her gaze on the floor. With kind permission of Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood (Textile Research Centre) and the RMV, Leiden.}
\end{figure}
the *thalamos* in vase paintings. A rare description of a painting that was said to have portrayed the union of Alexander the Great with the Persian noblewoman Roxane is recounted by Lucian who gives us a report of her private unveiling:

The scene is a very beautiful chamber, and in it there is a wedding couch with Roxane, a lovely girl, sitting upon it, her eyes cast down in modesty, because Alexander is standing there. There are some smiling cupids: one is standing behind her removing her veil (*kaluptran*) from her head and showing Roxane to her husband; another like a good servant is taking the sandal off her foot, preparing her for bed already; a third Cupid holds Alexander’s cloak pulls him with all his strength towards Roxane. The king himself is holding out a garland to the maiden and their best man and helper, Hesphaestion, is there with a blazing torch in his hand, leaning on a very handsome youth – I think he is Hymenaeus.

This is clearly a romanticized vision of the events that occurred in the bridal chamber and can be compared to a charming little terracotta statuette from hellenistic Myrina that depicts the bridal pair seated on the marriage bed (*Fig. 157*). The groom advances towards his reluctant bride with a gesture that indicates his tender concern. The terracotta bride is still garlanded and well wrapped in a fine himation-veil over which one is able to make out the eye-holes of a *tegidion* which has been folded back over the crown of the head. This is clearly a moment of unveiling.

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*Fig. 157*. A newly wed couple seated on the bridal bed. The bride’s *tegidion* is pushed off her face. Terracotta statuette from Myrina, c. 150–100 BC. Louvre, Paris MYR 28. Photo RMN: Chuzeville.
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The ritual undressing at the end of the wedding ceremonials probably balanced the emphasis that had been placed on the ceremonial dressing of the bride at the start of the wedding. After the veil had been removed – and not merely lifted any more, but actually taken off – and the couple had been prepared for bed (perhaps after washing and anointing with perfumes), the bridal escorts moved out of the room and left the husband and wife alone together for the first time. A full unveiling was only proper in the confines of the privacy of the bridal chamber and for the benefit of a husband.131 During the sexual act that was expected to follow, the final and most intimate personal unveiling occurred as the groom penetrated his bride and physically or symbolically took away her virginity by removing her internal red veil, her hymen.

It is clear that Greco-Roman medical practice frequently confirmed the existence of the hymen and that midwives in particular carried out tests for virginity by locating and examining its structure. Augustine narrates an incident of a clumsy midwife who destroyed the chastity she was sent to investigate through rough handling, while the popular story of Salome the midwife, whose hand shrivelled when she lacked faith and examined the purity of Mary the mother of Christ, tells of the popular tradition of testing for the physical signs of virginity.132 While much of this material is relatively late, Hanson argues that in the Greek world, from early times, references to the hymen can be found but are not stated in such obvious terms as in latter Latin texts. Popular medical and folkloric belief saw that the mouth of the uterus was blocked off with some kind of seal or stopper.133 The most common image of the uterus is that of an upside-down jug, a notion expounded by Eustathius who joined the Iliadic phrase krēdemnon luesthai, which as we have seen refers to the sacking of a city or the breaching of a woman’s chastity, to a quotation in the Odyssey which tells of the opening of a wine jug – krēdemnon eluse.134 The Homeric passage reads,

And as they entered the old man mixed the wine bowl for them with wine sweet to drink which the housekeeper had opened in its eleventh year and loosed the seal upon it (kai apo krēdemnon eluse). The old man mixed the wine in the bowl and prayed a good deal, pouring out a libation to Athene, daughter of Zeus of the aegis.135

There is an analogy here between the shattering of the seal of the wine jar and the mixing of the wines with the breaking of the hymen and the intermingling of body fluids during penetration. This is a notion too base to be exploited in epic, and so it is left to the image of the breaching of the city walls and the casting off of Andromakhe’s veil to highlight the sexual degradation suffered by women.136 Nevertheless, both images work in parallel and the removal of the veil-wall and the veil-stopper through penetrative destruction acts as an effective metaphor:

With virgins and city walls, a thrust through a closed and protective gate lays the innermost parts within easy reach of an outsider to appropriate as he chooses.137

There is a tangible unity of image in krēdemnon luesthai and krēdemnon eluse where the unsealing of the jug is presented in the same terms as the penetration of
city walls and the sexual violation of a female body. All three actions are connected by a potent visible symbol, whereby an inner space is penetrated and opened up by an outside force that shatters a barrier. The juxtaposition of the breaching of city walls and the defloration of virgins (particularly the virgin daughters of Priam) is a theme found on several occasions in fifth-century tragedy where, for example, after the walls of Troy have been penetrated and the city has been captured, Polyxena is forced to bleed from her ‘upper neck’ as a sacrifice to the shade of Akhilleus.¹³⁸ Her sister Kassandra is fated to bleed from the ‘lower neck’ as Agamemnon deflowers her, but it is not until she returns with him to Argos that she bleeds from her ‘upper neck’.¹³⁹

At a later date, the Christian bishop Tertullian made an explicit conjunction between a virgin’s head-veil and hymen: ‘Impose a veil extrinsically on her who has a covering internally.’¹⁴⁰ By which he implies that a virgin who has a ‘veil’ covering her genitals should, in order to demonstrate her chastity, have a corresponding veil placed over her head. Moreover, he insists that the virgin’s head-veil should be of a prescribed length and, in a divine revelation, he recounts the incident when an angel appeared to a female seer of Carthage and instructed her how to correctly wear her veil:

> It is proper for you to veil yourself from the head right down to the genitalia, [for exposure] of your neck does not benefit you!”¹⁴¹

Tertullian insists that the head-veil of a virgin should reach past her shoulders, right down to her loins to ensure her chastity and display her virtue. The long external veil will then act as an extra barrier to protect her precious internal veil.

It is no small coincidence that Nonnus, writing at the end of a long tradition, tells of Pandora’s jar – her womb – being covered by a krêdemnon:

> Would that she had never opened the heavenly krêdemnon of that jar – Pandora, the sweet evil of mankind!!¹⁴²

The opening of the jar by the removal of its veil-covering is analogous with the opening of the womb through the removal of the veil-hymen, a concept that is still in current use in the wedding imagery of Greece and Turkey in a short marriage ritual known as ‘dancing the jar’. At many modern weddings a clay water jar (much like the ancient pithos) is brought into the assembled wedding party and is filled with money and covered across its mouth by a red cloth that is stretched taught and firmly secured. The jar stands for the womb and the money contained inside is said to symbolize the bride’s treasure – her virginity – while the red cloth represents her hymen and the blood she will shed on the wedding night. Ideally, seven virgins, usually the sisters and cousins of the bridal couple, perform the dance in front of the bride who sits passively, veiled by her own red veil. The girls dance in turn, holding the jar high above their heads as they spin and twist until the final dancer has finished her performance and the jar is smashed in a symbolic enactment of the breaking of the bride’s hymen. Children rush forward to grab the money while the
unmarried girls try to retrieve the red cloth, as it is believed that the first to recover it will be the next to marry.\textsuperscript{143}

**The law of ‘threes’**

The ancient Greek wedding ceremonial is organized around three gazes:\textsuperscript{144} that of the bridal entourage (the guests and revellers) who bear witness that the wedding is legitimate by looking at the face of the bride unveiled before them and presenting her with ‘gifts of unveiling’, and then that of the groom who, in the privacy of the bridal chamber, views the uncovered face of his wife as a prelude to their sexual congress. The final act of gazing follows the next morning at the *epaulia*, a day of further feasting and presentation of more gifts. The types of things offered to the bride are spelled out in detail in Eustathius’ commentary on *Iliad* 22.49, quoting the second-century AD lexicographer Pausanias:

‘*Epaulia*’ are the ceremonies after the wedding, as Pausanias makes clear, saying that the day of ‘*epaulia*’ is that after the bride is first housed in the groom’s house, and the ‘*epaulia*’ are also the gifts brought by the bride’s father to the bride and groom in the form of a parade, on the day after the wedding. He says that a child led it, wearing a white cloak, and then came another child, a girl, carrying a basket, and then the rest bringing ‘*lekanides*’, unguents, clothing, combs, chests, bottles, sandals, boxes, myrrh, soap and, sometimes, he says, the dowry.\textsuperscript{145}

In other words, the *epaulia* was an occasion for the bride’s father to make a further public display of the legitimacy of the union and to honour his daughter with gifts that transferred and proclaimed her as a member of a new *oikos*.\textsuperscript{146} Eustathius makes no reference to any unveiling here, which seems to indicate that the second-century sources did not associate the act with this particular day. The presence of the bride was essential to the proceedings of the *epaulia*, and she would have appeared veiled, just as she had been on the previous day.\textsuperscript{147} The final public viewing of the bride enabled the guests to witness her formal incorporation into the new family that was represented by her appearing veiled in her new role as wife. As such, looking at her face was now out of the question.

The three wedding gazes are, perhaps, analogous with the three bridal unveilings: the public *anakalyptēria* at the feast, the private *anakalyptēria* for the groom in the *thalamos*, and finally the profoundly intimate *anakalyptēria* of intercourse that confirms the bride’s status as spouse. The first unveiling makes a public statement that a bride is becoming a wife, the second confirms the matter, while the third unveiling is really the point of no return. She is made a wife by the physical act of intercourse and the removal of the ‘lower veil’, and henceforth becomes the sexual property of one man. The three unveilings mark the stages of female transition. A triad of events is of course a common theme in Greek life and thought, usually with the idea that the third ‘strike’ is the confirmation (positive) or the crisis point of a sequence of events: Oedipus meets his destiny at the junction of three roads near Daulis, the three Fates are destined to spin, measure, and then cut the lives of men, and the goddess Hera
goes through the triple life-stages of virgin, wife, and widow. Moreover, in a sequence of three there is evidence of some kind of pattern or repeated behaviour: once may suggest uniqueness or even an error, twice suggests repetition, but thrice suggests confirmation that the first and second times were steps in a series. Such a thought process can be incorporated into the actual and symbolic rituals of *anakalyptēria* without too much difficulty.

The *anakalyptēria*: finding a meaning

Greek wedding ceremonials manipulated the bridal veil in a series of coverings and uncoverings that marked the transformation of a bride into a wife. Pherekydes of Syros’ *aition* of the first *anakalyptēria* suggests that this transformation occurred at a wedding ceremony when Zas proffered a gift of a figured cloth to Chthonie, who was simultaneously unveiled in an act which symbolized their marital union. The precedent for the first *anakalyptēria* is therefore an act of unveiling, and not veiling, which suggests that to veil a woman was only going part of the way towards marryng her. To turn a woman into a legitimate wife, she had to be unveiled by or for her husband. This is what Hesiod seems to have had in mind in his description of Pandora’s bridal attire, for she is veiled in her embroidered *kaluptre* in order that she can be unveiled by Epimetheus later and it is the removal of her ‘upper’ and ‘lower’ veils that thereby uncovers the famous jar of human misery. Likewise, Admetos’ reluctance to unveil Alkestis is explained by the fact that to uncover a bride makes her into a wife. The rituals of the *anakalyptēria* confront the paradox of the veil: an invisible woman, like Pandora, may deceive and her veil represents the danger of the unfamiliar and the acknowledgement that she may not be what she appears to be. Only after the bridegroom and his male guests have seen beneath the veil can they be sure of what it contains. It is only then that the next stage of the ceremony can go ahead and the public acceptance of the bride can take place with the offerings of the ‘gifts of unveiling’. The bride is unveiled in a public ritual in order that the groom and his male kin can acquire the support and consent of other men who bear witness that the marriage union is legitimate.

The question of who does the unveiling is therefore of immense importance since it encompasses notions of willingness and control. Was the bride an active participant in her wedding? If so, did she unveil herself in a gesture that spoke loudly of her willingness and desire to marry the man who stood before her? Alternatively, was she simply an *emblem* of marriage, someone who was unveiled by a man who thereby consented to ‘plough her for the creation of children’? The latter view is more likely.

Without any doubt, the *anakalyptēria* was a ceremony created by and for men and originated in, and responded to, male interests, for, as Harpokration noted, it was a ritual that placed the bride in a position where, ‘she may be seen by the men’. It has been noted that the formative rites of the Greek wedding provided no role for the future bride. She had no part to play in the negotiations that secured her future.
However, scholars often afford the bride pride of place in the wedding ceremonies and accord her role of honour with, it seems, most of the attention directed at her, mainly because our major sources for weddings are pots that depict, on the whole, female related scenes and were no doubt made as aspirational images for female viewers.\(^{152}\) This evidence is extremely one-sided and we should beware of over using iconography in our interpretation of the events. I believe that the ‘female-biased’ iconographic evidence, plus our own modern impression that the bride is the central element of the wedding (‘it’s her day’), has clouded our perception of the role of the bride in antiquity. The bride was not the focus of attention at all, at least not in the modern sense.\(^{153}\) The ancient wedding, like so many other public events, was a male affair; the women were kept segregated but occupied with their own roles and rites until they were needed by the men to participate in the male ceremonies.\(^{154}\) Lucian provides evidence that at the feast the women were crowded together at one end of the room away from the men, and this gender segregation is probably a reflection of much of the wedding proceedings, as in the rest of daily life. But, even though ‘scrupulously veiled’, at least the bride was present; in ancient Jewish weddings the bride did not attend the banquet at all but was kept in another room with the other women.\(^{155}\)

Much the same tradition lies at the heart of modern Muslim and Hindu weddings. The day is not meant to be a special occasion for the bride, but for the men of her family. The bride’s role is to look beautiful (for her husband) and, more importantly, sufficiently modest. In addition, she is there to wear the family’s wealth. Consequently she sparkles with jewels and costly fabrics.\(^{156}\) Sitting there passive, inert, silent, and veiled, the bride is more of a fetish to be admired than a living woman, an object to be adorned rather than adored. Jeffery’s account of Muslim wedding traditions in India is particularly noteworthy:

On the day of the wedding [the bride] is heavily shrouded in a thick duppatta and is guided in and out of the room, bent at the waist, by a female relative who grips her firmly across the forehead. Her consent to marriage indicates no undue enthusiasm – a grunt or nod suffices for the modest bride. Her husband has a brief look at her…underneath the duppatta, but she sits with her eyes closed. She is helped to the sedan chair which carries her to her husband’s home and once there, the husband lifts her out and carries her into the house. In the feeding of sweets which follows, she will be so shy and modest that her hands need to be guided to her husband’s mouth while, in contrast, he lacks no confidence. For the first days she hardly talks…she is a passive object of display and admiration while her husband’s relatives come to ‘see her face’; she sits in the centre of the room, shoulders bent and heavily veiled and silent. Her expressionless face, with eyes closed and lips shut, is briefly exposed to each visitor who comes.\(^{157}\)

Jeffery’s evocative description will have parallels with how the Greek bride appeared and how she was perceived by others: as an object of display she sat bedecked in costly regalia to be viewed and discussed without ever actively participating in the events herself. The bride was conceived as something that a father must give up in order that a bond might be secured, for as Vernant has argued, the gift of
a woman was comparable to those of other *agalmata* – prized personal belongings – that marked Greek gift-exchange.\(^{158}\) The virgin Iphigeneia is actually called the *agalma* of her father’s house, the member of her family closest to the father and one who embodies the respectability of his *oikos* and the purity of his family line.\(^{159}\)

However, the *agalma* is more than just a favoured possession; it is specifically an object to be viewed, a luxury item that is meant to attract the gaze. It is a word frequently applied to a statue of a young woman (a *kore*), but also to sculptures of horses. Osborne has persuasively suggested that the designation of a *kore* as *agalma* can be explained by a woman’s role within Greek society, in which she was viewed as a commodity, an object of exchange.\(^{160}\) Moreover, the passive quality of the bride can be compared to a statue, like that of Aiskhylos’ Helen, ‘devoid of desire in her lack of eyes’.\(^{161}\) The statue-like mannerism of the bride becomes most apparent in wedding iconography where the stiffness of her figure is unmistakably like that of a sculpture.\(^{162}\) A depiction of the creation of Pandora envisages her like a statue that is covered in fine garments, while a *loutrophoros* dating to around 430 (Fig. 158) shows a groom lifting his extraor-dinarily rigid veiled bride into a waiting chariot, an act which demonstrates his total domination over her and suggests an abduction in which the helpless girl is carried away.\(^{163}\) The picking up and carrying of the bride helps to define the roles of the bridal couple, the groom plays the active part as the one who *marries* (*ho gamoē*), while the bride is the object of his action, the one who *is married* (*ho gamoumenē*). The bride in the vase painting does not rebuff the groom’s embrace, but clutches her veil in front of her face and acquiesces to his authority in much the same way as the Muslim bride submits herself to her husband.

Throughout the wedding the Greek bride was pulled, led, carried, covered, and exposed in a series of rites that rendered her little more than an object to be controlled and viewed. In a passage that neatly parallels Jeffery’s account of the Muslim bride, Garland notes that, ‘Undeniably there is a heavy emphasis upon what appear to

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*Fig. 158. A groom lifts his veiled bride into a chariot. Loutrophoros, c. 430. Staat. Mus., Berlin F 2372.*
be negative elements [in the Greek wedding], as evidenced by the fact that the bride is at first an alienated and veiled non-person within her own home, then a victim of abduction, and finally a prisoner in her new home.' This concept of the bride as a ‘non-person’ is reflected in the idea that she sits veiled and separated from the main focus of the wedding party – the groom and his guests. Interestingly, a treatise on wedding orations written by Menander Rhetor (third century AD), advises that whoever makes a speech at a wedding should praise the groom, especially for his looks and skills, but warns,

As for the girl, be cautious in describing her beauty because of the scandal that may be caused, unless you are a relation of hers and can therefore speak as one who cannot help knowing, or unless you can remove the objection by saying ‘I have heard…’

Only a close relative, it appears, can safely assume to know the physical appearance of a new bride, and even then he should hesitate to comment publicly on her looks.

Apprehension surrounding the new bride is further emphasized by the use of the bridal veil. Fear of the evil eye and of the influence of malignant forces upon the body of the bride in her vulnerable state of transition is one of the reasons used by anthropologists to account for the use of the bridal veil in many ‘traditional’ communities. While it appears that concern to protect the bride in her precarious state is a nod towards the feelings of the bride and a recognition of her importance, it should be remembered that in many societies it is considered dangerous to look at dangerous persons. Therefore the veiling of the bride is not specifically done to protect her, but to protect others from her gaze, which could well be corrupted by an evil presence.

The notion that the bride was simply an admired (but simultaneously feared) fetish no doubt affected the process of the stages of the anakalypteria. The idea of a passive bride who is pulled, led, and lifted without any resistance finds a reflection in the unveilings themselves where it is not the bride who takes control of the ceremony but the men. Pollux, Harpokration, and the anonymous compilers of the Anecdota Graeca and the Suda all state that at the banquet the bride was unveiled by the groom, or else she was exposed ‘by the husband and those feasting’. In other words, it is the men who seem to take the active role while the bride remains passive and does not appear to have removed the veil herself. Even in the thalamos, according to Lucian’s evidence, the bride appears to have been unveiled by her attendants. Something of this is shown in a rare depiction of a moment of unveiling on a red-figure lekythos by the Phiale Painter in Boston (Fig. 118) which Oakley thinks represents a realistic depiction of the anakalypteria. The pot, however, shows an amalgamation of all the essential elements that, taken together, represent the ideal marriage: not only do we have here an anakalypteria but also a simultaneous katakhysmata, both performed in the presence of the customary youth and the nymphetria, while a fluttering Eros carries a bridal zone. Even the procession of gifts of the anakalypteria or epaulia is part of the scene. The pot does not show one precise moment, but a series of essential
From parthenos to gynē: veiling and the female lifecycle

marriage motifs merged together to spell out ‘wedding’\textsuperscript{170}. What is of importance, however, is the fact that the bride sits with her head and eyes deeply lowered in a characteristic display of \emph{aidōs} while the veil is lifted from her face by the \emph{nymphetria} who stands behind. The bride is just the object of the gaze of all the other figures on the vase; she remains inactive.\textsuperscript{171}

This type of evidence stands in sharp contrast to Carson’s interpretation of the ritual, whereby the bride takes an active role in the ceremony and controls the male gaze by manipulating her own veil. Citing the Boston \emph{lekythos} as evidence, she declares that,

\begin{quote}
the climax of the ceremony…is the moment when the bride rises or turns in her place and, facing her bridegroom and the men of the household across the room, takes off her veil.\textsuperscript{172}
\end{quote}

But there is nothing in the sources that speaks of the bride taking such a leading role in the events, and certainly nothing which has her stand, turn, and confront the men while controlling her own unveiling.\textsuperscript{173} To follow Carson’s model would necessitate giving the bride the authority to reveal and conceal herself according to her wishes. In that respect, the male gaze is at the mercy of the bride who lifts her veil as \textit{she} pleases. This reading of the events is seriously flawed and does not give an accurate reflection of the bride’s position in the wedding rituals, which was very humble.\textsuperscript{174} The veiled head and face of the bride ensured her complete silence and inability to influence the events that occurred around her because of the ‘invisible’ quality enforced on her by the veil. Sitting there veiled and silent, cut off from the society around her, the bride was at the mercy of the husband and his relatives who were at liberty to lift the veil and look at her face. The bride’s ritual abasement was emphasized by the use of the cloth. Exposure of that which was normally concealed placed structures of honour and status under stress because the idea of self-abasement was, of course, precisely designed to exert pressure on one’s honour. The bridal unveiling can perhaps be compared to the gesture of exposing the breast as a like way of expressing self-abasement and drawing on the sympathy and generosity of others.\textsuperscript{175}

The general demeanour of the bride, particularly her outward display of \emph{aidōs}, and the various stages of her transitional journey put one in mind of the characteristics of Greek supplication and ritual initiations. As we have noted, while the adjective \emph{aidōs} is usually used in the context of ‘displaying \emph{aidōs} oneself’, it is equally utilized when appealing to or inducing \emph{aidōs} in others. This reciprocal image is common in encounters between children and parents, women and men, and between \emph{hiketai} (suppliants) and those who receive them: the suppliant entreats the more powerful party and hinders any hostile action by a ritualized performance of self-humiliation.\textsuperscript{176}

As a stranger in the marriage, a wife takes on the role of \emph{hiketis} (suppliant) and displays a physical posture of inferiority towards the groom, the object of her supplication. A common characteristic of the suppliant is to crouch or kneel in an image of utter abjectness, but equally the \emph{hiketis} displays no resistance to the physical control
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of others, just like the bride. Moreover, like the suppliant, the bride’s incorporation into her husband’s *oikos* involved her ritual acceptance at the family hearth, the symbolic centre of familial and community solidarity. Squatting by the hearth as a suppliant implied a petition for incorporation into a new group. A ‘Pythagorean’ saying categorically connects the wife, the hearth, and supplication:

> It is wrong to persecute one’s wife, for she is a suppliant: hence we lead her from the hearth, and hence also the (ritual of) taking by the right hand.

Like any suppliant, the veiled bride was then raised to her feet in a symbolic act that elevated her to a new status as a member of her husband’s *oikos*.

Much of the imagery of supplication is found in the ritual practice of initiation of individuals into various mystery cults where it was customary for the initiate to undergo the necessary transforming rituals from their unenlightened to enlightened state beneath the cover of a veil.

The most secure visual evidence we have for the close connection between the physical appearance of the Greek bride and the initiate is found on two Kabirian vases from Thebes, dating between the late sixth century and the mid-fifth. The former, Fig. 159, is a black-figure depiction which shows the candidate for initiation wearing a chiton, a *himation*, and a *shaal*-veil which entirely hides her face. The veil itself is held in place by a garland of foliage, much in the way that the Boeotian bridal veil was secured on the head by a garland of asparagus. In fact, the appearance of this initiate is reminiscent of the scrupulously veiled (fifth-century Athenian) bride on the little Bonn pot of Fig. 153. The second representation, Fig. 160, shows

![Fig. 159. Initiation scene showing a veiled female (?), far left. Drawing from a Kabeirian krater from Thebes, c. 430. Unknown location. After Guthrie 1952.](image1)

![Fig. 160. Initiation scene. The woman, far left, wears a *shaal*-veil. Drawing from an unidentified source. After Bianchi 1976.](image2)
a ‘burlesque’ version of the mythological rituals: a number of individuals sing and
dance as a bearded Hermes hands sprigs of foliage to Pan. Behind Pan stands
a woman whose decorated shaal-veil is lifted off her face and the back of her head
as she witnesses the ceremony; this type of veil is frequently used by brides. Like the
bride, this veiled initiate woman stands at the periphery of the scene and does not
take part in the action of the ceremony itself.

The period before purification is a time of threat and vulnerability and the heavy
fold of cloth pulled completely over the head and face of the supplicant, initiate
and bride as symbolizes their abasement. For the bride, her ritual humility was
at the core of her ‘initiation’ into a new family and a new state as a wedded wife.
The inability to control access to her own face was perhaps the most degrading
(and possibly frightening) event of the marriage ritual because a woman’s capacity
to veil herself gave her some modicum of personal expression and control. The
rites of the anakalyptēria denied her this capability. The fact that she could be
unveiled without her control, or even her consent, meant that she was sexually
exposed and this sexual vulnerability found expression in the penetrating gaze of
the groom (and the male guests) onto the bride’s face and into her eyes. Hence the
alternative names for the anakalyptēria are appropriately linked with the verb ‘to
see’: optēria and theōpētra, while another term, prosthengomai, derives from the
verb ‘to salute’, ‘to address’. It is important to remember that although the bride
sat inert, silent and concealed, she still presented a beautiful and desirable image, as
she gleamed in her red veil and bridal jewellery and the desire to penetrate behind
the veil must have seemed imperative to the groom. The penetration took two
forms, and lifting the veil at the first (public) anakalyptēria was but a forerunner
to the events that were to take place in private later in the bridal chamber where
the act of sexual penetration removed (physically or otherwise) the lower veil. It
is perhaps no surprise to discover that Pollux glossed an alternative word meaning
‘gifts of the unveiling’; instead of ta anakalyptēria, he used ta diaparthenia – ‘gifts for
taking away the virginity of the bride’. At the moment of the first anakalyptēria
the intact boundary around the bride was broken and violated by the gaze of the
groom. The glance of the husband, so perfectly captured on the Boston lekythos,
penetrated her lifted veil and from that moment on she was no longer regarded as
parthenos; instead, she was ‘touched’.

Conclusion
In ancient Greece a young girl’s passage to womanhood was marked by her use of
the veil. No doubt first veiled at menarche, she offered her veils to a goddess on the
eve of her wedding before donning a specific wedding veil at the start of the wedding
rituals. Dyed a reddish colour, like a symbolic hymen, the bridal veil became the
focus of the rituals of the ‘unveiling’, for the anakalyptēria were not simply confined
to one specific moment in the wedding ceremony but were a series of unveilings
which were undertaken in progressively more intimate surroundings.
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No doubt invented by and for men, the *anakalypēria* visualized the bride as an object of fetish, a living *agalma* who was simultaneously admired and distrusted. The use made of the red bridal veil by the men of the wedding party rendered the bride the object of the male gaze and strengthened the notion of natural male superiority. It is highly unlikely that the bride had any control over her unveiling; instead she participated in a ritual debasement, not unlike that enacted by suppliants or initiates.

Notes

1 El Guindi 1999.
2 See further Graham-Brown 1988, 123.
3 See, for example, illustrations in Garland 1990, figs. 8, 10, 14 and in Fittà 1997, figs. 19, 43, 74, 103, 104, 105. For the difficulties of interpreting childhood imagery in Greek art see Beaumont 1998, esp. figs 5.6, 5.7 and 5.8.
4 King 1983, 120–1. For the *zônē* see Losfeld 1991, 222 ff.
5 On the erotic qualities of the veil see below, Chapter 10.
6 For Plutarch on unveiled Spartan girls see above, Chapter 6.
8 See Stewart 1997, 56, fig. 36.
9 For details see Oakley and Sinos 1993, 11–13.
11 Kondis 1967.
13 See Rayet 1881. Evidence for clothing dedications also derives from the epigrams collected in the *Greek Anthology* and Losfeld’s analysis of Book VI of the work reveals that of the 358 epigrams contained there, 33 recall offerings of clothing to the gods, the vast majority of which are given by women to Artemis. See Losfeld 1991, 324 ff. Other goddesses offered textiles are Athene, Hera, and Rhea.
14 The ceremonial presentation of the sash is alluded to by Pausanias who tells of the maidens of Troizen performing the ritual in honour of Athene Apatouria. See Pausanias 2.33.1. Bronze belts have been excavated on Chios and it is suggested that these were ritual wedding dedications. See Boardman 1967, 214–21; Jeffery 1976, 231.
15 Losfeld 1991, 322–3 categorizes them correctly as ‘le voile de tête’.
18 *Anth. Pal*. 6.207:
20 Either these two veils are separate garments without any connection or they could be intended to be worn together. It is possible that one of the veils might cover the head while the other is intended for the face. In *AP* 6.206 and 207, Herakleia is specifically said to have worn a *prokalumma prosőpou*. 
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From parthenos to gynē: veiling and the female lifecycle

21 See above, Chapter 2.

22 Losfeld 1991 fails to mention Aphrodite as the recipient of offering of clothing.

23 See Oakley and Sinos 1993, 14, 133, n. 20.


25 For the nympeutria see Ar. Achar. 1056. Plut. Lyc. 15, Poll. Onom. 3.41; Pausanias 9.3.7; Hesychius, Suda, Photius, s.v. νυμφεύτρια. For the nymphokomos see Hesychius s.v. νυμφοκόμος.

26 For details see Oakley and Sinos 1993, 16.

27 A Javanese bridegroom is dressed in the garments of a chief, while the Malayans refer to the groom as the ‘one day king’. For details see Crawley 1965. A good survey of modern western wedding rituals is provided by Leonard 1980.

28 For an exquisite necklace composed of tiny golden pomegranates, eminently suitable for a bride, and for a general discussion of wedding jewellery see Reeder 1995, 174–6.

29 Plut. Mor. 138D 2.


32 The adornment of the Greek bride finds parallels in texts from ancient Israel. The Book of Ezekiel (16.8 ff.) gives a description of how the bride, Jerusalem herself, is prepared for her wedding to Yahweh: ‘Then washed I thee with water and anointed thee with oil. I clothed thee also with richly woven cloth and shod thee with seal-skin, and I wound fine linen about thy head and covered thee in silk. I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thy hands and a chain on thy neck. And I put a ring upon thy nose and earrings in thine ears, and a beautiful crown upon thy head.’ In fact the decorations about her were so numerous and so ostentatious as to become proverbial: ‘And Zion will adorn herself with her newly returned children as a bride with her ornaments.’ See Isaiah 61.10. For a discussion of the Jewish bride’s crown and veil see Archer 1990, 193 f.

33 van Gennep 1960, 15–25, 189–94.

34 In the West, popular beliefs and traditions that still centre on the wedding dress are even more strongly associated with the veil. Thus, it is customary never to wear the veil when trying on the wedding dress before the wedding, although a separate fitting is allowed. An old bridal veil, especially if it belongs to a happily married woman, is considered lucky; for this reason many young brides choose to wear their grandmother’s or mother’s veil. It appears that the traditional taboo of pollution through clothing does not apply to the wedding veil which, if anything, becomes a symbol of female continuity. For modern nuances and phobias centred on the modern bridal veil see Leonard 1980, 37. The veil is frequently the subject of interest in bridal magazines; brides are advised on latest shapes and trends and are even given potted histories of the garment: ‘The veil, now a beautiful and gossamer-like symbol, is…a romantic reminder of the rough and tumble that used to accompany an excursion into matrimony in years gone by!’ See Woman magazine, 6th January 1973, cited in Leonard 1980, 37.

35 Hes. Thb. 575.

36 See Erdmann 1934, 255 for references to coloured or multi-coloured bridal robes and the possibility of embroidered robes.

37 Following the interpretation of Sutton, Jr. 1992, 20. He uses ‘head covering’ rather than ‘veil’.

38 Suhrawardy Ikramullah 1992, 74.

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40 As is perhaps the case in the Timodemos vase examined above. There is plenty of anthropological evidence to support the idea of the groom offering the bride her wedding veil. On Chios, for example, a prospective groom will visit the house of his 'beloved' early one morning and present her with the gift of a white veil embroidered with geometric or floral patterns. From that moment on the young couple are linked together to such an extent that the girl is able to help him with his farm work. See Argenti and Rose 1949, I 302.

41 Aes. Ag. 228–48.

42 Hermann 1859, 2.385. This is an interpretation that had actually been postulated before Hermann and was also used by later scholars. Thus: Potter 1778, ‘Rent (sic) on the earth her maiden veil she throws’; Plumptre 1868, ‘pouring rich folds of veil in saffron dyed’; Cambell 1890, ‘she shed to earth her veil of saffron dye’; Murray 1920, ‘Her stole of saffron then to the ground she threw’; Lattimore 1949, ‘pouring to the ground her saffron mantle’.

43 Fraenkel 1950, II.137–8.
44 Cunningham 1984, 9–12.
46 Not all authorities have been in agreement. Other interpretations of kroku baphas see it as blood, tears or Iphigeneia’s robes in general. Blood: Maas 1951, 94; Bollack 1981. Tears: Booth 1979. Iphigeneia’s robes: Fraenkel 1950, II.138, line 239. For a general review of interpretations see Armstrong and Ratchford 1985, 2–5.

47 See Kypria 1.
48 Eur. IT 361–77. Cunningham 1984, 10 sees Iphigeneia’s reluctance to lift her veil as an expression of her coyness.
49 de Ronchaud 1886, 76.
50 Il. 8.1, 19.1, 23.227.
51 Hes. Th. 273.
52 Hes. Th. 358. For a commentary see West 1966, 267.
55 Ar. Ek. 331–2; see also 329.
56 Ar. Ly. 44, 47, 51.
57 Ar. Ly. 219–22.
58 Aulus Gellius Noctes Atticae. 2.26.1–6. The colour debate is briefly noted by Holford-Strevens 1998, 47, 97. A general background to the intellectual tone of the work is provided by Baldwin 1975.
60 Meier 1977.
62 According to Horace, Sat. 2.4.68, saffron of Corycus in Cilicia was the best. There were, of course, much cheaper alternatives to expensive clothes-dyes as Ovid points out at Ars Amatoria 3.169–82: ‘You need no woollen dress blushing with Tyrian dye. When there are so many cheaper colours, why madly spend all your income on your dress? … This one imitates saffron… this one the myrtles of Paphos, this purple amethyst, this white roses.’ A good summary of ancient dying techniques and problems is given by Sebesta 1994, 65–76.
63 However, ‘traditional’ weddings are decreasing in most veil-societies. As a display of wealth and status, many families opt for western style weddings, or incorporate western ideas into traditional rites. Western-style white wedding dresses are frequently worn by non-western brides, or else an uncomfortable combination of western and local styles will
be made. It is very common to see displays of western-style wedding gowns worn with the hijab in the bridal stores of Cairo, Damascus, Tehran and Istanbul. For a summary of this phenomenon see Lindisfarne-Tapper and Ingham 1997, 32–6. The major discussion of red veils is found in Samter 1901, 47–59. A further compilation of sources can be found in Scott 1953, 167–98. See also Porter 1991, 71–2; Braddock 1960, 79–112; Crawley 1902, 42–5. Weir 1989, 254 ff., provides some interesting comments on the red bridal clothes of the Palestinian bride. Suhrawardy Ikramullah 1992, 74 comments on the red veils of Indian brides. See also Nomachi and Asher 1996, 102–7.

64 See, for example, Abu-Lughod 1997, 173.
65 Macedonia: Abbott 1903, 167. Here the bride’s face is entirely covered. Greece: Argenti and Rose 1949, I.329. The colour of the bride’s veil is changed during the ceremony from white to red with obvious symbolism. It is probable that this veil also covers the bride’s face as she undergoes a ritual unveiling later in the service. Brief comments on the modern (red) Turkish wedding veil are given by Allen 1994, 30.
66 Samter 1901, 47–59.
67 It is routinely mentioned by Latin authors, eg., Caecil. Com. 198; Cat. 61.8; Stat. Theb. 2.341; Juv. 6.225.
68 The best study of the colour to date is still Wunderlich 1925. See also La Follette 1994; Sebesta 1994.
70 The funeral garment worn by the deceased on Geometric pottery is usually represented as a long robe, but later we have evidence that the body was wrapped in a shroud supplemented by an epiblema. The custom of dressing the body for the prothesis is well attested from tragedy. The shroud was frequently white, but did not have to be restricted to this colour. The late-fifth-century law code of Ioulis on Keos (LSG 97A 2) stipulated white himatia, while the funeral ordinance of the Labyad phratry (LSG 77C 6) decreed that the mantle should be grey-black. A Spartan law ascribed to Lykourgos stipulated that the dead had to be laid out in their red military cloaks. The fact that ostentatious display at funerals was a constant concern for legislators suggests that the use of splendid garments and textiles was common. For details of the rich clothing of the deceased, including crowns and jewellery see Garland 1985, 26.
73 Philostratus Life of Apollonius of Tyre 2.24. See also Gage 1993, 29–33.
74 Aristotle De An. 418b; Sens. 439a 18.
75 Apoll. Argo. 1.721–4.
76 Il. 6.288.
77 For a study of the Mykonos Pithos see Anderson 1997, 182–91. For shining veils see Chapter 10.
78 Experts in the matter of myths and folklore tell us that if Little Red Riding Hood’s cloak is red, it is because Grandmother is trying to hand on the torch of womanhood to her granddaughter. Better still, the three drops of blood dripping from Snow White’s mother’s finger are very clear signs telling the heroine what is about to happen to her every month.
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80 Samter 1901, 57. For the ancient Greek idea of associating sacrifice with marriage ritual see Seaford 1987, 106–30; Foley 1982, 159–80. Further studies of note include Burkert 1983, esp. 64, where he argues that sacrifice originated in the hunt; in discussing virgin sacrifice, he reasons, ‘Hunting and war are sanctioned by social custom as tests of manhood, and they take precedence over courtship and marriage. Man declines to love in order to kill: this is most drastically demonstrated in the ritual slaughter of ‘the virgin’, the potential source both of a happy union and of disruptive conflict within the group. In the maiden-sacrifice, all the tensions – the jealousy of the elderly, the yearnings of the young – are released. An irreparable act transforms an erotic game into fighting fury… In the period of preparation, maiden-sacrifice is the strongest expression of the attempt to renounce sexuality.’ See further Segal 1975, 30–53; Osborne 1993; Rabinowitz 1993, 32–5. The subversion of wedding ritual contained within tragedy in particular frequently draws an analogy between the bride and a sacrificial victim (usually a young heifer) because, like a sacrificial animal, a young bride has her head wreathed and is led out to a public gathering accompanied by joyful song and dance to meet her fate. The assimilation of sacrificial and marital motifs is best exploited by Euripides in Iphigeneia at Aulis. Towards the climax of the tragedy the chorus sing an ode in praise of the wedding of Peleus and Thetis (a ceremony renowned among the Greeks for its splendour, yet one that was doomed to bring about war, chaos, and marital strife through uncontrolled desire) which ends with a reference to Iphigeneia’s plight as they weave together the images of the princess as bride and as sacrificial victim (1080–8). Hesiod likewise connects marriage with sacrifice as Pandora is prepared for her mortal life just as a bride is prepared for her wedding. She enters the world wreathed and glittering in gold, like an untamed sacrificial ox approaching an altar (W&D 63, 71–4; Th. 578).


82 On the veil-hymen imagery see below.

83 Essentially the Greek wedding worked in three stages: the enguê, ekdosis and gamos, although we should avoid seeing these three phases as clearly delineated steps in a civil or religious process. Rehm 1994, 11 has stated, ‘we must walk a tightrope in translating the Greek words’. Essentially, though, we are dealing here with terms relating to the betrothal, to the giving-away of the bride and to celebration of the wedding proper.

84 So fundamental was the veil to the Roman marriage ceremony that the verb used for the bride, nubo, is closely connected to nubes, a cloud, and literally means ‘I veil myself’, from which, in turn, derives nupta (a married woman), nova nupta (newly wedded bride), and nuptiae (wedding). The second-century scholar Varro derives nuptiae (wedding) and nuptus (wedlock) from nuptus (veiling), which he defines as opertio (the act of covering) and which he associates to nubes (cloud). Paulus, an eighth-century AD lexicographer, derives the word nuptiae from obnubit: ‘he covers the head; from which marriages also get their name from the act of covering (opertio) the head’. See Levine 1995, 100.

85 See Patterson 1991, 54.

86 Much information concerning ancient weddings has no doubt been lost or might never have been recorded at all. Detailed accounts of the more nuanced aspects of wedding ceremonialisms and traditions have not survived the centuries, especially of those rituals that were primarily a female concern. All societies give their women specific responsibilities at weddings, especially in the areas of organizing bridal adornment and the enactment of rituals and traditions associated with the bride. Our male-biased sources are, of course, largely silent about such rites. A convenient discussion of the ancient sources can be found in a recent study of Greek marriage rituals: Vérilhac and Vial 1998, 305–12.
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From parthenos to gynē: veiling and the female lifecycle

87 Hesych. s.v. ἀνακαλυπτήριον.
89 For interpretations see Deubner1900, 144–54; Oakley and Sinos 1993, 25; Carson 1990, 162; Montuoro1960, 49; Schibli 1990, 65; Toutain 1940, 350; Rehm 1994, 142. For a review of the theories see Llewellyn-Jones 2000.
90 Carson 1990, 163.
91 Epton1956, 65, describing a weeping bride at a wedding in Morocco, recalls that, ‘She could only have been about sixteen years old and she looked like a Christmas tree fairy in her white satin (Western-style) wedding gown and gorgeous Moorish tiara and jewellery. Her face covered with an extra thick veil, one of her relatives lifted it for a few seconds so that I could look at her.’
93 It has been suggested that the woman standing behind the bride was probably depicted in the act of pouring a drink into the bowl from an oinochoe. See Sutton, Jr. 1997/98, 31.
95 LSJ s.v. ὄ, ἡ, τό.
96 Luc. Symp. 8.
97 Plut. Moral. (Quaest. con) 666F–667A. The social prestige of throwing an enormous wedding is just as prevalent today; when Mohammed, the son of Sheikh Rashid bin Saeed Al Maktoum, for example, married Princess Salama in Dubai in May 1981, the whole affair lasted for seven days and cost about £22 million. On a more modest scale, in 1988 Saul Steinberg threw a wedding party for his daughter at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York that cost about $3 million. The average cost of a wedding in Britain today is between £3,000 and £8,000. For the cost of wedding receptions see Porter 1991, 103ff.
99 Poll. Onom. 3.36: τά δὲ παρὰ τοῦ ἀνδρός διδόμενα δόρα ἔδνα καὶ ύπτήρια καὶ ἀνακαλυπτήρια· οὕ γάρ μόνον ή ἡμέρα ἢ ἐκκαλύπτει τὴν νυμφήν οὕτω καλοίτ’ ἃν, ἄλλα καὶ τὰ ἐπ’ αὐτῆ δόρα. τά δὲ ἀνακαλυπτήρια καὶ προσφηγκτήρια ἐκάλουν.
101 Ἡρακτρατία: Ἀνακαλυπτήρια· δόρα διδόμενα ταῖς νύμφαις παρὰ τοῦ ἀνδρός καὶ τῶν οἰκείων καὶ φίλων, ὅταν το πρῶτον ἀνακαλύπτωταί ὡστε ὀραθήναι τοῖς ἀνδράσι. καλείται δὲ τὰ αὐτὰ καὶ ἐπαύλια. ταύτα δὲ εἰσὶ τὰ παρ’ ἡμῖν θεάρητα.
102 Σοῦδα: Ἀνακαλυπτήρια· δόρα διδόμενα ταῖς νύμφαις παρὰ τοῦ ἀνδρός καὶ τῶν οἰκείων φίλων, ὅταν το πρῶτον ἀνακαλύπτωται ἀνδράσιν ὀραθήναι. ἔστι δὲ ταύτα καὶ ἐπαύλιαι.
103 Schibli 1990, 64–5. It is possible that the bride responded, but unfortunately Pherekydes’ text breaks off at that point.
104 Theon. Progym. 69.7–9 (Lysias. frg. 7).
105 The incident is only mentioned by Pseudo-Longinus, On the Sublime 4.5.6. See further, Russell 1964, 80. For Agothokles see Justin 22–3 and Diod. 19–20.
106 The ceremony is described by Westermark 1914, 138.
108 Indeed, some societies go as far as placing the already heavily shrouded bride in a draped box that is then strapped on to the back of a horse or donkey For boxed brides
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see Westermark 1914, 166 ff.; Scott 1953, 184 ff. Jewish wedding rites in Graeco-Roman Palestine placed the unveiled bride in a curtained litter. See Archer 1990, 197. A similar rite is practised by Indian Muslims. See Jeffery 1979, 105.

109 Toutain 1940, 347 argues that the bride had remained veiled throughout the proceedings. See also Sissa 1990a, 98.

110 Sissa 1990a, 98.

111 Luc. Symp. 47.

112 Thus Rehm 1994, 142 argues ‘the fact that [a bride] is…depicted [as veiled] does not establish that a formal unveiling lies ahead, any more than it suggests that the anakalyptêria has already occurred’.

113 For a good discussion of the vase see Deubner 1936. See also Oakley and Sinos 1993, 32. Oakley and Sinos mention two unpublished pots from the Sanctuary of the Nymphs, just south of the Athenian Akropolis, and now in the Akropolis Museum, which allegedly show brides with their faces covered by veils, Na.57.Aa.684 and Na.55.Aa.8. An unpublished Attic red-figure lebes gamikos (c. 450) in Laon (37.1186) shows the bride with the back of her head and the lower half of her face veiled. Unfortunately, it has proved impossible to locate these vases, despite many attempts.


116 Plau. Cas. 32.

117 Ibid. 815 ff.

118 Ibid. 880 ff.


120 It is impossible to know if this vase represents any single moment in the wedding process, but my guess would be that it does not; it is simply a scene of a conventionally veiled bride surrounded by the symbols of the wedding – a nymphaeutria, Peitho (Persuasion) who chucks her chin, and a winged Eros. A discussion of the vase is provided by Kerényi 1976, 372–3 with further refs.


122 Eur. Tr. 314 ff. See also Schol. Eur. Ph. 344. A comparable ritual is frequently found in anthropological evidence but is extended to enable the mother-in-law to inspect her new daughter’s suitability. Thus, in many Islamic societies, as the bride arrives at the house her veil is lifted in order that the groom’s mother can view her son’s new wife and give her approval of the match; the brief unveiling simultaneously establishes the pecking order in the household as the mother gazes directly upon the face of the stranger-bride who out of respect and humility, keeps her eyes closed or fixed on the ground. It also means that the bride passes into the direct authority of her mother-in-law who is the first person to raise her veil after it was lowered by the bride’s mother at their parting. See for example Campbell 1964, 64 ff.; Rose 1991, 815 ff. The most complete treatment of the Muslim mother-in-law and her relationship with her daughters-in-law can be found in Mernissi 1975, 121–36. While there is no direct evidence for such a ceremonial in Greece, the presence of the mother-in-law (in iconographic sources) at this moment testifies to her importance in the future life of the bride and it is not inconceivable that some such ritual might have taken place. Such women-only rituals are not often commented on in the sources, although Plut. Mar. 143.35 does tell of the bride and mother-in-law rituals found in Leptis. Hieronymus, Adversus Iovinianum 1.48,
speaks of the importance of the bride placating her new mother-in-law and supports this with a reference to Terence *Hecyra* 2.1.4: ‘All mothers-in-law hate their daughters-in-law.’ On the importance of the mother-in-law see Lys. *On the Murder of Eratosthenes* 6–7. It is only after the death of Euphiletus’ mother (at her funeral in fact) that his wife begins her philandering, which suggests that while her mother-in-law was alive, the wife was under her surveillance. For mother-in-law relationships to new wives see Walcot 1994, 29–32. The importance of the bride’s mother and mother-in-law in the act of transition is emphasized in an Attic red-figure cup by the Amphitrite Painter that depicts the bride’s mother standing to the right of the scene with a lighted torch as her daughter is taken away by the bridegroom to be welcomed by his mother standing in front of the house with two torches. See Oakley and Sinos 1993 fig. 73.

123 Theopomp. *Com.* 14; Suda s.v. καταχύσματα. See also Oakley and Sinos 1993, 34 ff.
124 See above, Chapter 6.
125 Cited by Jeffrey 1979, 106.
126 LSJ s.v. παστώς and παστάς. The most important works on the term are by Vatin 1971, 211–28 and Lane 1988. Both authors conclude that the *pastos* was undeniably closely associated with marriage and was, in all probability, a curtain that was suspended above and around the bridal bed.
127 The Scholia to Theocritus 18 explains the purpose of the singing: ‘Maidens sing the *epithalamium* before the bridal chamber so that the voice of the virgin might not be heard as she is violated by her husband, but might go unnoticed, covered by the maiden’s voices.’
128 On *thalamos* scenes see Oakley and Sinos 1993, 37.
130 Higgins 1967, 117; Toutain 1940, 348–9; Pottier and Reinarch, 1887, 443, cf. 556, n. 268.
132 Augustine *The City of God*, 1.18. For Salome see *The Protevangelion of James* 19–20. For virginity tests in antiquity see Goldhill 1995, 116–23, and Clark 1993, 73–6. Speculating on the hymen of Mary, St Ambrose, in his *De Institutione Virginis*, asked, ‘What is this gate [the hymen] but Mary, closed because she is a virgin? Mary is the gate through which Christ entered the world, when he was born by a virgin birth, without opening the genital seal. The barrier of modesty remained intact and the seals of integrity were preserved.’ The idea that Mary and Joseph avoided all sexual intercourse and that Christ entered the world without breaking Mary’s hymen was also followed by Peter Damian, Bishop of Ostia. He also endorsed this rather bizarre doctrine with the view that the hymen, even if broken, could be miraculously restored. For a full discussion see Brooke 1989, 43. For Mary’s virginity see also Dalarun 1992, 25–30.
133 Hanson, 1990, 324–30.
136 Stanford 1959, 263 comments that the destruction of the battlements of Troy conjures up a far more ‘grandiose use of metaphor’, but admits that the use of *krēdemnon eluse* at *Od.* 3.392, has no humorous contrast and that no parody is likely to be intended; instead, it is a ‘free use of formula’. Commenting on the bottle seal itself, Wace and Stubbings 1962, 501 state, ‘to judge by the clay caps of oil jars found at Mycenae it was a cap of clay put over the stopper and spout and stamped with a seal. It thus corresponded to the caps of lead foil often put over the corks or tops of wine bottles today.’ Heubeck, West and Hainsworth 1988, 184
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are unclear whether krēdēmon eluse refers to the cover of the wine jug itself or to a string which is meant to keep it in place.

137 Hanson 1990, 326. For men, deflowering a virgin has often been seen as a sign of virility. In the sixth century ad the scholar Agathias of Myrina wrote, ‘As I have not yet destroyed the fortress of her maidenhood, which is still kept intact by delay since I avoided the fight. Yet if the battle begins anew, I will verily destroy the walls of her virginity, nor shall any battlements hold me back.’ The gratification derived from the act may be partly or wholly sadistic, as demonstrated by the anonymous author of Rose d’Amour, a late-nineteenth-century pornographic novella: ‘No sooner did I feel the head lodged aright that I drove and shoved in with the utmost fury; feeling the head pretty well in, I thrust and drove on… At length by my fierce rending and tearing thrusts the defences gave way… So great was the pain of this last shock that Rose could not suppress a sharp scream, but I heeded it not; it was the note of final victory.’ For details of Agathias and Rose d’Amour see Isaacs 1993, 276.


139 Eur. Tr. 308–13; Aes. Ag. 1437–43.


142 Nonn. Dion. 7.57–58.

143 See Bridgewood1995.

144 contra Sissa 1990a, 98–9.

145 See also Suda s.v. επαύλια.

146 For the iconography of the epaulia see Oakley and Sinos 1993, 38–42.

147 Until the 1950s the splendid wedding robes of Attic brides were worn for family and community gatherings and holidays during the year that followed the wedding, or until the birth of a second child, or (in rare cases) until the woman reached the age of 30. See Broufas (no date) 16.

148 Nonn. Dion. 7.57–8.

149 Ancient Near Eastern wedding ceremonials place a similar emphasis on veiling and unveiling the bride and offer interesting parallels to the Greek tradition. The earliest testimonial of a public unveiling (from Bitik, near Ankara, c. 1400) comes from the Hittite empire period in the shape of a fragmentary clay vessel with relief decorations showing an indoor scene of a seated man offering a cup to a veiled woman whose face is seen beneath the cloth which the man seems to be in the act of raising. See 1962, 58, 63, pl. XIV. This remarkable find can be interpreted with the aid of a Hittite law (no. 198) dating to the same era which speaks of a man who reinstates his wife as his lawful spouse following her accusation as an adulteress. To make this public knowledge, he veils her in open court, an act reminiscent of Middle Assyrian law 41 on veiling a concubine and making her into a legitimate wife. See Roth 1997, 237 (Law 198: ‘If he brings them to the palace gate (i.e., the royal court) and says “My wife shall not die”, he can spare his wife’s life, but he must also spare the lover, and clothe her head. If he says, “Both of them shall die”, they shall “roll the wheel”. The king may have them killed or he may spare them.’) The text is corrupt and the phrase ‘and clothe (i.e., veil) her head’ has sometimes been translated ‘clothe his head’. But, as Tsevat 1975 has demonstrated, this reading is certainly wrong. Of course, the Assyrian concubine and the reinstated Hittite wife are exceptions to the usual rule; they are veiled in a public act that confers or reconfirms wifely legitimacy on women who are already recognized as belonging...
under the authority of one man. However, it is the act of unveiling which generally identifies a new bride who is in the process of being made into a wife. She is the kullatu (bride) who must appear before her groom kuttumu (veiled). ‘One veils like a bride’ is the reconstruction of one damaged Assyrian text (KUB 41 11. 3). See Hoffner 1973, 86, 88 who mentions that KUB 27. 49 r. iii 17–19 has the reading ‘They take one head-veil, one blue cloth, and the pins (?) from the head of the bride.’ See further Tsevat 1975, 239 n. 14. It is possible that the groom would veil his future bride in order to unveil her later. More probably though, the man who exercised the most authority over the bride – the father or brother – was the one who veiled her and presented her for marriage. It is the act of unveiling, symbolizing legitimate marriage, which is depicted on the clay pot. The symbolism of the occasion is stressed by the device of placing the bridal couple within a (bridal?) chamber. The unveiling and the sharing of a cup within a chamber stress the intimacy of the occasion, an idea that is emphasized in the Great Prayer to the sex-goddess Ištar who is addressed as the one ‘[who] opens the veil of all young women’. See Tsevat 1975, 239. For Ištar see Black and Green 1992, 108–10. For Ištar’s relationship with sex and sexuality see Leick 1994.


151 Redfield 1982, 186.

152 On painted vase scenes being aspirational for female viewers see Llewellyn-Jones 2002a.

153 Contra Redfield 1982, 191 who calls the bride ‘the star of the wedding’.

154 It is these rituals that are depicted in the vase paintings. See Sutton, Jr. 1992, 31 ff. for some interesting ideas on female culture and female viewers of the pots.

155 Archer 1990, 195.


157 Jeffery 1979, 105.

158 Vernant 1980, 56.

159 Aes. Ag. 243–7. For a discussion see Scodel 1996, 111–28. See also Wohl 1998, 59 ff. In fact, the bridal veil itself can be classed as an agalma; it too is a precious and costly object of conspicuous display.

160 Osborne 1994, 90.

161 Aes. Ag. 418–19.

162 Blundell 1998b, 34, makes the analogy between the stiff bride and a rigid corpse. See further Jenkins 1983, 137–45 and pl. 18.


164 Garland 1990, 221.


167 Westmark 1914, 148 ff.; Crawley 1902, 44 ff. For a discussion of the evil eye and veiling see Elworthy 1895, 366.


169 On the reverse of the pot, not illustrated here.

It is this lack of interest in the male gaze that convinces me that the Penthesilea Painter’s pyxis (Fig. 151) does not show an official bridal unveiling, but simply a ‘veil manipulation’. Carson 1990, 163. She repeats her idea in her 1999 article (pp. 91–3) in which she also suggests that Sappho fragment 31(c), ‘inserts us imaginatively into the ritual moment of the anakalyptèria’. Carson suggests that in this poem we view the ceremony from the viewpoint of the nymphetria who stands behind the bride and raises her veil – as on the Boston vase – as she views the bridegroom’s first reaction to his unveiled bride. I find this unconvincing. There is nothing in Sappho’s text that suggests a ritual unveiling or, indeed, an unveiling of any kind.

As far as I am aware the only text that possibly hints at female control of the moment comes from a fragment of the hellenistic poet Euphorion (fr. 107) which seems to recount a highly charged sexual encounter between Zeus and Persephone: ‘When she was about to be seen for the first time she removed the veil of her wedding dress.’ The context of the fragment is difficult to place, but this mythological encounter, in which it seems Persephone has the upper hand, should not be taken as firm evidence that all brides operated in such a fashion. For similar encounters between Zeus and Persephone see Nonn. Dionys. 5.586–615.

The bride’s inability to control her unveiling puts one in mind of Callirhoe who was unveiled by Theron for the lustful gaze of Leonas. Patterson 1991, 55 has a credible approach to the anakalyptèria which, she believes, was purely a symbolic indication of mutual consent to marriage. As she explains, ‘I emphasize “symbolic” here, for the bride in particular probably had little voice in the actual making of the decision; but it seems that in the context of the gamos celebration, the gesture of the anakalyptis symbolized the bride’s giving herself to her husband. Again, this has nothing to do with actual consent. The bride may not have been willing, just as husband and wife may not have loved one another. My concern is with social form, not affective reality.’

See for example Il. 22; Hdt. 1.8.3.


Parker 1983, 181 classifies this as a ‘help me’ supplication (in contrast to a ‘spare me’ supplication). The lowest of the hiketai is no doubt the beggar; for sitting beggars see Eur. fr. 960; Antiphanes fr. 960. For suppliants sitting at altars see Soph. OT 32; Eur. fr. 554; Andokides On the Mysteries 44; Lysias 13.24, 52; Men. Sicy. 190. See also Parker 1983, 350.


On the Kabirian mysteries see Guthrie 1952, 123 ff.

Plut. Mor. 138D 2. See comments in Pomeroy 1999, 47.

Burkert 1987, 94.

For a discussion of the charis of the gaze of a groom upon his bride see Detienne 1977, 87 ff.

Poll. Onom. 3.39.

Carson 1990, 163.
VEILING THE POLLUTED WOMAN

Although many veil-societies, including those of ancient Greece, see women as particularly vulnerable, they also view female sexuality as acutely dangerous and threatening to men and to the social order as a whole. Traditional Arab culture, for example, views women as possessing animalistic sexual appetites. The female veil controls the chaos (fitna) that might be unleashed if womanly sexuality were allowed free reign. In some cases this is due to the assumption that men, by their very nature, cannot control their sexual urges when confronted by irresistible female lures. In other cases it seems that the veil functions to contain the unpredictable and often dangerous sexual desires of the woman herself. In both these instances, the female is seen as both threatened and threatening. As either an active or passive force, female sexuality constantly jeopardizes the social order, its proper hierarchy, and its ability to inflict control. In Muslim thought, woman is fitna, the epitome of the uncontrollable, a living representative of the dangers of sexuality and its rampant disruptive potential. Because of the double threat symbolized by uncovered women, the veil does a double duty of protection. In other words, the veil is a double shield, protecting women against external offences of society and protecting society against the inherent evil of women.¹

Several of these Islamic ideas are paralleled in Greece, most notably the assumption that women are more sexually driven and insatiable than men, the belief that women are endangered and dangerous, the perception of the female as the location of danger to men and to ordered society, and the ensuing need for the gendered separation of space and covering for women in certain social contexts, including those in which fear of invasion or disapproval from sacred beings is present. As the hellenist Andrew Stewart has put it, ‘unveiled – even by male command – a woman is a disaster waiting to happen’.²

A krēdemon of stone or of cloth, a defensive ‘wall’, is as much designed to protect those men outside its barrier from the dangers of the contained female sexuality, as it is to safeguard the chastity of the women who utilize its fortification. This chapter investigates why and how the veil was thought to act as a container of women’s naturally dangerous pollution. We shall need to examine evidence as diverse as the Homeric Hymns and early Christian dogma. The use of such apparently disparate evidence will demonstrate how hellenic perceptions of female miasma remained essentially unchanged and unchallenged across the centuries.³
Chapter 9

Physical and social contact invites the possibility of pollution and, as Padel has cleverly noted, Greek conceptions of pollution were, as ruthless as syphilis… Contact with the polluted can destroy even a whole population… Where contact was intensely important and also potentially contagious and damaging was not in sex but in hospitality. Letting someone in, not to your body but your house, had…emotional implications that, for the modern Western world, is only comparable in intensity to sex… We should not underrate the physicality, and persuasiveness, of Greek pollution.4

Parker’s investigation into the Greek concept of miasma has revealed that, essentially, pollution (and the related concept of purification) operates as a social divider and quite naturally marks out higher from lower and better from worse. This ‘science of division’5 can often take a physical form in which sacred areas are marked off from profane, and are often highlighted by the conspicuous appearance of lustral bowls for the purpose of washing away one’s impurity before entering a sacred, or even civic, space. As Parker emphasizes, ‘A kind of ring of purity excluded the disgraced from communal life.’6

Since the Greeks, like so many other societies, divided their world into sacred and profane, this basic dichotomy was naturally extended into the sexual sphere, for profane life is necessarily sexual, and sexuality is inexorably the domain of women. Women threatened men’s purity and, conversely, their virility. Moreover, as has been demonstrated, a woman had the power to bring dishonour to a man’s name; licentious and unmanageable, lacking in self-awareness or self-control, woman was the ‘weak link in the family chain of honour’.7

The Greek world operated within a set of divisions, or boundaries. There were political boundaries, of course; there were boundaries set between men and gods; there were social boundaries between the ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’, and there were even (movable) boundaries established within the home. Civilization functioned because of these divisions. Men, it was generally agreed, were in control of their personal boundaries; they were self-aware and understood their limitations, the balance of what was correct and what was morally or socially improper, but women had no such awareness since it was generally believed that they lacked control of their boundaries because, after all, their very bodies were wet and spongy containers of lustfulness and miasma. Even a woman’s skin refused to conform or adhere to the rules of containment because it was perceived as porous and hence destructive.8 A woman, her body, and her sexuality were things to be feared.

Furthermore, women were seen as being incapable of feeling the need to control their desires; female nature lacked sōphrosynē – ‘soundness of mind’, ‘self-control’, ‘ chastity’. Even from its first uses in Homer, sōphrosynē is the activity most closely allied to the restraint of some natural impulse, or the closing of the boundaries of the phrenēs (‘wits’) by the will. The resulting control of phrenēs is associated in Greek thought with aidōs: both are virtues of self-containment,9 although what the idea of aidōs primarily shares with the concept of sōphrosynē is the trepidation of overstepping.
Veiling the polluted woman

Boundaries and bindings

The concept of the Greek veil as an intrinsically bounding and binding garment is best expressed in the word *krēdemnon* itself, a word that is, as has been seen, derived from *kāre* (‘head’) and *deō* (‘to bind’). The idea of shielding off, binding, constraining, and containing powerful and often harmful forces is important in ancient magical practice, and the Greek use of ‘binding spells’, or *katadesmoi*, to protect cities, ships, crops, and homes stretches back to the earliest times. The basic ideology behind these *katadesmoi* is to ensure a pre-emptive strike, as it were, against potentially destructive forces, either of this world or of the next; they were a way of restraining one’s enemies without killing them or, if the purpose was to inspire love, they were a way in which a potential lover could be rendered defenceless against the charms of the individual who (perhaps with the help of professionals) activated the spell. A particular facet of *katadesmoi* is the concentration on binding and restraining certain parts of the human body. The mouth is an area of specific attention; the tongue in particular is visualized as bound and restrained.

The issue of restraining speech is a central facet of the ideology of female veiling, for if the veil is drawn across the lower face it supposedly restrains the female voice and inhibits the pollution of female sound emanating from the mouth. The veil can be regarded as a restrainer, a binder of the female body that encloses and contains the potential hazards of *miasma* that the female body and female sexuality are capable of releasing into an unprepared world. This is well illustrated in the case of witches, powerful females whose actions and speech are unrestricted and unbound by social conventions. Apollonius Rhodius’ description of the magic spell enacted by Medea is punctuated by references to her flashing eyes which penetrate into Jason’s pupils – her feminine eyes unhidden by a restraining veil or a modestly lowered head. The verbal directives she gives to Jason, with which he might conjure up the support of Hekate, know no boundaries. In casting their spells and concocting their potions, witches are unbound and exceptionally dangerous.

However, by adhering to male social control, and enclosing themselves behind a protective curtain of cloth, women who display *aidōs* and *sōphrosynē* through the act of veiling participate in safeguarding the good order of society. Those who do not show natural reverence for the social good must be restrained by enforced boundaries. Even though Aristotle allows for the notion that a woman might have a sense of *sōphrosynē*, it is envisaged as different from the *sōphrosynē* of a man; his is concerned with moderation of excess and logical self-control, while her *sōphrosynē* is rooted in deference and duty. Since a woman cannot master self-awareness, she must willingly submit herself to the control of others. She is incapable of setting her own boundaries, so she must be bound by others. This is best achieved by controlling and organizing female space, by the prescription of her gestures, the regulation of her rituals, and by the compulsion for her to veil. Pollution must be contained within the protective barrier of the *krēdemnon*.
veiling/binding. Pausanias alludes to the enforced restraint of female sexuality when he describes a cult statue of Aphrodite in Sparta in which the goddess is represented as both fettered and veiled:

Aphrodite…sits wearing a veil (kaluptran) with fetters on her feet. The story is that the fetters were put on her by Tyndareus, who symbolized by means of the bindings, faithfulness of women to their men.¹⁵

It appears that here Aphrodite’s veil becomes an extension of the leashes which bind her feet, although her veil is not a fortress against potential sexual threat or a container for her chastity, but a defensive binding, a barrier that keeps her dangerous sexuality internalized. Veiling and binding Aphrodite is a pre-emptive strike against her dishonourable sexually unrestrained influence. Thus, besides offering protection and safeguarding honour, every woman’s veil has the negative, but necessary, association of containing and restraining miasma and uncurbed sexuality, so that veiling women symbolically pre-empts the danger that pollution will spill out of the female figure and contaminate the social order.

‘Women leak’¹⁶
What it is that needs to be contained behind the female veil. What is the nature of female miasma? Carson has persuasively argued that the fear of pollution comes from the fact that women ‘leak’, and that women’s physical boundaries are porous, pliant and mutable and that, since she has no control over her boundaries, a woman’s body shrinks, swells, and is constantly prone to leakage.¹⁷ But what is it that leaks out? Is there a physical manifestation of miasma?

Many societies see menstruation, the leakage of blood, as pollution, although in the case of ancient Greece, mention of menstrual blood is conspicuously absent from the kind of sources that speak of female pollution. It is possible that menstruation may have been so shaming and so secret that it was not mentioned even in the sacred laws, although medical writers envisaged monthly bleedings as normal, healthy, and desirable traits of the fit female body.¹⁸ Women needed to bleed to stay well and fertile and, in fact, the notion that menstruation (and menarche in particular) was a ‘good thing’ may have been reflected in the (possible) practice of offerings of menstrual cloths as dedications in the sanctuaries of marriage or childbirth-goddesses such as Hera and Artemis.¹⁹

If the physical presence of menstrual blood is not necessarily polluting in itself, what is it then that oozes from women and defiles society as they move across boundaries of family, home, marriage, prostitution, or adultery? It is more likely that the miasma of womanhood is actually contained in the intangible, in, for example, female speech and in the feminine gaze. In fact, much of what is contained in the area of the female head is seen as inherently polluting. The mouth, eyes, ears, and hair are all seen as potentially disruptive and dangerous areas of female contamination. They do not operate alone; Greek understanding usually associates the various parts
of the female head with the corrupting evils contained in the female genitalia, and so, for safety’s sake, a woman’s head needs to be controlled beneath the confines of a veil just as the female sex organs need to be hidden beneath other garments. The female head thus becomes the focus of feminine miasma.

Eyes in particular have an important part to play in the ideology of veiling. While the various styles of Greek veils were not, on the whole, intended to cover the eyes (the exception is the maghmug-type veil), eyes were certainly intended to be shrouded or over-shadowed by the veil and were, in any case, supposed to lowered as a sign of submissive feminine aidos.20 One particular type of veil was certainly intended to cover the eyes, however: the wedding veil, as we have seen, securely concealed the bride’s gaze beneath a layer of protective cloth, and for good reason too – the female gaze was a source of acutely potent pollution.21

A woman’s gaze was perceived to be intimately intertwined with her sexuality and the lowered eyes of a respectable woman not only demonstrated her aidos but also spared men from the erotic and threatening power of her stare. Thus, the familiar Homeric epithet ‘loosening the knees’ was used to describe a warrior receiving a fatal death-blow and a man who was weakened by the desire that pours forth from a woman’s eyes.22 The stare of the Gorgon could render a man helpless and lifeless and recalls Alkman’s comment that a woman’s gaze is more liquefying than death, while, according to Empedokles, it was Aphrodite herself who gave birth to the round eye, an object so powerful, and so potent, that it needed to be enclosed within soft membranes and – interestingly – delicate cloths.23

Another area of pollution intimately associated with female veiling was a woman’s hair, a part of the head that frequently stands at the crossroads of nature and culture, for hair is first and foremost natural, but is often ‘tamed’ and ‘cultured’ into particular styles.24 Greek men were reluctant to ‘tame’ their own hair because it represented the virile and generative part of manhood.25 Like men, women might wear their hair loose and flowing as a mark of fertility and sexuality. Epic poetry, though it places great emphasis on the veiled heads of elite female characters, does not ignore the effect that unveiled hair can have on an audience, and gives to hair, as much as to the veil, an unusually rich vocabulary of epithets. Goddesses and heroines such as Rhea, Demeter, Hera, Athene, Leto, Thetis, Danae and Niobe are frequently described as eukomos, ‘rich-haired’ or ‘fair-haired’. The word is most frequently used of Helen who, in epic tradition, best represents feminine sexuality, although it is also used of sexual or threatening female figures such as Kalypso, the Harpies and, most tellingly, of course, Medusa.26 In almost every instance the epithet for fair or rich hair is used in contexts that stress the maternity or sexuality of the female subject.27 According to Artemidoros, for a woman to dream of having long and beautiful hair is a good thing, but for men to dream of long hair is not good, because it has connotations of feminine inactivity; after all, Artemidoros explains, the grooming of hair demands many hours of care and attention more suitable to the inactive life of a woman than to the busy life of a man.28
When uncovered by a veil and when displayed by certain types of women, hair can be a positive force intertwined as it is with notions of desirable feminine fertility or even wealth, but the same quality of luxuriant hair can also assume a negative trait in contexts where the same female sexuality or fertility are viewed with suspicion and disparagement. The women who pose the biggest threat to men are often envisaged with an abundance of untamed hair, flying free of any veil (Fig. 161): the uncontrolled hair of Medusa and the Maenads in particular shows how female sexuality is perceived as threatening to the male, a threat that can be neutralized by veiling the female head and concealing her dangerous hair. The flowing hair of the Maenads is emphasized in the conventional iconography as they dance in ecstasy, while Lucan asks, ‘who can look at the Gorgon’s head unveiled?’.

The connection between a woman’s head and her sexuality is found in many diverse cultures, leading some scholars to devise an explanation for what they see as a universal link between the head and hair and the genitals or between the mouth and the vagina or womb. Other scholars shy away from such universalistic explanations but note, nevertheless, that, especially in veil-societies, the head and hair are symbolically connected to sexuality and often specifically to the female genitals. As has been noted, ‘even the most sceptical anthropologist must admit that the hair is rather frequently employed as a public symbol with an explicitly sexual significance’. In veil-societies, the covering of a woman’s head and hair emphasizes the concealment of her most vulnerable organs, her genitals. Because the woman is seen as penetrable, the veil provides her with protection while at the same time it conceals and confines the polluting nature of the female genitalia. Speaking of Buddhist and Hindu assumptions, Leach goes as far as to say that,

Impurity is not invented by the subtle minds of anthropologists but is a matter of fundamental importance in ordinary everyday life; everyone knows that impurity attaches indiscriminately both to the genital region and to the head. The most typically impure things are faeces, urine, semen, menstrual blood, spittle, and hair.

There is evidence to suggest that the same connection was made in ancient Greek culture, certainly in symbolic and ideological concerns. It is well known that loosened or wild hair was a sign of Maenads and, possibly, of some lower class prostitutes, but some of the most interesting evidence for the head-genitals connection comes...
Veiling the polluted woman

from the medical writers who often call the womb a ‘mouth’, the labia, ‘lips’, and the cervix, the ‘lower neck’. Beyond the parallels in terminology, however, a physiological connection was believed to exist, so that the activities of the ‘upper head’ would affect the activities of the ‘lower head’, or vice versa. The link between the upper and lower mouths was confirmed in Greek thought by the existence of the bodos, an uninterrupted route extending like a tube from the mouth to the womb. In ancient writers this connection is usually made unselfconsciously; Aristotle, for instance, notes that a woman’s womb should become moist during intercourse in the same way that the mouth is lubricated with saliva when eating and Soranus makes a similar link when he insists that intercourse should take place when the woman feels sexual desire, for just as a woman who eats without an appetite will have trouble digesting her food, so a woman who receives male seed without desire will not be able to retain it in her womb. In an interesting (but confusing) passage in the Hippokratic corpus, one author suggests that in order to retain the seed after intercourse, a woman should avoid bathing and be vigilant against getting her head wet. No explanation is offered as to why a damp head might bring about the rejection of the seed by the womb, but perhaps no explanation was looked for because of the assumed connection between the two regions of the body.

One medical phenomenon that regularly highlights the ancient head–genitals connection is that of the ‘wandering womb’. Although Soranus and Galen in the second century AD rejected the theory that female hysteria and suffocation were caused by the actual displacement and movement of the womb, they did not succeed in overturning traditional Hippokratic theories that taught that the womb wandered around the body and could be manipulated by various techniques to return it to its rightful position. In Hippokratic gynaecology, the most common method for coaxing the womb back to the genital region was to place objects emitting sweet smells near the vagina and those emitting foul aromas near the nose, ears, and mouth, for, being sensitive to such things, the womb would flee the offending smell of, say, burnt hair or dung rubbed on the nose and ears, and retreat towards the vagina, where it was lured on by the sweet fragrance of spikenard or suppositories of myrrh.

With these demonstrations of the physical connection assumed to exist between the head and the genitals, it is a small step to recognizing how that connection may have expressed itself through veiling procedures. By covering her upper mouth, the veil simultaneously covers a woman’s lower mouth too.

This bond between the mouth and the genitals of a woman is mythologized in the bizarre story of Baubo, recounted by the (somewhat horrified) Christian Fathers, Clement of Alexandria and Arnobius. According to the very ancient myth, the goddess Demeter, though mourning the loss of her daughter, burst into peals of laughter at the obscene gestures of an old woman called Baubo who adroitly changed the dark mood of the Mother Goddess by lifting up her dress to reveal her withered (but shaved) pudenda. The discovery of a number of terracotta statuettes of Baubo from the remains of a temple of Demeter and Kore at Priene, dating to the fourth
century, have added to the ancient pedigree of the later Christian retelling of the story and have gone some way towards explaining the ancient perception of this odd mythological character. According to Maurice Olender, each of the crude little statuettes (Fig. 162) shows a,

disproportionately large head sitting directly on top of the legs, blending into and replacing the hips of the atrophied body. The huge face is broad and frontal, with a nose and with two large eyes in the position of the breasts. Below the mouth, and corresponding to the dimple in the chin, is a representation of a woman’s genitals... The hair, parted and drawn back above the forehead and held in place by means of a large knot, surrounds the belly, which is the face itself.41

While the mouth and the vagina do not blend into one in these figures (probably owing to the fact that Baubo needs to be shown smiling), they are close enough to suggest the link, and to play on the meaning of Baubo’s name – ‘cavity’.42 Furthermore, the hair that surrounds the ‘head’ is deliberately made to look like the folds of a garment that is being lifted away to expose the torso, and I suggest that we are meant to read into this image the double play on drawing back of the skirt to reveal the torso and genitals and the drawing back of the veil to reveal the face and mouth. The cloth that usually covers the genitals is literally displaced to Baubo’s head and mouth; both gestures of uncovering are gratuitous and unseemly but suited to the depiction of this coarse old woman.43

It is also interesting to note one of the details which Clement of Alexandria decided to include in his discussion of the myth. He states that,

Baubo pulled back her peplos and displayed her most indecent parts; the child Iakkhos, who was there, was putting his hand under Baubo’s kolpos, laughing. Then the goddess smiled, smiled in her heart, and accepted the shining cup that held the kykeon.44

Iakkhos’ action could be interpreted either as one whereby he places his hands beneath the old woman’s breasts or, if preferred, snuggling his hands beneath the overhang of her peplos; kolpos has both of these meanings.45 However, as a part of
the *peplos*, the *kolpos* could be drawn over the head as a veil and could even be folded across the mouth to provide a more complete veiling (Fig. 62). But ‘*kolpos*’ has another meaning, which might associate it more closely with the Baubo myth, since the word also means ‘vagina’. Thus, the gesture of drawing the *kolpos* across the head or face may well contain connotations of concealing the two female mouths. In Clement’s version of the myth, *lakkhos*’ seemingly innocent act of placing his hand beneath the nurse’s *kolpos* may therefore have a more sexual undertone, an ambiguity that is heightened by Strato’s reference to the general custom of spitting into a *kolpos* to avoid bad luck. The notion of spitting into something that is simultaneously a covering for the mouth and the vagina itself may be a pertinent idea for warding off unwanted trouble and could perhaps hint at a sexual association by the ancient connection between spit and sperm.

Further connections between the mouth and the genitals arise as a favourite subject for iambic poets and the Sicilian comic school as a way of insulting male enemies and describing the erotic skills of pipe-girls and hetairai. In fact, the notion of *fellatio* continued to be an erotic and defamatory literary *topos* throughout antiquity; oral sex was regarded as highly degrading and, as Andrew Stewart has emphasized, ‘Calling someone a ‘cocksucker’ was one of the most effective insults in the book.’ According to Theopompus, it was a perversion invented by the Lesbians, who gave their name to the practice: *lesbiazdein*. At the heart of the matter is the notion that the mouth is being defiled and that its use as a second vagina is dirty and contaminating, not to mention degrading, especially for a man who performs *fellatio* and actively and willingly turns his mouth into a symbolic vagina.

The body has a hierarchy, and the most noble and pure part of the body is the head; of the head, the purest part is the mouth, which should be opened to receive food, chaste kisses and, most importantly, utter prayers. When performed by a woman, *fellatio* loses some of its stigma, since women are naturally tainted in relation to men. The natural feminine association between the mouth and the female genitals lessens the harmful effects that the penetration of the penis into the mouth would have in the case of a man.

**Noise pollution**

According to Aristotle, the high pitched sound that emulates from a woman’s mouth is indicative of her immoral and wicked nature, for creatures who are brave and righteous – like lions, bulls, cockerels and human males – have big, low voices, because their vocal chords are tight, on account of being tautly connected to their testicles which act like loom weights. A naturally high voice indicates that a person deviates from the masculine ideal of self-control and, not surprisingly, male effeminate, eunuchs, and women fall into this category, for the noises they make are bad to hear and make ‘real men’ feel uncomfortable.
This discomfort is unsurprising when one considers how many mythological females bring about death and destruction with the use of the voices. The Gorgons, the Furies, and the Sirens are obvious candidates here, but so too is the goddess Artemis who, the Homeric Hymn tells us, routinely charges through the woods making a blood-curdling hullabaloo.58 Other females mask their deceptively destructive voices: Helen uses her art of impersonation deliberately to confuse men,59 and the demi-goddesses Kirke and Kalypso use a combination of song to suggest domestic respectability and beguiling words to tempt and captivate.60 In contrast, there are the obscene shrieks of the old woman Iambe, and the mad uncontrollable babblings of Kassandra.61 The list could go on.

Female noise pollution breaks the order of sophrosynē, a word that is often associated with sound, and a husband who exhorts his wife to sophrosynē is likely to mean, ‘Be quiet!’ The Pythagorean woman Timyche who bit off her tongue rather than say the wrong thing, is the exception to the rule where, generally, women are frequently given over to making noises of pain and pleasure as an expression of typical unrestrained and unbound female emotion.62 As Euripides puts it, ‘it is a woman’s inborn pleasure always to have her current troubles coming up to her mouth and out of her tongue.’63

It is a natural assumption that a man who shows sophrosynē and is aware of his natural boundaries should be able to restrain and dissociate himself from his emotions and passions and therefore control their sounds. It is also natural, therefore, to see women as uncontrolled in the noises that they spontaneously make. Such gender differentiation is made clear in a moment from the Odyssey when Eurykleia enters into the hall of the palace to find Odysseus covered in the blood of the suitors, whose corpses litter the floor. She lifts her head to let out a ritual cry of joy, but Odysseus stops her by literally reaching out a hand to close her mouth, telling her to rejoice in her heart, but not to scream out loud.64

A woman’s voice was believed to change during menstruation and was enough to give a sensitive man a severe headache.65 Indeed, men are vulnerable to female pollution through their ears, as the female voice penetrates into the male head.66 This explain why wise Odysseus blocks his shipmates’ ears with wax so that the Sirens’ words will not bore through into their heads, although he himself listens to their song.67

Because women’s voices are dangerous, closing women’s mouths was the object of a complex array of conventions in pre-classical and classical Greece, a concept that has at its core Sophokles’ famous blanket statement, ‘Silence is the ornament of women.’68 Such model female behaviour is enforced by the use of the veil because it also enfolds, encloses, makes invisible, and silences. Theano’s decorous assertion that her naked arm was not for public view is enforced by Plutarch’s contention that,

The arm of a virtuous woman should not be public property, nor her speech either, and she should guard just as modestly against exposing her voice to outsiders as she would guard against exposing herself. For in her blabbering can be seen her emotions, character and her physical condition.69
Unfortunately, it would appear that few women know how to restrain themselves, for Plutarch returns to the issue of the female voice in his essay, *On Talkativeness*, where, to typify the female use of noise, he tells the story of a politician’s wife. The politician invents a crazy story and, one morning before leaving the house for his day’s duties, he tells it to his wife, commanding her to keep the story a secret. He warns her to keep her mouth shut, and she agrees. But no sooner does the politician leave the house than the wife tells the story to her maid, commanding her to ‘keep mum’. But the maidservant immediately spreads the story all around town and, before mid-morning, the politician receives his own story back again. Plutarch concludes the anecdote by noting that, ‘The husband had taken precautions and protective measures in order to test his wife, as one might test a cracked or leaky vessel by filling it not with oil but with water.’ The wife fails the test because, like the leaky jar, she too is porous and her unrestrained words naturally trickle out of her.

Plutarch pairs this yarn with a story about masculine restraint through speech which is created through a description of a man named Anakharsis, a friend of Solon:

Anakharsis, had been entertained and feasted at Solon’s house and was resting, when he was seen to be pressing his left hand onto his genitals and his right hand onto his mouth; for he believed that the tongue requires a stronger restraint. And he was right. It would not be easy to count as many men lost through incontinence in sexual pleasures as cities and empires ruined through the revelation of a secret.

In analysing the implications for the gendering of sound in Greek societies, we need to take seriously the connection which Plutarch makes between verbal and sexual restraint and between the mouth and genitals, because the matter turns out to have different implications for men and for women. The masculine virtue of self-censorship which Anakharsis displays is unknown in a woman. Later in his discussion, Plutarch reminds us that perfect *sophrosynē* is an attribute of Apollo in his role of Loxias, an epithet that means that he is a god of few words, one who does not ‘run off’ at the mouth. But when a woman ‘gushes’ there is more at stake than a mere wastage of words. As we have seen, the image of a leaky water jar with which Plutarch concludes his first story is one of the commonest figures in ancient Greek literature for the representation of female sexuality. In the context of ancient Greek wedding rituals we noted that the word *kredemnon*, which we have seen used for both ‘veil’ and ‘defensive wall’, can also mean the stopper of a bottle, and that the phrase *kredemnon eluse* means ‘to undo a stopper’. Thus a *krēdemnon* is something that seals in liquid and prevents seepage. Because a woman cannot restrain the noise pollution that pours out of her mouth, then the *miasma* must be contained by a stopper. The veil, a *krēdemnon* of walls and stoppers, keeps the dangerous female voice behind a superimposed boundary.

**Silencing the woman**

In a well-known passage from Aristophanes’ *Frogs*, the character Euripides rages against the artificial manner of writing and performing employed by Aiskhylos and
his actors, the proponents of the so-called ‘Grand Style’. One example of theatrical artifice practised by Aiskhylos, claims Euripides, is his use of veiled characters who sit muffled and silent through much of the drama, doing nothing, yet causing the audience much concern by rising anticipation. Euripides claims that,

[Aiskhylos] would begin by making some solitary figure, say Akhilleus or Niobe, sit down with their head veiled (egkalupsas), not letting them show their face... and not even making this much of a sound... Meanwhile the chorus would fire off four strings of lyrics, one after the other, without a break, while the characters stayed mute... Sheer nonsense! The idea was that the public would sit waiting in expectation for the moment when Niobe would actually say something; meanwhile the play dragged on.74

According to the hellenistic Life of Aiskhylos, the poet’s well-recognized device of theatrical ‘veiled silences’ was used to great effect for the character of Niobe who sat veiled and in silence at the grave of her children without uttering a syllable until the end of the play approached, while in his work entitled The Ransom of Hektor (or Phrygians), the character of Akhilleus sat veiled and dumb throughout the play except for one brief exchange with Hermes at the beginning.75 Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest that Aiskhylos’ play Myrmidons depicted a veiled and silent Akhilleus nursing his anger against Agamemnon as he remained deaf to the entreaties of the Greek embassy, and since Aristophanes quotes from this play at Frogs 992 and 1264, it is probably Myrmidons that he has in mind in Euripides’ tirade too.76

These Aiskhylean veiled silences must have had an extraordinarily powerful impact on contemporary audiences and it would appear that Aiskhylos’ gamble of presenting a protagonist silenced by his or her veil paid off. The images of his veiled characters lingered in the collective memory for many generations after Aiskhylos’ death. So it is, despite his lampooning comments in the Frogs, that Aristophanes pays homage to the tragic master in his comedy Lysistrata, a work that fully utilizes the effective silencing power of the veil in a scene where the women of Athens turn the tables on the cantankerous Proboulos by dressing him in their clothes and forcing their weaving utensils into his hands.77

At the beginning of the scene the Proboulos reminds the women that they have no voice in community affairs and that it is men who debate serious issues in public; women may sing in religious festivals, he says, but there is no place for women’s words in civic life. With this statement, his world is suddenly turned upside down as the women take control of the city and begin to speak public policy. The heated debate between the Proboulos and Lysistrata climaxes with the heroine telling the indignant magistrate to shut up. Outraged, he answers her by reference to her veil:

Me, shut up for you? A damned woman with a veil (kalumma) on your face too? I’d sooner die!78

But Lysistrata responds using the same device:

If it’s the veil (kalumma) that’s the obstacle, here, take mine, it’s yours, put it over your face, and then shut up!79
It is clear that the stage action had Lysistrata pull off her veil, place it over the Proboulos’ head and drape it across his mouth. This action effectively silences him; now he sits quietly and listens to Lysistrata’s public policy. As far as the women are concerned, all it takes to represent one of them is a spindle, a basket, and a veil which substitutes and creates the image of a silent woman. The Proboulos has no lines to speak as the women begin the antistrophe, for he is forced to adhere to his own dictum that a woman has no place in public debate. The bullying magistrate is overpowered by the silencing, depersonalizing, power of the female veil.

It was noted earlier that a common type of terracotta figurine representing characters from comedy, shows a modest maiden pulling her veil across her mouth (Fig. 124), so that the veiled (and often silent) female was obviously a stock character in comedy, and probably satirized a recognizable (and desirable) type of woman from daily life. But another stock character, the gossip or chatterbox, is a woman who can be either young or old and is frequently represented in terracotta. Fig. 163, (c. 300) from Taranto, but most likely copied from an Athenian figurine, depicts such a chattering woman as she strides forward, well wrapped in her pharos-veil. She tugs at its folds and pulls it away from her face, affording us a view of her huge gaping mouth; her head leans to one side as though gossiping busily. It is the opposite of the standard ‘veil-gesture’ found in other artworks which emphasizes the converse of respectable feminine behaviour.

Another popular female character from New Comedy, the hetaira, is often represented in terracotta figurines, such as Fig. 126, wearing a character-mask which is framed by a thick roll of hair brought up into a bun on the top of the head where it is held in place by a fillet. The hetaira appears to wear a himation-veil which is drawn high over the topknot and is held in her two hands so that its edge conceals her chin. The veil-gesture might be mistaken for that of a modest maiden, were it not for the fact that the hetaira’s mouth is exposed and gaping open, allowing her tongue to poke out provocatively. As Stevens notes, ‘Sticking out the tongue past the lips can either be an insult or a sexual invitation, depending on the social context. In kissing and oral sex it is a phallic substitute.’ So this appealing and amusing little sculpture seems to play on the familiar motif of disreputable women toying with notions and gestures of respectability, and it conscientiously perverts the modest and silencing quality of the veil to highlight the sexualization and baseness of the mouth and, in particular, the tongue.

The power of the restraining, silencing veil is also expressed in the character of Phaedra in Euripides’ Hippolytus, especially in the passage mentioned earlier (lines
However, the pollution of the female voice is an issue that arises several times throughout the play. In his great diatribe against the female sex, Hippolytus stresses that women are naturally deceitful, over-sexed, and over-talkative and that they should, therefore, be isolated indoors so that no one will be able to speak to them or will be constrained to hear their voices. For Hippolytus, women’s voices pollute because they are so allied with female sexuality and he suggests that women should be totally deprived of speech in order that male honour may be left untarnished.

Initially it appears that Phaedra conforms to this view, for before the audience even sees the queen, we learn from the chorus that she is suffering, that she lies silently inside the house on her couch and hides her head beneath fine-spun phare. Because of her lust for her stepson, the only safe course for Phaedra is total withdrawal, and so she sits indoors, beneath her veils, silent and fasting; she seals off all her openings with her garments and then is doubly enclosed behind doors. Such an image informs us that even though her mind may transgress, her mouth will not and cannot. Phaedra is doubly resigned to silence and death within her coverings, and once again there is a clear merger of veil and house in her thoughts, as there is, indeed, between speech and uncovered public appearance. Euripides has Phaedra connect speech with going outdoors through the use of the word thuraia – ‘doorway, opening’: her tongue is out of doors, just like a wife who seeks a bed outside her marital home. The fact that she subsequently emerges from the dark recesses of her house and enters into the public sphere warns us that Phaedra is fickle, indeed, the nurse says that she cannot make up her mind about what she wants. The queen dithers between her original yearning and the ensuing shame, just as she wavers between her silence and the rigorous suppression of her sexuality and a total abandonment of self-control.

When the nurse escorts her out into the daylight, Phaedra asks for the release of her hair and the casting off of her head-covering, and says that she wants relief from the heavy burden of the head-dress. As her veil falls away, Phaedra speaks, and her speech knows no boundaries: it is a woman’s speech, passionate, hedonistic, and lustful. Her mouth runs away with her as she imagines herself in the places that Hippolytus haunts, because she longs for his freedom as much as she longs for him. When her gushing speech is done, she is suddenly filled with a need to veil and restrain herself again and to go back indoors and resume her silence; she sees her speech as shameful because she violates the code of silence and solitude. The stage action calls for Phaedra to be re-veiled (around line 250) and, with this act of veiling, once more we are compelled to recognize the silencing quality of the veil and its use as a metaphor for the interior and exterior, as we acknowledge the commonplace that the female mouth and the door of a house are to be viewed as one. The house and the veil cover the woman, enclosing her from view, making her socially invisible. The door is closed and the veil is pulled across the mouth. The woman is silenced.

Female silence through veiling is also an issue raised in a very interesting early Christian tract dating to the mid-first century AD, namely Paul’s first letter to the
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Greek-speaking Christian community at Korinth (I Cor. 11.2–16). This text is deeply concerned with the functioning of the human body and concentrates much attention on the female head. In particular, Paul contemplates the nature of the mouth and establishes rules for controlling the opening of this orifice and, most importantly, for what emanates from it. Korinthian women, it is supposed, are (literally) letting their hair down, thereby uncovering the tops of their heads, and opening their mouths to utter prophecies, much like the devotees of Dionysus or other deities who voiced loud prophetic frenzy. Unimpeded by the veil and therefore open to the incoming of the Holy Spirit, the women of the Korinthian church were, it seems, fully able to participate in the speaking of prayers, including the act of speaking in tongues.

It appears that when early Christians prayed (like most Greco-Roman peoples, in fact), they tended to outstretch their arms and raise the palms of their hands heavenwards whilst throwing back their heads. Therefore, Christian bodies – especially heads – were fully exposed to the much-anticipated incoming of the Spirit. On the down side, however, the back-tilted head meant that female worshippers were unable to keep their veils in place, as they would naturally slip off their heads when they adopted this position of prayer, especially as their hands were occupied in the traditional prayer-position and thus not capable of holding the veil in place. This is an idea supported by Gerd Theissen who argues that the type of covering worn by Korinthian women was probably the himation-veil, a style that is often located in local Roman sculptures of the Pauline period:

A himation… would simply be pushed over the head and could easily fall back on the shoulders. The transition between veiling and unveiling could occur simply and undramatically in this case. Women could come veiled to the assembly and take the veil off [or allow it to fall off] when they prayed or prophesied.

Thus, unveiled, open to Spirit, and free to speak in tongues, the Korinthian women were praying and prophesying within the public sphere of the Christian community and were, almost certainly, deriving from those experiences a status and prestige that Paul found both offensive and problematic. His ultimate aim seems to be to curb the public female voice, and to do this he simply orders the Korinthian women to re-veil their heads. By so doing Paul denies them full participation in the assembly and curbs their unrestricted speech. Essentially the Apostle’s attitude is no different to that of the Aristophanic Probolos.

What is most significant about the Korinthian problem is that gender is the central issue: what Paul finds particularly provoking is that women, by praying openly with their heads unveiled, do what men do. But being women, the noise from their mouths pours out and, naturally, debases the purity of the Spirit. Therefore, women have to be restrained and silenced and veiled.

Yet the act of veiling can also be a means of silencing someone else’s words, so that the veil acts as a defensive wall against speech that comes from the outside; the veil blockades the words and stops them from reaching their target. In Euripides’
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fragmentary play *Hypsipyle* it is clear that the wearing of a veil signifies social separation and an active withdrawal from speaking and listening. 106 Hypsipyle, nurse to Eurydike’s son, momentarily neglects her charge and he is bitten by a serpent and dies. The nurse then pleads her defence before her mistress, but in vain. Eurydike takes refuge in a hostile silence, which has the result of breaking off all communication between the two women (lines 1–7), so that Hypsipyle is forced to call upon the services of Amphiaraus to plead on her behalf (lines 35–6). His introductory words suggest that Eurydike has veiled herself, for he asks her to uncover her face and listen to him. By asking Eurydike first to unveil and then to listen, Amphiaraus intimates that listening as well as speaking implies the unveiling of the head or the head and face (lines 43–7). Accordingly, Eurydike unveils herself and speaks to Amphiaraus, saying that she is ready to listen to his argument (lines 50–4). By underlining the fact that she has taken off her veil before engaging in verbal communication, Eurydike confirms that the three acts of unveiling, speaking, and listening are closely assimilated.107

Conclusion
The metaphoric use of veiling as a defensive wall that keeps unwanted forces out can be expanded; the veil can be conceived as a stopper that keeps the undesirable in. The Greek male’s fear of female pollution was not expressed in terms of a real physical leakage, since menstrual blood was apparently (and unusually for antiquity) not considered polluting in itself, but pollution was conceived in more abstract images of leakage through the head, eyes, ears and, most noticeably, the mouth. The veiling of the female head, an area of the female body closely connected to the genitalia, and of the mouth, the most potent area of *miasma*, helped neutralize the threat of contamination. Binding women beneath a veil confirmed social and cosmic harmony, another good explanation of why the act of unveiling was not to be taken lightly.

Notes
1 See Mason 1975, 650, 657; Mernissi 1975, 44; Makhlouf 1979, 38.
2 Stewart 1997, 195.
3 Space prevents a full investigation into the Pauline dictum on female veiling and its relationship to both Greco-Roman and Jewish practices. It is hoped that this will form the basis of further study in the future.
6 Ibid. 19.
7 Ibid. 101.
8 Padel 1995, 146 ff.
9 North 1966, 1 ff.
men as well as women (from the second half of the fifth century), masculine and feminine chastity prove to be differently defined: masculine chastity derives from self-control, the opposite of *hybris*, feminine chastity from obedience.\(^{11}\)

11 See Chapter 2. In an interesting survey of the representation of the body in ancient literature, Newbold 1979, 93–114 emphasized a common belief (which has long been recognized by anthropologists and dress historians) that clothing was one of the principal ways in which a body could be identified, distinguished and protected. Clothing in these ancient literary sources, it is propounded, is often envisaged as a second skin, but a skin that nevertheless acts as a boundary between the person underneath the clothing and the outside world. All references to clothing, argues Newbold, can be seen in this light, as can allusions to jewellery and body embellishments like armour, shields, swords, and veils.


15 Paus. 3.15.10.6–11.9.


17 Ibid. 153–6. See also Carson 1999, 87.

18 Parker 1983, 102; King 1998, 89.

19 The word *rhakos* often has the meaning ‘tattered or ragged’ garment (*LS* s.v. ῥόκος), but it has been suggested that it can also mean ‘rag’ in the sense of bandage or sanitary cloth, on which young girls offered their menarche to Artemis. The debate is ongoing, but for a discussion see Linders 1972, 58ff.

20 See discussion above, Chapter 6.

21 As Padel 1992, 60 puts it, ‘Eyes ex-press. Something in comes out.’ For the dangerous gaze of the bride and the play on issues of veiling and unveiling during the *anakalypτēria* rituals see above, Chapter 8. The eye was a source of something very powerful, as vision and gaze penetrated in a two-way channel. Tragedy in particular attests to the potency of the eye, to such an extent in fact that people can read emotions within the eyes. Thus, the nurse fears for the safety of Medea’s children because she has seen their mother gaze on them with a certain ‘look’. See Eur. *Med*. 89–95. For a discussion of the power of the gaze in anthropological discourse see McNeil 1998, 22–7, 194–8. Very often the glance from the eyes is likened to flashing fire, and imagery from epic onwards frequently uses this metaphor to simulate the flare of the gaze. See, for example, *Ilīu Persis* fr. 8; Eur. *Or*. 480; Theocr. 14.18–19; Arist. *De sensu* 437B–438A; Plato *Ti*. 45B–46C, 67C–68D; Pliny *NH* 8.32–3. The flashing emanations of the eyes can be deadly, for the Furies drip blood and poison from their eyes, and the gaze from the eyes of the Gorgon turns those who see her into stone. See Aes. *Eum*. 54, 781, 832. For the eyes of the Gorgon see Reeder 1994, 410ff. Eyes are dangerous because they are receptive and while they may send out poisonous liquid-fire, they also receive pollution back. Eyes are vulnerable to polluting forces and are harmed by the polluting eyes of others; thus, having committed the heinous crime of murder, Herakles is desperate to avoid eye contact with Theseus out of fear that he will pollute his friend and so veils his head accordingly. See Eur. *HF* 1229–33. See Parker 1983, 371.


23 Emp. fr. 84. See Freeman 1971.

24 A discussion of the sociological importance of hair is offered by Synnott 1993, 103–27.
See also Stevens 1998, 409–10.

25 In Greek thought from Homer onwards, hair and foliage (like the trees of the forest) share the same name: kome. See, for example, Od. 23.195; Eur. Hipp. 210, Bacch. 1055. For the similar Latin coma and its compounds for foliage see, Catullus 4.12; Vergil, Aen. 2.629, 12.413, Geor. 4.122; Horace, Carm. 1.215, 4.3.11, 4.7.2; Pliny HN 13.59. To prune one’s hair is to impose the limits of culture on nature. In the case of men’s hair, the generative vitality of the hair is expanded to include issues of heroic strength and political power. Homer frequently portrays male divinities with potent flowing locks. See, for example, Zeus of the thundering locks: Il. 1.527–30; cf. HH 1.13–15; Ovid Met. 1.177–80. Dark Haired Poseidon: Il. 13.563, 14.390, 15.174, 201, 20.144; Od. 3.6, 9.528, 536; Hes. Theo. 278; HH 22.6, Luc. De Sacrificiis 11.7. Hades: HH 2.347, Eur. Alc. 439. Dionysus: HH 7.4–5, Eur. Bacch. 150, 235–6, 239–41, 455–6. The ‘long-haired’ Achaeans epitomize the martial strength that is rooted in the hair and is used 29 times of the Achaeans in the Iliad, e.g., Il. 2.323, 443, 4.261, 13.312. Note the contrast between Homer’s long-haired heroes and the thin-haired, unheroic Thersites at Il. 2.219.


27 See Il. 1.36 (of Leto), 7.355, 8.82 (of Helen); HH 26.3 (of nymphs).

28 Artemidoros Oen. 1.18.

29 For Medusa’s serpent-hair see Apollodoros Bib. 2.7.3; Paus. 8.47.5. For a discussion of the myth and imagery of Medusa see Reeder 1995, 410 ff. For the sexual significance of Medusa’s locks see Slater 1968, 17–20. For the Maenads see Eur. Bacch. 695, 757–8, 864–5, 930. On the significance of hair in Euripides’ Bacchae see Segal 1982, 174–7. For Medusa’s unveiled head see Luc. Pharsalia 6.

30 See, for example, Leach 1958; Berg 1951; Hildebeitel and Miller 1998; Eilberg-Schwartz and Doniger 1995.

31 Leach 1958, 153.

32 Ibid. 156.


34 This is true in both Greek and Latin. In Greek, stoma is used for the mouth of the womb, kheilos for the labia and trakhēlos for the cervix. See LSJ s.v. στόμα II, χείλος II, τράχηλος II.2. For further discussion see King 1998, 28 ff.

35 King 1998, 28.

36 Arist. HA 10.3. 635b 19–24.

37 Sor. Gyn. 1.10.37.


40 See Clem. Alex. Protrepikos 2.20.3.1–21.1.1 and Arnobius, Adv. Nat. 5.25. For a discussion see Olender 1990. See also, Theophrastos, Characters 4 (‘The Lout’) 11, and comments by Graf 1974, 171 n. 66.

41 Olender 1990, 83.
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42 Hesychius s.v. Baubo. According to LSJ the noun βαυβό is used as a synonym for κοιλία, which denotes the female uterus, but as a sound it derives from the onomatopoeic βαυ βαυ, the noise made by a barking dog, i.e., ‘bow-wow.’

43 As an interesting parallel, attention can be drawn to a famous and disturbing image created by René Magritte in 1945 called Le Viol (‘The Rape’), where there is a similar displacement of eyes and mouth for breasts and vagina as an overt statement of the erotization of the head.


45 LSJ s.v. κόλπος.

46 See above, Chapter 3.

47 Sor. Gyn. 1.16: ‘The “female shame” [i.e., vagina], on the other hand, is also called the female “kolpos”.’ Temkin 1956 (reprint 1991), translates this awkward line as: ‘The vagina, on the other hand, is called the female sinus.’ See also Ruf. Onom. 196; Poll. Onom. 2.222 (used in the plural).

48 As a veil-like covering, the kolpos is sometimes likened to a fortification. See Philo Mechanicus. Belopoeca. 86.8.

49 AP 12.229 (Strato): ‘What a good goddess is Nemesis, Alexis, because of whom we spit into our kolpos, dreading her as she follows.’ I am grateful to Emma Stafford for this reference.

50 ‘Spitting’ is sometimes referred to with the word haimatos (Hp. Aph. 3.29; Arist. Ph. 243b13, etc.), which is frequently associated with blood and the loss of blood. LSJ s.v. αιμάτωις.


52 Stewart 1997, 165.


54 See Aeschines 2.88. See further Forberg 1964, 101–36.


56 Arist. Physiognomics 807a, GA 787b–8. I am grateful to Ruth Bardell for drawing my attention to this passage.

57 Ibid.

58 HH 5.18–20.

59 Od. 4.275.

60 Od. 1.55–6, 10.221.

61 Iambe is the prototype of the religious practice called the aishkrologia or ‘saying of ugly things’. See Xen. Lac. 5.6; Arist. AE 1128a23.; Burkert 1985, 105. For Kassandra see Aes. Ag. 1213–14.

62 Iambikhos Life of Pythagoras 31.194.


64 Od. 22.411.

65 Gleason 1995, 99 and n. 84.

66 Padel 1992, 64 notes, ‘Hearing is intrusion from the outside, through ears, into the innards… Words drill through [the ears] into the mind.’ See also Aes. Choe. 451–2.

67 See Od. 12.40, 46, 177, 189–91; Hes. frs. 27–8; Eur. Andr. 937–8. For a discussion see Reeder 1995, 415ff. The care taken with his crew is a good move because, according to a Sophoklean fragment (858.1–2.), ‘The impact of words comes slowly, and has difficulty in getting through an ear that is blocked.’ Ears are central to a series of dream interpretations
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according to Artemidoros (Oen. 1.24), and to dream about ears generally has negative connotations.

68 Soph. Ajax 293. See comments in the recent study by McClure 1999, 32–69. In Acrisius (fr. 64), Sophokles reinforces his notion that female silence is golden. For an examination of silence in ancient Greece see Montiglio 2000.

69 Plut. Mor. 142D.

70 Plut. Mor. 507F.

71 Plut. Mor. 505A. Trans. Babbitt (Loeb) 1927, with amendments.

72 See also Gleason 1995, 98.

73 Plut. Mor. 511B.


75 Vita Aesch. 2–14. For a discussion of the feminizing quality of the veil when worn by men, see above, Chapter 1.

76 See Dover 1997, 180. See also Taplin 1977, 284, 318, 331–2, 423–4. For Aiskhylean silences see Michelakis 2000. For a discussion of these plays as represented in vase paintings see Trendall and Webster 1971, 54–8.


78 Ar. Lys. 530–1. For comments see Henderson 1987, 136–7. Cf. Sommerstein’s translation: ‘You, confound you, a woman with your face veiled, dare to order me to be silent? Gods let me die!'

79 Ar. Lys. 532–4. Cf. Sommerstein’s translation:

“Well, if that’s what’s bothering you…
With veiling bedeck
Your head and neck
And then, it may be, you’ll be quiet!’

80 See above, Chapter 4.


82 See Green and Handley 1995, 77–8. Compare also the terracotta ‘chatterbox’ illustrated by Pickard-Cambridge 1968., fig. 131. The same type of character is shown in a well-known mosaic from Pompeii (c. 100) which depicts a scene from Menander’s Synaristosai, which Plautus later adapted into his Cistellaria. The beautiful and well-known mosaic is probably a copy of a Greek wall painting and shows, on the right, wrapped in a yellow pharos-veil, an old gossiping woman sitting on the edge of a couch. To her right sits a younger woman (a pseudokorē or false maiden), also in a yellow pharos, but not worn on the head, and at the left of the scene sits a hetaira clasping her hands together. The old woman’s chattering nature is emphasized by her gesture of pulling her veil down from her face so that she can speak her gossip through her cavernous mouth unimpeded by the restraining, bounding nature of the garment. The mosaic is signed by Dioskourides of Samos and was placed in the so-called ‘Villa of Cicero’. The scene is found again on a mosaic from Myteline, c. AD 300–450. For discussions of the two mosaics see Trendall and Webster 1971, 145.

83 For this particular hairstyle see LSJ s.v. lampavdion and Higgins 1986, 123 and fig. 155. For a discussion of the hetaira figurine see Uhlenbrock 1990, 121.


85 See above, Chapter 6.


87 For a discussion see Rabinowitz 1986, 128–9 and 1993, 155–69. See also Barrett
Veiling the polluted woman

1964, 281 ff.
89 Ibid. 131–40, 394, 399, 401.
90 Ibid. 395, 409.
91 Ibid. 200–1.
92 Ibid. 244, 246.
93 The nurse confirms, ‘There, you are veiled. But my own body, when will death veil that?’
94 See above, Chapter 7.
95 Paduano 1985, 55–7 defines Phaedra’s veil as the visual representation of silence.
97 For Paul’s attitude to the body, head and mouth in *I Cor.*, see Neyrey 1990, 102–46.
98 The sexual connotations of female prophecy are fully explored by Sissa 1990.
99 See Jansen 1993, 255. See also Salisbury 1997, 64 ff. Paul does not necessarily want to limit women’s use of prayer *per se*, but he does seem to suggest that prayers should be spoken out of public hearing and should not be allowed to infiltrate the ears of other (male) worshippers. Greek sources state that women could pray, and we have no reason to suppose that their prayers were fundamentally any different from those of men. For a discussion see Pulley 1997, 168–71.
100 Aristotle, *De mundo* 400a16, tells us, ‘All of us human beings stretch out our hands to the heavens when praying.’ On the physical posture of praying in antiquity see Keel 1978, 308–23. Burkert 1985, 75 notes that in Greece prayers were usually said standing up with arms outstretched in a gesture of entreaty, with the hands raised to the sky and both palms upturned. Hands can also be stretched towards a cult image. Keel 1978, 321 illustrates a stele erected to Helios which has a prayer inscribed over an image of a pair of upturned hands. Further details can be found in Pulley 1997, 188 ff. He suggests that there is a close link between the mouth and hands in prayer and that the verb *proskuneo* has been wrongly translated to mean ‘prostrate’ or ‘fall on the ground’ but should refer to a gesture of raising the hand to the mouth as an act of prayer. For early Christian iconographic representations of prayer see McNamara 1985, 41, fig. 3 and Croon 2000, 80, fig. 35.
101 The back-tilted head is not featured in Christian art. Women tend to be shown conforming to the ideal with palms raised, mouths closed, and heads veiled. See Croon 2000, 80. See also the veiled figure of the deceased Comminia at prayer (*c.* fourth century AD) illustrated in Veyne 1987, 279.
102 Theissen 1987, 160–1. Evidence for veiling in Roman Korinthian iconography is as contradictory as that found in other Greek cities in earlier and later periods: There are certainly unveiled women’s heads preserved from the Roman period, but others wear fillets, diadems and *bimation*-veils. See Johnson 1931, 106–7 and nos. 160, 163, 164, 221, 222, 224. However, no other style of veil is found in the Korinthian sculptures. See also the discussion by Thompson 1988.
103 Kraemer 1992, 146.
104 See further Theissen 1987, 165: ‘The removal of head-covering must have been understood in an “emancipatory” manner, for the removal of the *kalumma* has precisely this meaning in Aristophanes’ *Lysistrata* … The connection…between “silence in public” (i.e.,
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with regard to public affairs) and the *kalumma* is noteworthy. I do not at all claim that the Christian women in Corinth consciously imitated Lysistrata. The analogy only illuminates how their action would have struck some people.’

105 Although Moses and Elijah were required to veil their heads when they spoke to Yahweh, the incarnation of God in flesh allowed men to approach God without veils. See II Cor. 3.18. For a discussion see Theissen 1987, 117 ff. That Korinthian men pray with uncovered heads shows that the Roman practice of veiling to perform religious rites was not necessarily prevalent in the Greek East by the mid-to-late first century AD. Roman devotional apparel lacked a true counterpart among the Greeks. The Romans developed something of a fixation with proper apparel for secular and sacred occasions and, consequently, Roman clothing is often more symbolic than Greek dress. Greek clothing tended to remain the same for different activities, whereas Roman dress was changed for different occasions. See Bieber 1967, 39–42. As a Greek, Plutarch found it odd that Romans worshipped with their heads veiled (*Mor. 266C–D*), although he notes that individual Romans veiled and unveiled their heads for a variety of reasons, a theme explored in a wide range of other sources: the head could be veiled as protection from the weather (*Cicero de Senectute* 10.34), to hide one’s face from impending death (*Horace Sermones* 2.3.37), and to demonstrate subservience or respect (*Petronius* 57). Some Roman sacerdotal officials kept their heads covered constantly, and the *Flamen Dialis*, for example, never appeared in public without his tight-fitting cap (*Aulus Gellius, Noctes Atticae* 10.15–17). Others, not just priests, wore a distinctly different apparel when they performed religious duties: this garment was worn in private and public devotional acts such as prayers, sacrifices, and prophecy, and was typically referred to by the phrase *capite velato*. This gesture comprised the act of pulling one’s garment or toga over the back of the head and forward until it covered the ears. See Stone 1994. The famous statue of Augustus as *Pontifex Maximus* in 12 BC shows him wearing his toga in such a fashion. For details see La Regina 1998, 61–2. While Greek women were expected to be veiled in public, the rule was not so strongly endorsed for Roman women, although Roman women in the Greek East may have felt compelled to comply with local custom. If, however, Greek women wanted to appear more Roman and imitate fashions at the Imperial court, then they may have unveiled (if they were permitted to do so). The evidence is patchy. For a discussion see MacMullen 1980, 208–18. Sebesta 1994, 48–9, however, argues that veiling was of fundamental importance for Roman matrons. Thus, like Paul, Isidore (19.25.4) comments that the head ‘is the sign of marital rank and power. For man is the head of woman, and the veil is over the head of the woman.’ While Roman women (excepting the Vestals – who were routinely veiled) rarely appear as sacerdotal persons in religious rites, we do have evidence to suggest that women were expected to be veiled during religious ceremonies. Juvenal (*Sat. 6.390–2*), for example, recounts how a woman of the aristocracy, ‘stood before the altar, thinking it no disgrace to veil her face in front of the cheapjack harpist. She made her responses in the proper way, and blanched as the lamb was opened.’ In Jewish tradition, respectable women were routinely expected to be veiled, especially for religious rites, as uncovered hair could be perceived as the sign of an adulteress (*Num. 5.18*). So whatever the make-up of the women of the Christian assembly at Korinth – Greek, Roman, or even Jewish – their uncovered heads would have broken with a number of social conventions and appeared as anathema to Paul. In view of Kor. 11, two Roman statues found in Korinth warrant particular mention: the first depicts (an over-life-size) Augustus *capite velato*, while another male head represents Nero, the son of Germanicus and Agrippina the Elder, again with head veiled ready to perform sacrifice. When one realizes that these two public Korinthian portraits date from the period
of Paul’s ministry to the city, then one is compelled to think of Paul’s statement that for men a veiled head is a disgrace. It is not impossible to suppose that the Christian community in Korinth would have thought of the imperial statues which were, no doubt, familiar to them, as was indeed the sight of male Romans participating in religious rituals. For the two statues see Johnson 1931 nos. 134 and 137 and Thompson 1988, 101, 103.

106 Eur. fr. 60 Cockle.

107 According to Bond 1963, on line 43, Amphiaraus’ words suggest that Eurydike veils herself only when he appears, not during Hypsipyle’s plea. If this is the case, then her veiling would not be directly related to her silence. He tells her, ‘there is talk all over Greece about the moderation of my eyes’, which suggests that he is respectful of a woman’s desire to veil in front of male strangers, but that does not prove that Eurydike only veiled herself with his arrival.
THE WHITE AND THE BLACK: CONSPICUOUS VEILING

The notion of ‘conspicuous veiling’ may, at first glance, seem absurd, especially so given the notion that the veil acts as a symbolic barrier which renders the wearer socially invisible. This remains the case, but it is important to remember that the act of veiling affords a woman a modicum of expression. But there are other occasions when veiling becomes an expressive act that is intentionally undertaken – often in public – to draw attention to the wearer and to convey a certain message. In particular a woman can accentuate her own sexuality through veiling, and she can use the veil to emphasize a sense of anger or outrage, as well as to express grief and despair. In the case of sexuality, the veil is sometimes consciously used to draw the eye of the observer towards the covered woman; veiling in anger and grief is intended to distance the wearer from social interaction. Both forms of veiling actually compel and solicit the gaze of the viewer and are tenaciously used to invoke an emotional response.

Sex, eroticism and the veil
In his account of the fall of Agrippina the Younger, the emperor Nero’s mother, the Roman historian Tacitus briefly diverts attention from the main thrust of the story to ponder on the nature of Nero’s infatuation with the beautiful but corrupt noblewoman, Poppaea Sabina. Noting her beauty, and her ingrained depravity, he states:

   Poppaea had every asset except goodness. From her mother, the loveliest woman of her day, she inherited distinction and beauty. Her wealth too was equal to her birth. Her speech was clever and elegant and not preposterous. She put forward a front of respectability, but her life was depraved. In her few public appearances she went out with part of her face veiled to arouse curiosity and because it suited her.

In other words, Tacitus notes how Poppaea deliberately contrived to magnify her mystique by making only very occasional public appearances during which time she skilfully veiled herself in such a way that the half-drawn veil highlighted her beauty and charms and captured the imagination of the Roman populace. Her skilled veiling techniques were a deliberate attempt to tease the onlookers with the skilful pretence of appearing modestly covered while effectively heightening her sexuality and her great beauty.
Poppaea was not the first or last woman in history to understand and exploit the inherent dichotomy of the veil; veiling and eroticism are fundamentally linked, as any casual perusal of popular cultural icons, past and present, will quickly reveal. Natasha Rambova’s vampish Salome in the 1922 film version of Oscar Wilde’s notorious play recreates the drawings of Aubrey Beardsley as she self-consciously raises her sheer black veil across her face, allowing her eyes to penetrate those of her male victims (Fig. 164); the chiffon veil does nothing to mask Rambova’s body, instead it highlights the concept of total revelation that has to follow her infamous dance. More ambiguous is Jean-Jacques Lequeu’s astonishing eighteenth-century image (Fig. 165) of a young nun exposing her full breasts and pert nipples by lifting her wimple and veil, an act which plays on an essential uncertainty as to whether the young woman is making a maternal or sexual gesture, or, indeed, if she lifts her garments deliberately for the viewer’s gratification, or whether we have stumbled upon a private moment and caught the nun unawares. Thus, the sexual allure of the veil may be conscientiously exploited by the wearer, or its sexual appeal may derive from a naïve innocence, although its charm may straddle the two poles.

In contemporary veil-societies, a young woman may wear the correct amount of clothing prescribed by her community, so that to all intents and purposes she is beyond reproach, but the manner in which she holds her veil enables her to appropriate audiences an alluring and provocative demeanour, as though she were exposing naked flesh. The veil can have the effect of making the facial features alluringly vague; sometimes it enhances the impression of attractiveness. Veils can draw attention away from physical defects, like wrinkles and lines. Veils also highlight the beauty of pale skin. Many sociologists and dress historians now accept the idea that the deliberate concealing of certain parts of the body does not necessarily discourage sexual interest but often activates sexual stimulation. In fact, a delicious

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*Fig. 164*. Hollywood publicity still of Natasha Rambova as Salome, 1922. Original publicity still from the collection of the author.

*Fig. 165*. Teasing image of a young nun toying with her wimple. Drawing after an engraving, c. 1780. After Bayley 2001.
Chapter 10

The white and the black: conspicuous veiling

In the 1930s the psychiatrist J.C. Flügel famously expounded the theory of the ‘shifting erogenous zone’, a system whereby certain parts of the body (sometimes parts with no direct sexual appeal, like the waist, the back, or the nape of the neck) become temporarily imbued with immense sexual attraction. He noted that areas of the body that were most completely covered became the centre of erotic focus and that momentary glimpses of taboo areas normally hidden behind concealing clothes were and are especially sexual. Drawing on Flügel’s original ideas, Lacan has noted the importance of the ‘rim’ or the ‘cut’ in the sexuality of dress and dressing and suggests that erogenous zones occur at the margins of the body where a cut or a discontinuity is apparent.

When a veil is placed on the head, it creates a rim that frames and emphasizes and sexualizes the face. When it is pulled across the lower face then it forms a cut that highlights the eyes and empowers them with a particular erotic appeal. If the veil is a niqab or a tegidion, then the eyeholes or eye-slits act as rims to sexualize the eyes and the gaze that emanates from them. The cuts, rims, slashes, and openings exploited in veiling can be astonishingly sexualized and can purposely emphasize the correlation between the female head and genitals and hence a woman’s procreative role. As a symbol of the sexual division between men and women, the veil is naturally imbued with a sexuality of its own. The veil endorses the idea that eroticism is omnipresent. In fact, the veil often becomes a sexual lure in its own right, a theme that is frequently found in classical Arabic poetry:

Your black veil entices me,
Opens me to the hunger of desire and envelops me.

Theoretically the veil, which is supposed to protect against external sexual aggression (or internalized sexual pollution), is, in reality, sexy. It advertises sex. By covering the head’s symbolic sexual organs the veil is transformed into an object of fetish. A woman completely enveloped within a veil is completely eroticized; she becomes an object of erotic, often mysterious, desire. A veiled woman has no control over her sexuality; she is a mere object. But that is not to say that, even when strictly veiled, a woman still has power to use her veil to give out certain signals, including sexual ‘come-ons’. The erotic power that can radiate from eyes framed by the slit or rim of a veil can transmit powerful sexual signs. The stare from the eyes of a veiled

Fig. 166. Veiled centre-page pull-out. Re-drawn from Playboy magazine 1986.
woman is a familiar theme in Greek poetry and is also attested in the rare artworks that show veiled women gazing out at the viewer of a vase (Fig. 66; compare Fig. 167). John Chrysostom found the playful eyes of veiled women particularly disturbing, and in a passionate diatribe against the affection of female dress he asked,

> When, though you do not indeed paint the face, you spend so much time and pains washing it, and spread a veil (kalumma) across the forehead, whiter than the face itself, and above that spread a pharos of which the blackness may set off the white by contrast – is there not in all of this vanity in dress? What can one say to the perpetual rolling of the eyes?

Drawing on many centuries of erotic tradition, in the fifth century AD the Greek pseudo-epigraphist Aristaenetus noted the sexual allure of the female gaze semi-hidden by a veil, in two very lively passages. The first reads:

> In the shrines where we beg the gods for release from our sufferings I fell into the most terrible trouble. For I was holding my hands out high and babbling my personal supplication, when, I don’t know how it happened, I was suddenly seized by Love. I turned to you and was arrow-struck at the sight of your beauty and when I saw you I was unable to move my eyes. You, seeing me looking at you (as happens with respectable girls) lightly veiled yourself and turning your neck around you put your hand in front of your face, but you left a bit of cheek showing on the side. Do you want me as a slave?

The second text tells of Pamphilos’ infatuation with the hetaira Thelxinoe, a woman who clearly understands the erotic allure of the veil:

> A woman named Thelxinoe, drawing the gleaming veil over her eyes, like a respectable woman, and looking out from under the rather narrow opening, misleads young men by her tricks, as a wolf is like a dog – a very wild thing like the most gentle thing. Pamphilios was swiftly smitten at the first sight of the beauty emanating through the eyes, like a cow struck by a gadfly.

Pamphilos’ reaction is not dissimilar to that felt by the modern journalist Douglas Botting who, whilst sitting in a Southern Arabian airport waiting-lounge, had a comparable experience:

> Before long I realized that every single male was staring at the person sharing a bench with me. I cast a sideways glance. She was an Arab woman dressed from head-to-toe in black in the strict Moslem way, so that it was impossible to form any impression of her body and even her hands were hidden by black gloves. Out of her entire anatomy only her eyes were visible – and it was on account of these eyes alone (and perhaps her calm, assured, superstar kind of poise) that she attracted the longing stares. They were
sensational eyes – large, brown, liquid, gazelle-like, with clear bright whites, a wide iris and long black lashes. Her skin was pale and she was obviously young. She revealed next to nothing of herself...she did not move or speak – yet she was utterly unforgettable. I turned to look at her again and as I did so she cast a glance at me and I found myself staring at point blank range into those quintessentially erotic eyes. The corner of her eyes crinkled slightly then, and I realized that beneath that all-obscuring veil a smile had formed. Her eyes seemed to signal a conspiratorial look, as if she recognized that we shared a mutual perception of the comic side of the situation. Then she turned back to resume her cool, aloof, unblinking gaze into that sea of yearning male faces – truly an Aphrodite of the desert.¹⁵

According to Makhlouf, Muslim men are allowed to fantasize about the face and body hidden beneath a veil and she recalls how, 'the husband of one of my informants told me that what first attracted him to her was a short glimpse of her face when she happened to lift her veil'.¹⁶ Other anthropological sources speak of subtle ways in which women, particularly unmarried girls, can breach the rules of decorum without incurring sanctions, for it is generally accepted in veil-societies that a woman may lift her veil for a short time should she need to look at something or someone at a distance, or when she announces herself at a door. But, as Aristaenetus confirms, some young women deliberately take advantage of this temporary freedom and will purposely lift their veil earlier or lower it later than is strictly necessary with the result that their faces are uncovered for a longer time than is acceptable, especially if men are present. Makhlouf calls these women ‘veil manipulators’ and notes, I once watched one of my informants go down the inside stairs of a house without covering her face when she knew that there were men on the lower levels of the house and even on the stairs – then she covered her face in feigned surprise... Other women knew this girl as ‘one who will lift their veil and let men see their face’, and they spoke of her with amusement and not severe admonishment.¹⁷

So a sexual awareness can be emphasized by the skilful use of a veil and sexual signals can be transmitted by women despite the apparent restrictive nature of their garments and their position within society as a whole. But working alongside this idea of an active veiled sexuality is one wherein a woman’s passive veiled modesty and chastity, a naivety towards her own sexuality, becomes an erotic turn-on in itself. It might seem paradoxical that the veil, the guarantor of chastity and honour for those who are perceived to warrant that respect, might actually be responsible for sexualizing the chaste and decorous wearer, but the truth of the matter is that sexual innocence is often viewed as desirable. This was certainly true as much of antiquity as it is today, and it is a theme exploited by Chariton in his novel Callirhoe. Towards the end of the work Chareas is reunited with his true love, Callirhoe, the heroine of the story:

So Chareas crossed the threshold into the room. The moment he saw her, reclining, and veiled though she was, his heart was stirred by the way she breathed and looked, and he was stirred with excitement... While he was still speaking, Callirhoe recognized his voice and unveiled and at the same moment they cried out: ‘Chareas!’ ‘Callirhoe!’¹⁸
Moreover, for a Greek male a circumspect display of 

\textit{aidōs} or \textit{sōphrosynē} on the part of a woman or a young man was frequently regarded as a sexual stimulus (in the case of male youths that desirability can be enhanced by a circumspect veiling in which the body is fully enveloped in cloth or by a more obvious feminization of the male body by means of dress and accessories).\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Aidōs}, after all, was one of the first gifts that Hephaistos instilled in his temptingly veiled clay virgin, Pandora.\textsuperscript{20}

The difference between active and passive awareness of the erotic effects of veiling can be illustrated by two cases – those of Hera and Penelope in the \textit{Iliad} and \textit{Odyssey} respectively. A notable motif found throughout ancient Greek literature is that of dressing: in Homer, for instance, as a counterpoint to the scenes showing wealthy warriors arming themselves, we find depictions of women (that is to say goddesses) dressing in multiple layers of rich clothing. Some of these accounts are mere outlines,\textsuperscript{21} but others are much more substantial and give us an invaluable insight into a woman’s wardrobe of the Homeric age. The dressing of Hera at \textit{Iliad} 14.170–86 is a particularly interesting example (as a motif, it can be compared with the toilette of Aphrodite in two of the Homeric Hymns).\textsuperscript{22} In the Hera episode the dressing theme is used to draw attention to the attractiveness and sexuality of the goddess as well as to indicate their obvious divine status. The same motif is found in Near Eastern hymns to Inanna and Ištar and invokes similar allusions to the erotic powers of the deities. Inanna is said to be dressed in ‘clothes of power’,\textsuperscript{23} while in the famous ‘Descent of Ištar into the Underworld’, the naked goddess systematically receives her divine powers as seven layers of clothing (representing the ‘me’, or powers of divinity) are placed on her body. While she is deprived of her clothes and wanders naked in the underworld, she is powerless and therefore subjugated to the will of others, but when she is dressed she is imbued with her full erotic potential for greatness.\textsuperscript{24} The motif of beautiful clothes and adornments which express Hera’s power as a fertility goddess and her consequent captivation of Zeus, is also essential to Ištar whose qualities of love and sexual arousal are also embodied in her clothes.\textsuperscript{25}

In both Near Eastern and Greek sources, the veil is used as a climax to the dressing scenes. The voyeuristic peep into the goddess’ boudoir at \textit{Iliad} 14 avails us of the rare sight of Hera anointing her body with fragrant oils to make her skin shine. In her preparation for her seduction of Zeus, after combing and plaiting her hair, Hera begins dressing herself with artful skill. She pins on a sweet-smelling patterned robe crafted for her by Athene and holds it in at the waist with a special tasselled \textit{zonē}, and places drop-earrings in her ears which shine with \textit{kharis}. Then as a final ornament in her armoury of seduction, Hera throws over her head a beautiful veil:

\begin{quote}
Lovely among the goddesses, she veiled her head downward with a sweet fresh veil; it was as white as the sun.\textsuperscript{26}
\end{quote}

The veil is seen as the perfect culmination to Hera’s preparation for the sexual act, it completes her outfit and the sexualization of her person. It is an image that finds a parallel in Mesopotamian literature, particularly in the hymns to the sex-goddess Ištar, who is not infrequently portrayed in the act of preparing herself to meet her
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lover Dumuzi. In one hymn she tells how,

I bathed for the Wild Bull.
I bathed for the shepherd Dumuzi,
I perfumed my sides with ointment,
I coated my mouth with sweet-smelling amber,
I painted my eyes with kohl.

Then, once she is prepared, a chorus takes up the refrain:

She is clothed with pleasure and love.
She is laden with vitality, charm, and voluptuousness.
Ištar is clothed with pleasure and love…
At her appearance rejoicing becomes full.
She is glorious.
Veils are thrown over her head.27

Again, veiling provides the finishing touch. The climax of Hera’s dressing-scene with her veiling is also reflected in the Hesiodic myth of Pandora who, as her toilette nears completion, is veiled with an elaborately worked veil by Athene; it becomes the culmination of Pandora’s arsenal of desire and deceit which brings about the fall of mankind.28 Echoing the early epic theme, Apollonius of Rhodes envisages the veil as the crowning glory of a woman’s sexual charms as he described Medea’s preparation for her first meeting with Jason in the Argonautika. She begins by bathing and anointing herself with oils, plaiting her hair, perfuming her cheeks, slipping on a delicate robe, and finally covering her head with a silvery veil (kaluptrēn argupheēn) which she subsequently uses to great effect (by raising it and lowering it across her face) in front of the love-smitten Jason.29 Like the veils worn by the goddesses, Medea’s veil is put on in order to beguile, tempt, and seduce; its seductive quality is fully realized by the wearer and she deliberately wears it to achieve her desired end.

To contrast with the deliberately erotic veiling decisions of Hera and her compatriots, Penelope’s acts of veiling throughout the Odyssey are not self-conscious decisions on her part to seduce her suitors, instead her veiling-acts are intended to help maintain her dignity, highlight her chastity and modesty, magnify her social rank as wife and queen, and instil a proper sense of aidōs in those who threaten her honour. Penelope’s concern with the preservation of her aidōs and the honour of her absent husband is stressed by the use of her (veiled?) amphipoloi who circumspectly accompany her into the hall. She certainly has no intention of encouraging or arousing her suitors any further with a deliberate display of erotic veiling. However, the intended response is not realized, and as Penelope draws her shining veil (lipara krēdemna) across her face,

On the spot, the knees of the suitors were loosened, indeed with desire in their hearts they were enchanted, and they all lifted up prayers to lie beside her in bed.30

Then again, at least one ancient source questions the motivation behind Penelope’s public and deliberate act of veiling in this rather risqué setting, because we find that
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the fourth-century polymath Dicaearchus of Messana came down heavily on her questionable morality when he claimed that Penelope’s veiling was a calculated and shamefaced act of titillation. He is cited in Porphyry’s commentary on *Odyssey* 1.332:

Dicaearchus criticizes Homer’s Penelope on the basis of these lines: ‘When the great queen had reached the suitors, she halted beside the pillar that bore the massy roof, her shining veil drawn over her cheeks…’ He says that she is not at all well-behaved: first because she appears in person before the drunken suitors; secondly because when she covered the most beautiful parts of her face with her veil she left the eyes alone to be seen – that kind of posturing is unnecessary and contrived, as is having maids stand beside her. In both respects he shows that the appearance of exceptional beauty is not achieved without contrivance.

To counter this argument Porphyry questions Dicaearchus’ understanding of Homeric custom and seeks to show how Penelope acts in accordance with the etiquette of the time and that she appears in public without rousing criticism. Accordingly, he cites the cases of Arete, Helen, and Nausikaa. He further notes that Penelope had no intention of arousing the sexual passions of her suitors, but that she used her veil to hide and wipe away her tears; she does not, he says, veil herself out of any morally-questionable motive:

If she veils her head and face, she does this because she is ashamed to cry in company, not because she is acting like a courtesan through this artifice.

He qualifies this by alluding to Odysseus’ act of veiling his head and face during the Phaiakian banquet in order to hide his tears and asks,

If Odysseus, a man, was ashamed to be seen weeping at a symposium and covered his head and face, how much more is his good-breeding appropriate to Penelope? For is such a sense of shame not so well established among men?

Whatever the intention, the effect which Penelope’s veiling has on the suitors is not dissimilar to that which Helen’s veiled appearance has on the old noblemen of Troy who, when she approaches them at the city walls, liken her to the immortal goddesses. Both incidents are reminiscent of a passage in Xenophon’s *Cyropaedia* where the motif of a veiled woman’s unwitting sexuality is highlighted in the novella of Panthea, the Lady of Susa:

When we [Araspas and the Persian officers] came into the tent, we did not make her [Panthea] out at first, for she was seated on the ground with all her women around her, and she wore the same clothes as her slaves, but when we looked at them all to discover their mistress, we soon saw that one outshone all the others, even though she was veiled and kept her eyes on the ground. And when we told her to rise, all her women rose with her, and then we saw that she was marked out from them all by her height, and her noble bearing, and her grace, and the beauty that shone through her ragged clothes. And, under the veil, we could see big teardrops trickling down her robes to her feet… But…the lady…tore the veil that covered her head and gave a pitiful cry, while her women lifted up their voices and wept with their mistress. And so we could
see her face, and her neck, and her arms, and I tell you... I myself and all who looked on her, felt that there never was, and never has been, in all of Asia a mortal woman half so fair as she.\(^{35}\)

Here again the veil is used to great effect and Xenophon clearly draws on the example of Homeric epic: Panthea is depicted as a second Penelope, for she stays veiled (\textit{kekkalummenē}) in front of strangers, and is surrounded by maidservants. Like Penelope, Panthea is a loyal wife separated from her husband, she is tall and beautiful, but has no desire to look attractive for any man except her husband and so she sits on the ground with her women.\(^{36}\) Like the suitors who eagerly wait to gaze behind Penelope’s veil, so Araspas and the Persian officers long to see behind Panthea’s coverings. As she weeps, and they notice a tear flowing down her veiled cheek, the tension grows. Finally in an outcry of grief, and in perfect accord with Homeric women, Panthea tears off her veil and the male gaze is sated by the sight of her face, neck and arms.

But neither Helen, Penelope nor Panthea deliberately sets out to seduce. Even though Helen’s act of veiling stimulates the aged men into comparing her to female divinities, her honour is not compromised by their affectionate musings. In contrast, Penelope and Panthea’s veiling stimulates a genuine and threatening erotic desire in their male observers and rouses their passions to such an extent that, in Penelope’s case, the suitors (silently) offer up prayers for their sexual satisfaction in Penelope’s bed. Penelope is in real danger of sexual assault.

The veil is the projector of sexual \textit{kharis}.\(^{37}\) The positive allure of Penelope’s veil is enhanced by its association with brightness and by its description as \textit{liparos}, a word that has as its core meaning ‘fat’ or ‘greasy’ (as used by the parodist Matron).\(^{38}\) When used of earth it implies fertility; when used of the human body or skin it has the meaning ‘sleek’ and ‘healthy’.\(^{39}\) When used of veils associated with Homeric women it suggests abundant fertility. Therefore the epithet \textit{liparokrēdēmenos} is used of Hekate, a goddess frequently associated with abundance, increase, and fertility,\(^{40}\) and the same applies to Rhea, the mother-goddess.\(^{41}\) Shining-veiled deities are often placed at the juncture of a story in which the mood of the plot changes; indeed, the appearance of the dazzlingly-veiled deities often heralds that change. Hekate and Rhea appear in the Homeric Hymn to Demeter just as the goddess’ mood begins to transform from grief to joy as she is summoned to Olympus, while in the \textit{Iliad} the goddess Kharis, the wife of Hephaistos, also wears a shining veil as she welcomes the grieving sea-goddess Thetis into the society of the gods on Mount Olympus.\(^{42}\) The shining veils of the female deities literally lighten the mood of the epic storylines.

The shining veil reiterates feminine fertility both with its doubled association of wetness and moisture and its privileging of the head, the symbolic seat (because of its association with the female genitals) of fertility and birth. According to the Homeric \textit{Hymn to Hestia}, the goddess of the life-sustaining hearth is welcomed into the home with liquid oil dripping from her hair,\(^{43}\) and in exactly the same manner the shining \textit{krēdēmenon} can suggest abundant fertility in its function as a head-covering imbued
with life-giving moisture. *Liparos* is the most common epithet of *krēdēmnon*, although it should be noted that it is also used of the *kaluptrē* worn by Hekabe, the mother of Priam’s many children.

In addition to the oily moisture of the veil, it is its shining property that makes the *krēdēmnon* or *kaluptrē* particularly attractive, and MacLachlan has shown how the concept of *kharis* is endorsed by visually compelling twinkling and notes that, ‘sparkling beauty was erotically attractive to the Greek eye.’ Thus the oiling and perfuming of the skin, the wearing of glistening jewellery, and the donning of shining robes denote *kharis*, a concept of sparkling exquisiteness that works in tandem with the Greek’s irresistible love of light.

Hera’s veil is described as being so dazzlingly white that it shines like the sun, and the word *leukos* (white) is used by Homer on at least sixty occasions where it is usually imbued with positive qualities that often include connotations of light. According to Aristotle, white was seen as a stable and easily definable colour and was naturally concocted from a transparent mixture of water and air and so was the colour of any diaphanously shining substance. Therefore, stars are naturally shiny because they reflect rays of light and bounce them back to the human eye, while air, water and many solids also have a transparency that leads to glistening whiteness. When Hera and Zeus make love on the summit of Mount Ida they do so discreetly veiled within a white cloud which reflects the sun’s rays and glistens with drops of dew that gleam as brightly as Hera’s shining veil.

A study of the Homeric references to shining cloth has discovered that gleaming garments are very much part of Homeric tradition; of the garment types described as *liparos*, shining veils predominate and the number of references to the *liparokrēdēmnos* far outweighs any other type of clothing. The references to these special garments might be linked to the Mycenaean industry of perfuming fabric. Through a boiling process, linen and wool could be imbued with sweet-smelling perfumes that would simultaneously make the cloth fragrant and shiny, and even though the practice of perfuming cloth died out with the Bronze Age, it still found a, ‘distorted and specialized role in Homer’.

The epithets attached to the Homeric words for veil (including the *pharos*) suggest that the garments were made from finely woven linen or well-spun wool. Wool and linen are called *liparos* in epic and both fabrics were seemingly considered suitable for perfuming. However, while a hand-woven woollen fabric could possibly be called *malakos* (soft), it could hardly be described as ‘shining like the sun’, a depiction that is easier to believe of bleached linen. Two Homeric passages demonstrate that oil was clearly used in the weaving of cloth, which would have the effect of producing a shiny appearance. The slave women in the palace of Alkinoos are described at their looms weaving cloth from the soft olive oil, while on the shield of Akhilleus, dancing youths wear garments that are perfumed with oil.

Allusions to shining cloth and the association of fabrics with oil appear only infrequently in later archaic and classical sources and all but disappear after the fifth century, which suggests that, essentially, the perfuming of fabrics was a Homeric
The white and the black: conspicuous veiling

idea. It was an expensive treatment, no doubt, which implies that the veils found in epic sources – many of which bear the epithet *liparos* – were a preserve of the wealthiest and most influential women.

Whatever the social ramifications of shining cloth, it is clear that shining *veils* were regarded as visually appealing and erotically stimulating. Hera’s glistening veil is calculatedly used as an erotic prop that seduces, quells, and deceives Zeus. At its extreme, however, the paradox of the good-wife’s covered head is symbolized in Penelope’s shining veil as an emblem of wifely modesty and social identity but also of sexual magnetism. In *Odyssey* 18 Penelope’s veil shimmers with perfumed oil, just as her skin gleams with sweet-smelling unguents, and her head-dress betokens chastity even as its sheen bespeaks fertility and sexual allure. By covering her face with her glistening veil and thereby denying her suitors what they most desire, Penelope stresses the erotic appeal of strictly observed *aidôs*. Like Hera’s sun-white veil, Penelope’s shining *kûrêðémon* marks her out as the most desirable of wives.

**Veil-dancing**

One more category of erotic veiling belongs to a more public form of conscious display, namely dance. It is generally accepted that from the archaic period onwards, public dancing was primarily performed by women (there are obvious exceptions, since men performed dances in ritualistic, choral, and military contexts, and less formally in drunken night-time revels). The fragmentary evidence for female dancers (professional and non-professional) is scattered throughout predominantly late sources, although it is clear that there were many forms of public and semi-public context for dance performance in the archaic, classical, and hellenistic periods; the evidence for women as dance-performers is strong.\(^{55}\) Public performers were by definition highly visible and perhaps the majority of public dancing women came from the margins of ‘respectable’ society, as is the case, for example, in contemporary Egyptian society where the social opinions regarding female dancers are widely diverse.\(^{56}\) Members of the elite classes (particularly wealthy women) tend to condemn dancers as immoral, while women of the lower classes, closer to the status of the performers themselves, tend to present them banally as ordinary working women. But it is more difficult to assess the position of female dancers in ancient Greek society where the fluid margins of female social status, especially in regard to various types of hetairai, no doubt affected attitudes to dancers and dance performances as much as they did the wider issues of visibility and invisibility.\(^{57}\) No doubt there were trained girls hired specifically to dance at symposia and other gatherings (maybe even at weddings), while other girls dabbled in dance and performed in public or semi-public, but could not be considered specialists. At the top end of the market the great courtesan might perform a dance for her wealthy client(s) as a special ‘treat’, much in the same way that a grand *geisha* of Kyoto might perform a skilled, elegant, and well-rehearsed dance for her specially honoured client or patron.\(^{58}\) There is, therefore, considerable ambiguity regarding the status of dancing women encountered in the sources.
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Red-figure paintings of veiled dancers are rare, but they do exist. The earliest evidence for veiled dancers occurs on the red-figure Mount Holyoak krater of c. 450–440 (Fig. 66), where five pharos-veiled women dance to the tune played by a sixth woman on her aulos. These women, of unspecified social rank, can be compared with a similarly veiled dancer on a contemporary oinochoe by the Phiale Painter (?) now in the Ashmolean Museum (Fig. 168). It shows a dancing pharos-veiled woman staring at a naked dancing ithyphallic dwarf but separated from him by a flying phallus-bird, images which might suggest that the veiled dancer and the dwarf must be performing some kind of erotic dance, perhaps a religious rite performed, perhaps, at the Haloa. In the Oxford oinochoe the movements of the dwarf seems to imitate those of the veiled dancer (both lift one leg and lean forward), which suggests that they perform a dance in unison. By placing the ithyphallic dwarf in such close proximity to the veiled woman, the Oxford scene might be implying a sexual potency and availability appropriate for certain types of religious rites, of which the Haloa, with its emphasis on sexual symbols, ribaldry, feasting, and rejuvenation, might have been considered particularly apt. However, it is not strictly necessary to connect such images to ritual practice, and it is just as feasible to read the Oxford oinochoe as a scene depicting a more casual (but still erotic, or even comic) dance-performance at, say, a symposium. Five scenes on wine vessels show naked dwarf entertainers dancing in pairs, and three of the scenes are definitely located at a symposium, the setting where female dancers are commonly found performing. The Oxford pot, which lacks a scenic location, could easily represent a sympotic dance-performance by two hired entertainers, but it could just as easily show two participants in a religious ritual, or it might simply be regarded an eccentric scene of dancers that does not need a precise setting nor, indeed, a logical explanation. It might be enough to say that the figures of the naked dwarf, the phallus-bird, and the intense gaze of the heavily veiled woman act as labels that can simply be read as ‘sex’ or, perhaps, ‘quirky sex’, or simply as ‘comical’.  

There are, however, some fourth-century representations, mainly from South Italy, that illustrate veiled dancers in an indisputably theatrical context which suggests that these veiled women are trained and paid professionals. Fig. 169, for instance, shows a frontal-facing dancer veiled in a richly patterned pharos. She raises her concealed arm in a dance movement as she simultaneously lifts herself up onto her toes. She is accompanied on the aulos by a seated woman who is heavily arrayed with jewellery, and both performers seen to be placed on a decorated platform or
stage while on the wall behind them hangs a piece of cloth (perhaps the pipe-girl’s veil) and what appears to be a looped sash or belt with tassel or pom-pom trimmings. A scene from a comedy (Fig. 170) depicts an elegant pharos-veiled dancer raising herself up on her sandaled toes as she turns away from the male figure who stands next to her; she covers her face with her veiled hand.

Another (and somewhat richer) source for the study of veiled dancers are the terracotta ‘Tanagra’ figurines dating to the hellenistic era. Most of them, especially those of superior quality such as the bronze veiled dancer in the Metropolitan Museum (Fig. 72), are thought to have been produced as votive offerings at sanctuaries and this has led certain scholars to suggest that they represent temple dancers and, moreover, to assume that veiling was carried out as a religious act. But this is to seriously limit the use of the veil in Greek social life, and it is better to concur with Dorothy Burr Thompson that, ‘veiling can scarcely have a religious connotation… There is no reason to ascribe the veiling of the head to religious grounds.’ Instead, Thompson correctly stresses the importance of veiling in daily life in hellenistic society and underlines the use of the veil as a garment that is much used in that period to emphasize the ‘playfulness’ of the age, since, ‘revelations of identity motivate much of the drama and fiction of hellenistic times. Plutarch tells us how the great revelled in disguises.’

The Metropolitan bronze veil-dancer might be one of the professional mimes that appeared in Alexandria and other Greek cities during the hellenistic period. According to the later Church Fathers, these mimes portrayed characters without the use of words, but that they employed masks or face-veils as part of their performance in what we might call ‘interpretive dance’. The Metropolitan dancer might well fit the description of a mime well if ‘we consider that her veil acts as a mask to suggest a type of woman familiar on the streets of Alexandria’. The veiled-dancer is dressed in contemporary clothing and deliberately sexualizes the every-day appearance of Alexandrian women in her mime performance. In fact a passage
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from Philogelos’ *Joke Book* (a compendium of earlier texts compiled in the fourth century AD) plays on the notion that when hidden behind a face-veil it is impossible to tell a lady from a whore:

The lady of a house had a simple-headed slave. But when she got a peek at just how thick his other head was also, she lusted after him. She put a veil over her face so that he wouldn’t recognize her, and played around with him. Joining her game, he had sex with her. Then, grinning as he usually did, he reported to his master: ‘Sir, sir, I fucked the dancer and the mistress was inside!’

Modern-day erotic veil-dancing (or ‘belly-dancing’) is frequent in the men-only clubs of modern cities Cairo and Damascus, but whether striptease was a typical dénouement for the veiled dancers of antiquity is open to question. Certainly, an ancient professional dance called the ‘ladle’ or ‘stirring-dance’ was literally intended to ‘stir up’ the passions of a male audience, perhaps by the removal of clothing and the swivelling of the hips, a technique still employed by modern belly-dancers. In his *Letters of Courtesans*, the second-century AD author Alkiphron relates an amusing tale of a contest between two such dancers, Thryallis and Myrrhina, on the question of who possessed the loveliest buttocks. Each woman displays her charms through a dance movement that we might today recognize as the ‘shimmy’. The ‘letter’ – purportedly from one hetaira to another – suggests that these women were not averse to shedding a few layers of clothing:

But the thing that gave us the greatest pleasure, anyhow, was a serious rivalry that took place between Thryallis and Myrrhina in the matter of buttocks – as to which could display the lovelier, softer pair. And first Myrrhina untied her waist-sash (her little chiton was silk), and began to shake her hips (visible through her dress), which quivered… [and] she looked back at the wiggling of her buttocks. And so gently, as if she were in the act, she sighed a bit, that by Aphrodite, I was thunderstruck. Thryallis, nevertheless, did not give up; on the contrary she outdid Myrrhina in wantonness. ‘I certainly am not going to compete behind a curtain (*parapetasmatón*’), she said, ‘nor with any affectation of coyness…’ So she took off her little chiton and… said, ‘There now, look at the colour, how youthful, Myrrhina, how pure, how free from blemish; see these rosy hips, how they merge into the thighs, how there’s neither too much plumpness or any thinness, and the dimples at the tips. But, by Zeus, they don’t quiver’, she said with a sly smile, ‘like Myrrhina’s.’ And then she made her buttocks vibrate so fast, swaying their whole bulk above the hips this way and that with such an undulating motion, that we all applauded and declared that the victory was Thryallis’s.

Maurice Emmanuel’s lively study of Greek dance techniques lays particular emphasis on erotic dancing, particularly when performed with a veil, and notes the coquettish attitudes adopted by veil dancers in the terracotta statuettes and vase paintings. He notes that one dance, in which the performer first grasps her enveloping mantle-veil by its border and then raises it on high so that the veil floats in great folds, ‘seems to have been devised for the sole purpose of affording an opportunity to play with the veil’. An Apulian kalyx-krater of c. 350 seems to depict an enticing striptease being performed by a woman wearing little more than
a necklace, earrings, bracelets and anklets (Fig. 171). The naked woman toys with her veil and tantalizingly waves it in front of her as she dances for a male audience; the veil emphasizes her nudity.\(^\text{77}\)

The puzzling dichotomy that confronts us in the figures of the more reserved veiled dancers who are modestly covered but swathed in such a way that their enticing movements beneath the veil arouse desire and anticipate the removal of the garment and (perhaps) other layers of clothing, is the underlying theme of the story of Salome, the infamous Jewish princess who, through her veil-dancing, is popularly conceived as having brought about the death of John the Baptist. Her ‘Dance of the Seven Veils’ is perhaps the most famous ‘Oriental dance’ in Western culture, immortalized in Oscar Wilde’s 1893 lyric-drama Salomé and Richard Strauss’ opera of 1905, in which the princess systematically removes all of her clothing as she dances for the pleasure of king Herod and at the desperate behest of her mother, Queen Herodias.\(^\text{78}\)

But in neither of the two New Testament accounts of the Baptist’s death is there, in fact, a description of Salome’s dance.\(^\text{79}\) The closest we get is the information provided by Mark: ‘For when Herodias’ daughter came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests.\(^\text{80}\)

Even the name Salome is omitted from the New Testament account, she is simply known as the daughter of Herodias and Philip and thus the stepdaughter of Philip’s brother Herod Antipas, and it is only through Josephus that we know her as Salome, although he does not credit her with a dance that results in the death of the Baptist.\(^\text{81}\) Despite the later traditions that grew up around Salome and her Dance of the Seven Veils (particularly in the Late Antique and Byzantine periods), it is unlikely that in the first century AD a young noblewoman of the hellenized Jewish court would have performed at a male entertainment; indeed it is questionable as to whether even queen Herodias’ presence would have been considered acceptable.\(^\text{82}\) Nevertheless, the subsequent late-Victorian and early-twentieth-century image of a pure young girl sexualized by her veil-dance continues to be appealing, and does manage to capture the ambiguity of the eroticly concealing but simultaneously conspicuous veil. After all, the Salome myth draws on the ancient Herodotean theory that a woman sheds her modesty with her clothing; in Salome’s case, her youthful innocence is cast off in seven layers, and as her seven veils fall to the floor, systematically revealing more of her body, her sexuality and desirable fertility are fully exposed.\(^\text{83}\)

The eroticism of the ancient Greek veil depends on the idea that it covers and conceals the female body and keeps it chaste and secure. But in concealing the figure, the same veil highlights the body’s sexuality and makes it desirable. Men expect
women to veil in order that they can be unveiled. Veiling temporarily denies men access to women’s sexuality, but the rebuff itself is an erotic turn-on. Women and girls can toy with this veiling in a deliberate (even professional) bid to arouse male desire, or they may unwittingly contribute to the eroticization of veiling simply by conforming to social norms. In that case the erotic display centred upon veiling can be entirely unselfconscious. Whatever the case, the veil, so often described in Greek texts as glistening, gleaming, and dazzlingly-white, is linked to desirable female fertility and sexuality and is highly conspicuous.

Veiled anger, concealed grief
The use of the eye-catching veil can often highlight other emotions or situations, because veiling can express anger and grief. In Euripides’ Medea, for example, according to the report that the messenger brings to Medea, upon Jason’s arrival into Glauke’s bridal house, the princess was overjoyed to see her prospective husband. But her elation quickly turned to anger when she realized that Jason was accompanied by the two children borne to him by his foreign wife. At the sight of the boys Glauke’s physical response to her anger is visually manifested by her action of drawing her veil across her face:

Afterwards, though, she veiled her eyes, her cheek turned white, and she turned herself away from him, so disgusted was she at the children coming there. But your husband tried to end the girl’s bad temper and said, ‘You must not look unkindly on your loved-ones. Cease being angry. Turn your head to me again. Take as your loved-ones the same ones that your husband has. And take these gifts, and beg your father to reprieve these children from exile. Do it for my sake.’

Glauke’s action serves two purposes: firstly, her veiling separates her from circumstances that she considers undesirable, so that the presence of Medea’s children and the shame of having to acknowledge them publicly are simultaneously ‘removed’ by the blockage imposed by the veil. Secondly, Glauke’s veiling and enforced separation is not intended to be a private act, because her public demonstration of deliberate concealment and separation is intended to inform any viewers about her emotional state, in this case, her anger. By her action Jason is immediately made aware of Glauke’s temperament and is forced to quell her rage there and then; he is fully aware that by veiling herself Glauke is making a public display of her displeasure at the humiliation of having to receive her rival’s offspring.

A similar reasoning accounts for an incident of male veiling recalled by Herodotus who states that the explanation of why Demaratus left his homeland for Media lay in his public humiliation in the theatre at the Gymnopedai when Leotychidas, who had taken over the kingship in his stead, insulted him by calculatingly drawing attention to his diminished status. Angry and embarrassed, Demaratus veiled his head and left the theatre. Herodotus makes it clear that Demaratus’ angry response was a direct result of the humiliation he suffered in public, which makes his reaction and his subsequent veiling not dissimilar to that of Glauke. The
princess and the ex-king veil themselves to perform a symbolic forced separation from their surroundings and to make an overt public demonstration of their anger. This heated withdrawal behind the veil is as blatant as the sexual and erotic messages that the veil can also emit.

This angry concealment within the folds of a veil is, of course, a particularly striking feature of the iconography of the heroes Akhilleus and Aias, and may well have influenced their portrayal this way on the Athenian stage. Yet in the *Iliad* Akhilleus does not veil himself to express his anger but instead he physically withdraws from the company of his fellow Achaeans to communicate his mood. Similarly, in Sophokles’ *Ajax* the hero spends much of the first half of the play within his tent, bemoaning his humiliation in a way that, according to Tekmessa’s report, he usually scorns. But the very act of separation and withdrawal indoors feminizes the heroes, just as the act of veiling can feminize a man; a man’s seclusion indoors or beneath a veil reduces a man to the status of a woman, for what is a woman after all but a dishonoured man?

Veiling as an expression of anger can often be found in the Greek texts as part of a wider standard pattern of anger–withdrawal–return. In the *Iliad*, for example, in addition to Akhilleus’ angry alienation, Meleager’s fury at his mother is expressed by his withdrawal from society into the bedroom of his wife, Kleopatra. The elders of the Aetolians beg him to come out and aid their fight against the Kouretes who are laying siege to the city of Kalydon, and their entreaties are later reinforced by Meleager’s father and even by his mother, but it is only when Kleopatra informs him about the devastating sack of Kalydon that he is finally stirred into action by donning his armour and entering the fray.

The same theme is famously followed in the Homeric Hymn to Demeter, where the goddess’ anger at the abduction of her daughter is manifested in her irate withdrawal first from the other gods and then from mankind, before her eventual return to divine and human society. Her *mēnis*, or ‘wrath’, is shown in a physical separation from those around her and in the highly visible act of veiling. When the goddess hears that her daughter is not dead but held captive in Hades, Demeter’s gesture of covering herself with a black veil signifies her transformation from the passive state of sorrow into an active state of fury. The language employed in the Hymn stresses her anger as she rips off her *krēdemnon* and throws on a *kalumma*:

> Sharp grief seized her heart, and she ripped the veil (*krēdemna*) from her ambrosial hair with her own hands. She threw a dark veil (*kalumma*) over both her shoulders and sped like a bird over dry land and sea, searching.

In the *Hymn to Demeter*, the plot-pattern of the goddess’ wrath, withdrawal, and return serves to bring the worlds of mortals and immortals together for a brief moment and there are similarities between the *mēnis* of Demeter in the *Hymn* and that of Akhilleus in the *Iliad*. The *mēnis* of both the goddess and the hero ultimately stems from the abduction of a woman (Kore or Briseis) who becomes the wife or concubine of the abductor (Hades or Agamemnon) and the subsequent
withdrawal of the hero and the goddess brings about immense losses for the Greeks and a devastating famine throughout the world. In epic tradition, Akhilleus’ mēnis is expressed by his departure from the field, although by the classical period his anger is articulated by the use of veiling, but Demeter’s anger is explicitly publicized through her act of veiling; she remains enveloped in her dark kalumma until her mēnis is appeased and her grief is finally dispelled. The combination of anger and grief prompts her behaviour throughout lines 195–205 of the Homeric Hymn where, until she is amused by Iambe’s jests, she rejects all social interaction by refusing to sit, by avoiding eye-contact and then, when finally seated, by veiling herself, remaining silent, and refusing sustenance. Once again, her veiled alienation has the effect of drawing others to her. These gestures of inactivity and deliberate withdrawal are, of course, the mythical origin for the Eleusinian mystery rituals, but are nonetheless motivated on a personal and emotional level for the goddess of the Hymn.94

At Phygalia in Arkadia, the goddess was worshipped in this angry aspect as Demeter Melania (‘The Dark’) and was seen as a goddess who veiled herself because of the grief she suffered at the loss of Kore and because of the intense anger she felt at her own sexual violation by Poseidon.95 Pausanias also records that Demeter was worshipped by the Thelpusians as Demeter Erinys (‘The Fury’) because, as she was searching for her daughter, she was raped by Poseidon and became so enraged that she was given the title Erinys in commemoration of her divine wrath.96 Demeter in her two aspects of Melania and Erinys is seen as a vengeful, wrathful goddess conspicuously wrapped in black veils.97

There is one more candidate in epic for veiling as an expression of anger: Thetis. At Book 24 of the Iliad, lines 87–96, Thetis wishes to distance herself from the other gods and expresses her mood by the donning of a black kalumma:

Iris the swift-foot came close beside her and spoke to her: ‘Rise Thetis. Zeus whose purposes are infinite calls you.’ In turn Thetis the goddess, the silver-footed, answered her: ‘What does he, the great god, want with me? I feel shame to mingle with immortals, and my heart is grieved with sorrows. But I will go. No word shall be in vain if he says it.’ So she spoke, and shining among divinities took up her black veil, and there is no darker garment. She went on her way, and in front of her rapid wind-footed Iris guided her.98

Thetis’ disposition can be deciphered because it is so neatly paralleled by Demeter’s action and mood, and also because the Iliad presupposes that Thetis is unforgiving in her hatred for Zeus, the god who abandoned her and gave her in marriage to a mortal man. Akhilleus, the mortal child of her union with Peleus, can never claim the lordship of the universe and must therefore be content with his lot as the foremost of the heroes. Since Thetis’ grief cannot be at Akhilleus’ death, then it must be at the loss of what she thinks should rightly be hers, namely, her child’s divinity. Accordingly Slatkin argues that, ‘The image of the goddess taking up her kalumma kuaneon may be seen…as alluding to the implicit threat of mēnis. That Thetis wears a dark [veil]…accords with her having a cosmic potential for revenge.’99
However, Cairns has questioned whether the goddess’ emotional state in this passage is really one of anger, although he concedes that there is some parallel with Demeter’s dark kalumma and its association with anger. It may be better to regard Thetis’ veiling as a manifestation of her feelings of grief and anger combined, a mixed emotion aroused by the imminent loss of a son unjustly condemned to fragile mortality. Fate often deals a bitter blow to mothers in epic and tragedy and it is something of a commonplace to find the despair of a mother grieving the death of a child turn into something more powerful as grief gives way to bitter wrath.

Veiling as an expression of anger is for the most part alien to Western thought. It is common in some modern veil-societies however, most noticeably among male Tuareg who have adopted styles of draping the *tagelmust* to create a complex set of signals for an individual’s mood and status. Whenever male honour is at stake, a Tuareg man will veil much of his face, exposing only his eyes, the bridge of his nose and cheekbones in a gesture called *amawal*, or ‘guard’, an act which is understood to protect the individual’s honour. A more austere form of veiling called *temedert* (‘reserve’) creates a barrier which is meant to be read as a force that compels restraint and restriction.

For the Tuareg, veiling and honour are closely connected, a relationship that is also stressed in the Greek sources. To possess *aidôs* means that one is aware of how to present oneself to others and how to show a level of regard and respect that can be expressed by lowering the eyes or veiling the head. To be *anaidês*, however, is to be unconcerned with how one appears to others and deliberately to initiate eye contact in circumstances which are considered inappropriate. For the Greeks, anger was frequently connected with honour, so that as an expression of anger, veiling can be regarded as a breach of normal reciprocity. When offended, the affronted party breaks off communication with the community and steps outside by veiling or by some other act of physical removal. A man veils when honour is impugned but a woman, whose honour is always marred when compared with that of men (especially her male kin), should ideally remain indoors or circumspectly veiled. However, she is permitted to express her anger, shame, or emotional state, and consequently a display of these emotions can be achieved through the conspicuous act of veiling in public. That act might take the form of replacing one veil with another – in the case of Demeter and Thetis it means casting off a normal veil and replacing it with a black one.

The so-called *Altar of Kleomenes* dates to the second century (but is possibly based on an earlier classical model); it depicts the sacrifice of Iphigeneia (*Fig. 172*). It shows a bearded male – possibly Kalkhas – veiling or unveiling Iphigeneia, who is accompanied by a naked youth – probably Akhilleus. On the far right, standing beneath a tree, is Agamemnon: his head and face are veiled and he raises his hands to his head in an attitude of joint grief and shame brought about by his allowing his
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The white and the black: conspicuous veiling daughter to be sacrificed to Artemis. A wall painting from the House of the Tragic Poet at Pompeii famously recalls the same scene: this time, though, Odysseus and Diomedes carry off the young girl while Kalkhas, who ordained that the sacrifice had to be made, holds his hand up to his mouth in the traditional attitude of consternation. On the edge of the Roman composition stands Agamemnon, his face and head veiled by his robe. This painting is now generally considered to be a Roman elaboration based on several classical Greek models, such as the Altar of Kleomenes, although the example that immediately comes to mind is the (now lost) painting created by the fourth-century artist Timanthes whom Pliny the Elder praises in his Natural History as being a truly remarkable artist in terms of his ingenuity and inventiveness.

Particularly famous owing to the praise given to it by the orators [i.e., Cicero, Orator 74 and Quintilian, Inst. Or. 2.13.12] is his ‘Iphigeneia’, whom he depicted, as she was about to perish, standing at the altar with others looking on gloomily, especially her uncle [Menelaos]; he [Timanthes] had exhausted every expression of sadness and had veiled the face of her own father [Agamemnon], whom he could not represent adequately.

It is likely that Timanthes understood his craft better than Pliny gives him credit for: by choosing to conceal Agamemnon’s face beneath a veil, the artist skillfully drew attention to the father’s plight and allowed the spectators of the scene to imagine a grief more intense and desperate than could be portrayed by conventional means. What becomes clear from Fig. 172 is that the anonymous sculptor chose to follow Timanthes’ brilliant example and skilfully applied the same convention to his carved relief.

Artistic merit aside, it is interesting to note how the figure of the veiled and grief-stricken Agamemnon immediately draws the gaze of the viewer (despite his placement at the picture’s edge); the veiled figure elicits an emotional response from the observer. No doubt, following on from Timanthes’ original idea, this was the reaction anticipated by the artist. For the original Greek spectator, an image of emotional suffering could be conveyed in pictorial shorthand by the use of a concealing veil.

Veiling was a culturally approved expression of grief at the death of a loved-one or comrade. More generally, it was used ritualistically and symbolically to acknowledge...
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The white and the black: conspicuous veiling and emphasize distress and apprehension. There were developments, of course, in the attitudes to public displays of grief throughout Greek history, but by the classical period the act of covering the head or face as a sign of sorrow or anxiety was *de rigueur* for both sexes, almost demanded by etiquette, in fact. It seems that the initial covering of the head and face was just one stage in the rite of mourning and was perfect for drawing attention to one’s plight. This expressive veiling worked in two ways: it had the familiar effect of cutting off the veiled individual from society, while simultaneously drawing attention to his or her dilemma. We find that Priam, Hekabe, and Iolaus lie with their heads veiled in sorrow, Amphitryon sits with his robe covering his eyes, grieving at the results of Herakles’ fit of madness and the deaths of his children, and the hero himself veils his face when he comes to his senses and begins to understand his atrocious actions. Elektra covers her face to weep in despair for Orestes’ frenzy, and the chorus of slave women in the *Libation Bearers* and the chorus of sailors in the *Ajax* veil their faces *en masse.* Additionally, veiling also expresses an individual’s emotional reaction to a stressful situation: Odysseus covers himself in his *pharos* when he hears the sad songs of Demodokos from a combination of shame and suffering, and in a ‘like-father-like-son’ scenario in Sparta, Telemakhos veils his eyes as he remembers Odysseus. The old slave in the *Ion* covers his face and weeps for Kreousa’s poignant childless state, while Iphigeneia and Polyxena hide their tears beneath their veils as they cry about their own sad predicaments. In Chariton’s novel, Callirhoe and Chaereas weep and veil themselves at the slightest provocation.

Finally, veiling is done by those on the point of death; the covering of the face at this moment foreshadows the ultimate separation that death will bring. Most famously Plato’s Sokrates veils himself at the moment of death (briefly unveiling to deliver his last famous words), and Plutarch also relates the similar events surrounding the ‘near-death experience’ of the fifth-century philosopher Anaxagoras:

> It is said that at a time when Perikles was absorbed in public affairs, Anaxagoras who was by then an old man with no one to care for him, took to his bed and veiled his face, determined to starve himself to death. When Perikles heard the news, he was horrified and rushed to the poor man and begged him to live. He used every argument and entreaty and lamented not exactly at Anaxagoras’ fate, but at his own, if he should now lose such a trusted councillor in matters of government. At this Anaxagoras unveiled and said, ‘Perikles, even a lamp has oil put into it by those who need it.’

By veiling just prior to death, individuals remove themselves from reality (so long, that is, as they resist the temptation to raise the veil and deliver one last piece of advice). They prematurely take on the appearance of a corpse, which was customarily veiled by a shroud or a garment. When a man died, ‘black darkness’ was said to have ‘veiled his eyes’; thus Antigone says to her dead father, ‘Now you are veiled in eternal darkness.’ The association of the veil, or of veiling the head and face, with death is such a common feature of Greek literature that it probably had a parallel phenomenon in actual burial practice. The custom arose of wrapping a cloth around
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the corpse’s head and the cloth itself may have replaced the death masks of earlier generations. There was certainly a tradition of imagining the personification of Death as wearing or holding some kind of head-covering. As far back as the Hesiodic Shield of Herakles, Death was envisaged wearing a dog skin on his head.\textsuperscript{123}

Unlike men, women were expected to be veiled daily. In their case, therefore, conspicuous inversion of the normal state required the casting off of the veil as a public display of loss. This is the case in the Iliadic examples of Hekabe and Andromakhe. Aiskhylos also uses female grief as a focus for lamentation in his Persai, so that the male chorus of wailing Persian elders recounts how the citadel of Kissa echoes to the mourning cries of women who tear their fine linen robes in anguish.\textsuperscript{124} Aiskhylos refers to the use of veils in mourning ritual:

\begin{verbatim}
O Zeus my king, now you have destroyed
The army of the Persians
Who could boast so many men?
And you have shrouded the citadel of Susa and Agbatana
Over with grief and gloom.
There are many women tearing their veils (kaluptras)
With their soft hands,
Soaking, drenching their breasts
With tears, taking their share of the pain.\textsuperscript{125}
\end{verbatim}

Here the women of Susa are said to be tearing their veils in two, rather than simply throwing them off their heads. However, there is nothing expressly Persian about the act; it is an appropriate action for any woman in dire distress and it is evoked by Sappho who instructs young women to beat their breasts and tear their robes as they lament the dying Adonis.\textsuperscript{126} Aiskhylos’ use of kaluptre in this context, it could be argued, is a typical adaptation of epic usage and the motif of rending the veil is one that is already familiar to his Greek audience. He uses the same motif in his Suppliants, as the Danaides rend their veils in despair:

\begin{verbatim}
Many times I lay my hands upon my Sidonian veil (Sidonia kaluptra) and tear the linen into rags.\textsuperscript{127}
\end{verbatim}

The tearing of the veil is a gesture that fifth-century Athenian society would know. The women of Aiskhylos’ Susa behave in a very Greek way.\textsuperscript{128}

Of course, it is hard to know whether such gestures were an accepted part of real life, or whether the abandonment or tearing of a veil was an artefact of epic and tragic invention.\textsuperscript{129} Yet in order to wring pathos and understanding from an audience (male or female), epic and tragic poets very likely used contemporary conventions that spoke directly to those attending the rendition of a famous myth. Athenian citizens must have understood that the nature of a woman’s uncontained grief could, indeed perhaps should, be properly expressed in the conspicuous abandonment or destruction of her veil in the first stage of her outpouring of anguish. The etiquette of this first stage of mourning may have prescribed a deliberate inversion in the natural order of gendered appearance: that a man should noticeably indulge in the action of
covering himself with a garment while, conversely, a grieving woman should initially unveil herself in a demonstrative gesture (which in pre-Solonic times also seemed to have included the laceration of the skin). With this reversal of the gendered language of dress goes an inversion in the principle of male speech and female silence: the veiled man contains his grief beneath his veil and, of necessity, remains markedly silent, but the grief-stricken woman abandons her veil with an immediate outburst of sobs, cries and ritual screams. Both actions deliberately draw on the attentions of observers and are aimed at mustering sympathetic responses from them.\textsuperscript{130}

**Brilliant blackness**
The abandonment of the veil and the associated outpouring of despair are only the first stage in the ritual process of mourning. It seems to have been regarded as de rigueur for people who had passed through the first uncontrollable and topsy-turvy state of grief to return to a semblance of normality and to restore themselves to the natural social order. In other words, once the initial display of grief is finished, men should once more act like men and women should behave like proper respectable wives, mothers, sisters, and daughters. This meant that men in mourning should put aside their unrestrained emotional displays of weeping, throwing themselves on the floor, covering themselves in dust, and veiling, and should conduct themselves with a more formal regard for self control. Women, while given greater freedom to continue to express their distress (which simultaneously bolstered the male sense of natural superiority), were no doubt constrained to show a certain degree of sôphrosynê once more and were probably expected to re-veil. Iconographic sources seem to reveal that at certain rituals surrounding the death of an individual, both men and women were involved in the mourning, and a recent study has demonstrated that the two sexes appear to have mourned in different ways, with women taking on the more active and overt attitudes of grief.\textsuperscript{131} But the period following the internment or cremation of the deceased is less studied and little research has been undertaken on the notion of a Greek ‘mourning period.’\textsuperscript{132} Was there a conception in various Greek societies that individuals or families who had suffered a loss should display their grief for a protracted or even prescribed period of time? Unfortunately it is difficult to know. What is clear, however, is that individuals could wear black clothes as a mark of grief and ancient texts alert us to the fact that grieving women in particular are associated with this colour.\textsuperscript{133} Black is a colour that we easily associate with death and grief, and has been so in the West for centuries. It probably reached a climax in the mid-Victorian period when, since upper and middle class men habitually wore black, it was increasingly left to the women and children of a family to demonstrate the public face of family grief.\textsuperscript{134}

It would be foolish to impose on the Greek evidence Victorian forms of public mourning, but there is enough in the sources to suggest that Greek women used the colour black in their dress as an indication of grief. Black was regarded as an appropriate (if not sole) colour for death rituals.\textsuperscript{135}
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Black does have close ties with death: chthonic deities are offered sacrifices of black rams, heifers, goats, and puppies; dying warriors bled black blood and were enclosed by black mists. Grief and sorrow were visualized as black as were the dangerous waves that swelled up from the bowels of the mysterious sea. According to the famous myth of the return of Theseus to Athens, it was a black sail hoisted on the mast that drove Aigeus to throw himself into the Aegean, thinking that it heralded his son’s death. Black was part of the ritual costume of death and little children dressed in black robes to serve at the shrine of Hera Akraia at Perakhora on the outskirts of Korinth to appease a vengeful demon who killed infants and expectant mothers and to mourn for the deaths of Medea’s children.

In the Homeric Hymn to Demeter, black veils and black clothes are central to the goddess’ characterization as we trace her progress from her introduction as the ‘fair-tressed awesome goddess’, to the moment of her darkest despair when she learns of Kore’s abduction and rips the krēdemnon off her head, replacing it with a black kalumma. The dark clothes of the goddess are fundamental to the story and convey Demeter’s grief:

She, grieved in her heart, walked with her head veiled (kekkalummenē). And the dark peplos swirled around the feet of the goddess. Thetis also dons a veil of total blackness to visit the gods on Olympus. A unique picture of the dark-veiled Thetis can be found on a late-sixth-century hydria from Caere which shows two black-veiled goddesses pleading their respective cases to Zeus.

Athenian tragedy also attests to the use of black clothing as an indication of mourning. On his arrival home in Argos, for example, Orestes witnesses a party of female libation-bearers approaching the grave of his murdered father conspicuously veiled in black pharē. In Thebes, Queen Iokaste intentionally wears a black pharos-veil instead of a white one as a sign of mourning. As she says to her long-lost son Polyneikes:

I cut my white hair short and let it fall loose, weeping tears for you, my son. I never wear a white veil (pharos) now; instead I put on this old disarrayed rag, murky as night.

Once again we can suppose that tragic characters reflect the real-life social situation; the wearing of black garments and black veils was commonplace for women in mourning and that a black veil was considered the appropriate garment for the deceased on her journey to the underworld. The mourning women in the Libation Bearers and Euripides’ grieving Theban queen all continue to wear their black veils long after tragedy first strikes: Polyneikes has been absent from court for several years, while Agamemnon has laid buried beneath the earth for at least a decade, if not more. But the women continue to mourn in black garments as a fitting and evident sign of civic despair and disorder.

The use of black veils at a time of emotional upheaval is noteworthy for the Greek idea that the colour black is brilliantly intense. It is not to be regarded as
an absence of colour (as black sometimes is in modern Western tradition), for it has an existence and a function specific to itself and it is even seen, like white, as an intensifier of other colours.\textsuperscript{147}

In epic we meet with the idea of darkness descending onto battlefields and surrounding an individual (usually a warrior) in a veil of mist, cloud, or night. This black veil is usually created by a deity (most often Zeus, Hera, Athene or Ares) and symbolizes all that is bad or feared: grief, disaster, peril, defeat, and death. It is no surprise, therefore, to hear Homer speak of ‘baneful night’ or ‘evil mist’.\textsuperscript{148} Black mists and fog can enshroud a dying warrior on the battlefield, and black night can enfold a hero in sleep; dark grief enwraps and encloses both men and gods and black waves can envelop swimming heroes. The verbs used for all of these actions are taken from the stem \textit{kalup-}, so that it is feasible to speak of heroes and warriors being ‘veiled’ by death, ‘veiled’ in grief, ‘veiled’ in dark night, and even ‘veiled’ by a wave. Blackness, darkness, and the idea of veiling are closely linked, as are the notions of whiteness, brilliance, and veiling.

In the often puzzling array of ancient Greek notions of colour, black is often imbued with negative qualities, notably death and loss, white with positive properties, in particular sexuality and fertility. But both colours are seen as appropriate for natural occurrences like clouds, mists, and water and, as an extension of this, they are used for ‘nature veils’ and for the corresponding physical veils worn by women in daily life. These black and white veils are deliberately worn by women who need to reflect a social situation or an internal feeling and they are purposefully intended to attract the attention of an onlooker who is expected to read a social message in the woman’s choice of clothing.

Women who choose to wear black veils, like the grieving Theban mothers on the Chalkidian amphora of \textit{Fig. 128}, do so because they want to pass on the message that they grieve. By using the social semiotics of the black veil, mourning women draw attention to themselves and to their plights and solicit the support of others.

A deliberate act of public veiling can send out the message that the wearer is angry and should not be approached. This conspicuous veiling is utilized by both sexes but women tend to veil themselves in black garments to strengthen the message. This is also a phenomenon of mourning dress for women; the colour black was regarded as a strong and vivid colour by the Greeks and was used in mourning dress to emphasize the public nature of an individual’s grief and the fact that she was separated from her society.

\textbf{Conclusion}

In the acts of veiling highlighted in this chapter – veiling and sexuality, veiling and anger, and veiling and grief – the motion of raising the veil over the head or across the face becomes a public gesture. Here the veil does not render the wearer invisible, but instead makes a conspicuous display of timely emotion.
Notes

1. See above, Chapter 6.
2. As has already been noted, for example, with the reaction to Philippus’ veiling in Plato’s *Symposium*.
6. The idea that concealing clothes are to be imagined as a tease or a turn-on is a point endorsed by Lurie 1981, 212, who claims that, ‘It is certainly true that certain parts of the human form considered sexually arousing are often covered in such a way as to exaggerate and draw attention to them… People [clothed in layers]…affect us just as a birthday present does: we’re curious, turned on; we want to undo the package.’ See further Shirazi 2001, 56–7.
7. Flügel 1930. For a further discussion of his theory of the shifting erogenous zone in the context of Greek art and dress see Llewellyn-Jones 2001.
8. Lacan 1977, 314: ‘The very delimitation of the “erogenous zone”, that the drive isolates from the metabolism of the function, is the result of a cut expressed in the anatomical mark of a margin or border-lips, “the enclosure of the teeth”, the rim of the anus, the tip of the penis, the vagina, the slit formed by the eyelids, even the horn-shaped aperture of the ear.’
9. See above, Chapter 9.
10. Quoted in Makhlouf 1973, 93. Hebrew poetry of the Old Testament also contains images in which the veil serves as a sexual stimulant. See *Song of Songs* 4.1, 3.
13. Aristaenetus 2.2.1–11.
15. Cited in Botting and Botting 1995, 58. In Oman the use of the *burqaa* often has the effect of throwing the eyes into relief. See the comments made by Wikan 1982, 98: ‘Time and again I was struck by the marvellous ingenuity of this cloaking device in beautifying not so beautiful women. I remember one case in particular, a Baluch woman of striking beauty. She seemed to have the most superbly balanced facial features, and eyes of enrapturing, magnetic beauty – when wearing the *burqaa*. I was struck with surprise and disappointment when, one day, she presented herself without the *burqaa* to have her photograph taken. Gone was the wonder. She had been transformed into an ordinary woman of ordinary good looks – her face too square, her features too coarse; but, most importantly, her eyes were no longer in focus, and their radiant magnetism was gone.’
17. Ibid. 35.
21. Such as the images we are given of Kirke and Kalypso at *Od*. 5.230–2; 10.543–5.
22. *HH* 5.61–5, 161–3; 6.5–5.
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28 *Hes.* *Theog.* 574.
31 Porphyry on *Od.* 1.332 [Dicaearchus F92 Wehrli]. I am grateful to Malcolm Heath for alerting me to this passage.
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid.
34 *Il.* 3.154–60. Trans. Dakyns 1914, with amendments. Alexander Pope’s 1743 edition of the poem conjures up the correct atmosphere: ‘These, when the Spartan queen approach’d the tow’r / In secret own’d resistless beauty’s pow’r: / They cry’d, No wonder, such celestial charms / For nine long years have set the world in arms; / What winning graces! What majestick mien! / She moves a Goddess, and she looks a Queen!’
36 For Penelope’s beauty see *Od.* 18.248–51. For her reluctance to appear beautiful see *Od.* 18.171–81. Sitting on the ground, see *Od.* 4.248–51. For a discussion of the Panthea novella see Gera 1993, 221ff.
37 Nagler 1974, 59.
38 See above, Chapter 5.
39 *LSJ* s.v. *λιπαρός*.
41 *HH* 2.459. The same epithet is used of the Nymphs and Kharites who adorn Aphrodite prior to seduction (Kypria fr. 6.) and of the Nereid Kharis who, as the wife of Hephaistos, greets Thetis as she reaches Mount Olympus (*Il.* 18.382), although in these instances the fertility element is not as important as the general feeling of beauty.
42 *Il.* 18.382
43 *HH* 24.3.
44 Nagler 1974, 58, n. 44.
45 *Il.* 22.406. On the association between fertility and moisture see Giacomelli 1980, 1–19 and Stewart 1997, 128–9. Callimichus describes Apollo’s hair as giving off healing oils. The same notion of wetness is found in the Latin term *nitidus* (‘gleaning’) applied to the head or hair. See Horace *Carm.* 1.4.9; Tibullus 1.8.16, 1.7.51; Virgil *Georg.* 4.337; Ovid *Her.* 20.166. In Hebrew tradition the anointing of the king’s head with oil is similarly meant to invoke fertility. See I Sam. 10.1 (Saul), 16.13 (David).
46 MacLachlan 1993, 34.
47 For a discussion of *kharis* and light see MacLachlan 1993, 35. Much of the shining quality is focused on the head and hair: the *stephanē* that crowns the heads of Greek goddesses highlights the beauty and vitality of female hair with epithets like ‘gold-crowned’ (*HH* 6.1, of Aphrodite) and ‘fair-crowned’ (*HH* 2.295, of Demeter). The Suda connects the idea of the Homeric glistening veil to erotic *kharis*, s.v. *Λιπαροκρήδημος*.
48 See, for example, *Il.* 20.94ff. (a ‘light of deliverance’). The other words used for ‘white’ by Homer are *argos* and *leirioeis*.
49 Aristot. *De An.* 418b 11; *Sens.* 439a 18.
50 *Liparēn kaluptrē:* *Il.* 22.406; *liparokrēdemnon:* *Il.* 18.382; *Od.* 1.334, 13.388, 16.416,
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18.210, 21.65; HH 25, 438, 459. ‘Sun-white’: Il. 14.185. Add to this references to the pharos shining like the sun or moon: Od. 24.148. For a discussion see Shelmerdine 1995.

51 Ibid. 104.
53 Il. 18.595–6.
54 Shelmerdine 1995, 102.
55 For the gendered aspects of dance see Naerebout 1997; Delavaud-Roux 1994; Lawler 1964.
57 See above, Chapter 5.
58 For a discussion of the Geisha-client roles see Dalby 1983, 165 ff. Nevertheless the Greek vase portrayals and terracotta images we have of veiled dancers may not necessarily represent women of the demimonde at all, since, as Lawler 1964, 113 suggests, ‘It is possible…that these attractive figures do not represent dancers of any one type, but are rather evidence of the fact that Greek women…when participating in dances, were usually modestly clad.’
59 Oakley 1990, 38.
60 See Galt 1931, 35, fig. 1.
61 Robertson 1979b. It is justifiable to interpret the presence of the dwarf in a religious context because we know that dwarfs, by their usually disturbing appearance and social marginality, could have a very special place in the religious systems of various Greek communities. Discussed by Dasen 1993, 236 ff.
62 Ibid. 237. He suggests that this painting can be compared with a krater scene from Chiusi where a veiled maenad is advanced upon by a group of satyrs adopting the same stance as the Oxford dwarf.
65 I am reminded of the unusual scene of the veiled woman and the seated monkey on the Nolan Amphora in Fig. 147.
66 Equally puzzling is a scene that shows a winged Nike performing a veil-dance in front of a group of satyrs, Aphrodite, and Pan. The meaning of the image may allude us, but it is clear that Nike adopts the typical twisting, raised-arm pose of other, mortal, veil-dancers and conceals her face in order to expose her eyes in the manner of the Mount Holyoak women and the Oxford oinochoe performer. For details see Boardman 1989, 191. A veiled Nike is also found in a North African mosaic of c. 180–90 AD (‘The Four Seasons Mosaic’). See Yacoub 1995, 129.
67 Robinson and Graham 1931, 69: ‘In some cases…it would seem that there is a religious significance in the veiling, and that dancers often veiled part of their faces.’
68 Thompson 1950, 379, 383.
69 Ibid. 383. She illustrates her point with the example of Marc Antony who, Plutarch says, used to dress himself and Kleopatra in servants’ clothes and wander the streets of Alexandria in disguise (Plut. Ant. 29.1 ff.). Masquerade does seem to have been something of a penchant for Antony who, Plutarch once again tells us, once dressed as a slave and visited his own house at night saying that he was the bearer of a message to Fulvia. He was admitted to his wife’s presence with his face veiled and delighted in revealing his true identity much to Fulvia’s surprise. See Plut. Ant. 10.9.1 and also Cicero, Phil. 2.75 ff. where the feminine aspects of the veiled Antony are expounded (Cicero calls him a catamite).
70 See also Fronto On Orations 5: ‘As actors (i.e., mimes), when they dance clad in mantles
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with one and the same mantle representing a swan’s tail, the tresses of Venus, a Fury’s scourge.’

71 Thompson 1950, 383. See also Friedman 1994, 6–8, 16 for further discussion of the dancer’s appearance and performance.

72 We know that a more general type of veiling was part of mime tradition: a story told by Athenaeus relates to king Antiochus IV Epiphanes of Syria who, it would appear, was in the habit of throwing elaborate parties for his courtiers. These would often continue for several hours in his absence, but at the point when the guests were beginning to depart, the mime actors would come into the banqueting hall carrying a figure – the king himself – entirely wrapped in veils. He would be deposited on the ground and as the music began, he would leap up, systematically throwing off his veils and dance naked, much to the embarrassment of his guests. See Athenae. Deip. 5.24.24; Polybius, 14.11. Bevan 1902, 129 notes: ‘Antiochus had something…of the “Bohemian” in him.’ For Antiochus IV Epiphanes see also Ogden 1999, 143 ff. The king’s entrance into the palace shrouded in veils puts one in mind of Kleopatra VII’s famed entry into Julius Caesar’s presence wrapped in a carpet.

73 Philogelos 251.

74 On dance terms see Lawler 1964, 22 ff. See also the discussion by Fear 1996.


76 Emmanuel 1916, 182. See Baldwin 1983; Thierfelder 1968.

77 The dance might have been an element of real life practice, but here it is given a mythological setting as the striptease artiste is watched by the (named) handsome Olympos (who accompanies her on the pipes), by his mentor, the lecherous Marsyas, and by a skipping satyr. In the upper register sits Aphrodite, holding a mirror, who watches Eros as he prepares to crown Marsyas with a laurel wreath. For details see Carpenter 1991, 99, fig.135. For erotic veil-dancing see Jarrett 1997, 59–105. For the veil emphasizing nudity see Emmanuel 1916, 27.


80 Mark 6.22.

81 Jos. Ant. 28.5.1–4. Kokkinos 1998, gives her the title ‘Salome III’. Bach 1997, 213 ff., compares the story of the beheading to an incident recorded by Plutarch in which the Roman senator Lucius Flaminius beheaded a condemned prisoner at a banquet at the behest of his lover (in one version of the story a young boy in another a young woman). It has been suggested that Salome’s Dance of the Seven Veils is in fact to be connected to the ancient Near Eastern myth of the goddess Ištar who cast off seven garments as she descended into the underworld. For a discussion see Buonaventura 1983.


83 But if Herod did call for his stepdaughter to dance at his symposium, then it shows the ambiguous nature of his desire for Salome, a young princess who performs as a hetaira. The ambiguity of the girl’s position in regard to her sexuality and the protection that she should be expected to receive at home is comparable to that of Aiskhylos’ Iphigeneia (Ag. 243–7) who is paraded out in front of her father’s guests to perform a paean. Both girls are described as korê, and both are the objects of their father’s affections, but both are sexualized for the male gaze as they perform their entertainments. For a discussion of the inherently sexual...
nature of the Salome story in its mythical context see Knapp 1997, 87–110, and for the Iphigeneia myth see ibid. 69–85.

See in particular Cairns 2001 and 2002.


Hdt. 6.67.

See above, Chapter 9.


Il. 9.550–607.

For a study of mēnis see Watkins 1977.

HH2 39–44. Trans. Lattimore 1951. Slatkin 1991, 93 has noted that, ‘the goddess’ deliberate assumption of the dark garment betokens her dire spirit of retaliation, the realisation of her imminent wrath’. I am grateful to Professor Slatkin for her generosity in discussing ideas on veiled anger.

For veiled initiates see Chapter 8.

Paus. 8.42.1–4.

Paus. 8.25.4–6.

For a discussion see Johnston 1999, 258–64.


See Hawad-Claudot 1992, 202 and figs. 2–18.

See Cairns 1993, 98–9, 158, 217–18.

See further Cairns 2002. It should be stressed that angry-veiling is usually manifested as a public reaction to a social situation; this is what enables a woman to make the bold gesture of unveiling and re-veiling. On a daily basis, however, women are inconspicuous beneath their veils and are regarded, as we have seen, as invisible – as long as male ideology wants them to appear so, that is.

See further LIMC 5 (1) 720, no. 42; LIMC 5 (2) 474, no. 42. See also Rumpf 1953, 121.


Pliny NH 35.73. Trans. Rackham 1938.

See van Wees 1998b.


Eur. HF 1111.

Ibid. 1202 (Herakles must have veiled himself at the end of his speech at line 1162).

Eur. Or. 280.

Aes. Ch. 81; Soph. Aj. 245.

Od. 4.114–16, 153–4; 8.83–6, 90–2. See also Porphyry on Od. 1.332: ‘Odysseus too firmly seized the big crimson cloak he was wearing, drew a piece of it down over his head and veiled his countenance, ashamed that the Phaeacians should spy the tears that streamed from his eye’ [Od. 8.84–6]. When the song ended Odysseus ‘would wipe his tears, draw back the cloak from over his head… but when the bard began once more at their wish… then Odysseus would cover his head again and groan and weep.’

Eur. Ion 967.
The white and the black: conspicuous veiling

118 Plato Phaed. 118a.16.
119 Plut. Per. 16.8. Cf. Plut. Cic. 47.9. Trans. Frazier 1906, with amendments. The veiling of the head by those about to die is also an homage to the mystery cults as well as acknowledging the custom of Pythagoras’ pupils who veiled their faces during his lectures as though they were present at the mysteries or else so removed from ‘reality’—and thereby not distracted by sights and sounds—that their physical states-of-being impinged on death. See Plut. Mor. 266E (10). Such an action is parodied in Plato Phaedr. 237a, where Sokrates speaks egkalupsamenos in order not to see Phaedrus as he talks. Cf. Ar. Frogs 911 ff.
120 See, for example, Soph. Tr. 1078; Eur. El. 1227; Tro. 508; Men. Aspis 346. For shrouded corpses see Garland 1985, 24–5.
121 Iliad 13.425.
123 Shield of Herakles 227. Early Etruscan tradition seems to have imagined death demons carrying a piece of cloth which was intended to cover a corpse or be wrapped around its head. See Poulsen 1922, 55 ff. Centuries later, the Latin poet Tibullus describes ‘dark Death’ appearing with a ‘covered head’ (tenebris Mors adoperta caput). See Elegies 1.1.70.
124 Aes. Per. 120–5.
126 Sappho fr. 140(a).1–2. It should be borne in mind, however, that the cult of Adonis originates in the East and may well have preserved its early traditions in the later Greek practices. See van Wees 1998b, 42–3, 52 n. 66.
127 Aes. Supp. 120–1.
128 We have to wonder how the characters of Persai were dressed for that first performance. Throughout the play there is reference to luxurious dress, so it would be proper to envisage the chorus and the ghost of Darius looking particularly opulent in their robes. This is in direct contrast, of course, to the shabby appearance of Xerxes who arrives battered and bruised from the battlefield. But how did Aiskhylos understand Persian dress? Were his costumes mere ‘artistic interpretations’ of Persian fashion? He seems to have had some kind of understanding of Persian dress, since the chorus recounts how Darius will appear in yellow Persian slippers and a tiara (660–2). Hall 1989, 84, n. 127, assumes that characters and choruses of barbarian origin wore ethnically differentiated costumes. The famous Persai vase dating to the mid-fourth century certainly shows Darius and his court bedecked in a wide array of Persian finery. There is every reason to suppose that the details of the vase painting were based on the reality of a performance. See Trendall and Webster 1971, 112. What the vase lacks, however, is a representation of a female Persian character. We have no idea how royal women, like Aiskhylos’ Atossa, were represented on the stage. Did the Greeks think that there was a distinctive costume for a Persian queen? If so did it resemble anything we find in the Persian evidence? Did Atossa wear a veil? I suggest that given her role as mother of Xerxes and mother of the empire, and the empathy she is expected to show for defeated Persia, her wearing of a veil would have identified her with the mourning mothers of Susa. Moreover, if she were cast in the vein of Iliadic royal women, like Hekabe, then the veil would have been an essential attribute. For costumes of Orientals in Attic tragedy see Pickard-Cambridge 1968, 199 ff.
129 van Wees 1998b. 41 ff. asks the same question of representations of grief in the iconographic sources.

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130 See, for example, Eur. *HF* 1198.
131 van Wees 1998b.
132 Rather than a mourning period, it is possible to envisage a pollution period following a death.
133 Plutarch *Mor.* 609B suggests that there is an acceptable period of time when women should wear mourning hairstyles and black-dyed clothing. For women and mourning see Vermeule 1979, 13 ff. and Stears 1998.
134 See comments in Goldthorpe 1988, 69 ff.
135 Maxwell-Stuart 1970, 114, 116 confirms, ‘Black was a colour worn only on certain specific occasions or by mourners immediately after a death… Black [was] the colour of emotional disturbance and overwhelming grief.’
137 e.g., *Od.* 10.553.
139 *Il.* 23.693.
140 See Diod. Sic. 4.61.4, 6–7; Paus. 1.22.5; Plut. *Thes.* 22.1; Strabo 8.7.4.
141 Paus. 2.3.11. For a full discussion see Johnston 1997.
142 *HH2* 181–3. See also lines 319, 360, 374, 442.
144 *Aes. Choe.* 10–12.
146 *Melas* is found 175 times in Homer alone, and in diverse usage. He applies it, for example, to blood (*Il.* 5.354), freshly ploughed land (*Il.* 18.548), and water (*Od.* 4.359). Bacchylides attributes it to clouds (3.55), an elder-tree (8.33), an eye (16.17), and earth (12.153). Hesiod uses the word 14 times for earth (*Th.* 69), hair (S. 186), weapons (S. 22), and blood (S. 252). Another common word for black is *kelainos*. Homer uses it for blood (*Il.* 1.303), waves (*Il.* 9.6), storms (*Il.* 11.747), and the earth (*Il.* 16.384). Hesiod applies it to blood and earth (S. 153,172) and Aiskhylos to waves (*Eum.* 832) and Ethiopians (*PV* 808). Interestingly, *melas* is a compound of the word *melathon*, which appears increasingly in the classical period to be used for a description of the interior of a house. As the darkness of the house encloses the family and protects the women, so the darkness of the veil enshrouds the mourning woman and emphasizes her withdrawal.
147 Pseudo-Aristotle *On Colours* 795b, 25 ff. Thus, black is the colour of elements in the process of transmutation. Pseudo-Aristotle thought that it was derived from darkness and that things appeared black when they were not seen at all, that is to say, if they reflected no light to the eye, although the surface surrounding them may be visible. Therefore, things from which little light is reflected appear black, like shadows and rough water, because they do not reflect light evenly. Clouds and masses of water too dense for light to penetrate appear black because the light-rays they reflect are negligible; so to create black, a darkness is required, since true black is created out of the privation of light.
CONCLUSION

In the shivers of her clothes are her stories
Of yearning and desire and a charming world.
And she sees me from behind the veil,
And I know what is behind the veil.
But is she laughing at me
Or is she smiling at me?

Al Sharafi, Yemeni poet,
cited in Makhlouf 1979, 3.

In Greek culture from the archaic era through to the Roman period, the veiling of women was routine. An ideology of veiling which was imposed and endorsed by men was probably adhered to by most women in Greek society as a matter of daily practice, at least when they appeared out of doors or at home in the company of strange men. Because of its habitual nature, veiling tends to be underplayed in the ancient androcentric sources, except on occasions when the male principles of gender construction are violated and inverted, that is to say, when women unveil and men veil. The apparent lack of solid source material means that the study of veiling has not enjoyed the full treatment it deserves in contemporary classical scholarship. Also we may suspect a more political reason for scholarship’s reluctance to tackle the issue of ancient Greek veiling practices: could it be that Western scholarship is unwilling to concede (or even suggest) the notion that Greek women were veiled because the practice connects the Greeks too closely with the the Oriental ‘Other’? The lack of scholarly attention paid to the ancient Greek veil does the contemporary study of ancient social and gender history a great disservice, chiefly because a recognition that veiling ideologies and veiling practices were of deep importance to the male construction of the Greek female and, indeed, to female life-experience itself, would mean that certain problematic issues of male-female interaction in Greek society might be resolved.

I have attempted to demonstrate that veiling was a habitual female practice in the Greek world. This is reflected in the artistic sources, which display an impressive variety of veil-styles worn over a wide geographical area and a correspondingly broad period. The veils themselves roughly fall into two groups: firstly, the garment-veils like the pharos and the himation-veils which tend to conceal much of the body by swathing it in drapes, and secondly, separate veils, like the shaal-veil and the
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tegidion, which are designed to just cover the head or, in the latter case, give a more complete form of veiling by covering the face and exposing only the eyes. Tracing the development of these veil-styles lets us speculate on external and internal influences on Greek society and the development of the treatment and perception of Greek women. For example, early veil-styles have clear Near Eastern and Anatolian influences, which appear to give way in the late sixth century to plainer and simpler forms of veiling which seem to be in tune with male fashion developments and the general trend towards the ‘democratization’ of dress. Moreover, the introduction of the tegidion face-veil in the late fourth century coincides with a move towards the more conscientious separation of public and domestic spaces within Greek households and a growing tendency for women to appear in public spaces, and I have suggested that this stricter form of veiling permits a woman to have greater access to public life.

Hand-in-hand with the variety of veil-styles located in the artistic evidence goes a rich assortment of veil-words found in the literary sources. While it is not possible to match a veil-term with an artistic example (although there are notable exceptions to this), and while our understanding of the veil-vocabulary is imperfect, the sheer variety of veil-terms located in the textual sources ranging from Homer to the late lexicographers, alerts us to the fact that veil-words were familiar to Greek speakers. Moreover there is every possibility that the veil-terms recorded in the ancient texts could have been subject to a series of metamorphoses (like Greek garments themselves) and that they were adapted or adopted in various ways at different times and places within the Greek world. Greek veil-vocabulary was once a living, evolving, and adapting entity.

Finding an ancient vocabulary of veiling is difficult but ultimately rewarding. The popular veil-term krēdemnon, for example, has a long history (from Homer to Hesychius) and is frequently used metaphorically. Thus the krēdemnon-veil is assimilated with city or fortress walls, so that the unveiling of a woman stands as a metaphor for the breeching of the defences of a fortress and the violation of the city that inevitably follows – and vice-versa. It is a potent symbol of the metaphoric importance of the veil as a guard of a woman’s chastity, honour, and social position. Krēdemnon is also a word that means the protective covering of a bottle and, by extension, it means something that acts as a container; but the krēdemnon can be broken, so it becomes a fitting metaphor for the hymen which is torn apart when a woman’s chastity is breeched.

Krēdemnon has the literal meaning of ‘head binder’, and together with other veil-words like kaluptre and kalumma, which have the general meaning ‘to conceal’, accentuates the restrictive nature of the veil: it encloses women and keeps them safe from male aggression and interference by making them socially invisible, securing women’s chastity and (by extension) the honour of the men of their families. The veil separates women from male (that is to say, public) society, but at the same time it acts as a container, a boundary from behind which the female pollution of gaze and
sound cannot (easily) escape. The veil safeguards male society from a potent sexuality, which is inherent in a sex that cannot impose its own limits and boundaries. But that is not to say that men are unencumbered by any form of social commitment themselves: if the ideology of veiling is to be successful, then both sexes need to obey the rules. Veiling means that women can have a public lifestyle and intervene in male society as long as they stay (relatively) silent beneath the veil, at least when in the public sphere. They should avoid eye contact with any man and they should certainly not speak to men in public. This would shatter the illusion of female invisibility and the important concept that the veil acts as a portable form of domestic seclusion, an amplification of the privacy of the house. But the man has a duty to ignore the woman in public too. He must show her the same aidōs that she displays by her conscientious act of veiling and her observance of the rules which construct Greek gender.

The Greek male’s ideology of veiling is perhaps best encapsulated in the wedding rituals of the anakalyptēria, a series of unveilings in which a bride was ritually debased as she was exposed to the gaze of a series of men. In the anakalyptēria ceremonies the bride had no control over her own unveiling and she was at the mercy of others (men) who could unveil her as the rituals required.

Normally the act of veiling gave women a form of self-expression and acted as a means of non-verbal communication. Social status may have been reflected at one time in the use of veiling, although by the classical period (at least in Athens) the veil was worn by women in most classes of society (with the possible exception of slaves). Veiling certainly gave women varying forms of social respectability (even for hetairai who, by veiling, almost played the role of ‘respectable’ citizen woman) as they were connected to a husband, father, brother, guardian, or even a patron. Veiling the head and, most importantly, the face (reflected in the popular veil-gesture motif in Greek art) allowed a woman to express her mood and situation. By veiling she could display her grief, anger, and separation from society (as indeed could a man in these instances), or her respect for those around her and her reverence for her own aidōs and the aidōs of others. However, a woman could use her veil to highlight her sexuality, and the very act of veiling a girl who reaches puberty acknowledges that what is contained beneath the veil is inherently sexual. Deliberate concealment of that which is desired might intentionally arouse desire, although a genuine display of female aidōs through veiling could also provoke male ardour.

It is the multivalence of the garment that makes the Greek veil so fascinating; on a practical level, its variety of styles, forms, names, and usages make us aware of its importance in Greek daily life. On an ideological level, the veil tells us much about the Greek male’s construction of the Greek woman; it informs us that men liked the thought that their women were contained and separated from public (male) society, that their chastity and fidelity could be safeguarded, and that family honour could be upheld. The male ideology of veiling alerts us to the fact that Greek men feared the pollution that emanated from female eyes, hair, and mouth; they disliked the
polluting sound of the female voice, so felt that it was better to restrain and silence it behind a binding cloth. The veil and the use of veiling encapsulated in the rituals of the *anakalyptēria* speak of male control over women.

But what is most compelling about the veil is the way in which the two worlds of male ideology and female life-experience collide and converge: ideologically, the veil is an invisible barrier that keeps women out of the public world of men; practically, it is a garment that allows a woman a degree of social freedom and movement in that very same world and in a more confined ‘women’s world’ of home-visits, conversation, midwifery, festivals, and shopping. Such independence would be denied her in its absence. The veil allows Aphrodite’s tortoise to manoeuvre in a male domain.

This investigation into the Greek veil began by examining the battered veiled head of *Fig. 1* and ends now with another sculpted head, *Fig. 173*. Again there is a subtle rendering of the fall of the veil’s pleats as it covers the delicate features of the face. Half of the visage is obscured; half is exposed. But this time the sculpted bust is in a better state of preservation, it is not so weathered or fragmentary. Let this veiled stone head stand as a metaphor for our knowledge of the Greek veil: it still lacks a complete context, but it looks in a more complete form, a more satisfying state, than when our investigation began.

*Fig. 173.* Head of a woman with a semi-transparent veil partially covering her face. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, N.Y. (on loan from private collection). Unknown provenance. We reproduce through the kind permission of the sculpture’s owner. (Photo: H. van Wees.)
ABBREVIATIONS

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