APHRODITE: DEFENDER OF CITIES

A Thesis

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Aphrodite has traditionally been perceived by scholars to be the goddess of love, in accordance with her dominant amatory aspect. Evidence that she possessed a defensive martial aspect in the sixth and fifth centuries B.C. in some cults in mainland Greece has not been fully considered by scholars, in part because it does not fit with the preconceived notions about the character of Aphrodite that have developed since antiquity.

This thesis will attempt to address a number of questions. 1.) Is there sufficient evidence to argue that Aphrodite had a martial aspect during the 6th and 5th centuries BCE? 2.) How do we understand Aphrodite's associations with Ares and her characterization as a citadel and an armed goddess? 3.) If there is sufficient evidence for Aphrodite's martial aspect, how does that broaden our understanding of Aphrodite's meaning to Greek society? 4.) Is there any evidence that these associations are related in some way to the epithet Ourania?

This thesis will explore four associations of Aphrodite that might point to her possession of a defensive martial characteristic. These four aspects overlap at times, but it seems best to explore each of them individually. 1.) There are a number of parallels between Aphrodite and Near Eastern goddesses of love and sexuality
(specifically Astarte) in myth and art. Many of these goddesses undeniably possessed militaristic associations. 2.) Aphrodite appears to possess a defensive aspect as a citadel goddess at some sites. 3.) Aphrodite is associated with Ares, the god of war, in myth and cult. 4.) Aphrodite may have been represented armed at some cult sites. In order to investigate these characteristics, I will examine the evidence for Aphrodite at the cults in mainland Greece where Aphrodite was worshipped as Ourania at some point - Kythera, Athens, Sparta, Corinth, Epidaurus, Argos, Thebes, and Elis. I will look at evidence from myth, literary sources, archaeology, and visual sources. I will consider the modern explanations for Aphrodite's martial characteristics, and will ultimately argue that this aspect can best be understood as an inversion of the normal roles for women.

Ultimately, this thesis will argue for a more nuanced understanding of Aphrodite that is inclusive of aspects that appear to conflict with her role as the goddess of love and sexuality. This will allow us to better understand her character, cult, and meaning to society.
Dedicated to my mother, Nancy Rock.
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INTRODUCTION

In 480 BCE, the Persians approached Greece. According to Athenaios and Plutarch, the denizens of Corinth prayed to Aphrodite for her help.\(^1\) The image of Aphrodite as a citadel goddess and as the protectress of a polis is not one that fits with her usual amatory image as the goddess of love and sexuality. It is hard to imagine that in a time of imminent military peril, when an invading army was closing on the Greek poleis, that the citizens of a city-state would pray for help to a goddess from whom they could not reasonably expect aid. It is equally hard to imagine that when they prayed to Aphrodite for deliverance from the Persians, they expected that deliverance in the form of her driving the attacking army mad with lust – even if many of the suppliants were prostitutes. The logical conclusion is that the residents of Corinth expected Aphrodite to be able to defend the city somehow against an invading army.

Gods and goddesses in the Greek pantheon often possessed a wide array of attributes. On this level, the idea that Aphrodite’s attributes extend beyond the world of love and lust is not surprising. There has been a trend in modern scholarship, however, to overlook those attributes of Aphrodite that appear to break her out of this amatory aspect.

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\(^1\) Athenaios, 13.573d; Plutarch, On the Malice of Herodotus, 871
This thesis will attempt to address a number of questions. 1.) Is there sufficient evidence to argue that Aphrodite had a martial aspect during the 6th and 5th centuries BCE? 2.) How do we understand Aphrodite’s associations with Ares and her characterization as a citadel and an armed goddess? 3.) If there is sufficient evidence for Aphrodite’s martial aspect, how does that broaden our understanding of Aphrodite’s meaning to Greek society? 4.) Is there any evidence that these associations are related in some way to the epithet Ourania?

This thesis will explore four associations of Aphrodite that might point to her possession of a defensive martial characteristic. These four aspects overlap at times, but it seems best to explore each of them individually. 1.) There are a number of parallels between Aphrodite and Near Eastern goddesses of love and sexuality (specifically Astarte) in myth and art. Many of these goddesses undeniably possessed militaristic associations. 2.) Aphrodite appears to possess a defensive aspect as a citadel goddess at some sites. 3.) Aphrodite is associated with Ares, the god of war, in myth and cult. 4.) Aphrodite may have been represented armed at some cult sites. In order to investigate these characteristics, I will examine the evidence for Aphrodite at the cults in mainland Greece where Aphrodite was worshipped as Ourania at some point - Kythera, Athens, Sparta, Corinth, Epidaurus, Argos, Thebes, and Elis. I will look at evidence from myth, literary sources, archaeology, and visual sources. I will consider the modern explanations for Aphrodite’s martial characteristics, and will ultimately argue that this aspect can best be understood as an inversion of the normal roles for women.

2See Appendix A for the evidence for Ourania at these sites
Ultimately, this thesis will argue for a more nuanced understanding of Aphrodite that is inclusive of aspects that appear to conflict with her role as the goddess of love and sexuality. This will allow us to better understand her character, cult, and meaning to society. It will support the view of scholars who argue against the simplification of goddess figures — in particular the tendency to reduce every goddess to either a mother goddess or a fertility goddess, simply on account of the fact that she is female. Beverly Moon, for example, asserts that in reality goddesses often display more than one kind of symbolism, and that “a goddess may acquire a complex symbolism because her role and symbolism change with the gradual transformation of the culture around her.” The example that Moon gives for this acquisition of complex symbolism is Aphrodite. Aphrodite was clearly a complex goddess, possibly influenced by a great number of goddesses from the Near East and Mediterranean basin. Her symbolism and associations changed over time as her role in Greek society changed, and it is because of this that some of the traits that do not agree with the traditional conception of the goddess of love and beauty — such as the armed images — baffled even the Romans. Of course, some of these associations survived in certain places until the Roman period at least, although for the most part they died out. For example, while Leonidas of Alexandria could not understand why the armed statue of Aphrodite would carry the weapons of Ares, both Julius Caesar and Sulla claimed the patronage of Venus Victrix.

3 Moon, 2000, p. 5-9

4 Moon, 2000, p.5

5 The Greek Anthology, 171; Appian, Bell. Civii, 1.97; Moon, 2000, p.18-21
Sarah Pomeroy’s description of Aphrodite as representing “physical beauty, sexual love, and fertility” is an example of the simplification of goddess figures that Moon argues against. Pomeroy further comments on Aphrodite that: “Much of Aphrodite’s seductiveness lies in her frivolous, deceitful character, for these appear to be the qualities of sexually attractive females.” This description does not appear to be in any way compatible with a strong goddess who at some point had a clear defensive martial aspect. Perhaps this difficulty in understanding is why so many scholars avoid the study of Aphrodite, and those who do tackle the subject blithely explain away or ignore certain aspects of her character, attempting to fit her into the personality that Homer created. Paul Friedrich comments on recent scholarship on Aphrodite: “Recent points of view, both popular and scholarly, tend to reduce Aphrodite, including the Homeric Greek one, to a fun girl or a patroness of prostitutes and to equate the Sapphic Aphrodite with the physical side of Lesbianism.” Such views of Aphrodite represent a severe simplification of her character and associations, and are detrimental to our understanding of Aphrodite’s place in society.

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6 Pomeroy, 1995, p.6

7 For a discussion of “the avoidance of Aphrodite” see Freidrich, 1978, p.1-3

8 Friedrich, 1978, p.2
CHAPTER 1:

THE "CHARACTER" OF APHRODITE

Gods and goddesses of the Greek pantheon often possessed a number of characteristics. Each was worshipped using many different epithets. Aphrodite was no exception. The index of Vincianne Pirenne-Delforge's work on Aphrodite has entries for over one hundred different epithets of Aphrodite in Greece. Some epithets refer to a certain trait or location, but others, like Ourania, are more general, and thus more difficult to associate with certain traits or aspects of the goddess. Each of these epithets, however, represents a different conceptualization of the goddess. Obviously, there is no actual Aphrodite. Aphrodite exists in the minds of people. Each epithet of Aphrodite represents a conception of Aphrodite, whether of a single literary author or the communal conception of a cult. There are actually an infinite number of conceptions of Aphrodite, although all of these conceptions draw from largely the same group of sources and possess some commonalities. Some conceptions of Aphrodite probably possessed a martial aspect, while many other conceptions inevitably did not.

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9 Burkert, 1985, 119-189, especially p.184

10 Pirenne-Delforge, 1994, p.512-513
There are four main sources that contribute to conceptions of Aphrodite: 1.) myth and epic poetry; 2.) religious cults; 3.) artistic representations; and 4.) philosophy. None of these exist in a vacuum, obviously, and all overlap with each other to some extent, while presenting somewhat distinct conceptions of the goddess. Their relationship might best be demonstrated by a Venn diagram. It is important to understand that while these conceptions have some commonalities, they are not interchangeable. Aphrodite’s character in myth is not necessarily a good indicator of her character in a specific cult, and epithets given to her in epic poetry do not necessarily refer to specific cults of the goddess.

This chapter will focus mainly on the conceptions of Aphrodite presented by myth and philosophy. Briefly, I will look at some of the associations of Aphrodite in vase paintings during the 6th and 5th centuries and previously. These conceptions of Aphrodite are fairly universal, while the conceptions of Aphrodite in cult are often more individual or localized and will be explored in later chapters. I will focus on the episodes from myth, distinctions in philosophy, and visual representations that are relevant to Aphrodite’s defensive martial aspect in some fashion. Finally, I will explore some of the possible meanings for the epithet Ourania.
Figure 1: Interactions between Different Types of Conceptions of Aphrodite
MYTH AND EPIC POETRY

The poems of Hesiod and Homer, although likely composed within a century of one another, present two conflicting portraits of Aphrodite. The most obvious difference between these two conceptions of Aphrodite is her parentage. In the account of Hesiod, Aphrodite has no mother and is born from the genitals of Ouranos when he is castrated. In the account of Homer, Aphrodite is the daughter of Zeus and Dione, a goddess about whom little is known. The significant difference between these two accounts is the place of Aphrodite in the cosmogony. In the *Theogony* of Hesiod, Aphrodite is one of the first deities. She is, consequently, a much more primal goddess. She is associated with Ares, and together their children are Pain, Panic, and Harmonia. Aphrodite as the daughter of Zeus obviously comes much later in the scheme of things, and is a member of the established Olympian order. In Homer Aphrodite is presented as the lover of Ares, the wife of Hephaistus, and the mother of Aeneas.

This differentiation between the “Hesiodic” and the “Homeric” Aphrodite is not clear-cut and simple. Conflicting beliefs about deities were not uncommon in the Greek belief system, nor were even direct contradictions within myth. Although Hesiod relates the account of Aphrodite’s birth that she is the daughter of Ouranos, Hesiod is also obviously aware of the tradition by which Aphrodite belongs to the established Olympian order. In the beginning of the *Theogony*, when he lists the deities, he includes Aphrodite with the group of Olympians.\(^\text{11}\)

\(^{11}\) Hesiod, *Theogony*, 10-20
This traditional modern conception of Aphrodite as a goddess of sexuality and beauty can be traced back to the Aphrodite presented in the *Iliad* by Homer. Aphrodite is responsible for the entire war since she gave Helen to Paris so that she could win the beauty contest. Essentially, the Trojan War can be credited to the vain and selfish desire of Aphrodite to be considered the most beautiful. Her contribution to the instigation of the Trojan War appears to be one of her greatest literary roles.\(^{12}\) Aphrodite also helps others use sexuality and beauty in a deceitful fashion to get their own way. For example, in the *Iliad*, Hera comes to Aphrodite when she wishes to outmaneuver Zeus and distract him during a battle. She says to her “Give me love, give me longing now, the powers you use to overwhelm the gods and men.” Aphrodite complies in aiding Hera in her deceit, replying that “it’s wrong to deny your warm request.”\(^{13}\)

In the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, Aphrodite is not depicted as a powerful goddess with connections to a war god, but rather as ineffectual, selfish, deceitful, and weak. In the *Iliad*, Aphrodite’s wrist is wounded by the spear of Diomedes while she attempts to protect her son Aeneas, and she lets out “a piercing shriek… racked with agony” and flees to the lap of her mother, Dione.\(^{14}\)

Perhaps Homer presents Aphrodite in this light because she is a powerful goddess who on some levels is threatening to men and to the patriarchal order. Certainly, Aphrodite must have posed a frightening challenge to the male-dominated society of ancient Greece. Her very birth, a result of the castration of Ouranos, can be interpreted to

\(^{12}\) Budin, 2003, p.32

\(^{13}\) Homer, *Iliad*, 4.187-269
represent the male fear of female sexuality.\textsuperscript{15} Aphrodite also wielded enormous amounts of power over gods and mortals alike, though her power to manipulate their sexual desires.\textsuperscript{16} Only the virgin goddesses Artemis, Athena, and Hestia are immune to her influence.\textsuperscript{17} This is perhaps why in Athens, Pausanias testifies to the presence of an inscription identifying Aphrodite with the oldest of the Fates.\textsuperscript{18} Aphrodite was even able to manipulate the great Zeus - and it was for this that he took his revenge in the fifth Homeric Hymn, and forced her to fall in love with Anchises.

Aphrodite is the only female Olympian to be caught in the act of adultery and also to be sexually promiscuous. Aphrodite had well-known affairs with the gods Ares and Hermes, and with the mortals Anchises and Adonis. For a society where the punishment of μοιχεία (adultery) could be death, the presence of an adulterous female in the pantheon of gods must have seemed at times threatening indeed.\textsuperscript{19} Fifth-century tragedy reflects Aphrodite’s perceived role as the source of dangerous passions in married women.\textsuperscript{20} In \textit{Hippolytus}, the passion that Aphrodite inflicts on Phaedra, who loves her virginal step son, results in Phaedra’s suicide and the brutal death of Hippolytus at the

\textsuperscript{14} Homer, \textit{Iliad}, 5.356-430

\textsuperscript{15} Blundell, 1995, p.36-37

\textsuperscript{16} Homeric Hymn V; Blundell, 1995, p.37

\textsuperscript{17} Homeric Hymn V

\textsuperscript{18} Pausanias, 1.19.2

\textsuperscript{19} Blundell, 1995, p.38; Lysias, \textit{On the Murder of Erotasthenes}

\textsuperscript{20} Blundell, 1995, p.38
hands of his father.\textsuperscript{21} Blundell comments on this: "Underlying the narrative is the belief, present also in the story of Aphrodite’s birth, that female sexuality can un hinge and destroy a man."\textsuperscript{22}

**VISUAL REPRESENTATIONS**

Although Aphrodite is present in artistic representations dating back to the seventh century BCE, she has few obvious iconographic traits. This makes it difficult to identify her when she is not explicitly identified. She is identified in some works on the basis of her association with Ares. One example of this pairing is in the main frieze of the Francois Vase, where the gods and goddesses are depicted in a procession. Ares and Aphrodite are depicted together at the wedding of Peleus and Thetis. Fourteen representations of Aphrodite and Ares together are recorded in the Greek repertoire before 500 BCE.\textsuperscript{23}

Aphrodite’s role as the instigator of the Trojan War is not just one of her most prominent literary roles, but also a prominent role for her in visual representations. She is depicted in the Judgment of Paris at least five times before 500 BCE.\textsuperscript{24}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{21} Euripides, *Hippolytus*
\item \textsuperscript{22} Blundell, 1995, p.39
\item \textsuperscript{23} Delivorrias, 1984, #1285-1317
\item \textsuperscript{24} Budin, 2003, p.32
\end{itemize}
PHILOSOPHY

Plato and subsequent philosophers capitalize on the apparent duality of Aphrodite from Hesiod and Homer, and the distinction of these two Aphrodites takes on meaning for philosophy. In his Symposium, Plato attempts to provide a clear cut differentiation between the two conceptions of Aphrodite, Ourania (heavenly) and Pandemos (common).25

“Does anyone doubt that she is double? Surely there is the elder, of no mother born, the daughter of heaven, whence we name her heavenly; while the younger was the child of Zeus and Dione, and her we call Popular… Now the love that belongs to the Popular Aphrodite is in very truth popular and does his work at haphazard; that is the Love we see in the mealer sort of men, who in the first place, love women as well as boys; secondly, whence they love, they are set on the body more than the soul; and thirdly, they choose the most witless people they can find, since they look merely to the accomplishment and care not in the manner be noble or no. Hence they find themselves doing everything at haphazard, good or its opposite, without distinction: for this Love proceeds from the goddess who is far the younger of the two, and who in her origin partakes of both female and male. But the other Love springs from the Heavenly goddess who, firstly, partakes not of the female but only of the male, and secondly, is the elder, untiring with wantonness, wherefore those who are inspired by this Love betake them to the male, in fondness for what has the robuster nature and a larger share of the mind.”

Pausanias also refers to Aphrodite Ourania (the heavenly one) and Aphrodite Pandemos (of all the people, the common one) in a cult context.26 While these distinctions represent two of the major cults to Aphrodite, the titles Pandemos and Ourania take on great

25 Plato, Symposium, 180c-181c

26 For example in Elis, Pausanias 6.25.1
significance for philosophers. Apuleius takes up these distinctions five centuries after Plato in his *Apologia.*²⁷

The one [of the two Venuses] is the goddess of the common herd, who is fired by base and vulgar passion and commands not only the hearts of men, but cattle and wild beasts also, to give themselves over to the gratification of their desires: she strikes down these creatures with fierce intolerable force and fetters their servile bodies in the embraces of lust. The other is a celestial power endued with lofty and generous passion: she cares for none save men, and of them but few; she neither stings nor lures her followers to foul deeds. Her love is neither wanton nor voluptuous, but serious and unadorned, and wins her lovers to the pursuit of virtue by revealing to them how fair a thing is nobility of soul. Or, if ever she commends beautiful bodies to their admiration, she puts a bar upon all indecorous conduct. For the only claim that physical beauty has upon the admiration is that it reminds those whose souls have soared above things human to things divine, of that beauty which once they beheld in all its truth and purity enthroned among the gods in heaven.

The two titles of Aphrodite come to have moral overtones in philosophy — *Pandemos* is common and sexually impure, while *Ourania* is heavenly and pure. It is important to note that the distinctions that Plato creates are not those that were generally accepted in religious cult, especially in the sixth and fifth centuries BC. The cult of *Pandemos* was actually an important cult for the political life of the city, as it was Aphrodite “of all the people” who was responsible for political harmony in Athens.²⁸ *Pandemos,* for example, was sacrificed to by magistrates on the successful completion of their term in office. It is also apparent from epigraphic evidence that *hetaerae* sacrificed to both Aphrodites; they do not seem to have a special attachment to *Pandemos.*²⁹ It is also important to note that

²⁷ Apuleius, *Apologia,* 12-13

²⁸ Pirenne-Del forge, 1994, p.446-450

²⁹ Pirenne-Del forge, 1988
while Plato and later philosophies saw two distinct Aphrodites, in cult there were many more epithets of Aphrodite used and they do not correspond to these philosophical distinctions.
THE EPITHET OURANIA

An important question for understanding Aphrodite Ourania is: Just what does Ourania mean? Literally, the epithet Ourania refers to Aphrodite in her role as the daughter of Ouranos. As mentioned in Hesiod’s Theogony, Aphrodite is born from the castrated genitals of Ouranos. Plato refers to the daughter of Ouranos as Ourania in his Symposium – “Surely there is the elder, of no mother born, the daughter of heaven [Ouranos], whence we call her Heavenly [Ourania].”31 Pirenne-Delforge suggests that Aphrodite was already called Ourania, and that Hesiod provides the story of the castration of Ouranos as an explanation for the epithet.32

The word Ourania is literally translated as heavenly.33 The epithet “Heavenly” corresponds to the title of the Queen of Heaven, given to some Near Eastern goddesses. Ourania is the literal translation of the Semitic title ‘Meleket Aschamaim’, or the Queen of Heaven, used in the Old Testament for the goddess Astarte.34 The title Queen of Heaven was also given to the Sumerian goddess Inanna.35 Although the term “Heavenly One” might appear to have some astral meaning, Farnell suggests that the term Ourania

30 Hesiod, Theogony, 192-205
31 Plato, Symposium, 180d
32 Pirenne-Delforge, 1994, p.66
33 Lidell and Scott, Ourania
34 Old Testament, Jeremiah, 7:18, 44:17-19; Burkert, 1985, p.152-153
35 Moon, 2000, p.69

15
for Aphrodite should most likely not be assigned any distinct lunar, solar, or astral meaning, and that it refers to the goddess whose seat was in heaven, and whose power stretched throughout the world.\footnote{Farnell, 1977, p.630}

The focus of this thesis is on the conception of Aphrodite in cult. In some cults in mainland Greece, Aphrodite possessed a defensive martial characteristic. The evidence of conceptions of Aphrodite in myth, philosophy, and visual representations can contribute to the character of Aphrodite in specific cults, but it can not create a full picture. The only way to do this is to explore the evidence for each cult, including material remains, other epithets used in the same polis, and literary evidence. This paper will thematically explore the evidence for the eight cults where Ourania was worshipped, and from there try to create a broader picture of Aphrodite’s defensive martial characteristic.
CHAPTER 2:

SECONDARY SCHOLARSHIP ON APHRODITE

This section will review the relevant scholarship on the question of Aphrodite’s martial characteristic and how it might be interpreted. The origin of Aphrodite has generated a significant amount of scholarly debate. Although the focus of this thesis is not on the origin of Aphrodite, the arguments for Aphrodite’s origin inform the arguments that are used to explain her martial aspect. Various explanations that have been presented as ways to understand Aphrodite’s association with Ares and her alleged martial aspect will also be considered.

Some scholars, such as K. Tumpel in the article on Aphrodite in Pauly’s Realencyclopädie, argue that Aphrodite is an indigenous Greek goddess, and that her origins come from Greece itself. This indigenous goddess was then lost beneath layers of foreign influence, causing even the ancients to consider Aphrodite a foreign goddess.\(^{37}\)

The opposite argument is the “Orientalist” argument, or the argument that Aphrodite was not an indigenous Greek goddess and was imported to Greece before 750 BCE. Famell argues that there is no good evidence for Aphrodite’s origin as an indigenous Hellenic deity. He says, in fact, “Whenever an

\(^{37}\) Budin, 2003, p.5; Tumpel, 2769 p.49-55
Aphrodite-cult in any Greek state claimed to be of remote antiquity, its foreign origin usually stood confessed."38 Walter Burkert writes about the origins of Aphrodite in his comprehensive Greek Religion.39

Behind the figure of Aphrodite there clearly stands the ancient Semitic goddess of love, Ishtar-Astarte, divine consort of the king, queen of heaven, and hetaera in one... The decisive evidence, however, comes from those correspondences in cult and iconography which go beyond mere sexuality – this deity is androgynous – there is an Ishtar with a beard and a male Ashtar beside Astarte, just as there is a bearded Aphrodite and a male Aphroditos beside Aphrodite; Astarte is called the Queen of Heaven just as Aphrodite is called the Heavenly, Urania; Astarte is worshipped with incense altars and dove sacrifices as is Aphrodite and Aphrodite alone, Ishtar is also a warrior goddess, and again Aphrodite may be armed and bestow victory. If moreover there is prostitution in the Aphrodite cult, then the most notorious characteristic of the Ishtar-Astarte cult is taken over. The connection with the garden and with the sea is also present in both cases.

Williams has argued that Corinth directly imported Astarte to act as their city’s benefactor and protectress. Williams suggests that Aphrodite was imported to Corinth after its synoikismos, and that “it may have been Bacchic policy to set up a state cult and a protecting goddess, borrowing a city goddess and her cult from a powerful and admired state in the Near East or Cyprus, thereby obtaining the most powerful protectress available in the Mediterranean.”40 In his view, Aphrodite in Corinth was originally Astarte, and this explains her martial aspect as well as other aspects that might appear objectionable as characteristics of Aphrodite. Since Astarte is accepted as a goddess who has aspects of both sexuality and martiality, this is a possible explanation for Aphrodite’s martial characteristic.

38 Farnell, 1977, p.620
39 Burkert, 1985, p.152-153
40 Williams, 1986, p.19
Williams' argument is an intriguing one, but it does not have an overwhelming amount of material evidence to back it up. Only one sherd has been found inscribed with the name Astarte. This is the only direct evidence for the importation of Astarte. Williams further argues his theory on the basis of the cult feature of sacred prostitution, but most scholars no longer support the contention that there was sacred prostitution in Corinth. \(^{41}\)

Another argument has been proposed by scholars that occupies a middle ground between the two extremes of the indigenous and the imported Aphrodite. Some scholars propose there were elements of Aphrodite in a deity or deities of the pre-Iron Age Aegean that combined with external elements to create the Hellenic goddess. \(^{42}\) Recently, Stephanie Budin argued that Aphrodite was a Cypriot goddess. “But Aphrodite was not an oriental goddess. She emerged slowly from Cypriot, Levantine, and Aegean influences, all left to simmer together in Cyprus for centuries during the Dark Ages before finally emerging and establishing her cult in the Greek world.” \(^{43}\)

Other recent scholarship has acknowledged the connection between the Near Eastern goddess Astarte and Aphrodite, while attempting to avoid the rather murky question of origins. A paper co-authored by Vincianne Pirenne-Delforge and Corinne Bonnet attempts to shed light on the interactions between Aphrodite and Astarte. \(^{44}\) They

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\(^{41}\) Pirenne-Delforge, 1994, p.121-126

\(^{42}\) Budin, 2003, p.1; For example Friedrich, 1978

\(^{43}\) Budin, 2003, p.273

\(^{44}\) Bonnet and Pirenne-Delforge, 1977, p.250-251
argue that a number of goddesses contributed to the development of an anonymous
goddess into the Greek Aphrodite. Bonnet’s Astarte examines the problem of the
relations between Astarte and Aphrodite throughout the Aegean basin, while Pirenne-
Delforge’s l’Aphrodite Greque comprehensively examines Aphrodite in Greece, “sans
poser, en principe, la question des origines.”45 Pirenne-Delforge wishes to understand the
relationship between Aphrodite and her epithets.46 She explains all of Aphrodite’s
functions through reference to her dominant attribute of sexuality. Even Aphrodite’s
martial attribute at Sparta is explained because Aphrodite is appropriately involved with
coming of age rituals for young girls, and at Sparta girls were given a more physical
education than in other poleis.47

The association of Aphrodite and Ares, especially on a cult level, is difficult to
understand. Scholars have explained this association in one of two ways: 1. Aphrodite is
a martial goddess when she is associated with Ares, and he is the cause of her martial
aspect. 2. Aphrodite is not a martial goddess when she is associated with Ares. Aphrodite
and Ares are paired because they possess opposing attributes, and this actually mitigates
her martiality.

Some scholars argue that Aphrodite is a martial goddess when she is associated
with Ares. The association of Aphrodite with Ares provides a tempting explanation for
an armed Aphrodite. Farnell argues that Aphrodite is armed at Thebes on the basis of her
association with Ares as the ruling couple of Thebes. In his view, the pairing is all the

45 Bonnet and Pirenne-Delforge, 1977, p.250; Bonnet, 1996; Pirenne-Delforge, 1994

46 Pirenne-Delforge, 1994, p.469
more natural if Aphrodite appears in the form of the armed goddess.\textsuperscript{48} Likewise, Tomlinson argues on the basis of a double temple to Ares and Aphrodite in Argos that Aphrodite appears in Argos as a goddess of war.\textsuperscript{49}

An alternate explanation for the pairing has been proposed, however, that argues that Aphrodite and Ares are paired not because of their similarities, but because of their differences. They are like foils in a literary work, with characteristics that complement and contrast one another. Aphrodite represents peace and harmony, while Ares represents war. Hesiod says that the honors due to Aphrodite were “flirtatious conversations of maidens, smiles and deceits, sweet delights and passions of love and gentle enticements.”\textsuperscript{50} These are certainly not associations that suggest an armed and militaristic Aphrodite.

A good example of a case where the opposition argument might shed light on the relationship between Aphrodite and Ares is the double temple of Aphrodite and Ares in Argos. The temple is situated with two entrances - one to the west, and one to the east. Ares looks outward to Arcadia, across the boundaries.\textsuperscript{51} Tomlinson argues that the association of Aphrodite and Ares in Argos is evidence that Aphrodite appears in Argos as a goddess of war.\textsuperscript{52} Pirenne-Delforge disagrees, and suggests an alternate reading of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{47} Pirenne-Delforge, 1994, p.469-471
\item \textsuperscript{48} Farnell, 1977, p.623
\item \textsuperscript{49} Tomlinson, 1972, p.208-209
\item \textsuperscript{50} Hesiod, \textit{Theogony}, 204-206
\item \textsuperscript{51} Pausanias, 2.25.1
\item \textsuperscript{52} Tomlinson, 1972, p.208-209
\end{itemize}
the double temple based on Vernant’s study of the Hestia / Hermes pairing. Ares represents war and oppression, and thus looks out of Arcadia. Aphrodite, however, looks inward to the Argolid and represents peace and harmony. Aphrodite was often an important figure in the life of polis as pandemos, of all the people. Magistrates sacrificed to her because she was responsible not just for sexual love, but for the harmony of the citizens in the polis.\textsuperscript{53} If the temple is read in this way, Aphrodite does not take on any of Ares’ attributes or any sort of martial aspect. Schacter argues similarly that the couple at Thebes are “an allegorical representation of the formation of the community by a fusion of its destructive and generative, or, if it is preferred, its male and female, elements.”\textsuperscript{54}

A useful model for the evaluation of this interpretation is Jean-Pierre Vernant’s study on the unlikely pairing of Hestia and Hermes in art. Vernant argues that “the Hermes / Hestia association is invested with real religious significance. It is there to express a definite structure in the Greek pantheon.”\textsuperscript{55} Hestia, the hearth personified, is rarely depicted in anthropomorphic form. Many of these rare images depict her as the partner of Hermes, with whom she is paired on the base of the great statue of Zeus at Olympia. Hestia is permanent and immovable. Hermes also inhabits the world of humans, but as the messenger, moving from place to place. As opposed to Hestia, “nothing about him is settled, stable, permanent, restricted, or definite.” Vernant argues that “It (their mutual philia) is the result of an affinity of function, for the two powers are present in the same places and carry out their complementary activities side by side.

\textsuperscript{53} Pirenne-Delforge, 1994, p.446-450

\textsuperscript{54} Schacter, 1991, p.40
Neither relations nor spouses nor loves nor vassals - one could say that Hermes and Hestia are 'neighbors.' Each is related to the terrestrial sphere, the habitat of a settled people.” Hestia represents the immoveable world of women, locked away inside the house, while Hermes “represents, in space and in the human world, mutation and transition, contact between foreign elements.”

Vernant argues that:

If they form a couple in the religious belief of the Greeks, it is because the two deities belong to the same plane, their action applies to the same field of reality, and their functions are interpolated. Now, as regards Hestia, no doubt is possible: her significance is obvious, her role is strictly defined. Because her fate is to reign, forever immobile, at the center of the domestic sphere, Hestia implies, as her complement and her contrast, the swift-footed god who rules the realm of the traveler. To Hestia belongs the world of the interior, the enclosed, the stable, the retreat of the human group within itself; to Hermes, the outside world, opportunity, movement, interchange with others. It could be said that, by virtue of their polarity, the Hermes-Hestia couple represents the tension that is so marked in the archaic conception of space: space requires a center, a nodal point, with a special value, from which all directions, all different qualitatively, may be channeled and defined yet at the same time space appears as the medium of movement implying the possibility of transition and passage from any point to another.

This argument does offer a compelling explanation for the double temple of Aphrodite and Ares at Argos. It does not easily apply to all of the associations of the two, however, and certainly fails to explain the presence of an armed Aphrodite when there is no Ares. If the opposition argument held true for all cases, Aphrodite would never be portrayed armed. The oppositional argument fails to explain instances where Aphrodite holds arms or armor at all, whether accompanied by Ares or not. Aphrodite

55 Vernant, 1963, p.113
56 Vernant, 1963, p.114
57 Vernant, 1963, p.115
was clearly portrayed armed at Corinth, but the two statues that Pausanias describes as standing with her statue on the AkroCorinth are Helios and Eros. The oppositional argument can explain the association of Aphrodite with Ares in some instances, but certainly not all.

Vernant’s study presents an intriguing parallel to the unlikely pair of Aphrodite and Ares. But do Hestia and Hermes really provide the best comparanda? Hestia does not leave her hearth. She is not portrayed in art with the attributes of Hermes. Neither does Hermes display any of Hestia’s attributes. The two stay opposites. At times in artistic representations, Aphrodite appears to have been depicted as a war goddess, with attributes that are generally associated with Ares, and may or may not be her own. The explanation that Vernant suggests for Hestia and Hermes can not be compellingly applied to cases where Aphrodite is actually armed.

The opposition theory has also been presented as a way to understand Aphrodite’s martial aspect. Freidrich acknowledges that Aphrodite might seem to have a martial nature at first, but concludes that she is relatively “peaceful and amatory.” Because she is linked to Ares by opposition, this actually mitigates her martiality in his eyes. Freidrich does suggest that “some of her traits can be interpreted as metaphors of war within the synchronic Homeric system or as reflexes of an earlier martial version.” For example, in Sappho the “perils of Aphrodite” are sometimes compared with the perils of war. Unlike the metaphors of love and war in the Sumerian, Babylonian, and Canaanite

58 Pausanias, 2.5.1

59 Freidrich, 1978, p.96-97
traditions, the metaphor is outward, from love to war. In these other traditions, the
direction is inward, from war to love. For example, in the poem by Enheduanna “is
overtly about war and violence, though at times it may possibly be a metaphor of love.”
In Freidrich’s view, because love is a metaphor for war, and not vice versa, this actually
“seems to lend further confirmation to the relatively peaceful and amatory nature of
Aphrodite.” So Aphrodite (love) metaphorically means conflict or war sometimes, but
Aphrodite does not actually possess a martial characteristic.

An alternative theory to understand Aphrodite’s martial aspect is inversion. Fritz
Graf points out that women did not play a role in warfare or its rituals. “War in its
practical as well as its religious aspect was the business of the Greek male. Women stood
aside and acted only in emergencies, by throwing stones or by praying, preferably
silently.”60 He examines three stories in which these roles are turned upside down: the
defense of the city of Argos by its women led by Telesilla, the defense of Sparta by its
women against the Messenians, and the defense of Tegea by its women against the
Spartans. These stories explain fixtures in the cultic life of these cities – statues, a temple
and the ritual of the Hybristika.61 The rituals behind these stories are impossible to
recover. Graf suggests that the one conclusion that seems certain is that “The paradox on
the level of narration corresponds to a paradox on the level of cult reality: the story of
women fighting to save the polis is a narrative device pointing to a representation of cult

60 Graf, p.246
61 Graf, p.249
or a ritual with unusual features, those of inverted normality."\(^{62}\) Cults of Aphrodite with an inversion of normality are present in Greece. One example is the festival of the Aphrodisa in Thebes. The aitia for the Aphrodisia – that men disguised as hetairae were brought in and stabbed the pro-Spartan polemarchs who were celebrating the festival – is similar to the other stories examined by Graf.\(^{63}\) He concludes: \(^{64}\)

Nor do the fighting women of the aitia refer to historical realities; they are narrative signs for the paradoxical structure of the cultic reality behind the. If there is a reference to how women behaved in Greece, it is a reference by inversion: the fighting women gain their semantic value through the opposition to ordinary life, where women were almost totally absent from the male world of war.

Pirenne-Delforge argues that Aphrodite does not have a martial aspect at all. She suggests a few solutions for the epithet \(\omega\pi\lambda\iota\sigma\mu\iota\nu\eta\): 1.) It does not refer to more than the shield which Aphrodite is holding in the statue at Corinth possibly observed by Pausanias. 2.) It refers to her relationship with Ares. 3.) She is “armed” with her beauty.

Pirenne-Delforge argues that Aphrodite was only truly armed at Sparta, and she was only armed there because of the unique Lykurgan regime. Aphrodite, for the sake of Lykurgus, gave up her mirror and her jewelry for the lance and the shield. This would not be abnormal at Sparta, given their militaristic society as well as the unique education of girl children. This sentiment is echoed by Julianus, Prefect of Egypt in his comment on the Armed Aphrodite at Sparta: “Cypris has ever learnt to carry a quiver and bow, and to ply the far-shooting archer’s craft. Is it from reverence for the laws of warlike Lycurgus that,

\(^{62}\) Graf, p.253

\(^{63}\) Graf, p.253-254

\(^{64}\) Graf, p.254

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bringing her love-charms to Sparta, she comes clad in armour for close combat? But ye, daughters of Sparta, venerating in your chambers the arms of Cytherea, bring forth courageous sons."65 Moreover, as Areia she does not become a goddess of war, but her action manifests itself in the context of war. The tradition at Kythera possibly follows that at Sparta, because of the possible religious exchange, and at Corinth Pausanias simply used the same descriptor.66

Many of the explanations presented by scholars fail to explain the complexities of Aphrodite’s martial aspect. Often these explanations – such as the opposition theory – deny Aphrodite her martial aspect. Given the evidence for Aphrodite’s defensive martial aspect, I fail to find such explanations compelling. The theory of inversion presents a possible lens with which to understand why Aphrodite was given a martial characteristic. Without denying Aphrodite her martiality it is possible to acknowledge at the same time that it was not a potential role for Greek women, and presents a possible way to explain Aphrodite’s meaning (in some cults) to Greek society.

65 The Greek Anthology, 173

66 Pirenne-Delforge, 1994, p.450-454
CHAPTER 3:

EVIDENCE FOR APHRODITE’S DEFENSIVE MARTIAL CHARACTERISTIC

3.1 APHRODITE AND NEAR EASTERN WAR GODDESSS:

PARALLELS IN MYTH AND ICONOGRAPHY

Ancient authors assumed that Aphrodite Ourania was imported from the Near East. 67 Herodotus informs us that the sanctuary at Ashkalon in Syria is the most ancient of Aphrodite Ourania, and that it was from this Syrian cult to Aphrodite that the Cypriots imported their cult. The Kytherians received the cult from Phoenician traders from Syria. 68 Herodotus explicitly equates Aphrodite Ourania with the Skythian Argimpasa, with the Assyrian Mylitta, and with the Arabian Alilat. 69 Centuries later Pausanias relates a slightly different story. “It was established that the first people to revere Ourania were the Assyrians, and after the Assyrians the Paphians of Cyprus, and those of the Phoenicians who dwell in Ashkalon in Palestine; Kytherians worship her having

67 Aphrodite is identified with Astarte, Isis, Ishtar, Inanna, Hathor, the Proto-Indo European and Early Greek Dawn goddesses, the Old European Bird Goddess, and the Minoan Dove Goddess; see Friedrich, 1978, p.9-54 for a review of Aphrodite’s origins and her relationships with these goddesses; Farwell, 1977, p.626-627

68 Herodotus, 1.165.1-4

69 Herodotus 4.59.2, 4.67.1; 1.131.3; 1.199; 3.8.3
learned so from the Phoenicians."⁷⁰ If the testimony of Herodotus can be trusted, Aphrodite *Ourania* was clearly perceived to be a foreign import, and perceived to be closely related to Astarte. There are also clear parallels between Aphrodite *Ourania* and Astarte in myth and artistic representations. Astarte (and some of Aphrodite's other Near Eastern cognates) was regarded as a goddess of both sexuality and warfare. If Aphrodite appeared to be parallel to Astarte in myth and art, then Aphrodite's possession of a martial aspect would not have seemed out of place.

Some objects that depict Aphrodite *Ourania* demonstrate a parallel with Astarte in subject and symbolism. A monumental altar was dedicated to Aphrodite *Ourania* in the Athenian Agora at the beginning of the sixth century BCE. The altar was identified by Leslie Shear as dedicated to *Ourania* based on the archaeological evidence and the position of the altar in the agora, which agrees with Pausanias' description of the agora.⁷¹ The altar was damaged during the Persian sack of Athens and repaired in the third quarter of the fifth century BC. When the altar was excavated, archaeologists found ash fill inside it. There are two potential explanations for this ash fill - either the ash from sacrifices built up inside the altar or the fill was taken from a nearby dump when the altar was repaired.⁷² The first study of this ash deposit by Giraud Foster revealed a large number of burnt bird bones, especially doves.⁷³ The dove is sacred to Aphrodite and

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⁷⁰ Pausanias, 1.14.7  
⁷¹ Pausanias, 1.14.6-7, 15.1; Shear, 1984, p.37-40  
⁷² Reese, 1989, p.63; Shear, 1984, p.38-39  
⁷³ Foster, 1984
connected to her iconographically. The subsequent study of the ash deposit by David Reese, which supercedes the preliminary report by Foster, found no bird bones.\textsuperscript{74}

Both studies found that a large percentage of the burnt bones were goat bones.\textsuperscript{75} The goat was also a special animal of Aphrodite, and a third of the references to her sacrifices prescribe goats or kids.\textsuperscript{76} Aphrodite is also associated with goats iconographically. On a votive relief that was once in the Museo Kircheriano, but is now lost, Aphrodite is descending a ladder. Beside Aphrodite and Eros stands a mother goat suckling a kid.\textsuperscript{77} In Plutarch’s Life of Theseus he also presents a story that associates Ourania with female goats. When Theseus is leaving for Crete, he is told by the oracle of Apollo to take Venus as his guide, and sacrifices a goat to Aphrodite.\textsuperscript{78} The prevalence of burnt goat bones among the ash fill, as well as the topographical position of the altar both confirm Shear’s identification of the altar as dedicated to Aphrodite Ourania.

Excavations have uncovered two fragments of a marble relief which have been associated with the monumental altar to Ourania. These two adjoining pieces of a classical votive relief were found in Byzantine levels above and west of the Painted Stoa in 1981.\textsuperscript{79} The relief pictures the head of a young woman gazing down at a vessel held in her right hand. She wears a short veil. Above and behind the veil is a portion of a ladder;

\textsuperscript{74} Reese, 1989, p.68

\textsuperscript{75} Reese, 1989, p.64-67; Foster, 1984; Shear, 1984, p.38-39

\textsuperscript{76} Shear, 1984, p.39

\textsuperscript{77} Edwards, 1984, p.66

\textsuperscript{78} Plutarch, \textit{Life of Theseus}, 18

\textsuperscript{79} Shear, 1984, p.31-32
the upper end of which disappears behind the frame.\textsuperscript{80} Charles Edwards dates this votive relief to the late fifth century BCE. He identifies the figure as Aphrodite based on two vase paintings and another relief depicting Aphrodite on a ladder.\textsuperscript{81}

The votive relief from the Museo Kircheriano illustrates the same scene as the agora relief. Aphrodite descends a ladder with her head veiled. The short veil is an iconographic characteristic of Aphrodite. There is a sickle shaped moon in the upper right corner, and a kline in the lower left corner. The ladder runs from the upper left corner of the relief, evidently bridging the area between earth and heaven. Aphrodite holds a vessel in her left hand, as she does in the agora relief, and is accompanied by two Erotes. In the upper right corner of the relief a mother-goat stands nursing her kid.\textsuperscript{82} On the hydria from the British Museum and the lekythos from Berlin, Aphrodite is also descending a ladder and sprinkling incense in a thurible held by a woman standing at the foot of the ladder.\textsuperscript{83}

The image of the heavenly ladder suggests that here Aphrodite is \textit{Ourania}, or heavenly. The relief from the Museo Kircheriano best illustrates the symbolism of the heavenly ladder. The ladder Aphrodite is descending stretches from heaven to earth. The sickle shaped moon suggests astral symbolism, and the goat is an animal sacred to Aphrodite \textit{Ourania}. The heavenly ladder is an image that appears in Egyptian and Near

\textsuperscript{80} Appendix B, figure 1
\textsuperscript{81} Appendix B, figures 2-4
\textsuperscript{82} Edwards, 1984, p.66-67
\textsuperscript{83} Edwards, 1984, p.67
Eastern texts. The heavenly ladder is mentioned twice in the Theban book of the dead. Edwards suggests that Babylonian ziggurats must have served a similar function, connecting the earthly plane to the heavenly one. The heavenly ladder seems to be a motif appropriate to heavenly Aphrodite, the daughter of heaven (Ouranos).²⁴

Edwards argues that the relief depicts the Adonia, but Ourania is descending from her heavenly ladder to accept the Adonis gardens from Eros. The symbolism of the heavenly ladder, and in particular the astral symbolism of relief from the Museo Kircheriano, indicate that this is likely Aphrodite Ourania. It is not altogether clear what the association of Ourania was to Adonis. The two are associated on Cyprus in cult, but there is no evidence for their association in Athens.²⁵

The identification of the subject of this relief is accepted as the Adonia by many scholars.²⁶ The Adonia is the festival that Aristophanes describes in his Lysistrata where women would climb to their rooftops and mourn the death of Adonis.²⁷ The presence of Aphrodite is explained by her association with Adonis. There is only evidence for the celebration of the festival of the Adonia in three Greek cities, and it appears from

²⁴ Edwards, 1984, p.66, footnote 50
²⁵ Reed, 1995
²⁶ The depiction of Aphrodite on the ladder has two possible readings, which have been the subject of debate for the past century. It is possible to read the ladder as Aphrodite’s heavenly ladder, and to read the scene of her descending the ladder as simply a ritual scene in the cult of Ourania. This reading is strengthened by the presence of other iconographic traits of Ourania in the vase paintings that have also been used to identify the agora relief - astral and terrestrial images, as well as a goat and a swan. The image of the heavenly ladder also has precedent in Egyptian and Near Eastern sensibility. The second reading of the ladder scenes is as a depiction of the Adonia, the festival that Aristophanes describes in his Lysistrata (lines 428-443) where women would climb to their rooftops and mourn the death of Adonis. The presence of Aphrodite is explained by her association with Adonis. See Edwards, 1984, p.66-70
²⁷ Aristophanes, Lysistrata, 428-443

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Aristophanes that the festival was regarded as a foreign import. Aristophanes ridicules the Adonia in his Lysistrata. One of the characters, the commissioner, comments to himself about the festival:

Women! Dippy dames! Jangling their tambourines, / worshiping foreign gods – Sabazios, / Adonis, for Christ’s sake! What screwy times! / Everything’s bass-backwards. like the crap / I had to listen to in the Assembly. That idiot / Demostratos urging the campaign against Sicily, / and all the while, his nitwit wife, skunk-drunk, / freaking out on the roof, wailing “Oh woe! / Adonis has croaked! O woe, O woeful omen!” / And Demostratos talking the dumb Assembly into drafting the Zakynthosians, / raising a giant army, while his wife’s / dervish dancing on the roof, hollering, “Woe! / O woe!” So Demostratos – damn the fool! - / railroad his proposals through. That’s the result / of ever letting women have their heads.

Even allowing for Aristophanes’ ridicule and exaggeration, it appears that the Adonia was a festival that the men of Athens were not all together comfortable with.

The Adonis myth is paralleled by a number of other myths in the Near East – Osiris and Isis, Astarte and Tammuz, and Inanna and Dumuzi. The name Adonis comes from the Semitic word for Lord, Adon. Aphrodite Ourania is associated with Adonis in cult outside of Athens. According to Pausanias in the city of Amathus on Cyprus there is a sanctuary of Aphrodite and Adonis.

88 Friedrich, 1978, p.69-71
89 Aristophanes, Lysistrata, 428-443
90 See Reed, 1995 for a longer discussion of the Adonia in Athens.
91 Friedrich, 1978, p.69-71
92 Pausanias, 9.41.2-3; Edwards, 1984, p.71
The representation of Aphrodite *Ourania* in the form of herms is a clear parallel with the aniconic worship of Astarte. Pausanias mentions a depiction of Aphrodite in herm form when he visits the sanctuary of Aphrodite in the gardens (ἐν κῆποις) in Athens. Pausanias says “She has a square shape like the figures of Hermes, and the inscription says ‘Heavenly Aphrodite is the oldest of the Fates.” In his *Dialogue of Courtesans*, Lucien mentions a sacrifice of a cow to Aphrodite *Ourania* ἐν κῆποις.

Pausanias testifies that Pheidias made two cult statues of Aphrodite *Ourania* — one for the cult in the Athenian agora, and another stood in Elis. Pausanias says only of the statue in Athens that it is of Parian marble and by Pheidias. He describes the statue in Elis in more detail: “The goddess in the temple they call Heavenly; she is of ivory and gold, the work of Pheidias, and she stands with one foot upon a tortoise.” Harrison argues that the Sappho head type “is appropriate in every way to the Aphrodite *Ourania* of Pheidias.” A number of copies of the Sappho head have been found in herm form. The Pheidian origin of the Sappho head has been recognized for the past century. Harrison suggests that the form of the herm is supposed to indicate what the meaning of this

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93 Harrison, 1984, p.382

94 Pausanias, 1.19.2

95 Lucian, *Dialogi Meretricii*, 7.1; Pirene Delforge, 1994, p.48-50

96 Pausanias, 6.25.1, 1.14.6

97 Harrison, 1984, p.387

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particular Aphrodite is. Given the testimony of Pausanias, it would be appropriate
to represent Ourania in the form of a herm.

One piece of material evidence from Corinth also suggests parallels between
Aphrodite and Astarte. A plaque from the Heraion at Perachora of the seventh century
BCE depicts a female rising from a sack. She has painted hair and eyes, and dots on the
jaw line may indicate a beard. Payne suggests that this is a “Grecized version of the
bisexual Aphrodite of the Orient and Cyprus being born from the severed genitals of
Ouranos, an incident that took place in Cyprus.” Astarte was also represented as
androgynous.

Aphrodite Ourania was clearly seen as parallel to Astarte by the ancient Greeks
of the sixth and fifth centuries BCE. Herodotus conflates her with a number a Near
Eastern deities. Material evidence from the sites under examination here suggests a
parallel as well, and there was clearly a parallel in the mythic story of Aphrodite’s
involvement with Adonis. Astarte was regarded as a goddess of both sexuality and

98 Williams, 1986, p.12-14
99 Williams, 1986, p.14
100 Payne, 1940, p.231-231, Williams, 1986, p.14
101 Burkert, 1985, p.152-153
3.2 THE CITADEL GODDESS

Aphrodite seems an unlikely choice as the patron deity of a city. After all, she is sent running by Diomedes when he wounds her wrist in the *Iliad*.\(^{102}\) At some sites, however, Aphrodite appears to act as the patron of the polis, a citadel goddess, and to have a protective function. In some poleis, this function may be connected to Aphrodite *Ourania*. Aphrodite's role as a citadel goddess is yet another parallel between her and Astarte.

Aphrodite clearly acted as a citadel goddess in Corinth.\(^ {103}\) Pausanias describes the statue of Aphrodite on the AkroCorinth as ὀπλισμένη, an epithet which may imply a protective function.\(^ {104}\) According to Athenaios, when the Persians invaded in 480 BC, the Corinthians appealed to her in this role. Athenaios cites an ancient custom in Corinth, recorded by Chamaeleon that "whenever the city prays to Aphrodite in matters of grave importance, to invite as many prostitutes as possible to join in their petitions, and these women add their supplications to the goddess and later are present at sacrifices."\(^ {105}\) A votive plaque was dedicated to her in thanks after the threat had passed, on which were inscribed the names of the temple prostitutes whose prayers were thought to have

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\(^{102}\) Homer, *Iliad*, 5.356-400

\(^{103}\) Williams, 1986, p.12, 17

\(^{104}\) Pausanias, 2.5.1

\(^{105}\) Athenaeos, 13.573
contributed to the victory. After describing the supplication of the goddess on the occasion of the Persian attack, which is likely directed towards the citadel goddess on the AcroCorinth, he continues that “Even private citizens vow to the goddess that, if those things for which they make petition are fulfilled, they will even render courtesans to her.” The example that Athenaeus gives for this is the fragment of Pindar describing Xenophon’s dedication of prostitutes to “Heavenly” Aphrodite. Plutarch relates the same general story about the Persian attack, but says that the epigram was for bronze statues set up in the temple. It seems unlikely that anyone would pray to a god or goddess in the face of imminent military attack if they did not have some reasonable expectation of aid. In this case, if Aphrodite did not have some sort of defensive martial characteristic, why pick her to act as your citadel goddess and protect your city, and why pray to her in the face of danger?

Athenaios records a fragment of Pindar that refers to Aphrodite as Ouranian in Corinth.

Young women, who welcome many guests, attendants
Of Persuasion in rich Corinth
You who burn the yellow tears of fresh
Incense, often soaring in your thoughts
To the Heavenly (ouranian)
Mother of loves, Aphrodite

This fragment of Pindar is taken by Williams and Blomberg as evidence that Aphrodite was worshipped as Ourania on the AcroCorinth. For Williams, the existence of sacred

106 Athenaios, 13.573c-d
107 Plutarch, On the Malice of Herodotus, 87)
108 Athenaios, 13.572c-d; Pindar, fragment 122 (Bowra)

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prostitution further cements the identification. It is probable that there was no such thing as sacred prostitution in Greece, removing that as a point in favor of identifying Aphrodite as Ourania on the AcroCorinth. All that remains is the fragment of Pindar. Blomberg surveys the known cults for Aphrodite in the fifth century and argues that the helmeted heads on Corinthian coins in that period are most likely Ourania. In his argument, this is the only known cult that would fit the helmeted heads on the coins. Again, the identification of a cult in Corinth depends on the fragment of Pindar. It is difficult to connect the cult of Ourania to the AkroCorinth. It appears likely that the first example of Athenaios refers to the city goddess on the AkroCorinth although he does not explicitly label her such. If the first example refers to the cult on the AkroCorinth, then likely the second does as well, but this is impossible to establish without any doubts.

It is possible that the epithet ὀπλισμένη, used by Pausanias to describe statues of Aphrodite at Corinth, Kythera, and Sparta, suggests a protective function. At Kythera, it is explicitly Aphrodite Ourania who is ὀπλισμένη. At Sparta, it appears that Aphrodite was also worshipped as βασιλις. This epithet is the restoration of an inscription, but it is made more certain by the fact that Aphrodite was worshipped as βασιλις at the Spartan colony of Taras. This epithet is attested to by Hesychius. A black figure Attic amphora found at the sanctuary and dated to the middle of the six century sports and

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109 SEG II 133-136, 151; Pirenne-Delforge, 1994, p.209

110 Budin, 2003, p.96; Hesychius s.v. βασιλις: Παρὰ Ταραντίνοις δὲ καὶ Ἀφροδίτη βασιλις
inscriptions in a local Tarantine Doric dialect that: λεοκράτεια ἀνέθηκε ταῖ βασιλίδι (Leokrateia dedicated this to the Queen). 111

Aphrodite’s role as a city goddess at Sparta may suggests that she was considered one at Kythera as well. Kythera is closely related to Sparta, as it was controlled by Sparta for a period of time. 112 This hypothetical religious connection to Sparta is possibly strengthened by the presence of a bronze Laconian statue. 113 The statue appears to represent Aphrodite in her aspect as a fertility goddess. This statuette may suggest a certain amount of religious exchange between Sparta and Kythera. Perhaps the Spartans exported not only their armed goddess, but also the epithet ἀπεία. Since the sanctuary to Aphrodite on Kythera has not been found, it is impossible to judge.

At Thebes, Aphrodite is associated with Ares, the patron god, as the mother of Harmonia, who married Kadmos, the founder of the city. Harmonia is the daughter of Aphrodite and Ares in Hesiod’s Theogony. The reference to her may refer back to Aphrodite’s identity in Hesiod as the daughter of Ouranos. 114 Aeschylus implies Aphrodite’s role as the protector of the city in Seven Against Thebes, when the chorus appeal to Aphrodite for aid as “the first mother of our race, from thy blood we are sprung.” 115 The chorus is appealing to various deities for aid, after learning that the Argives have surrounded the walls of Thebes with the intention of attacking. The other

111 Budin, 2003, p.96; Schindler, 1998, p.151 footnote 21
112 Pirenne-Delforge, 1994, p.210
113 Pirenne-Delforge, 1994, p.217-226
114 Hesiod, Theogony, 933-937
115 Aeschylus, Seven Against Thebes, In140
deities invoked for protection are Zeus, Athena, Poseidon, Ares, Apollo, and Artemis. All of those deities have at least some prowess with weaponry. It makes little sense for Aphrodite to be invoked to aid Thebes against a military attack if she did not have some sort of protective or martial aspect.

It is also possible that Aphrodite was considered a citadel goddess at Epeiros, where she was worshipped as ἐρυμία. An inscription to Aphrodite ἐρυμία was found on the ancient acropolis. ἐρυμία appears to be related to the noun ἐρυμία, meaning defense or safeguard, and the verb ἐρύσω, meaning to protect or guard. Pirenne-Delforge hypothesizes that this epithet suggests Aphrodite had at Epeiros a function similar to the Aphrodite Armed at Corinth, who gave protection to the city.116

In the three stories about women in warfare that Graf studies, all of the women are defending their polis. In Argos, Telesilla is leading the women to defend the city against Cleomenes. In Sparta, the Messenians attack while the men are off at war, and in Tegea the women defend the city against the Spartans. Aphrodite is associated with the defense of Argos – where a relief of Telesilla supposedly was preserved in sanctuary of Aphrodite according to Pausanias – and in Sparta, where the women dedicated a temple to Aphrodite Armed. Here Aphrodite is not associated with aggression, but with defense of the polis when the men are not available to defend it themselves.

Some of Aphrodite’s actions in the Iliad also suggest a defensive or protective martial aspect. Beverly Moon argues that despite the negative bias of the Iliad towards Aphrodite, some scenes “point to an Aphrodite who is strong, loyal, and unafraid in
battle.” As an example she points out is that during the war it is Aphrodite who stands by Paris, driving away the spirits of death. When Menelaus brings him down and drags him by the chin strap, Aphrodite breaks the chin strap, leaving Menelaus with an empty helmet. Aphrodite then carries Paris out of battle and back to his bedroom. When Achilles attempts to feed Hector’s body to the dogs, it is Aphrodite who stands over the body day and night, protecting it from the dogs and anointing it.\textsuperscript{117} While Aphrodite may not succeed against Diomedes, she does succeed in protecting Paris and Hector.

Clearly at some sanctuaries Aphrodite possessed a protective martial aspect and was called upon to act as a city goddess, in a fashion similar to Athena Polias. Aphrodite was clearly worshipped as a citadel goddess at Corinth. This Aphrodite may have been \textit{Ourania} but the identification is uncertain. It is also possible that Aphrodite was considered a city goddess at both Thebes and Epidaurus. There is very little evidence for Aphrodite at Epidaurus at all. The only connection between Aphrodite’s role as a citadel goddess and \textit{Ourania} is the testimony of Pausanias at Kythera that the cult statue of \textit{Ourania} is \textit{ωναλομενη}. Of course, the sanctuary at Kythera has not been discovered and there is no archaeological evidence, so this connection can not be certain.

\textsuperscript{116} Pirenne-Delforge, 1994, p.175

\textsuperscript{117} Moon, 2000, p.22-23; \textit{Iliad} 3.369-446, 23.210-220
3.3 ASSOCIATION WITH ARES

Aphrodite is clearly associated with Ares in myth, art, and cult. Aphrodite is linked with Ares in both the Hesiodic and Homeric traditions. According to Hesiod, Aphrodite “the Queen of Kythera” bore three children with Ares: Phoebos, Deimos, and Harmonia, the wife of Kadmos.\textsuperscript{118} It is important to note that the Aphrodite who Hesiod connects with Ares is explicitly the daughter of Ouranos. Aphrodite and Ares are paired in both the \textit{Iliad} and the \textit{Odyssey} as well. In Book five of the \textit{Iliad} Aphrodite is associated with both Ares and with Dione as her mother.

In the \textit{Iliad} the pair appear together in two battle scenes.\textsuperscript{119} The two scenes mirror each other in an intriguing fashion. In Book five, after Aphrodite’s humiliating defeat at the hands of Diomedes, she runs to Ares, and it is he who lends her his horses so that she can return to Olympus. In Book twenty-one, it is Ares who has suffered defeat at the hands of Athena, and Aphrodite leads him off the field. Athena then attacks Aphrodite and defeats her. While in neither scene does Aphrodite demonstrate any prowess with the arts of war, the two scenes do point to a connection between the two deities.

\textsuperscript{118} Hesiod, \textit{Theogony}, 933-937

\textsuperscript{119} Homer, \textit{Iliad}, 5.400-425, 21.473-495
In the *Iliad* this connection does not appear to be explicitly sexual, and Aphrodite refers to Ares as “brother” Ares in Book five. The Greek word used is *kasignetos.* According to Lidell and Scott, this word usually specifically refers to being born of the same mother. More generally, it might mean cousin. This is also the scene in Homer where Aphrodite is explicitly the daughter of Dione. Here, there is no indication that the two have any sort of a sexual relationship, nor is there any such indication in the later scene in Book twenty-one. In the *Odyssey,* Homer relates the story of the adulterous relationship of Aphrodite and Ares, and their exposure and embarrassment at the hands of her husband, Hephaistos.  

120 It is also worth noting that both Aphrodite and Ares fight on the side of the Trojans, while Hephaistos sides with the Greeks.

Aphrodite and Ares are also linked in myth as the ruling couple of Thebes. Ares is the patron god of Thebes, and he and Aphrodite are linked in particular through their daughter Harmonia.  

121 Harmonia marries Kadmos, and thus through Harmonia Aphrodite is “the first mother of our race, for from they blood we are sprung.”  

122 According to Pausanias, Harmonia dedicated three ancient * xoána* of Aphrodite. These wooden cult statues were made from the wooden gunwales of Kadmos’ ships, and were called *Ourania, Pandemos,* and *Apostrophia.*  

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120 Homer, *Odyssey,* 8.300-410

121 Hesiod, *Theogony,* 933-937, 975; Aeschylus, *Seven Against Thebes,* 135-144; Euripides, *Phoinissai* 7; Pausanias 9.5.2; Homer, *Iliad,* 2.494

122 Aeschylus, *Seven Against Thebes,* ln 140

123 Pausanias, 9.16.3-4
Although Aphrodite is present in artistic representations dating back to the seventh century BCE, she has few obvious iconographic traits. This makes it difficult to identify her when she is not explicitly identified. She is identified in some works on the basis of her association with Ares. One example of this pairing is in the main frieze of the Francois Vase, where the gods and goddesses are depicted in a procession. Ares and Aphrodite are depicted together at the wedding of Peleus and Thetis. Fourteen representations of Aphrodite and Ares together are recorded in the Greek repertoire before 500 BCE.\(^\text{124}\)

The association of Aphrodite and Ares extends beyond the art and myth of ancient Greece, and into cult. At Sparta, she is worshipped in cult as Aphrodite ἀρεία.\(^\text{125}\) According to Pausanias, there was a temple of Aphrodite ἀρεία in Sparta, with Ἁεόνα as old as any in Greece.” Ἀρεία is usually taken to mean warlike when the epithet is given to Athena, and it might also refer to Aphrodite’s association with Ares.\(^\text{126}\)

Although none of the sanctuaries to Aphrodite that Pausanias described have been found, an iron blade with a bronze mid-rim has been found on the Acropolis. The blade bears an inscription λύκειοσ ἀρεί[ν]ο[ν]. It is dedicated to Aphrodite ἀρεία. Woodward suggests that the first word is likely the name of the dedicator and the second refers to

\(^\text{124}\) Delivorrias, 1984, #1285-1317

\(^\text{125}\) Pausanias, 3.17.5

\(^\text{126}\) Jones, 1986, p.32
Aphrodite. According to Pausanias, her shrine would have been near the Bronze House of Athena, which was the find site.\textsuperscript{127} The digamma suggests an early date for the inscription, but the presence of a digamma within a deity’s name could easily cause it to remain ‘frozen’ in epigraphic time. This makes it unhelpful as an indicator of chronology.\textsuperscript{128}

At Argos, Pausanias testifies to the connection of Aphrodite and Ares in cult, in the form of a double temple to both Ares and Aphrodite:

“\text{"The (road) to Mantinea from Argos is not the same one that goes onto Tegea, but the one from the gates of the Deras Ridge. Upon this road is a double sanctuary, with an entrance to the west and another to the east. In the one lies a xoanon of Aphrodite, while in the direction of the setting sun is one of Ares. They say these are the dedications of Polyneikos and the Argives who fought as his allies to avenge his honor."}”\textsuperscript{129}

The sanctuary itself has not been discovered, so there is no archaeological information to substantiate this testimony.

In Thebes, Aphrodite and Ares are linked as the mythic parents of the city. In Sparta, Aphrodite is given the epithet Απεία. This may refer simply to her connection with Ares, or it could be taken to mean “warlike.” At Argos, Aphrodite and Ares were clearly connected in cult. Aphrodite is explicitly Ourania in none of these cases.

It is possible that Aphrodite was associated with Ares as Ourania, as it is the daughter of Ouranos who is his mate in Hesiod. This is not certain however, since in the \textit{Iliad} Book Five Aphrodite is both associated with Ares and then with Dione as her

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\textsuperscript{127} Woodward, 1928-30, p.252-253; SEG XI, 671

\textsuperscript{128} Budin, 2003, p.76

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mother. There is no trace of a sexual relationship between the two in the *Iliad*, however, and Aphrodite refers to Ares as brother/cousin. The association of Aphrodite with Dione and Zeus as her parents (rather than Ouranos) is surely on some level an attempt to control a powerful goddess, just as Athena and Artemis were controlled by being made the daughters of Zeus. Perhaps Aphrodite is represented in the *Iliad* not as the lover and consort of Ares in order to take away from her whatever power that relationship afforded her.

125 Pausanias. 2.25.1
3.4 ARMED APHRODITE

Although very few images of Aphrodite Armed have survived, Pausanias testifies that her cult statue was ὄπλισμένη in three of her most ancient sanctuaries. When writing about the sanctuary at Kythera, Pausanias reports that “The sanctuary of Ourania, the most holy and sacred, is the most ancient of all the sanctuaries of Aphrodite among the Greeks. The goddess herself is represented by an armed ἔνοχον.” At Kythera, Pausanias explicitly refers to Aphrodite Ourania as the Aphrodite who is depicted armed.

At Sparta Pausanias reports:131

Heading not much farther on is a small hill, upon which is an ancient temple of Aphrodite Armed. Of all the temples I know only on this one did they build a second storey - a temple of Morpho. Morpho is an appellation of Aphrodite, and she sits and bears a veil [upon her head] and fetters upon her feet. It is said that Tyndareus placed the fetters on her feet to symbolize by the bonds the unfaithfulness of wives to their husbands. For indeed, the other story, that Tyndareus avenged himself upon the goddess, as the disgrace upon his daughters came from Aphrodite, I absolutely shall not admit; for indeed it was absolutely ridiculous to have made an image of cedar and given it the name Aphrodite so as to take vengeance on the goddess.

There is other literary evidence of Aphrodite’s martial aspect at Sparta. Lactantius relates a story explaining the foundation of the temple and the cult statue of Aphrodite Armed in Sparta.132 According to Lactantius, during a conflict with the Messenians the Spartan

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130 Pausanias, 1.14.7
131 Pausanias, 3.15.10-11
132 Lactantius, Divinae Institutiones 1.20, 29-32
men were away when the Messenians attacked. The women of Sparta took up arms and put on armor and went out to defend the city. The Spartan men came home to find the women victorious, but mistook them for the Messenians. The Spartan women then threw off their clothes to identify themselves, and an orgy ensued. Later, a temple and a cult statue were dedicated to Aphrodite Armed.

Antipater provides further documentation of the statue of Armed Aphrodite, commenting that: "Cypris belongs to Sparta too, but her statue is not, as in other cities, draped in soft folds. No, on her head she wears a helmet instead of a veil, and bears a spear instead of golden branches. For it is not meet that she should be without arms, who is the spouse of Thracian Ares and a Lacedaemonian."\(^{133}\)

At Sparta, Aphrodite is also worshipped as ἐνόπλιος, which Pirenne-Delforge argues has nearly the same meaning as the epithet ὀπλίσμενη.\(^{134}\) Also at Sparta, Aphrodite is worshipped as ἀρεία.\(^{135}\) Pirenne-Delforge suggests that the epithet could only denote a connection to Ares. Given the other evidence for the armed Aphrodite at Sparta it seems unlikely that such an epithet would refer only to her association with Ares. Also, aside from the epithet there is no evidence to connect Aphrodite with Ares in cult at Sparta.

\(^{133}\) The Greek Anthology, 176; Other comments on statues of Aphrodite Armed include 171 and 173

\(^{134}\) Pirenne-Delforge, 1994, p.199, IG V 1 602, Plutarch, Moralia 239A

\(^{135}\) Pausanias, 3.17.5
At Corinth Pausanias writes that "Going up to the AcroCorinth is a temple of Aphrodite; the statues are: Aphrodite Armed, and Helios, and Eros with a bow."\(^{136}\) The armed Aphrodite of Corinth may be found on a Roman wall painting in Corinth. The painting depicts Aphrodite standing frontally, but turning to the right to gaze at her reflection in a shield, which she has hoisted in the air. This shield is identified as the shield of Ares. She is depicted in a sensuous fashion, nude by for a himation wrapped around her waist. She also wears jewelry.\(^{137}\) This image may represent the cult statue that Pausanias saw when he visited the AcroCorinth, although it is probably not the same type of image that stood in the sixth and fifth centuries BC.

The Aphrodite Armed of Corinth can also possibly be found depicted on the coinage of Corinth. In the early fifth century BCE, Corinth began to mint coins with a female head on the reverse side, and images of Pegasus on the obverse side. Previously the coins showed Pegasus on the obverse side and a geometric image on the reverse side. The female head on the stater or tridrachma was wearing a helmet. The drachma and hemidrachma were minted both with and without a helmet.\(^{138}\) The helmeted heads on these coins have been identified by most scholars as Athena, primarily because she is the only goddess depicted armed.\(^{139}\) Blomberg has suggested that there is no good reason for

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\(^{136}\) Pausanias, 2.5.1

\(^{137}\) Gadberry, 1993, p.63-64

\(^{138}\) Blomberg, 1996, p.68

\(^{139}\) Blomberg, 1996, p.77; Jones, 1985, p.31-33
the Corinthians to choose Athena - the patron deity of another city - rather than their own patron deity to represent their city on coinage.\textsuperscript{140}

The symbols on coins could be expected to refer in some important way to the issuer... the symbols may have served as signs that could be easily understood and that conveyed a message which the issuer wanted to communicate to the recipient. It has been argued above that Corinth from the beginning used her coins for political messages. It was found that Pegasos on the obverse of her coins was most likely a symbol for the liberation from the tyranny, and a reminder of the danger of hybris. It would have been illogical if Corinth had not selected the female head on her coins with the same careful consideration and a similar intention.\textsuperscript{141}

Blomberg further argues that the goddess is in fact Aphrodite, specifically in her cult guise as \textit{Ourania}.

Blomberg suggests that Aphrodite's beauty - in particular her neck - and her jewelry are iconographical attributes that may be used to identify the coins as Aphrodite rather than Athena. Special attention is paid to her necklace in the Fifth Homeric Hymn, and when Anchises recognizes Aphrodite, "it is the beauty of her neck and eyes that enable him to do so."\textsuperscript{142} In contrast, Athena is rarely shown wearing a necklace of beads, and usually wears earrings of a round, flat type. Aphrodite typically wears earrings that resemble a cluster of grapes or something similar.\textsuperscript{143} It is clear that the figure on the coins wears a beaded necklace, which would be atypical for Athena, but would agree with the iconography of Aphrodite. In addition, her neck is very clearly shown, and "seems almost

\textsuperscript{140} Blomberg, 1996, p.77

\textsuperscript{141} Blomberg, 1996, p.77

\textsuperscript{142} Blomberg, 1996, p.86; Homeric Hymn V To Aphrodite, 181

\textsuperscript{143} Blomberg, 1996, p.87
highlighted.”¹⁴⁴ The knotted hairstyle on the coins is also in agreement with representations of Aphrodite, but Athena’s hair “is gathered in an Archaic knot or is arranged in tight short symmetrically placed curls.”¹⁴⁵ Finally, Athena is rarely depicted wearing a Corinthian helmet, and usually wears the aegis and a helmet without cheek and nose protection. These details, however, are not seen or indicated on the Corinthian coins.¹⁴⁶

Further evidence of the Armed Aphrodite has been found in Gravisca in Magna Grecia, where there was an important temple to Aphrodite. Many Corinthian objects have been found, suggesting an Aphrodite with a Greek background and a certain amount of exchange with Corinth. Flemburg has identified bronze statuettes found there as Aphrodite Armed.¹⁴⁷ These bronze statuettes depict a goddess wearing a Corinthian helmet with her right arm lifted. There is a hole in her hand, where she likely held a spear. Her hair is dressed in four braids that are visible on her shoulders. While the statuette could be Athena, certain iconographical traits of Athena are missing – there is no aegis, and Athena is usually depicted wearing an Attic helmet, not a Corinthian one. Flemburg argues that Aphrodite’s usual attributes are the sword, helmet, and spear.¹⁴⁸ The potential connection to Corinth would further support Aphrodite’s martial aspect in Corinth itself.

¹⁴⁴ Blomberg, 1996, p.91
¹⁴⁵ Blomberg, 1996, p.92
¹⁴⁶ Blomberg, 1996, p.92
¹⁴⁸ Blomberg, 1996, p.90
At Argos, Aphrodite was worshipped as νικήφερος or the Bringer of Victory. A ξοάνον of her in that guise stood in the temple of Apollo λυκίας, one of the principal sanctuaries of the city. This epithet is the subject of some debate, and could possibly allude to a martial aspect of the goddess at Argos. The epithet was used for the goddess Athena when she was represented holding a figure of victory in her outstretched hand. 149 Tomlinson argues that the combination of the epithet νικήφερος and the connection of the goddess with Ares at Argos suggest that in Argos Aphrodite was worshipped as a goddess of war. 150 The question then, is the nature of the victory that Aphrodite is holding – is it military victory, or a non-martial victory?

Pirenne-Delforge argues that the Nike that Aphrodite holds is connected not to war, but to marriage. 151 Pausanias writes the following about the episode:

"The xoana of Aphrodite and Hermes, which they say one is the work of Epeiros, the other a votive offering of Hypermestra. For Danaos brought her to court, she being the only one of his daughters to neglect his command, and the deliverance of Lykeos bringing danger to him, and because she not taking part with her sisters in his plan increased his disgrace. Being tried among the Argives she went free and there dedicated Aphrodite Nikephoros." 152

Pirenne-Delforge argues here that Aphrodite is not holding a Nike (νικήφερος literally means bearing or carrying a Nike, or bearing / carrying victory) for a military victory in

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149 Jones, 1986, p.32

150 Tomlinson, 1972, p.208-209; Farnell agrees with this interpretation, and sees the worship of Aphrodite as νικήφερος as "inspired by the eastern idea of the warlike goddess, although people explained it in another way." Farnell, 1977, p.654

151 Pirenne-Delforge, 1994, p.153-154

152 Pausanias, 2.20.8
which she herself was the divine agent, but that by bringing victory to Hypermestra in her trial she has won the guarantee of harmonious passage to the status of spouse for young girls.\textsuperscript{153} Her victory here, then, is related to marriage and does not allude to any sort of martial aspect. Pirenne-Delforge supports this argument by referring to Athenian vases that depict Nikes and Eros on bridal scenes.

Pirenne-Delforge's explanations for the double temple of Aphrodite and Ares\textsuperscript{154} and the epithet νικήφορος are a tempting alternative to the armed Aphrodite at Argos. Ultimately, however, the opposition argument fails to explain the entire picture of Aphrodite at Argos. One further piece of evidence must be considered, although it does not fall within the sixth and fifth centuries BCE. Pausanias testifies that at Argos:

\begin{quote}
"Above the theatre is a sanctuary of Aphrodite; before the chamber is an engraved stele of the lyric poet Telesilla. Books are cast there at her feet, while she looks at a helm she holds in her hand and is about to put on her head."\textsuperscript{155}
\end{quote}

Telesilla rallied the women of Argos to defend the city walls against Cleomenes after the Argive army had been defeated in battle.\textsuperscript{156} It is extremely unlikely that Telesilla and the attack by Cleomenes were associated during the sixth and fifth centuries BCE. Herodotus does not appear to know about the attack of Cleomenes against the town of Argos, nor the defense by the women, although he writes

\textsuperscript{153} Pirenne-Delforge, 1994, p.452-453

\textsuperscript{154} See the above discussion of the opposition argument and explanation for the temple of Aphrodite and Ares at Argos, p.15-19

\textsuperscript{155} Pausanias, 2.20.8

\textsuperscript{156} Plutarch, \textit{Mul. Vitr} 4.245
about the battle at the river Sepeia and relates that Cleomenes was actually put on trial for not attacking Argos. Herodotus also relates the oracle given to Argos that prophesies female victory over men, but associates it with a different set of events.\textsuperscript{157} If Aphrodite did not display any martial characteristics at Argos, why was Telesilla later connected with Aphrodite, and portrayed in such a martial manner in the Aphrodisian? Pirenne-Delforge argues that the relief of Telesilla is placed in the Aphrodisian because it is suggestive of the festival of the Hybriska, with its role reversal and exchange of clothes.\textsuperscript{158}

Aphrodite is known by other epithets (such as στρατεία and στρατονίκις\textsuperscript{159}) elsewhere, but the evidence for these epithets falls outside the temporal and geographic boundaries of this investigation. It is also important to note that Aphrodite likely had a protective aspect at many places where she was also worshipped as a citadel goddess - for example at Corinth, or in Sparta where she was worshipped as βοσιλιδίας.\textsuperscript{160}

Of the nine sanctuaries where there is some evidence that at some point Aphrodite was worshipped as \textit{Ourania}, she could be interpreted to have been worshipped as a goddess of war at five of them – Corinth, Kythera, Sparta, Argos, and Thebes. She is described as ὡπλισμένη by Pausanias at Kythera, Sparta, and Corinth. It is important to

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{157} Herodotus, 6.75-84; Graf, 1984, p.246-247

\textsuperscript{158} Pirenne-Delforge, 1994, p.453

\textsuperscript{159} Farnell, 1977, p.654; Aphrodite is worshipped as στρατονίκις in Smyrna, and στρατεία at Mylasa

\textsuperscript{160} For more on Aphrodite's protective role as a citadel goddess, see the previous section on her aspect as a citadel goddess.
\end{footnotesize}
note that the epithet ὀπλισμένη appears to be a later epithet and is used only by Pausanias. At Sparta, Argos, and Thebes Aphrodite was associated with Ares.
CONCLUSIONS

Let us return to the four questions posed at the beginning of this paper. Is there sufficient evidence to argue that Aphrodite had a martial aspect during the 6th and 5th centuries BCE? There is clearly evidence that Aphrodite possessed a defensive martial aspect in some cults. At Corinth she is a citadel goddess, and defends the city from the Persians. None of Pirenne-Delforge’s arguments to mitigate this martial aspect are exceptionally compelling. There is evidence for the Armed Aphrodite outside of Sparta, so Aphrodite’s martial aspect can not be explained as a Spartan idiosyncrasy. If ὀπλισμένη denotes only the cult of Ourania, or especially ancient cults of Ourania, then it is difficult to understand why Pausanias would not have used this epithet when describing the cult statues at Athens and Thebes, where the cults appear to have been perceived as especially ancient as well. Finally, Aphrodite’s martial characteristic can not be explained only by her relationship with Ares. There is good evidence for Aphrodite’s martial characteristic at cult sites – such as Corinth – where there is no evidence for her association with Ares. Conversely, the opposition argument explains certain instances but can not explain instances where Aphrodite herself is armed. It can only explain instances where she has an attribute that opposes Ares – and in those cases, such as the double temple at Argos – the argument is extremely compelling and a valid way to understand the association between the two.
Second, how should we understand Aphrodite's associations with Ares and her characterization as a citadel goddess? How does our knowledge of Aphrodite's defensive martial characteristic broaden our understanding of Aphrodite's meaning to Greek society? A useful method for understanding this martial aspect is inversion. Inversion is not the only way to understand Aphrodite's defensive martial aspect, but it presents a method of understanding that does not require us to deny Aphrodite her martial aspect, while still acknowledging the realities of life for women in ancient Greece. This aspect of Aphrodite presents an inversion of the normative roles for ancient Greek women.

Aphrodite has a great spectrum of roles – at one end she is the respectable patron of girls who are being married, at the other the fierce passionate goddess who wields a spear. Many of these roles overlap and coincide with one another. The ancient Greeks tried to contain Aphrodite's more outrageous roles in mythology – by making her the daughter of Zeus and Dione, and by making her subject to Zeus's will in Homeric Hymn Five. Ultimately, this failed – even in Homeric Hymn Five the bard sings that Aphrodite is being subjugated because she herself had the power to control even Zeus. Only the virgin goddesses – Hestia, Artemis, and Athena – could escape her power. Even the failure to control Aphrodite was a success, however. Aphrodite is in a way the Greek male impression of the quintessential woman – ruled by dangerous passion that needs to be controlled. Aphrodite, because she is not controlled, wreaks havoc in her wake, as she does in Euripides' Hippolytus. In this way her example is a cautionary tale to Greek women.
These characteristics of Aphrodite, although not in opposition with her own personality, are in opposition with the traits desired of Greek women. Perhaps she is best understood in contrast with Athena. Both are born of a father and not a mother – but while Athena is born from Zeus’ head, Aphrodite is born from the genitals of Ouranos. Athena has received all the best of the male, and none of the female. In this way, she is almost the ideal female – she is chaste, and her actions are ruled by the male trait of wisdom. Aphrodite represents the worst female traits. She is born from an unthinkable act of aggression against a male, and her actions are capricious and ruled by her dangerous female passion. Athena represents Zeus’ triumph over the problem of succession – Aphrodite represents Ouranos’ humiliating defeat. Thus it is Ourania, the daughter of Ouranos, who most needs to be controlled.

Aphrodite’s martial aspect is a realization of male fears. The inversion of roles allows Greek men to validate their feelings about the danger of female passions. A martial Aphrodite is more threatening and dangerous than Ares, just as a woman bearing a spear would be more dangerous than a man. This is because in the male view Aphrodite (and all women) is ruled by passion and not logic or wisdom. They act capriciously, as they desire to at that moment in time. Aphrodite desires to win the beauty contest, and so she hands Helen over to Paris – obviously not thinking ahead to the war that she was inevitably starting. The example of the martial Aphrodite demonstrates that women need to be controlled by men.

Finally, is there any evidence that these associations are related in some way to the epithet Ourania? The ancient Greeks saw parallels between Aphrodite and Near
Eastern goddesses of sexuality and war. This is reflected in the ancient literary sources, as well as in art and myth. Aphrodite, like Astarte, acted in some poleis as a citadel or city goddess, defending the city – as she did at Corinth when the Persians were attacking. In myth and in some cults she is connected to Ares, and she is clearly depicted armed at some cults. In many of these instances she is specifically Ourania.

Initially, I thought that the connection between the cult of Ourania and Aphrodite’s defensive martial aspect would be quite strong. The evidence bears out the opposite conclusion, however. The only explicit connection in any source of Ourania to Aphrodite’s defensive martial aspect is the testimonia about Pausanias for Kythera. The Aphrodite of the AkroCorinth may have been Ourania but this is impossible to establish. Certainly, the cult at Corinth portrays an Aphrodite who has a defensive martial aspect, bears arms, and acts a citadel goddess. Sometimes, perhaps, it is Ourania who was armed – but many times, it appears that it was an Aphrodite other than Ourania who was armed.

Further, there appears to be a tendency to treat Aphrodite as a special case because of our own preconceptions about her. Why should an epithet such as Ἀρεία not mean warlike for both Aphrodite and Athena? If the only rejoinder is that we don’t think Aphrodite should be warlike, this is not a feasible explanation for rejecting that reading of the epithet. We need to approach the evidence for Aphrodite in cult with fresh eyes. In order to understand the full spectrum of Aphrodite’s character and associations in cult, it is necessary to move beyond our own preconceptions and the limitations on that character that are placed there by epic poetry or philosophy. A fuller examination of
Aphrodite’s character in cult will necessarily rely more on archaeological and material evidence recovered at specific cult sites, and less on reconciling the evidence with Aphrodite’s good-time girl reputation.
APPENDIX A:

EVIDENCE FOR THE WORSHIP OF APHRODITE AS OURANIA

Kythera:

“And when they [the Skythians] appeared in Syro-Palestin, Psammetikhos, the King of Egypt, entreating them with gifts and prayers dissuaded them from proceeding further. Then they, heading back again, appeared in the city Ashkalon of Syria; the majority of the Skythians passed by unharmed, but some of them, seizing the sanctuary of Aphrodite Ourania, plundered it. This is the sanctuary, as I discovered through inquiry, (which is) the oldest of all the sanctuaries of the goddess; for the sanctuary of Cyprus originated there (Ashkalon) as the Cypriots themselves say, and as for the one among the Kytherians, the Phoenicians are its founders, who are from Syria too.”

61 Herodotus, 1.105
62 Pausanias, 1.14.7
"Kythera is about ten stades inland from Skandeia. The sanctuary of Ourania, the most holy and sacred, is the most ancient of all the sanctuaries of Aphrodite among the Greeks. The goddess herself is represented by an armed xoanon."\(^{163}\)

Εν Κυθήρας δὲ ἐπὶ θλάσσης Σκάνδεια ἐστιν ἐπίνειον, Κύθηρα δὲ ἡ πόλις ἀναβάντι ἀπὸ Σκάνδειας στάδια ὡς δέκα. Τὸ δὲ ἱερὸν τῆς Οὐρανίας ἀγιώτατον καὶ ιερὸν ὁκόσα Ἀφροδίτης παρ’ Ελλησίν ἐστιν ἀρχαιότατον αὐτῇ δὲ ἡ θεός ξύδαον ἐπιστρέψεων.

**Corinth:**

Young women, who welcome many guests, attendants
Of Persuasion in rich Corinth,
You who burn the yellow tears of fresh
Incense, often soaring in your thoughts
To the heavenly
Mother of loves, Aphrodite\(^{164}\)

Πολλῆς ἐστι τε κοίνες, ἄμφιπόλοι
Πεθείος ἐν ἀνάπαυς Κορίνθω
Αἲ τε τὰς χλοὰς λυθέντας ξανθὰ δάκρυ
Θυμάτες, πολλάκις ματέρ' ἐρώτων
Οὐρανίαν πτάμεναι
νοήματι πρὸς 'Ἀφροδίτην.

\(^{163}\) Pausanias, 3.23.1

\(^{164}\) Pindar, fragment 122 (Bowra)
Sparta:

An inscription of the Roman period is the only evidence for the worship of Aphrodite as

*Ourania.*

[ΤΩΝ Ἀ]ΡΧΕΡΕΑ ΤΩΝ ΣΕΒΑΣΤΩ[Ν]
[ΙΕΡΕ]Α ΔΙΟΣ ΤΟΝ ΑΡΙΣΤΟΝ ΚΑ[Ι]
[ΕΚ ΤΩΝ ΑΡΙΣΤΩΝ ΤΩΝ ΑΞ(ΙΟΛΟΓΩΤΑΤΩΝ) ΣΕ[Κ-]
[ΣΤΟ]Ν ΕΓ'ΔΑΜΟΝ ΟΝΑΣΙΚΡΑΤΕ-
[ΟΣ, Μ'] ΑΠΟ ΗΡΑΚΛΕΟΥΣ, ΜΖ' Α-
[ΠΟ] ΔΙΟΣΚΟΥΡΩΝ, ΙΕΡΕΑ ΚΑΙ
[ΑΓ]ΩΝΟΘΕΤΗΝ ΔΙΑ ΒΙΟΥ Κ[ΑΙ]
[ΔΙΑ] ΓΕΝΟΥΣ ΤΩΝ ΤΕ ΔΙΟ-
[ΣΚΟΥΡΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΤΟΥ ΑΓΩΝΟΣ]
[ΤΩΝ] ΜΕΓΑΛΩΝ ΔΙΟΣΚΟΥΡ[ΕΙ-]
[ΩΝ Κ]ΑΙ ΑΓΩΝΟΘΕΤΗΝ ΔΠΑ
[ΓΕΝΟΥΣ ΤΩΝ ΜΕΓΑΛΩΝ
[ΛΕΙ]ΩΝΕΙΩΝ, ΙΕΡΕΑ ΚΑΤΑ
[ΓΕΝΟΥΣ ΤΩΝ ΜΕΓΑΛΩΝ
[ΛΕ]ΩΝΕΙΩΝ, ΙΕΡΕΑ ΚΑΤΑ
[ΓΕΝΟΣ ΠΟΣΙΔΩΝΟΣ ΑΣΦΑ-
[ΑΙΟΥ, ΑΘΗΝΑΣ ΧΑΛΚΙΟΥΚΟΥ]
[Α]ΘΗΝΑΣ ΠΟΛΙΑΧΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΤΩΝ]
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[ΤΕ]ΜΕΝΕΙ ΘΕΩΝ, ΤΥΧΗ ΣΩ-
[ΠΙΑΤΡΟ, ΑΡΤΕΜΙΤΟΣ ΠΑΤΡΙ-]
[ΩΠΙΔΟΣ, ΔΗΜΗΤΡΟΣ ΚΑΙ ΚΟ-
[ΡΗΣ ΕΝ ΦΡΟΥΡΙΩ, ΣΩΤΕΡΑ-
[ΤΙΑ]Σ ΕΝ ΕΤΕΙΛΟΙΑΣ, ΑΘΡΟΔΕΙ-
[ΤΗΣ ΟΥΡΑΝΙΑΣ, ΤΥΧΗΣ]
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[ΝΙΟΥ, ΔΙΟΝΟΣΟΥ, ΔΗΜΗΤΡΟΣ]
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[ΣΩΤΕΡΑ, ΔΗΜΗΤΡΟΣ]
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[ΣΩΤΕΡΑ, ΔΗΜΗΤΡΟΣ]
Argos:

“Near the temple of Dionysus is a temple of Heavenly Aphrodite.”

Πλησίον δὲ τοῦ Διονύσου καὶ Αφροδίτης ναὸς ἐστὶν Οὐρανίας.

Thebes:

“There are xoana of Aphrodite in Thebes that are indeed so old that say they were dedications of Harmonia. They were made from the gunwales that were made of wood for Kadmos’ ships. They call the one Ourania, the other Pandemos, and the third Apostrophia. Harmonia gave these titles to Aphrodite so: Ourania for love that is pure and separated from the body, Pandemos for sexual intercourse, and third Apostrophia, because she turns the race of humans away from illicit desire and inappropriate works. For Harmonia knew of many such things among the barbarians, and as well endured among the Greeks, such as later were sung about the mother of Adonis, and Phaidra of Minos, an the Thrakian Tereus.”

Αφροδίτης δὲ θηβαίοις ξόανα ἐστίν οὕτω δὴ ἀρχαία ὡστε καὶ ἀναθήματα’ Ἀρμονίας εἶναι φασίν [αὐτᾶς], ἐργασθῆναι δὲ αὐτὰ ἀπὸ τῶν ἄρχοντος, ἀρὰς Κάδμου ναυσίν ἦν φύλου πεποιημένα. καλούσι δὲ Οὐρανίαν, τὴν δὲ αὐτῶν Πάνδημον καὶ Ἀποστροφίαν τὴν τρίτην ἔδεικνυ τῇ Αφροδίτῃ τὰς ἑπαναμίας ἡ Ἀρμονία, τὴν μὲν Οὐρανίαν ἐπὶ ἐρωτι καθαρῷ καὶ ἀποθελλόμενο πόθου σωμάτων, Πάνδημον δὲ ἐπὶ ταῖς μέγεθες, τρίτη δὲ Ἀποστροφίαν, ἰνα ἐπιθυμίας τε ἀνόμου καὶ ἔργων ἀνοσίων ἀποστρέφῃ τῷ ἐνος τῶν ἀνθρώπων πολλὰ γὰρ τὰ μὲν ἐν βαρβάροις ἡπίστατο ἡ Ἀρμονία, τὰ δὲ καὶ παρ’ Ἑλληνικῇ ἡδη τετολυμένα, ὁποιαὶ καὶ ὑπό εἰπ’ ἡ Αδάμνοις μητρὶ καὶ ἐς Θαίδραν τε τὴν Μίνω καὶ ἐς τὸν Ἐλαῖκα Τηρέα ἄδεται.
Epidaurus:

The only evidence for the worship of Aphrodite as Ourania is an inscription of the fourth century AD.\(^{168}\)

\[ \text{ΑΦΡΟ[ΔΙΓ]ΑΣ ΩΡΑΝΙΑΣ} \]

Elis:

"Near to the sanctuary of Eileithya are the remains of the sanctuary of Heavenly Aphrodite, and there too they sacrifice upon the altars."\(^{169}\)

\[ \text{Πλησίων δὲ τὴς Εἰλεἰθυίας ἔρειπια Ἄφροδιτῆς Ὄυρανίας ἱεροῦ λείπεται, θύουσι δὲ καὶ αὐτόθι ἐπὶ τῶν βωμῶν}. \]

"Beyond the portico built from the spoils of Corcyra is a temple of Aphrodite, the precinct being in the open, not far from the temple. The goddess in the temple they call Heavenly: she is of ivory and gold, the work of Pheidias, and she stands with one foot upon a tortoise. The precinct of the other Aphrodite is surrounded by a wall, and within the precinct has been made a basement, upon which sits a bronze image of Aphrodite upon a bronze he-goat. It is the work of Scopas, and the Aphrodite named is Pandemos. The meaning of the tortoise and of the he-goat I leave to those who care to guess."\(^{170}\)

\[ \text{ἐστὶ δὲ τῆς στοὰς ὅπισώ τῆς ἀπὸ τῶν λαφύρων τῶν ἐκ Κορκύρας Ἄφροδιτῆς ναὸς, τὸ δὲ ἐν ὑπαίθρῳ τέμενος οὐ πολὺ ἀφεστηκός ἀπὸ τοῦ ναοῦ. Καὶ τὴν μὲν ἐν τῷ ναῷ καλοῦσιν Ὄυρανίαν, ἔλευθαντος δὲ ἐστὶ καὶ χρυσοῦ, τέχνη Φειδίου, τῷ δὲ ἐπέροι ποδὶ ἐπὶ χελώνης βέβηκε τῆς δὲ περείχεται μὲν τὸ τέμενος θριγκῷ, κρηπίς δὲ ἐντὸς τοῦ τεμένους πεποίηται καὶ ἐπὶ τῇ κρηπίδι ἄγαλμα Ἄφροδιτῆς χαλκοῦν ἔπὶ τράγῳ κάθηται χαλκῷ. Σκότα τοῦτο ἔργον, Ἄφροδιτὴν δὲ Πάνδημον ὄνομαζον. Τὰ δὲ ἐπὶ τῇ χελώνη τε καὶ ἐς τὸν τράγον παρίσῃ τοῖς θέλουσιν εἰκάζειν. \]

\(^{168}\) IG IV² 283

\(^{169}\) Pausanias, 6.20.6

\(^{170}\) Pausanias, 6.25.1
Athens:

"Nearby is the sanctuary of Heavenly Aphrodite. The Assyrians were the first of the human race to worship the heavenly one, then the people of Paphos in Cyprus, and of Phoenician Askalon in Palestine, and the people of Kythera who learnt her worship from the Phoenicians. Aigeus instituted her at Athens. He believed himself childless since he had no children then, and that evil had come on his sisters, because of a curse from the heavenly one. The statue there now is of Parian marble and by Pheidias."

Πλησίον δὲ ἱερὸν ἔστιν Ἄφροδιτῆς Οὐρανίας. Πρώτοις δὲ ἀνθρώπων Ἄσσυριοις κατέστη σέβεσθαι τὴν Οὐρανίαν, μετὰ δὲ Ἀσσυρίων Κυπρίων Παφίων καὶ Φοινίκων τῶν Ἀσκάλων έχοσιν ἐν τῇ Πολαιστίνῃ, παρὰ δὲ Φοινίκων Κυθῆριοι μαθὸνες σέβοσιν Αθηναίοις δὲ κατεστήσα τὸ Ἁγείος, αὐτῷ τε οὐκ εἶναι παιδικὸς νομίζων — οὐ γὰρ πιὸ τότε ἦσαν — καὶ ταῖς ἀδελφαῖς γενέσθαι τὴν συμφορὰν καὶ ἐκ μηνίματος τῆς Οὐρανίας. Τὸ δὲ ἥψον ἔτι ἀγάλμα λίθου Παρίου καὶ ἔργου Φειδίου ὑμὸς δὲ ἔστιν Ἀθηναίοις Ἀθηναίοις, οἷον Πολυφρίον ἔτι πρώτερον Ἀκταιοὶ βασιλεύσαντα τῆς Οὐρανίας φασὶ τὸ παρὰ σφίσιν ἱερὸν ἱδρύσασθαι. Δέχουσι δὲ ἀνὰ τοὺς δήμους καὶ ἄλλα οὐδὲν ὁμοίως καὶ οἳ τὴν πόλιν ἔχοντες.

"Concerning the location they call the Gardens and the temple of Aphrodite, no word is said among them, nor about the Aphrodite that stands by the temple. For its form is quadrangular in the manner of the hermai, the inscription states that Ouranian Aphrodite is the oldest of those called the Fates. The statue of Aphrodite in the gardens is the work of Alkamenes and one of the most noteworthy sites in Athens."

171 Pausanias, i.14.6
172 Pausanias, i.19.2
ἐς δὲ τὸ χωρίον, ὁ Κῆπος ὁ νομάζουσι, καὶ τῆς Αφροδίτης
tὸν ναὸν οὐδεὶς λεγόμενός σφισίν ἐστι λόγον οὐ μὴν οὐδὲ ἐς
tὴν Αφροδίτην, ἢ τοῦ ναοῦ πλησίον ἔστηκε. Ταύτης γάρ σχήμα
μὲν τετράγωνον κατὰ ταὐτά καὶ τοῖς Ερμαῖς, τὸ δὲ ἐπίγραμμα
σημαίνει τὴν Ουρανίαν' Αφροδίτην τῶν καλουμένων Μοιρῶν
εἶναι πρεσβυτάτην τὸ δὲ ἀγαλμα τῆς' Αφροδίτης ἐν [τοῖς]
Κῆπος ἔρχον ἐστίν' Ἀλκαμένους καὶ τῶν Αθήνησιν ἐν ὀλίγοις
θέας ἄξιον.
APPENDIX B:

IMAGES
a. Votive relief for Aphrodite, Agora S 3344

b. Votive relief for Aphrodite, Agora S 1797
## APPENDIX C:

### CHARACTERISTICS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Parallel with Astarte</th>
<th>Association with Ares</th>
<th>Armed Images</th>
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ANCIENT SOURCES


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