APHRODITE'S TORTOISE

The Veiled Woman of Ancient Greece

LLOYD LLEWELLYN-JONES

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Frontispiece. Veiled dancer. Bronze statuette from Alexandria *c.* 200 BC. (Courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, N.Y.) See p. 65.

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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.

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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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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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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.

1

VEILING THE ANCIENT GREEKS

She'll be embarrassed when we go in, that's clear,
And she'll veil herself, for that's what women do.
(Menander, *Perikeiromene* 311–12)[1]

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.

Fig. 1. Veiled marble head from Cyrene. Fourth century BC. Musée de sculptures, Cyrene. After Onians 1979.

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 to 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.[2] 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.[3]

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.[4] 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 *anakalyptēria*, 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.[5]

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 *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.[6] 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:

Fig. 2. Standing veiled female, conventionally called 'Aspasia', c. 470–450. Roman copy. Ashmolean Museum Cast Gallery.

> 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.[7]

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'.[8] 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.[9]

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 'harems', 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.[10] 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 *burqaa*s. 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.

Fig. 3. *The New Liberty.* The Statue of Liberty, symbol of democratic freedom, is veiled beneath a *burqaa*. Courtesy of Alison Burke.

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 *burqaa* (*Fig.* 3).

Islamaphobia 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.[11] In the West we are fed startling media reports with headlines like 'The Veil of Tears',[12] 'A Voice Behind the Veil',[13] 'Lack of schooling Veils Afghan future'[14] and 'Anger Behind the Veil'[15] 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'.[16] 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.[17]

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'.[18]

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.[19] 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.'[20]

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.[21] 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.[22]

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.[23] 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

> *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 is 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

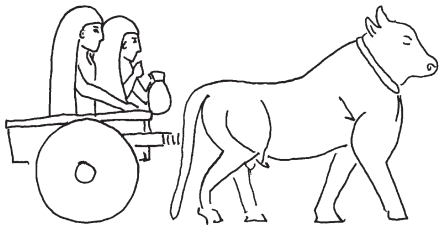

Fig. 4. Line drawing taken from an Assyrian palace relief at Lachish, c. 745–725, showing veiled female captives. BM, London.

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).[29] 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.[30] 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.[31] 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.[32]

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.[33] 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.[34]

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.[35] 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.[36] 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.[37]

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.[38] 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.[39]

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.[40] 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.

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

tradition, and any developments of the female lot in so-called 'traditional societies' tend to move at a much slower place 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

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

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 (*kalyptras*), 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 (*kalyptras*) 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 (*kalyptrais*).[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*).[50] 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.[51] 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.[52] 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'.[53] 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).[54]

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.[55] 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.[56] Susan Saïd's reinterpretation cites the figure as an instance of comic transvestism,[57] 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'.[58]

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

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.

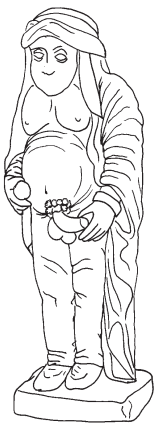

Fig. 6. Line drawing of a terracotta statuette of a veiled man from Attica, *c.* 400–350. Met. Mus. N.Y. 13.225.24.

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

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.[60] A major component examines issues of veiling and *aidōs*, 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 *aidōs* 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; Heuzey1922; 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 Sebesta and Bonfante 1994; Scholz 1992; Clark 1993 and Croom 2000.

[4] Galt 1931.

[5] Ibid. 377, 393.

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

[7] Robertson 1979, 56.

[8] Boardman 1993, 39. Emphasis mine.

[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

a three-dimensional sculpture made of sheet brass, fashioned into the shape of a Muslim *burqaa* 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.) On the veil in contemporary art see Doy 2002, 135–8 and Shirazi 2001, 10 ff.

[11] See Roald 2001, 254–94.

[12] Report by Tim McGirk. *The Independent*, 9th October, 1996.

[13] Report by John Hooper. *The Observer Review*, 23rd March, 1997.

[14] Repost by Rone Tempest. *The Guardian*, 25th August, 1997.

[15] Unidentified report.

[16] See Sherif 1987.

[17] 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* (*burqaa*) 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 *burqaa*s 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 there are differing views on the Islamic ruling regarding whether the *niqab* is obligatory or recommended, it is undoubtedly one's duty to unify the call for it and co-operate as much as possible in urging young women about its necessity and to limit their desire to expose the faces as much as possible… Hence my fellow Muslims, when you are asked: what is the form of *Hijab* according to the *Shari'ah*, especially from a woman who loves the [Prophet]?, you should encourage her to wear the *niqab*… We truly hope from Allah for the day when all believing women will rush to cover their faces with full contentment of their souls.' See Ibn Stanley Palmer 1997, 34. The veil has been at the centre of social reform and revolution in the Muslim world for many decades. For a discussion see Brooks 1995, 13–32 and Simpson and Shubart 1995.

[18] 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.

[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 historico-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, Mayo1973; Rehm 1992 and 1994; Oakley 1982; Oakley and Sinos 1993.

[23] Cairns 1993, 1996a, 1996b and 2002.

[24] Blundell 1998, 36.

[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 Nevett 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 *Il.* 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.

[32] See Llewellyn-Jones (ed.) 2002 and Blundell 2002.

[33] On this see Lewis 2002; Blundell 2002; Sebesta 2002; Llewellyn-Jones (ed.) 2002

[34] Lambin 1999, 31.

[35] Pfuhl and Möbius 1977–9, nos. 376, 379, 387, 452, 453, 459, 550, 556, 557, 581, 588, 596, 919, 929, 954.

[36] Rüsch 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; Makhlouf 1979; Mernissi 1975 and 1987; Murphy 1964; Rasmussen 1991; Rugh 1986; Sharma 1983; Tarlo 1996; Weir 1989; Vogelsang-Eastwood

1996a and 1996b.

[40] Notable studies include: Cartledge 1985; Bradley 1990 and 1992; Evans-Grubbs 1989; Treggiari 1991; Langdon 1991; Bastomsky 1990; Golden 1988, 455–75; Winkler 1990; Cohen 1989, 1991 and 1993; Nevett 1994, 1995 and 1999; Hunter 1989 and 1994; Fisher 1998; van Wees 1999.

[41] See discussions in Gilmore 1982; Herzfeld 1980 and 1984; Galt 1985; Sourvinou-Inwood 1995.

[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.

[44] Chafiq and Khosrokhavar 1995, 145 ff.

[45] See in particular Chapter 6.

[46] Chowdhry 1994, 1–2.

[47] Aelian, *Varia Hist.* 1.18. Trans. Wilson (Loeb) 1997, with amendments.

[48] Ibid. 7.9. Trans. Wilson (Loeb) 1997, with amendments.

[49] Plut. *Mor.* 245E.

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

[51] Ar. *Thes*. 257–60.

[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.

2

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.[1] 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.[2] Carla Makhlouf, 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.[3] 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.[4] 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

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,[8] 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.[9] 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 bedspread by Dionysus when he made love to Ariadne.[10]

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.[11]

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