

GYNAIKOS LOGOS:
FEMININE VOICE IN ARCHAIC GREEK POETRY

DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation argues that feminine voice can be found in Archaic Greek poetry. Attempting to answer this question, I tried to build a case for a feminine voice that is historically contextualized, since it is constructed within the context of archaic Greece. For this thesis, such a voice is not as a natural, physical voice but a constructed gendered voice. In the beginning, Sappho's construction of feminine voice is considered as dialogic. Sappho re-reads, re-writes Homeric epic as a feminine epic: polyphonic, against dichotomies and hierarchies. In the case of Sappho, feminine voice is constructed as the voice of the persona loquens, be that Sappho or the female performer. In Homer, a similar feminine voice is constructed as the voice of Helen, a poetic female figure. Thus, Homer constructs a double, unfixed, polyphonic feminine voice that functions as an alternative poetic discourse within the *Iliad*. Finally, in Alcman the female voice of the chorus proves to be essentially masculine. Thus, emphasizing hierarchical models, or male models of desire, the chorus is reinforcing patriarchal structures.

Building on French feminist theory and late Bakhtinian discussions, this thesis attempts to map down polyphony, multiplicity, fluidity and mutability as the main characteristics of a feminine voice. By demonstrating how both male and female authors are able to construct a feminine voice with the aforementioned characteristics essentialist arguments are avoided. Hence, both Sappho and Homer produce a feminine voice, a multiple, dialogic, unfixed

voice. The use of such a feminine voice is an ideological choice with sociopolitical implications. My objective was to explore a feminine voice that is neither essentialist nor victimized: if Sappho's feminine voice is not anchored on her gender, it is a position in language rather than a biologically defined position, then, an *écriture féminine* can be composed by male writers as well. Moreover, if Sappho is able to speak at the same time within and against the specific androcentric society, then, indeed, the subaltern woman, and her voice, does exist.

To my family, *ἀντίδωρον*

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|------|
| ABSTRACT..... | ii |
| ACKNOWLEDGMENTS | v |
| VITA | vii |
| TABLE OF CONTENTS..... | viii |
| INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| CHAPTER 1 | 30 |
| Performing Female Selves: the Polyphonic Voice of Sappho | 30 |
| i. Toward a dialogic lyric | 30 |
| ii. Remembering female selves: time, space, memory, and polyphony..... | 39 |
| in Sappho fr 94..... | 39 |
| iii. Polyphony in “absentia”: Fr. 96 | 46 |
| iv. Sappho’s Homer: performing feminine voice in an epic world | 58 |
| v. Sappho’s Helen: Fr.16 and 44 | 65 |
| vi. Exchanging women: male vs. female discourse in Sappho and Alcaeus | 75 |
| vii. Voices <i>in</i> and <i>as</i> fragments: Sappho 31 and Catullus 51. | 85 |
| CHAPTER 2 | 92 |
| Weaving the body: feminine voice and alterity in Homer’s <i>Iliad</i> | 92 |
| i. In the beginning was the (masculine) word | 92 |
| ii. Toward a possibility of feminine voice in the Homeric epics | 102 |
| iii. Feminine voice and female poetics in the <i>Iliad</i> , or Why Helen? | 111 |
| iv. Weaving the double: Helen as a poet | 118 |
| v. Performing duplicity: Helen as a performer | 128 |
| vi. The language of Helen: memory, praise and blame. | 141 |
| vii. In place of conclusion, or Helen’s doubles..... | 154 |
| CHAPTER 3 | 160 |
| Performing the other: female choruses and (fe)male voice in Alcman | 160 |
| i. Introduction: problems and questions | 160 |
| ii. The fragment..... | 163 |
| iii. Recent scholarship..... | 166 |
| iv. Scholarship and methodology | 170 |
| v. Singing the other: feminine voice in Alcman’s <i>Partheneion</i> 1 (1P, 3C)..... | 173 |
| vi. Being the other: social order, performance and female chorality in Alcman..... | 192 |
| vii. Mirroring the other: metaphors and specula..... | 198 |
| viii. Performing the other: metaphor and performance in <i>Partheneion</i> 2 (2P, 26 C) | |
| 204 | |
| ix. Sapphic skies: Toward a possibility for female desire and language | 210 |
| CONCLUSION: A Voice Of Her Own | 215 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | 224 |

INTRODUCTION

The study of women in Greek literature has received great attention by classicists, especially after the rise of the feminist movement. Being a male dominated field that predominately studies male authors, classics seemed at first to be resistant, if not unreceptive, to feminist theory: after all “if feminism is a politics of change, the very word classics connotes changelessness”.¹ This conservative politics was soon challenged by feminist ideas that brought a revaluation of classics: it was then seen not only as study of language and literature but as a study of culture as well.² This gave rise to the concept of *cultural poetics*, that is the process by which a society constructs shared meanings – social distinctions, behavioral conventions, moral codes and, of course, gender roles.³ The study of gender, as the construction of gender roles, the representation of women in literary texts, largely conceived as products of a male-oriented society, triggered discussions among classicists and feminist theorists alike (with those categories beginning to overlap). Very important to the problem of female representation is the question of female subjectivity and feminine voice. Do speaking female characters utter a

¹ Rabinowitz-Richlin 1993, 3.

² Rabinowitz-Richlin 1993, 6.

³ Halperin-Winkler- Zeitlin 1990, 4.

feminine voice or are they simply ventriloquized by men? How can female voice be heard and defined in classical texts?

The term voice by itself is a very broad one: it can mean the sound or sounds uttered through the mouth of people; expression in spoken or written words, or by other means; the distinctive style or manner of expression of an author or of a character; the faculty of speech, discourse or even language.⁴ In the present discussion, the term "feminine voice" is specifically used to describe the multiple ways in which female speech is rendered in literary texts.

In this study then, it would be useful to explain concepts such as female (as in female voice) and differentiate it from feminine (or "feminine" voice). The distinction followed in this thesis begins with the common distinction between sex and gender: while the first is biologically determined the second is socially, culturally and I may add literarily, constructed. Female voice is therefore, to this study, a voice uttered by a woman, a biologically female subject. Feminine voice on the other hand is a voice constructed as uttered by a woman. This category then covers voices constructed *as* feminine by both female and male authors. As de Lauretis would put it "the construction of gender is the product and the process of both representation and self-representation"⁵ Female voice then, a *qua* sex essentially feminine voice will not be a part of this study. What I will try to show on the other hand is that feminine voice as a construction is more than one: it can be a "feminine" voice as constructed by a prevailing ideology. An ideology based on the assumption of dichotomies that need positive and negative poles

⁴ See Myriam-Webster sv

⁵ De Lauretis 1987, 9.

and assign the negative pole to the “feminine”. It is the ideology, deeply embedded in Western civilization, which defines “feminine” as other, irrational, object, as silenced in contrast with the masculine, rational, subject position.⁶ It will however be the main point of this thesis that a different place for feminine voice can be found outside this dichotomy, a place from which feminine voice can be spoken and heard. I will then discuss how “feminine”, as the negative pole of the dichotomy, can be different from feminine, the non-hierarchical position that creates the possibility for feminine voice to exist.

At this point, an historical overview of feminine voice in classical scholarship is needed. Since the mid-seventies many nuanced discussions of feminine voice as a construct of a prevailing male ideology have been published.⁷ Classical scholarship has discussed female/feminine voice in various different ways: Instigated by the second wave Anglo-American feminist tradition, previous discussions were focused on female-authored poetry and discussions emphasizing its poetic value. Attempting to deconstruct the idea that female poetry equals less artistic, naïve, unworthy poetry scholars have mainly focused their interest on Sappho as a response to the denigrating remarks against female poetry⁸. Feminine voice was seen in the framework of construction of gender and the ways in which feminine fictional voice can negotiate political, social and aesthetic issues has been the main agenda of scholarly discussion.⁹

⁶ For similar concerns see Batstone 2000, 3.

⁷ See especially the early collections of essays regarding women in Greek literature: Peradotto-Sullivan, 1978; Foley, 1981; Cameron-Kuhr 1983.

⁸ Skinner 1986; Snyder 1989; Greene 1996.

⁹ For good discussions see Zeitlin 1985; Padel 1983, Goldhill 1984.

Discussions about feminine voice in Athenian tragedy begin from the paradox between the silent Athenian women and the powerful women of drama.¹⁰ If tragic women are represented as manipulating and even subverting the dominant discourse of their husbands, is tragedy the staging of the ultimate fear of male Athenians?¹¹ Starting from the premise that performers can stage gender ideology through performance, Zeitlin discusses the contradiction of women speaking in public dramatic performance stages. According to her, a woman on stage already transgresses the social rules if she speaks on her behalf, since they play practically no role in the political and social life in ancient Greece.¹² According to her, women roles in tragedy are ultimately designed as “radical others” in plays whose purpose is to explore male selfhood.¹³ Staging women as “anti-models” theater employs the feminine as a way to “imagine a fuller model for the masculine self”.¹⁴ Other critics also point out that the fact that women speaking in Greek tragedy only licenses male speech. According to Foley, “Greek writers used the feminine to understand, express, criticize, and experiment with the problems and contradictions of their own (male) culture”.¹⁵

In a similar vein, discussing Plato’s *Symposium*, D. Halperin asks “Why is Diotima a Woman”.¹⁶ Relying on the Foucauldian theory of (male) sexuality, he argues for a

¹⁰ Zeitlin 1990, 68. Also for the same contradiction see Foley 1981, 127-8.

¹¹ Hall 1997.

¹² Zeitlin 1990. In Winkler and Zeitlin (ed).

¹³ Zeitlin 1996, 347.

¹⁴ Zeitlin 1996, 363.

¹⁵ Foley 1988, 1301-2.

¹⁶ Halperin-Winkler-Zeitlin 1990, 257-308.

feminine identity that serves as an alternate male identity. According to him, Diotima conceptualizes *eros* from a “feminine” perspective employing the metaphor of reproduction.¹⁷ But the Socratic idea of spiritual labor and birth is “feminine”, in that it is the male fantasy of female sexual desire, a typical masculine “attempt to colonize female difference”.¹⁸ We are then left with the absence of women’s experience, a fiction of the feminine since Plato is constructing woman as a presence of a male lack, that of procreation. He then denies her otherness, since she merely fills a male gap. In other words, the fact that Diotima is female does not mean that her voice is feminine: she is a trope, a male fantasy, a way to speak about women inside the male discourse.¹⁹ As a result, “she does not speak for women, she silences them”. And Halperin concludes his article with the Lacanian assertion that there is “no authentic femininity”.²⁰ Female voice and desire, as women, do not exist in Plato.

Halperin is then discussing a familiar theoretical position - basically Lacanian and further explored by Irigaray especially *vis- à-vis* Plato- using Diotima as an example of a ventriloquized female. This is, of course, neither a paradigm limited to Plato nor an unfamiliar paradigm in classical scholarship in general. Other performances of female speech will prove equally “feminine”: under a sheer pretension of femininity lurks a masculine voice. Discussing Alcman’s *Partheneion*, Eva Stehle points out although the performers of the choral song “articulate their gender ideology much more explicitly”;

¹⁷ Halperin 1990, 263.

¹⁸ Halperin 1990, 289.

¹⁹ Halperin 1990, 297.

²⁰ Halperin 1990, 289.

women claim the gender roles that society assigns to them.²¹ Based on this argument, she then discusses how lyric poetry can convey male political ideas using women's voices.²² In this light, "feminine" voice is seen as subordinated to the predominant patriarchal ideology, helping to sustain it.²³ In some different venues, feminine voice can not only be appropriated but also appropriate male voice: Nancy Worman discusses how feminine characters may be represented as employing the discursive modes characteristic of men as well. In her article on Helen's speech, Helen manipulates masculine epic language so as to convey her own intentions.²⁴ Is that a victory for feminine voice? Is speaking like a man, or is not speaking at all the only option? In *Making Silence Speak*, for example, the contributors of the volume seem to begin from the premise that women are, in principal, silenced. Is feminine voice in male-authored literature a pure fantasy, or does feminine voice exist?

If in male-authored poetry women always play out the roles that society assigns to them, then what are those roles? Are those roles connected with specific poetic genres only appropriate to women? In other words when women are represented as performing poetry what genre is attributed to them? In classical studies, poetic genres such as ritual lament and obscenity have been connected to women using comparative ethnographic research. Margaret Alexiou's *The Ritual Lament in Greek Tradition* compares laments from Homeric to Modern Greek women arguing for the historical continuity of lament.

²¹ Stehle 1997. 72.

²² Stehle 1997 chapter 2.

²³ On a similar view also see Arthur 1983. For the appropriation of the feminine voice by the male see also Bergren 1983. Also Arthur 1982.

²⁴ Worman 2001.

For her lament is and always has been a feminine genre.²⁵ Alexiou studies the motifs and the performance of the laments but does not attempt to answer questions of feminine authorship, or differentiate for that matter between laments composed by Homer and the traditional *moiroloi* of modern Mani. Alexiou also does not account for the importance of audience. Since it is performed before a mixed audience how does it relate to men? Does it enforce typical gender roles?

Ritual obscenity, again a “female” genre according to scholars, is a slightly different case in that it is represented as taking place before women only audiences.²⁶ Usually taking place in feminine festivals excluding men, *aischrologia* is connected to feminine fertility and reproduction.²⁷ Again, what we have is representations of such performances in Old Comedy and the Homeric Hymn to Demeter, in male-authored texts and performed before mixed audiences.²⁸ Granted that the content of those performances in their ritual context was secret “arrheta” or “apporheta”, only known to women, the comedic re-enactments of those performances can be read more as a male fantasy of the original festivals. But confining feminine voice to certain genres does not solve the problem: there are many feminine voices outside boundaries of the specific *genres*.

Ann Bergren's "Language and the Feminine in early Greek Thought"²⁹ was a decisive step toward connecting the feminine voice and poetics and discussing the

²⁵ Alexiou 2002.

²⁶ For up-to-date bibliography see O'Higgins 2003.

²⁷ Lardinois-L.McCLure 2001, 11.

²⁸ See for example O'Higgins article in Lardinois-L.McCLure 2001, 137-160.

²⁹ Bergren, 1983.

function of feminine voice in archaic texts in general. For her, female poetics is not confined in specific *genres*. Discussing only male-authored texts, Bergren first brings up female poetics by connecting the weaving ability of women in archaic poetry with the making of signs and thus with composing poetry. Moreover, Bergren establishes the idea of doubleness as an important element of feminine voice and *mêtis* as an inherent characteristic of feminine speech³⁰. The connection of weaving and poetry had, of course, been previously established in epic and lyric tradition alike; however, there was no attempt to identify the features of this female poetics.³¹

Turning to female-authored poetry, Sappho till recently monopolized scholarly interest: Greene's "Reading Sappho" was a decisive step toward contemporary approaches of her poetry but her 2005 "Women poets in ancient Greece and Rome" is not focused in Sappho alone but examines, again, only female-authored poetry in both Greece and Rome. The book focuses on the relationship between gender and genre and seems to rely on the fact that female-authored works are composed for female audiences. In trying to explain what is typically feminine in each poet's work, the contributors of the volume often apply Freudian or Lacanian psychoanalysis. The book presents- and challenges- the two basic assumptions considering female-authored poetry: first, that it is composed for a female audience and second, that feminine poetry is closely modeled on the public speech genres of women in ancient Greece. Lardinois has earlier attempted to limit Sapphic poetry to subject matters and genres considered female. According to him, Sapphic poetry consists of lamentation, ritual hymns or bridal songs, genres that have to

³⁰ Bergren 1983, 73.

³¹ Snyder 1981.

be considered as female.³² Is it then possible for an “authentic” feminine voice to be found only in “female” genres? Is feminine voice possible to be heard only among women?

Although Sapphic poetry is seen by both ancient and modern critics as thematically limited to “gardens of nymphs, wedding songs, love affairs”, Sappho’s songs, Holt Parker argues, do resonate a public world as well.³³ There is evidence, according to Parker, that Sappho was not only involved in public affairs but also that she wrote poems about them. As a member of an aristocratic family, Sappho is involved in the civil war in Mytilene and was in exile because of that. The possibility that she might be also writing political poems is in some ways shocking because of modern/romantic ideas of feminine poetry and its exclusion from the public. Parker then challenges a structuralist dichotomy that is clear in the scholarly mind: female-private/male-public.³⁴

The dichotomy is though very strong in classical scholarship: In Sappho’s case for example, it has been argued that her songs are composed for and performed at a circle of young girls. Stehle argues that Sappho’s poetry represents an alternative poetic tradition performed for a different community, that of adult women. Is feminine poetry then only to be recited by and for either young or adult women? The tradition of Sapphic poetry can certainly testify against that. The idea of performances of Sapphic poems before exclusively female audiences, the so-called circle of Sappho, has been long ago

³² Lardinois 2001 in Lardinois-L.McCLure (edd).

³³ Parker 2005, 3-24.

³⁴ See Foley 1981, 127-168 for a discussion of the same dichotomy in Athenian drama.

contested.³⁵ If Athenaeus and Stobaeus are to be trusted, the poems of Sappho were most popular among male symposiasts, who used to recite and enjoy them.³⁶ Stehle, however, moves toward deciphering the feminine features of Sappho's poetry. According to her argument, feminine poets provide an "alternative subjectivity" and conceptualize speech differently from their male counterparts, both in their "erotic sensibility" and in their poetic discourse, namely "a more egalitarian and reciprocal form of relationship", although she again infers that such a differentiation is probably influenced by a female audience.³⁷ The question of feminine poetics, although alluded to, is not answered through Stehle's discussions. Stehle's discussion thus moves away from the assumption that a female poet composes female genres but still seems to allude that Sappho's voice is too feminine to be heard by men: it is therefore composed and heard by women, whose sensibility is similar to Sappho's. But if Sapphic poetics are only to be heard by women, how does this explain Sappho's survival in the classical canon? What needs to be discussed then is how Sapphic poetics, being female poetics, can be heard by men. How can Sapphic poetry speak difference in a recognizable language? And is Sappho the only one to use this language?

Lardinois and McClure, for example, do not differentiate between natural and constructed voice and hence do not refer to feminine voice as a construction. According to them, speech uttered by female characters in literary texts composed by men comprises the main part of feminine voice data from classical antiquity. In this category, the ways in

³⁵ See Parker 1993.

³⁶ According to tradition Solon wished that he may learn Sappho's song and die. See *test.*10 Campbell. For a discussion of Sappho and the symposiastic tradition also see Martin 2001 in Lardinois-McClure.

³⁷ Stehle 1996 in Foley (ed), and Stehle 1996 in Greene (ed).

which women's speech is rendered, the representation of female voice and the social, cultural or aesthetic assumptions of such representation, and finally the construction of voice as a gendered voice are matters of their scholarly investigation.³⁸ Moreover, in the same volume, limited samples of poetic discourse of female authorship are taken into consideration. Female poetic voices such as Sappho and Erinna are discussed by Lardinois and Stehle as a feminine voice *per se* and texts in which multiple feminine voices emerge.³⁹ McClure and Lardinois' collection is the first to offer a comprehensive study on women's speech. The essays though and the introduction to the volume fall short in theoretically discussing feminine voice and most importantly desegregating women's natural from fictional voices. In this vein, Sapphic poetry is examined under the same category of women's speech with epistles from Hellenistic Egypt. Engaging with female writers things tend to be more complicated: Is Sappho's voice, for example, a genuine or constructed voice? Does Sappho, or Erinna "negotiate complex political, epistemological and aesthetic issues" the same way as male-authored fictional feminine voices do?⁴⁰

It is evident then that there is still not a full discussion of female voice and its characteristics. A central issue has been the question whether female-authored poetry can be characterized as "feminine" and in what sense. Scholars seem to use many terms, some of them are really awkward expressing certain confusion: Rayer uses the term "woman-identified" and describes it as following:

³⁸ Lardinois-McClure 2001, 4-6.

³⁹ In Sappho's choral *partheneia* for example according to Lardinois 2001 in Lardinois and McClure.

⁴⁰ Lardinois- McClure 2001, 3.

“women-identified” writing avoids “both imitation and protest” in constructing a dialogue with other women’s texts. This discourse focuses on women’s experience, repossesses tradition, and addresses a female audience”⁴¹

For Rayor then, female-authored poetry is categorized according to its reaction toward male-authored poetry: It is either imitating, or subverting or avoiding both, as in Sappho’s or Korinna’s case. Rayor discussion brings up an important question that this dissertation wants to explore further: if feminine voice is to be seen as a construction then female-authored poetry can very well be a “masculine voice”, that is a voice that represents male concerns. On the other hand, more categories are possible: female-authored poetry as feminine voice, male-authored poetry with a masculine voice even male-authored poetry with a female-voice. In deciphering female voice then all those categories need to be taken into account, not only female-authored poetry but also male-authored poetry should be discussed.

In answering these important questions I argue that a dialogue with French feminist theory can be proven very useful. Cixous, Kristeva and Irigaray offered an alternative perspective on feminist theory by using psychoanalysis and poststructuralist theory as their basis. What is more important they have discussed the possibility for a feminine/female discourse or even language and attempted to map down the characteristics of such a discourse, a discussion that is missing in classics. Summarizing the work of French feminist theorists is a difficult task especially because their language deliberately avoids fixed meanings. But since this thesis relies heavily on their work, I will attempt to outline the basic discussions in their work:

⁴¹ Rayor 1993, 222 borrowing the term from Diaz-Dioscaretz. Her categories are 1. Feminist, 2. non-feminist, 3. women-identified. Referring to discussions on Korinna’s poetry she cites Skinner (1983) as arguing for a non-feminist Korinna who “has fully internalized male values”.see. .n6.

Poststructuralist feminist theory sees “man” and “woman” as subject positions within the structure of language. Those positions though are not equal since Western thought relies on binary oppositions which privilege the first part of the pair over the other: male/female. Psychoanalysis only adds to this inequality since men and women enter the Symbolic differently. The center of the Symbolic itself is the Phallus, hence term “phallogocentric” coined to express both the privileged status of phallus and logos in the Western thought. For this reason then, it is their claim that language is masculine, expressing a masculine ideology. On the other hand the female is always the other, the other side of the binary, viewed as different and lacking. Hence, in language female difference is repressed and the masculine remains the only voice. In order to speak then the female must assume a male position, since the woman, as speaking I, does not exist in language. Starting from post-structuralism, Derridian deconstruction and Lacanian psychoanalysis French feminists seek a way for the possibility of female voice to exist: such a voice would not be from a position of a man but from that of a woman. The concept is described by Cixous as *écriture féminine*: it is, according to her, a feminine style of writing full of silences, gaps, puns, incomprehensible, inconsistent, unfixed, in other words everything logocentrism is not.⁴² In the “Laugh of the Medusa” she both outlines and writes in *écriture féminine* which is slippery, fluid and unfixed, demanding that “woman must write woman” that is woman must find a way to be connected with the signifier I by writing their own discourses.⁴³

⁴² Tolan 2006. 335.

⁴³ Cixous 2000.

In a similar vein, Luce Irigaray argues that both female desire and female language is always seen within masculine parameters. Moreover, she undermines the binarism of Western thought by describing the feminine as not one: In “This sex which is not one” Irigaray argues that woman is not herself in masculine language (since I is always a male position) and at the same time the female is not a unified position but multiple. Hence, Irigaray in her concept of *parler-femme* sees female discourse as multiple, fluid, not defining a stable unified self.

Both Irigaray and Kristeva find female discourse in the margins of the Symbolic: according to Lacanian thought the maternal Real needs to be abandoned in order to enter into the Symbolic, governed by the phallus. Since masculine language represents the linear, fixed symbolic, *écriture féminine* behaves like the semiotic disturbing, disrupting and unsettling the structure of language. For Kristeva, this writing is better described as “anti-phallic” since it is closer to the semiotic, fragmentary and unstable.⁴⁴

It follows then that *écriture féminine* is political: the marginal position of female language makes it disruptive, subversive. By deconstructing binary oppositions *feminine écriture* shows how Western thought enforces these inequalities and imbalances. By analyzing how the inequalities were constructed and evolved in time points to how they can also be changed, deconstructed. On the other hand, *écriture féminine* is not essentialist since it is a mode of writing that can be appropriated by either sex. Using the term anti-phallic for example, Kristeva argues that this mode should not be connected to women only. On the contrary, *écriture féminine* should be seen as marginal: as the voice of the subaltern.

⁴⁴ Tolan 2006. 337.

Insisting in difference rather than equality and emphasizing an unstable rather than unified self, hence questioning the humanist ideal, French feminist theory has met with some opposition by Anglo-American feminist classicists. But since French feminist theories emphasize language they could not be ignored by classicists. Jack Winkler's and Marilyn Skinner's work engages with French feminist theory either embracing or criticizing it.⁴⁵ In "Gardens of Nymphs: Public and Private in Sappho's Lyrics" Jack Winkler argues that Sappho's poems engage in a dialogue with the androcentric vision and values of Homeric epic. Exploring this argument, his essay is divided into two parts: in the first he is reading fragments 1 and *vis-à-vis* the episode of Diomedes and Aphrodite in *Iliad* 5 and Nausicaa's encounter with Odysseus in *Odyssey* 6 respectively. The second half of the essay explores feminine body imagery in Sapphic poetry, discussing Sappho's use of concealed sexual metaphors for plants and body parts. Throughout his essay Winkler emphasizes the idea of Sappho's double consciousness: both of her "private", woman-centered, lyric world and the other "public" male-centered, epic world are parts of a unique poetry that is "both subjectively and objectively woman centered".⁴⁶ For Winkler, this is a double circle: Feminine consciousness always contains the male.

Winkler's article provides a good basis for thinking not only Sapphic poetry in gendered terms but also gender in Sapphic terms. For if we- readers, scholars, and women- tend to read within a phallogocentric framework, even with the attempt to problematize it, Sappho's double consciousness challenges the framework itself. What if instead of seeing the feminine poetry of Sappho as a limited, marginalized voice, we start

⁴⁵ Winkler and Skinner in Greene, 1996.

⁴⁶ Winkler 1996, 108.

seeing it, following Winkler's idea, as a voice containing the male voice, as a voice that "seems to always speak in many voices".⁴⁷ Winkler's reading seems then to upset the hierarchy of voices (dominating male-subjugated female) by denying the very idea of linear hierarchy and substituting it with the idea of circularity:

"We must diagram the circle of women's literature as a larger one which includes men's literature as one phase or compartment of women's cultural knowledge"⁴⁸.

For Winkler it is also important to show how this voice is always closely connected to a feminine body:

"It seems to me clear that Sappho's consciousness included a personal and subjective commitment to the holy, physical contemplation of the body of Woman, as metaphor and reality, in all parts of life".⁴⁹

Following Winkler, I see Sapphic self as both Sapphic body and Sapphic corpus. But to take his thought one step further, I am going to argue that the doubleness of consciousness that Winkler is referring to is tied to the construction of feminine voice, self and a more importantly feminine poetics. Sappho's fragmented, elusive self resembles both her corpus but also her text: a never ending and a never - to -be -read text, forever lost. As Sapphic self is an elusive, fragmented self, Sapphic poetics are also tied with the concept of multiplicity of voices. Defying the Bakhtinian insistence on lyric monologism, Sapphic self is able to be polyphonic, precisely because of the fragmented, elusive quality of lyric self.⁵⁰ In *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* Bakhtin describes the polyphonic self as "a conversation, a struggle, of discrepant voices with each other:

⁴⁷ Winkler 1996, 108.

⁴⁸ Winkler 1996, 95.

⁴⁹ Winkler 1996, 109.

⁵⁰For a discussion of lyric dialogism in Catullus see Batstone, 2002.

voices speaking from different positions."⁵¹ It is this quality of the polyphonic self, I believe, is also a characteristic of feminine voice. The Sapphic voice is not one: giving voice to many women, being performed by a chorus, and being heard by a female audience (although not exclusively female, I believe), Sapphic poetry can be perceived as a polyphonic poetry. Moreover, I will argue that feminist criticism can be employed in order to support the possibility of a polyphonic lyric if read as a supplement of the Bakhtinian theoretical framework. Critics like Irigaray and Cixous, insist that woman is excluded from dominant structures of representation. Language for them originates with men and excludes women: all that is left to her is the negative pole and the subordinate object position, a definition only in terms of her alterity. Is then the very term "feminine voice" impossible? Almost, for they discuss different paths of possible resistance, a way of "feminine linguistic transgression» described in two different ways: for Cixous an active production of *écriture féminine*, and for Irigaray, feminine discourse, *parler-femme*, a "feminine language" in which feminine subjects can express themselves among each other. Those characteristics of women speaking to each other are, I argue, visible in Sapphic poetry. With close reading of fragments the characteristics of *écriture féminine*, emphasizing the openness, polyvocalism and lack of a totalitarian form of thought and discourse in feminine texts will become apparent.

The use of feminist theory though has created some uneasiness among the classicists. In Sapphic studies for example, Marilyn Skinner argues against a radically Irigarayan reading of Greek culture and especially Sappho: for her, Sappho's songs are not inscribed within the discourse of patriarchy; they occupy a discursive space that is

⁵¹ Bakhtin 1984, 217.

distinctively female. And although she tries to describe feminine voice, her attempt to avoid the very term, which would be pointing to the French feminist she denounces, ends up inventing different terminology:

I therefore propose to negotiate the restoration of "woman" into the Greek literary tradition as the historical consequence of "women-among-themselves speaking (as) woman," that is, producing woman-specific discourses.⁵²

Skinner tries to avoid the term *écriture féminine* but ends up creating a problematic situation: she talks about discourses, not writing hence she needs to show that Sappho is an oral poet with an exclusively female audience.

But why is it so important that she avoids the term? Skinner outlines French feminism as a radical attack on the "liberal humanist creed"⁵³ and therefore Skinner's critique begins by cautioning classicists- both readers but most importantly writers- of the danger that Irigaray's work poses for the field:

"I attempt to alert my colleagues to the danger of arriving, via Irigaray, at such a theoretical impasse and to outline a more positive way of conceptualizing the ancient literary record".⁵⁴

According to her then, Irigaray's way of thinking about classics is negative, unproductive, and potentially disastrous and needs to be "corrected" by a positive model. However, Skinner's reading attempts to interpret, summarize, and "fix" Irigaray's texts and in that it is a gesture of mastery, a gesture that her feminine voice should try to avoid. She does attempt to control meaning, rank, enforce canons. Skinner talks about a canon

⁵² Skinner 1996, 182.

⁵³ Skinner 1996, 176.

⁵⁴ Skinner 1996, 177.

of feminine writers;⁵⁵ it is however an oxymoron since neither canonizing-which involves hierarchy and exclusions- nor writing is female, as Skinner claims. Skinner's reading is male in that it supports and replicates the patriarchal modes: she talks about a "paradoxical heterosexuality" of Sapphic poetry that seeks to "direct its audience to choose what is identified as the better, of two real alternatives".⁵⁶ Skinner then employs a male rhetoric of direction, identity, reality, and polarization and inscribes Sappho in it.

Unlike Skinner, I would propose reading Sapphic poetry as an exemplary feminine discourse, since it is the only example of a feminine poet in archaic Greece with a considerable amount of extant work, based on the possibility of polyphony. Consequently, such a reading can be used in order to open up new possibilities within the Bakhtinian theory. If feminine texts as such promote multiplicity of voices by denying totalizations, if they try to avoid the repression of different voices by undoing the extant hierarchy, it is then evident that they can be seen as dialogical texts in the Bakhtinian sense. Reading Sapphic poetry then as feminine discourse produced by women talking to each other elucidates its characteristics as such. Sapphic fragments then are going to be read not as revealing an elusive self but as revealing a voice that precludes "any distinction of identities, any establishment of ownership, thus any form of appropriation".⁵⁷

I propose this to be a feminine reading: a reading that unlike masculine readings does not seek binary oppositions but as a fusion of many voices. Skinner's reading

⁵⁵ For an anti-canonization reading in classics see Hallett 1993, in Rabinowitz-Richlin 1993.

⁵⁶ Skinner 1996, 188.

⁵⁷ Irigaray 1985, 134.

therefore can be seen as feminine in this sense: although it is an interpretation of Sapphic poetry, it also reveals a tendency to recognize transference. Skinner's writing tends to be psychoanalytic in that she recognizes the problems of feminine voice and feminine subjectivity, problems that, she argues, still haunt (female) classicists. Skinner's anxiety forces her to assume the male position- forces her to use male rhetoric of hierarchies and canons. And in this way, she proves the Lacanians' point once more: feminine discourse does not exist.

But is this the only way? What if there is a reading that "includes recognition of transference enacted in the process of reading". Such a reading would not assume a position of mastery but will recognize that "the presumption of coherence is an illusion produced by the transference".⁵⁸ That reading would be feminine. A reading in which both Skinner and Irigaray can co-exist feeding each-other anxieties as restaged by a third reader. A reader that adopts a male position by interpreting Skinner, explaining what Skinner really meant and at the same time a feminine mode by uncovering a fertile partnership between the two, reading her text as a dialogue between three women in an attempt to find their voice.

Chapter 1 will discuss the only major female poetic voice in Archaic Greece, Sappho. Dealing with a feminine poetic voice, the hypothetical qualities of feminine discourse, such as its doubleness, will be put to the test. How does Sappho construct the feminine voice and how is this construction different from Homer's Helen? Does feminine poetics as deciphered in male authored texts correspond to feminine poetics as encoded in Sapphic poetry? Moreover, problems of poetic voice in relation to selfhood

⁵⁸ Whitford 1991. 23.

arise. If, according to de Lauretis, gender is not only construction of representation but also of self-representation, how does Sappho construct a gendered self-representation? Can the Sapphic self, the Sapphic voice, attest to feminine voice in general? Does her poetry open up a window for other feminine voices to emerge? How do Sapphic poetics deal with feminine voice as such?

In that vein, I will argue that by writing and performing feminine discourse Sappho does not ignore masculine discourse. On the contrary, following Winkler's ideas, I will discuss how by writing and reading the feminine, Sappho uses the image of Helen, to revisit, re-read and re-write Homeric epic. But the image of Helen as a feminine voice, opposed to the "feminine" is, I believe, to be seen in Homeric poetry as well. The purpose of this study is not to solve or even discuss problems of date or genre. I am not therefore going to discuss the possibility of Sapphic poetry ante-dating the Homeric poems – charming as it may seem.⁵⁹ The possibility of a female poetic tradition before Homer or before Sappho seems equally appealing but lacks sufficient evidence.⁶⁰ What I will try to suggest on the other hand is that the image of Helen in Homer is very close to the Sapphic image-and voice of the feminine: the feminine is not therefore limited – historically, by genre or by an essentially female authorship. And while Homeric feminine voice is different from Sapphic, they can both be feminine: for the feminine voice cannot be one.

⁵⁹ For a full discussion of epic developing from an older lyric tradition see Nagy 1990 especially chapter 1. Further discussion on interactions between lyric and epic also in Martin 1997.

⁶⁰ For the attribution of Homeric poetry to women see Martino 1991, 46-8 with bibliography.

Barbara Clayton's recent book (2004) begins from the idea that weaving images in Odyssean scholarship are to be perceived as a poetic mimesis of the weaving process that lies at the heart of the Odyssean text, and suggests that this has to be considered as "an invitation to think about the poetics of *Odyssey* in gendered terms."⁶¹ According to Clayton, weaving and reweaving is crucial in the context of a "Penelopean", thus female, poetics. Continuing Bergren's idea, Clayton argues that just as *mêtis* evokes a feminine method so too poetic activity by Penelope's web constitutes:

"A female poetics that brings together notions of gender, language and poetic production that challenge androcentric ideology. The [male] poet weaves a feminine alterity into the fabric of the *Odyssey*".⁶²

Clayton's discussion is valuable in thinking female poetics in the *Odyssey*, but I find the fact that she limits her theory to this poem at hand rather perplexing since it does not do justice to the argument itself. Clayton's discussion would be enriched if she tried to read the female poetics of unfixity, mutability, multiplicity in the poetry of Sappho, who, by the way, does refer to working on the loom, hence connects poetry with weaving. Another perplexing point in her argument is the fact that Clayton strongly denies that this female poetics can be applied to Homeric poetry in general. According to her then, we cannot read feminine poetics in the *Iliad* and she goes on to explain it by stating that:

"...the essential point here is to remember that this female activity (i.e. weaving), in a generalizing context, was associated uniquely with the *Odyssey*, and specifically in comparison with the *Iliad*. In other words, here we find an important linking of the weaving metaphor with a specifically Odyssean poetics."⁶³

⁶¹ Clayton 2004, 5.

⁶² Clayton, 2004, 19.

⁶³ Clayton 2004, 5. Italics mine.

But how would then one explain the fact that Helen, a figure connected with poetic ability, is emphatically weaving in the opening of the *Iliad*? Why is she weaving the only textile that is described by the poet as a mini-Iliad? Why would the poet choose to make her narrate stories and make meta-poetic comments?

Going back to Clayton's aforementioned argument, limiting feminine poetics to the *Odyssey*, I cannot see why the *Iliad* does not similarly invite us to read it in gendered terms. Rather than seeing Penelope as a unique female-poet figure-qua weaver- I see her as *one* example of such. The figure of a female-poet in the Homeric poetry is, appropriately, multiple: Helen, Calypso, Circe and Andromache they all weave. Calypso and Circe combine working at the loom with singing, connecting singing with poetry. Helen on the other hand is the only example of producer of a visible text-textile: hers is the only text read by Homer, by the audience. And it is a text about the battles of Greeks and Trojans, not a feminine subject matter, but a feminine voice nevertheless. Moreover, Helen is a paradigmatic feminine voice in the *Odyssey*. Described as imitating the voices of the Greek wives, Helen is *the* feminine voice. Seen as an imitation moreover, Helen's voice points to feminine voice as a construction in Homeric epic.

Chapter 2 will then concentrate on Homeric epic discourse, especially the *Iliad*. The choice might seem a strange one since the *Iliad* is usually seen as the masculine epic *par excellence*, a place for masculine virtues to be praised, and a place from which women are excluded. It is after all an epic about war. It is nevertheless a war fought *because* and *before* a woman. Also, feminine characters speak and act throughout the *Iliad*. It can of course be argued that those are fictional feminine voices, staged by Homer and subordinated in his dominant male discourse. This argument does not provide an

explanation for the importance of the existence of feminine voice. Is feminine voice a part of the epic in order to be subordinated and silenced? In fact, feminine voices both open and conclude the *Iliad*: a feminine voice is first “heard” as a (double) invocation to the Muse both in the beginning of book 1 and also book 2. Again the feminine voices of Andromache, Hecuba and, of course, Helen conclude the epic with the lament of Hector. An exhaustive investigation of feminine voice in epic would, of course, include the speeches of the goddesses, especially Hera, Athena and Aphrodite. Of all those feminine speeches, this paper is focusing on Helen, not because she is the only feminine voice, but because she can be seen as a poetic figure.

Helen is introduced in the *Iliad* as a poetic figure: in book 3 she is shown to weave a carpet: the similarity and connection between the poet and the weaver is well attested in archaic poetry. The creation of a textile brings her closely to the function of the *rhapsodos*, stitching his poem together. Moreover, quite contrary to the other Homeric carpets, Helen’s carpet not only has a clear the subject matter but also one resembling the *Iliad*.⁶⁴ Helen can also be seen as a performer book 24, when she is lamenting Hector and in the *Teichoskopia* in *Iliad* 3.

In scholarship, Helen has been previously considered as a poet-figure in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.⁶⁵ Discussions about Helen usually focus on the question of character, style or rhetoric: her style has been often seen as shifting, changeable, inclusive, and therefore difficult to categorize, signifying not only dangerous aspects of women but also

⁶⁴ I am referring to the blank textiles of Penelope, Circe and Calypso. Andromache’s textile is embroidered with flowers.

⁶⁵ For the connection of weaving and poetic composition see Snyder, 1981, 193-96. For the relationship of weaving and feminine *mêtis* see Bergren, 1983.

of poetic and rhetorical effect⁶⁶. In her speech, there is also a gap between meaning and intention using transposition of locutions from their usual contexts to form locutions unique to her.⁶⁷

Helen's speeches have been seen as invoking various models of authoritative speech: the Muses, the poet, and the prophet. The changeable quality of Helen's voice reflects her indeterminable and yet authoritative status in Homeric epic.⁶⁸

Starting from this idea of Helen's authoritative status, this chapter is going to discuss Helen's position, as a feminine poetic voice in the *Iliadic* epic emphasizing not in her style and rhetoric, but in an attempt to read her voice as an alternative feminine poetics within a very masculine poem. Reading the *Teichoskopia* as a performance of Helen's parallel narrative is going to help answering important questions: Does her voice constitute a different, feminine poetics within the Homeric text? How does Helen manifest herself as the other poetic voice? What are the feminine discourse qualities in this parallel narrative?

The problems regarding the feminine voice of Helen in the *Iliad* are then going to be discussed in this thesis. The androcentric world of the *Iliad*, I will suggest, stages Helen as its prototypical feminine voice. The fact that we are dealing with an androcentric world is important. I will read the *Iliadic* world as a world of dichotomies, a world of gender segregation: in the *Iliad* the categories of male and female are distinct. But it is also a world of male fantasy in which the female exists as the non-male. The

⁶⁶ Worman 2001 19.

⁶⁷ Worman 2001, 21.

⁶⁸ Worman 2001, 36.

feminine then is a staging of otherness, of what the masculine excludes. In this masculine world then Helen's voice is a staged voice. I use the word "staged" to draw attention to the fictionality of her feminine voice but also to Homeric technique of presenting Helen within the *Iliad*. Helen is a spectacle, a fantasy; she talks as on stage in the *Teichoskopia* or bedroom scenes. She is always covered, effaced, a mirage. But of course Helen does talk in the *Iliad*, or at least a face behind a mask speaks. And her voice uncovers the difficulty to stage her alterity: the difficulty to be categorized and fixed is a difficulty staged, a difficulty structured in language. Homer realizes that the rigid words of dichotomies cannot contain Helen: she is therefore transgressive, mobile, unfixed. She is promiscuous and duplicitous: she mixes with the wrong people, speaks in a mixed language, and belongs in a mixed category.

Finally, in chapter 3, feminine choral performance is going to be examined as a locus of feminine and feminine voice to be uttered and heard. Taking the *Partheneia* of Alcman under consideration, the fact that the chorus presents itself *as* a female chorus is important: this is a gendered-and sexed- performance, especially because the maidens refer to their feminine identity and their feminine bodies. The voice of the performers thus stages and emphasizes their gender identity before an audience.⁶⁹ However, the feminine voice is performed by a female chorus but has a male author. Is the author trying to "mimic" a physical feminine voice? Or is it just a convention of the genre? If so why does the poet bother to assume a feminine voice, to have girls not only perform but also refer to their femininity? Does an audience assume that a female chorus is speaking about itself no matter who the composer is? The basic question then is how the text deals

⁶⁹ Stehle 1998, 71.

with the aforementioned contradictions, how the text stages the feminine performance, identity and voice.

Dealing with matters of feminine voice, though, the poem presents us with an interesting problem since it “begins” in a quite unexpected way for a girls’ song: a catalogue of male warriors.⁷⁰ According to discussions in scholarship then, the song is divided in two parts, a “male” and a “female” part: The first section reveals a strong authoritative male speech while the authority of the chorus’ speech is for her problematic, almost impossible.⁷¹ What I would like to stress, though, is the connection of their feminine voice with the first part of the poem. How do they refer back to the first section, and how does this dialogue help to elucidate this interesting but also strange voice?

Claude Calame points out that poem like the *Partheneion* “confirm the role of tribal initiation in the instruction of sexuality”.⁷² In other words, the passage from girlhood to womanhood is concluded by a choral performance of songs as the *Partheneion*, performed in a public festival. The young girls dance in public as they are initiated into the realm of adult life prepared for the next step, their marriage. Following up on Calame’s and Stehle’s emphasis on the civic function of performance poetry, I propose a reading of the *Partheneion* under a Marxist light. Reading the poem against a Marxist theory of exchange of women, I propose, helps solve some of the enigmas of the *Partheneion*.⁷³ According to Irigaray the organization of patriarchal societies is based

⁷⁰ For a discussion of the bipartite division see Robbins 1994, esp.14- 16.

⁷¹ For a gendered discussion of the division see Clark 1996, esp. 146-7, 168.

⁷² Calame 1997, 261.

⁷³ For an anthropological view on the exchange of women see also the seminal work of Gayle Rubin, 1975. In classics, important discussions can be found in Kurke,1991; Rabinowitz,1993; and Wohl, 1998.

upon the exchange of women. The passage into order of a society, into the symbolic order, is then linked with the institutionalized gazing upon women as objects of transaction; Women, like signs, myths and commodities are made to be exchanged and always refer back to men.⁷⁴ Connecting theories of exchange of women with problems of representation and self-representation of women, my discussion is going to focus on the feminine voice of the chorus. Does Alcman write a feminine voice with the characteristics of feminine discourse as seen in both Sapphic and Homeric poetry? My argument does not begin with the idea that Alcman cannot produce a feminine voice because of his gender. It takes the construction of a feminine voice as a possibility, then testing it to the particular poet. I will then argue that Alcman fails to perform a feminine discourse as discussed in its Sapphic or Homeric form. Although the girls of the *Partheneion* utter a feminine voice, there is no sign of polyphony, unfixity and fluidity that were detected as characteristics of feminine voice. On the contrary, “feminine” voices in the *Partheneion* are shown as either incapable of uttering any voice or as mimicking the predominant male discourse. This is very important in the context of a public performance: the maidens in the *Partheneion* act like men, adopt a male gaze and of course, they talk like men emphasizing hierarchical models. Moreover, by performing this “feminine voice» in public, the chorus not only assume male language but also validate and legitimize male roles and male ideology.

Although discussions of feminine voice do exist in classical scholarship, especially in feminist approaches, I believe that there is not yet a proper discussion of feminine voice. Discussions of feminine voice have been so far limited in either female-authored

⁷⁴ Irigaray 1985, 170-1.

voices, or their lack. At the same time, discussions of women's poetic tradition focus on "female perspective" and often awkwardly describe "a woman-specific" or "woman-identified discourse". Engaging in an on-going discussion of feminine voice then, this thesis is going to examine feminine voice as a construction of gender that happens in language. I will discuss gender as a construction that operates within the Western constructs of binary oppositions that value the first part of the opposition over the other. Seeing feminine voice as a construction allows a discussion of both male-authored and female-authored texts; in this discussion feminine voice will be seen as both "feminine", the voice male ideology assigns to the feminine and feminine, a position of seeing the feminine outside of the dichotomies, possible for both sexes to produce.

Using both modern feminist criticism, especially discussions about the possibility of an *écriture féminine*, Derridian ideas about difference and the Bakhtinian idea of polyphony as a guide, then, and with a close reading of feminine voices as they emerge from male- and female- authored texts, this thesis will provide answers to matters of representation of female subjectivity and selfhood, feminine poetics and their relationship to masculine poetics in archaic Greek poetry.

CHAPTER 1

Performing Female Selves: the Polyphonic Voice of Sappho

i. Toward a dialogic lyric

The lyric self, or the lyric I, is traditionally presented in the light of Romanticism as the suffering self, expressing inner emotion. This expression of emotion takes place in isolation. The utterance of an isolated voice of the lyric poet takes place without the presence of the other. In T. S. Eliot's words, the first person poet expresses "his own thoughts and sentiments to himself or no one".¹ J.S. Mill again talks about the isolation of the lyric utterance, which is not supposed to be "heard, but overheard". The lyric genre is thus characterized as a private, isolated "representation of feeling", a genre expressing the inner feelings of the isolated poet as a confession of his deepest thoughts.²

Thus, Romanticism takes for granted the premise that lyric expresses feelings of the poet as a real man; real feelings as a true representation of a real self. This view does not allow much space for discrepancies. The same applies for New Criticism; the views of C. Brooks for example, although acknowledging the fact that the poet has to work out the tensions in order to express this single unified voice, describe the poem as a

¹ Johnson 1982, 1.

² Batstone 1993, 143.

“single”voice of a poet.³ It then follows that those feelings describe self in a perfect, unified way: after all a unified self had to disclose unified feelings. Brooks talks about “the unification of attitudes into a hierarchy” in a “unified poem”. Thus, they privilege unmediated unity as the truest representation of a self. Singularity of voice and absence of addressee is then the shared view of Romanticism and New Criticism, an idea that shaped (if not still shaping) modern criticism for a very long time, disregarding external factors such as audience or occasion.

In a diachronic reading of lyric, W.R. Johnson’s *Idea of Lyric*, takes a historical point of view suggesting that the poet talking to himself is a later development⁴. Starting from T. S Eliot’s view that first-person poems are nothing but a disguised inner monologue, Johnson shows that in a Greco-Roman context, the addressee is a *sine qua non*: without his presence the poet cannot focus on his feelings, concluding that a necessary premise for self-knowledge, and self expression, is the presence of others. The absence of an audience in modern poetry then, according to Johnson, engendered an anxiety and a sense of impotence that does not relate to ancient lyric.⁵ The need of an audience is also emphasized in W. Batstone’s work: “we cannot know ourselves apart from others because we are, deeply and essentially, inhabited by the presence of others”.⁶ According to him, the transparent voice of the Romantic lyric expression is

³ Batstone 1993, 144.

⁴ Johnson 1982, 1-23.

⁵ Johnson 1982, 16.

⁶ Batstone 1993, 146.

fundamentally challenged when seen as a “presentation of an elusive self in the process of assuming a voice” that is a “*figure* of self”.⁷

The presence of the other, the addressee, seems to be important in Greek lyric, seeing it without the shadow of Romanticism. If the presence of others is an essential element for the self to come forth and if the lyric poem stages nothing but the performance of self, the definition of the lyric poem as an expression of the feelings of one person or the unified feelings of one person needs to be modified. Moreover further questions arise. Is this self staged any differently because of its audience? Does it have as many different faces as its audiences might have been? And what if we are dealing with more than one addressee at a time? Is there a multiple self talking to a multiple audience?

Reading Sappho, it seems to be the case that we are dealing with the presence of not only one but also more addressees. Does the presence of many voices contradict the essence of lyric as the expression of personal feelings? Can lyric self be disparate and non-unified? And granted that more than one voice or addressees are involved, can lyric be seen not as a monologue but as a dialogue?

Mikhail Bakhtin draws a firm line between the monologic quality of poetry and the possibility of dialogism in prose. For him dialogism, that is a multiplicity of voices, is utterly denied to poetry. Starting from the Romantic idea of the expression of the single voice of a poet, he concludes that lyric is by definition monologic due to the “form shaping ideology” inherent in the genre⁸. Bakhtin then goes on to argue that a unified

⁷ Batstone 1993, 147.

⁸ Batstone 2002, 100.

truth, and as a result a unified consciousness cannot be the result of a monologue. Truth requires a plurality of unmerged voices, a plurality of consciousness. In a polyphonic work, the author ceases to exercise monologic control. Several consciousnesses meet as equals and engage in a dialogue that is in principle unfinalizable.⁹ Bakhtin discusses this kind of dialogism only as feature of the novel, in particular Dostoevskian, and denies the possibility of lyric to be polyphonic. Bakhtin's point is then contradicted by his definition of utterance:

"However monological the utterance may be, however much it may concentrate in its own subject, it cannot but be a response to what has already been said. Utterance is filled by dialogic overtones".¹⁰

Given that any utterance is then dialogic qua utterance, why is then not possible for the lyric utterance to be dialogic? ¹¹

This chapter, then, will explore the possibility of a dialogic lyric. Following the main features of dialogism as described by Bakhtin, this discussion will trace dialogic features in Sapphic lyric: multiple speakers presenting their value centers and their consciousness without hierarchy¹², different language styles, and more importantly, consciousness as a feature of time and space¹³, suggesting that Sapphic poetry shares

⁹ Morson -Emerson 1990, 236-8.

¹⁰ Bakhtin 1986, 92.

¹¹ Bakhtin discusses poetry under the light of dialogism, only to prove that it is not possible for it to exist. For a discussion of Pushkin's poem see Batstone 2002, 103 and his notes.

¹² Morson-Emerson 1990, 236; 238-9; 241.

¹³ Bakhtin 1986, 7 "in order to understand, it is immensely important for the person who understands to be located outside the object of his or her creative understanding in *time, space and culture*."

characteristics of the dialogic novel, since it constructs a polyphonic consciousness and thus a polyphonic self¹⁴.

Paul Allen Miller has pointed toward a dialogic, albeit Catullan, lyric. His approach though will prove very different from mine, since Miller first defines dialogism as inter- and intratextuality and then goes on to absolutely deny the possibility of a dialogic Sapphic lyric.¹⁵ According to his discussion, Sappho 31 cannot be dialogic while Catullus 51 clearly is because of its intertextual relation with Sappho 31. According to Miller, Catullus 31 is composed "in a complex and sophisticated world of literary allusions, artistic self-consciousness, and psychological ambiguity"¹⁶ all of which, apparently, archaic Lesbos and Sapphic poetry lack.

Bakhtin does mention different language styles, as indicative of polyphony but his idea of polyphony is never confined under the heading of intertextuality. Be that as it may, epic allusions in Sapphic poetry have been repeatedly discussed by classical scholarship. Jasper Svenbro has shown how in Fr 1 the prayer to Aphrodite is modeled on Diomedes' prayer in Iliad 5, and among many others Winkler, Svenbro and Rissman have discussed the Iliadic debt of Fr 1.¹⁷ In a similar manner, Page Dubois shows how the figures of Helen, Hector and Andromache in Sapphic poetry clearly allude, rely and

¹⁴ The present discussion owes a great debt to Batstone's discussion (2002) on Bakhtin and Catullus in which he discusses the possibility of a dialogic lyric providing the prerequisites for such a discussion, and finally making a sharp distinction between the Bakhtinian dialogism and dialogism as inter/intratextuality that classical scholarship has reduced it into (mainly Miller 1993).

¹⁵ Miller 1993.

¹⁶ Miller 1993, 102.

¹⁷ Winkler. 1996, 89-109, in Greene. Svenbro. 1975, 37-49. Rissman. 1983, 1-19

presuppose the Iliadic characters.¹⁸ Orality and archaic poetry are not synonymous with less complex and less sophisticated literature, and artistic self-consciousness or psychological ambiguity describe, I believe, Sapphic poetry very well. Although Miller's reading of Bakhtinian dialogism is different from the one I am pursuing, nevertheless his suggestion that Sapphic poetry is not dialogic, even solely based on intertextual criteria, is, I believe, unfounded.

On the other hand, William Batstone's arguments point to the problem of the Bakhtinian denial of a lyric dialogism. According to him, the problem lies in the Romantic roots of Bakhtin's theory. It is the Romantic concept self of as a self-presented object that haunts his theory of lyric. It is, though, evident in Bakhtin's psychology that he emphasizes the dialogic nature of consciousness, as inhabited by others, "an interpersonal entity constructed by the voices of others".¹⁹ It can be concluded then that dialogic lyric is possible if it is thought as being based on such a "dialogism of consciousness".²⁰

Moreover, dialogue in lyric has to avoid the hierarchization of voices under the dominant poetic voice. For lyric polyphony to exist, the represented self cannot be the single voice of a poet. It needs to be seen as a divided, elusive self, a self under construction- or even under deconstruction- a voice resounding the voices of others. This interpersonal self, put together by many different discourses, seems to be more precise a description than the Romantic ideal of a single voice pouring out unified feelings. Since

¹⁸ For Sappho's reworking of Homeric epic see also DuBois in Greene, 79-88.

¹⁹ Batstone 2002, 104.

²⁰ Batstone 2002, 104.

it is, then, the representation of an elusive, unfinalized self, that is the main prerequisite for a dialogic lyric, Sapphic poetry can be seen as polyphonic precisely because of its fragmented, elusive quality.²¹

In *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* Bakhtin describes the polyphonic self as "a conversation, a struggle, of discrepant voices with each other: voices speaking from different positions."²² It is this quality of the polyphonic self, I believe, that the Sapphic self is predicated upon. Moreover, it is this kind of self from which an equally polyphonous voice emerges: a fragmented voice of a fragmented self as read in a fragment.

Under that light, Sapphic fragments will be read in a search of the Sapphic self, a self constructed to be disparate and elusive. The Sapphic self will be seen as a fragmented Sapphic body and Sapphic corpus. Furthermore, not only is Sappho a woman but her voice is a female voice, uttering a dialogic lyric self. Thus, giving voice to many women, being performed by a chorus, and being heard by a female audience (although not exclusively female, I believe), Sapphic poetry can be perceived as a polyphonic poetry, a voice which is not one, defying the Bakhtinian insistence on lyric monologism.

Moreover, I will argue that feminist criticism can be employed in order to support the possibility of a polyphonic lyric if read as a supplement of the Bakhtinian theoretical framework. Critics like Kristeva, Irigaray and Cixous have tried to map the characteristics of *écriture féminine*, emphasizing the openness, polyvocalism and lack of a totalitarian form of thought and discourse in female texts. Reading Sapphic poetry as

²¹ Batstone 2002.

²² Bakhtin 1984, 217.

an exemplary feminine discourse, since it is the only example of a female poet in archaic Greece with a considerable amount of extant work reinforces the possibility of polyphony in Sapphic lyric. Consequently, such a reading can be used in order to open up new possibilities within the Bakhtinian theory. If feminine texts as such promote multiplicity of voices by denying totalizations, if they try to avoid the repression of different voices by undoing the extant hierarchy, it is then evident then that they can be seen as dialogical texts in the Bakhtinian sense.

In addition, for Irigaray the concept of the fragmentary female self is crucial since it also describes female writing and female voice. According to her, female discourse is essentially different from the male one: a woman's desire cannot be expected to be spoken in a male language.²³ For, female voice is limitless, open, always expanding and stretching, fluid, without boundaries.²⁴ However, woman's voice has to "pass through the master discourse" and woman's desire has been submerged in the dominating male discourse.²⁵ As a result, the role of femininity is prescribed by this same discourse and fails to correspond to her desire, putting the woman in the position of experiencing herself only fragmentarily.²⁶ Irigaray insists on seeing the woman as "several", as "never being simply one".²⁷ Fragmentation and multiplicity then characterize both women and their discourse.

²³ Irigaray 1985, 25.

²⁴ Irigaray 1985, 213-5.

²⁵ Irigaray 1985, 149.

²⁶ Irigaray 1985, 30-1.

²⁷ Irigaray 1985, 31.

Engaging with female language and discourse, Cixous discusses the possibility of female writing in the dominant framework of a male discourse. A female text, female writing in general, is both impossible and existing. Following Irigaray, Cixous argues that female and male discourses are radically different. As a result female writing needs to exploit different resources in order to convey its differentiation. Exceeding the traditional phallogentric discourse, female writing conveys meaning with the body. Writing and voice are entwined and interwoven. Female writing is exposure, it is body.²⁸ It is then, the expression of a radical alterity of female libidinal economy: fluid, abundant and multiple it is opposed to the masculine economy based on exchange.²⁹ In “The Laugh of the Medusa”, Cixous calls women to subvert the masculine libidinal economy, by writing the overflowing, unending, multiple, fragmented female body.³⁰ Both Irigaray and Cixous avoid the trap of essentialism by suggesting that feminine voice can be appropriated by both sexes. Similarly, Kristeva (via Bakhtin) describes a fragmented, ununified, anti-phallic writing, possible for both sexes to produce. By using the work of J. Joyce to prove the possibility of such an anti-phallic writing, Kristeva has been frequently criticized for excluding female authors.³¹ Although Irigaray, Kristeva and Cixous focus on the female body and feminine difference, they still define femininity as a non- biologically defined position, a position that this dissertation is based on.

Taking up the discussion of a feminine voice then, the voice of Sappho will be considered as a paradigmatic embodiment of feminine discourse: a fragmented, elusive

²⁸ Cixous- Clément 1986, 92-97.

²⁹ Cixous- Clément 1986. 79-83.

³⁰ Cixous 2000, 259; 262; 269. Cixous never denies the possibility that a feminine text can be male-authored. She actually discusses Joyce as such an example.

³¹ Tolan, 2006, 337.

self, a never-ending and a never-to-be-read text, forever lost. Sapphic poetry defies closure because it is a feminine text, as Cixous would put it. At the same time its fragmented quality is not seen as problematic but as expressive. It is not a lack of meaning we are dealing with. On the contrary, seen as a female text the fragmentation of the Sapphic text seems almost organic. Defying closure and singular meaning, it is an open text ready to be re-opened and re-read.

With a close reading of Sappho's texts, then, this chapter will attempt to map the feminine poetics of Sappho and to provide answers to matters of lyric construction of selfhood by emphasizing the construction of female self. It is evident so far that writing a female self is considered as staging a fragmented, elusive self, a self under construction. In addition, such an understanding of Sapphic poetics points to a possibility of a polyphonic lyric by decoding the inherent polyphony of feminine poetics and its relationship to male poetics as encoded in archaic Greek poetry.

ii. Remembering female selves: time, space, memory, and polyphony

in Sappho fr 94.

τεθνάκην δ' ἀδόλως θέλω·
 ἃ με ψισδομένα κατελίμπανεν
 πόλλα καὶ τόδ' ἔειπε[μοι
 ὦιμ' ὥς δεῖνα πεπ[όνθ]αμεν,
 Ψάπφ', ἦ μάν σ' ἀέκοις' ἀπυλιμπάνω.
 τὰν δ' ἔγω τάδ' ἀμειβόμαν·
 χαίροις' ἔρχεο κᾶμεθεν
 μέμναις', οἷσθα γὰρ ὥς <σ>ε πεδήπομεν·
 αἰ δὲ μή, ἀλλὰ σ' ἔγω θέλω
 ὀμναισαι[....][...]·εαι
 ος [] καὶ κάλ' ἐπάσχομεν·
 πο[λλοις γὰρ στεφάν]οις ἴων
 καὶ βρ[όδων ...]κίων τ' ὕμοι
 κα..[] πὰρ ἔμοι π<ε>ρεθήκα<ο>
 καὶ πό[λλαις ὑπα]θήμιδας

πλέκ[ταις ἀμφ' ἀ]πάλαι δέροι
 ἀνθέων .ε[...] πεποημέναις
 καὶ πολλῶν.....[]. μύρῳ
 βρενθείῳι.[]ρυ[...]ν
 ἐξάλ<ε>ίψας κα[ὶ βασιλῆϊ
 καὶ τρώμν[αν ἐ]πὶ μολθάκας
 ἀπάλας παρ[]...ονων
 ἐξίης πόθο[ν].νίδων
 κῶτε τις[οὔ]..τε τι
 ἶρον οὐδ'υ[]
 ἔπλετ' ὅππ[οθεν ἄμ]μες ἀπέσκομεν,
 οὐκ ἄλλος []ρος
 []ψοφος
 []...οιδίαι

Honestly, I wish I were dead. She was leaving me, shedding many tears, and saying this: «Alas, what a dreadful thing happened to us, Sappho, I am leaving you, honestly, without my will". And I replied to her thus: Go, farewell and remember me, for you know how we cherished you. And, if you don't, I will remind you ...that beautiful things happened to us. Many garlands of violets and roses and saffron you put around you, lying close to me, and round your tender neck you put woven garlands made from flowers, and much perfume....made from flowers...royal...you anointed, and lying on the soft couch you used to kindle the desire of young women...nor shrine...from which we were absent...nor grove...nor dance...sound...song.³²

The fragment begins with the utterance of a death wish, followed by a description of a separation scene between two women, one of which is named Sappho. Since the beginning of the poem is missing, there is no clear indication of who the speaker is. Scholarly opinions are therefore divided.³³ According to the first edition of the poem in 1902, it was the girl to whom the first line belongs. Soon enough, though, scholars concurred that it had to be uttered by “Sappho”. For Schadewaldt, the attribution of the death wish to Sappho should not be doubted any more.³⁴ Nevertheless the matter was

³² All Sappho fragments follow E. M Voigt's edition . Translations are mine, reflecting the discussion at hand.

³³ For an overview of the past scholarly debate see Burnett 1983, 292-3 and esp. n.38.

³⁴ Schadewaldt 1936, 364.

not settled. Gomme and Danielewitz challenged his opinion again in the late 60's.³⁵ Against this opinion Anne Burnett argued that it is the addressee who utters the wish to die in the opening lines, suggesting that the poem is divided between two points of view: the desperate, disconsolate weeping girl and the courageous Sappho who commands her to go remembering the good times they spent together³⁶. Along the same lines, more recently, Ellen Greene concludes, "attributing the opening line to the other woman heightens the tension of the poem between the two speakers, whose different approaches toward the separation, reflected in their correspondingly *different modes of discourse*."³⁷

This reading will then try to explore the question of the speakers *via* the question of self. Is it one or two different selves described in the poem? Are we dealing with two "points of view" of two different people or is it one splintered self this poem is dealing with? The presentation of the lyric self is the main focus of the poem. The fragment accidentally-albeit quite appropriately- opens with a first person singular. Later, the speaking person is named by her interlocutor in an attempt to point to a specific self. Now we know it is *Sappho* speaking, it is her own self being exposed and staged.³⁸ The poem opens with a wish in present, first person singular (θέλω) and the focus to a self is emphasized by the use of the first person singular, nominative personal pronoun (ἐγώ-twice). As the poem moves on time shifts and, at the same time, the self is further

³⁵ Burnett 1983, 292.

³⁶ Burnett 1979, 23.

³⁷ Italics are mine, Greene 1996, 239-40. Snyder, although she does not align with Burnett in attributing the first line to the second person, strongly emphasizes the *polyvocalism* and *openness* of fr. 94. See p. 56; 58-9.

³⁸ By *Sappho* I mean the self the poem stages not the historical person with whom the present discussion is not concerned.

exposed. Thus, time works in different levels staging the lyric self. It is then, I suggest, this staging of self through time that is important in fr. 94.

The fragment begins with a present utterance of the lyric self in a moment of self-destruction: I wish I were dead. Then the time shifts to the past moment of separation: she was leaving me, shedding tears (κατελίμπανεν). Then a dialogue, as present in the past: she was saying (ἔειπε μοι) Sappho I leave you (ἀπυλιμπάνω) unwillingly, and I said (ἀμειβόμεν), go, farewell (χαίροισ' ἔρχεο), and remember me (μέμνηαι). A second person emerges not only as a person in a narrative, but as an interlocutor, who addresses, by name, the lyric I (Ψάπφ'). Then another time shift, while memory helps to go again back to the past, even before the separation: it is the time of togetherness: "remember how we lived together, and if you don't, I will remind you"(θέλω ὀμναικαί). Although it is a narration of past times, the future crops up. The lyric I will go on to describe the previous experience of their common life, trying to preserve, store and secure the memory of the past. The self then is preserved in future perfect, as past and future combine. Memory is both "what we were" and "what we will have been". What the speaker wants is both to create and share the created memory to be preserved in the future.³⁹

The self then emerges in three different time levels: now, then, and before. Three different selves, three different feelings: desperation, courage, and bliss. Is it a shattered self, torn in three pieces, a disparate self? In *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, M. Bakhtin suggests that:

³⁹ A possible schema of the construction of time can be the following:

Present→ death wish

Past I→ time of departure → **future**: I will remind you

Past II→time of togetherness → **past future**: will have been

Language imagines self as a conversation, a struggle of discrepant voices with each other, voices speaking from different positions, and invested with different degrees of authority⁴⁰.

In this poem, I suggest, three different voices of the same self- struggle: not only from different spatial positions but from different temporal positions as well. Space and time change, as the voice changes: present time of desperation and death wish, first level of past, place of separation, and a second level of past, a time and place of bliss: a *utopia* of togetherness, smells, beautiful sounds, and love. The self then emerges as polymorphic, even changed: it is not the staging of two different selves, two different persons the poem deals with. It is not one unified, desperate self whose feelings the poem expresses. It is the staging of a changing self, or rather a lament for the lost old self, even a lament for a changed self, or selves. For the courageous lyric I of the past has now become the desperate I of the first line, while, or because, the desperate I of the separation scene has also changed. The poem then focuses, with at least 19 out of the 29 preserved lines of it, on the memory of the past togetherness, in a last desperate attempt to preserve, by memory, the lost selves.

Furthermore, the poem stages two distinctively female spaces: the present scene of separation and the memory of past bliss in the framework of the *hetairia*. Sappho's description marks both spaces as female. In the beginning, the dialogue between the friends is marked with grammatically feminine endings. During the departure scene the grammar is heavily gendered with the use of participles and pronouns.⁴¹ When the

⁴⁰Morson -Emerson 1990, 217-8.

⁴¹ Line 2, ἄ, ψισδομένα; line 5, Ψάπφ', ἄέκοισ' (α); line 6 τὰν; line 7 χαίροις'(α). Although feminine forms are common in Sappho this is actually the only extant fragment with such concentration of feminine forms (6 forms in 6 lines).

person addressed as Sappho begins talking, she evokes to memory a past female space of female reciprocity, song, smells and female bodies.⁴²

Luce Irigaray describes female space as the space in which women are together in a relationship based on nearness rather than ownership. Ownership and property according to her demarcate the master (male) discourse. For woman is traditionally an exchange object, exchange value between men. On the other hand female discourse is based on a nearness, proximity and reciprocity as opposed to the hierarchy of male discourse.⁴³

Often being read as a poem of a friend departed in order to get married, thus to be a part of the male hierarchies, the poem brings forth a different, female world, a world opposed to the prevailing male economy. It is a world in which speaking among -and as- women is possible, a world in which female desire is spoken.⁴⁴ Sappho then goes on to explicitly stage such a world: descriptions of female singing, a sound of multiple female voices, smells, and touches.⁴⁵ All senses come into play evoking desire. Lines 21-3 explicitly describe the intimate space of female desire, which is named in line 23 (ἐξίης πόθο[ν].νίδων, with most scholars reading νεανίδων). The lines have provoked many scholarly arguments and a great deal of lyric *amēchania* to scholars who tried to conceal any hint of Sapphic homoeroticism.⁴⁶ It is nevertheless evident that there is an explicit

⁴² Similarly in Greene 1996, *via* Irigaray.

⁴³ Irigaray 1985, 31.

⁴⁴ Irigaray 1985. “the problem of speaking (as) women is precisely that of finding ...that speech of desire”, 137.

⁴⁵ Irigaray, 1985, 209. “In all senses. Why only one song, one speech one text at a time.”

⁴⁶ Burnett 1979, 25 esp n. 31.

scene of female homoerotic desire, as a marker, I suggest, of female discourse, or rather female *homilia*.

In female discourse, Cixous argues, female body must be written. Sappho writes (about) the body, the soft neck on which the garlands are placed, the bodies anointed with perfumes, the bodies reclining on couches, feeling soft to the touch (ἀμφ' ἀ]πάλαι δέραι, ἐξαλείψαιο, στρώμν[αν ἐ]πὶ μολθάκων , ἀπάλαν). Women are also talking or rather singing.⁴⁷ As these voices of the past become voices in the present of performance, another function of feminine writing is accomplished:

In feminine speech, as in writing, there never stops reverberating something that, having imperceptibly and deeply touched us, still has the power to affect us-song, the first music of the voice of love, which every woman keeps alive...Within woman the first, nameless love is singing.⁴⁸

Participating in the scholar controversy, it has been my intention to explore the attribution of the first line to Sappho as it can be read within the framework of the construction of a polyphonic lyric self that this paper tries to explore. Seen as polyphonic Fr 94, then, discloses not only the Sapphic voice but also the voice of the departing friend. This sense of polyvocalism does not mean, I argued, that the first line has to belong to another speaker. The poem stages a dialogue between two women bringing forth two female voices, in a discourse, I suggest, marked as feminine. The poem, then, intentionally marks the discourse as such revealing the construction of a female self and shedding light on female poetics.

⁴⁷ For singing and dancing see the last fragmented lines : χο].ρος, ψόφος

⁴⁸ Cixous 1986, 93.

Poem 94 then can be read as a process of constructing a feminine self: a disparate, elusive thus polyphonic self, constructed through memory. Constructing a feminine self through different time levels create a unique dialogue between time, place and selves. It is time and place that shift together with the interlocutors, creating a palimpsest of lyric dialogism. The self in 94 is double-folded: there is the self as shown to the other person of the dialogue, the courageous, hopeful self, and the self as shown to self in the beginning of the poem, the self wishing for its death. Moreover, in the context of a performance, a third self emerges, as the self is again shown to others. This unfinalized, open-ended self is then expecting the audience to exercise their surplus, so that they might finalize and complete the speaker.

Attributing the first line to "Sappho" rather than the second person of the dialogue emphasizes the presentation of a disparate, elusive self which dialogism calls for. Furthermore the "indeterminacy"⁴⁹ of the speakers, I suggest, adds to the effect of the disparate selves in a female discourse. It is in the moment of separation that the female discourse exercises its power of bringing the interlocutors closer. In a female space, women speak in "nearness so pronounced that it makes all discrimination of identity impossible".⁵⁰

iii. Polyphony in "absentia": Fr. 96

[]Cαρδ.[..]
 [πόλ]λακι τυίδε [.] ὦν ἔχουισα
 ὡςπ.[...].ῶμεν, .[...].χ[.]

⁴⁹ I borrow the term from duBois 1995, 138 ff.

⁵⁰ Irigaray 1985, 31.

σε θεῶι ἱκέλαν Ἄρι-
 γνώτα†, αἶ δὲ ἐμάλιστ' ἔχαιρε μόλπαι·
 νῦν δὲ Ἰλὺδαῖσιν ἐμπρέπεται γυναι-
 κεσσιν ὥς ποτ' ἀελίῳ
 δύντος ἃ βροδοδάκτυλος <σελάννα>
 πάντα περ<ρ>έχοις' ἄστρα· φάος δ' ἐπί-
 χρει θάλασσαν ἐπ' ἁλμύραν
 ἵως καὶ πολυανθέμοις ἀρούραις·
 ἃ δ' <ἐ>έρσα κάλα κέχυται τεθά-
 λαισι δὲ ἐβρόδα κᾶπαλ' ἄν-
 θρυσκα καὶ μελίλωτος ἀνθεμώδης·
 πόλλα δὲ ζαφοίταις' ἀγάνας ἐπι-
 μνάσθεις' Ἄτθιδος ἡμέρῳ
 λέπταν ποι φρένα κ[.]ρ... βόρηται·
 κῆθι δ' ἔλθην ἄμμ[.]... ια τόδ' οὐ
 νωντα[.]υκτονυμ[...] πόλυς
 γάρυει [...]αλον[.....].ο μέεσσιν·

Sardis...often having her mind here... how we lived together... (she honored) you as a being a goddess, Arignota, and she rejoiced most of all in your song. Now she stands out among the Lydian women like the rosy-finger moon after the sunset, surpassing all the stars. And the light evenly spreads among the salty sea and the flowery fields; the beautiful dew is shed, the roses blossom and the soft chervil and the flowery honey-lotus. But she, roaming about far and wide, remembers gentle Atthis with desire and her tender heart is devoured inside, for your fate. ...come there...shouts... sea... middle...

Poem 96 seems at first glance monologic. In contrast with Fr 94, there is no dialogue; it is a narrative in third person, uttered by an anonymous, albeit omniscient narrator. The main characters of the poem do not talk to one another. The narrator addresses Atthis and talks about a departed friend, Arignota. The selves of the two women appear in the poem, constructed, again, through memory and several time levels. However, it is not a speaking person that constructs its own self. In 96, the self seems to be reflected while constructed by the other.

The narrator, a friend of both, talks to Atthis about Arignota⁵¹. The departed friend, according to the speaking person, still remembers the whole group but still desires her, the same way she did back then. It is through the mouth of the *persona loquens*, then, that Atthis is reminded of their past relationship, the now missing friend's past feelings for her: she thought you looked like a goddess, your singing made her happy. At the same time the narrator sees Arignota in her present state, as she now lives in Lydia, knowing what Arignota now thinks and how she feels. But not only does she have a privileged vision and knowledge over both women but she can also see through the eyes of the other: she can see through Atthis' eyes when she was casting her eyes on Arignota. She knows how she felt, how she saw her. The narrator seems to have a surplus of vision. Is Sappho then a typical omniscient narrator? And if so, why does she choose to have an addressee she talks to? Moreover, why does she have to talk about Arignota's present thoughts, feelings and even words? If the presentation of Arignota's feelings was the point of the poem, why didn't she have Arignota utter her state of mind, pouring out her own inner emotions in first person singular? If the presentation of a self was the point why does Sappho need to stage the poem using two more persons besides herself?

For M. Bakhtin, self consists in 3 categories: *I for myself*, *I for others* and *other for me*⁵². And, since one cannot occupy the place of the other, one always misses one category of self: *the I for others*. In Bakhtinian terms this is the other's *surplus*, which is what the other can see about you that you cannot. The self then, according to him, cannot

⁵¹ I am translating ἀριγνωτά not as an adjective (prominent, well-known) but as the name of the departed friend. For parallel comparisons of the beloved to a god in Sappho see fr. 31 and 44. For the suggestion see Campbell, 123,n.1. This choice, far from being conclusive, can be supported by the Sapphic practice of naming the other, and makes the discussion about the persons in the poem much easier.

⁵² Morson -Emerson 1990, 180.

be fully presented unless through the eyes of the other. The Sapphic self then seems to be aware of its incompleteness, since the presence of the other, an addressee or an implied audience, is the prerequisite for its full emergence.

The narrative of the self cannot be completed unless someone else desires it. As a result, the narrator stages two selves separated from each other. Through this separation, the selves of both protagonists of the poem emerge: the narrator helps Atthis and Arignota fully see themselves, enabling them to look at all the categories of self. Thus, it is through the eyes of the others, Sappho and the other two speakers that all selves fully emerge.

"Everything that pertains to me enters my consciousness, beginning with my name, from the external world through the mouths of others."⁵³

Atthis can now see the *I for others* through Sappho's privileged vision over Arignota's point of view. At the same time Sappho shows her the *I for herself*, enabling her to see herself as not the subject but as the object. Atthis can see herself as Arignota sees her and at the same time she sees herself as the other. Moreover Arignota's self is shown first as the *I for others*, as she is seen through the eyes of the Lydian women. Then, the *I for her* as she wonders alone longing for Atthis. The narrator speaks her desire, and utters a desperate attempt for dialogue, only to prove the impossibility of the communication. Or, is the communication possible?

It is through the narrator, I suggest, that the communication becomes possible in a dialogue of selves. Through the narrator, all selves seem to be disclosed, while missing images come together. As the moonlight sheds its light on both sea and fields, the narrator sheds her privileged vision to both Arignota and Atthis. The selves of the

⁵³ Bakhtin 1986, 138.

protagonists seem to be enlightened by her gaze. As she can look at both, they seem to be able to look at one another. As the moon mirrors both land and sea, she mirrors both women, together. Then, quite opposed to the image of her in vain shouting to the sea, an image of communication seems to coincide with the choral performance.

i. Gardens of nymphs and Sapphic voices: Toward a discourse in the feminine.

It has been argued that it is through performance that the discourse becomes possible, the dialogue takes place, and the desire is fulfilled. The poem, addressed to a female you, talking about the desire of a second female, is a poem about desire in the feminine: Arignota and Atthis, the woman she desires. Desire is not however spoken in the first or second person. It is spoken by a third, narrated or better read as the desire of the other. If it is Sappho who speaks the desire of the women involved in the poem, is it then a female desire? Can the discourse of desire be a female discourse? If desire is written in an always masculine poetic discourse can it be a female desire, can it be uttered by a female voice?

The poem begins with an enigmatic Sardis standing alone in the first line of the fragment. There is no way to know if this is the beginning of the poem, but at the beginning of the fragment Sardis seems to be the place the poem is set. The setting however quickly moves from Sardis to here (τῷδε) with a similar movement from present to the past. Being in Sardis now her mind travels to Lesbos and the memory of past life, how we used to live together is the subject matter of the three following lines. The third person narrator talks about her desire: it is here in Lesbos her mind comes back

to all the time, it is you who she saw as a goddess, it is your song she liked the best. Atthis is addressed directly in the second person (σε, σῶι) as she becomes the object of Arignota's desire. The speaking subject of Arignota's desire though is not she. It is Sappho reading her desire, the desire of an absent girl to the one present.

In another shift of time though, the next line comes back to the present but the place changes back to Sardis: she is now in Lydia, preeminent among the Lydian women. As time a place shifts so does desire: it is Arignota now who is the object of desire of the Lydian people, it is Arignota who surpasses in beauty all others, as the moon outshines the rest of the stars. Arignota is desired, not only by the Lydians but perhaps by Atthis as well. In describing Arignota the speaker employs a simile: the picture of the moon surpassing the stars gives way to a description of the moonlight spreading over the sea and flowery, dewy meadows. Following the moonlight, desire crosses the sea from Sardis to Lesbos and vice versa. The boundaries of space are blurred, so do time boundaries: for the image of roses and soft grass bring back the times of togetherness. If Sappho's poetry is nothing but "gardens of nymphs, wedding songs and love affairs" as Demetrius assures us, it is then to those gardens of erotic euphoria that the description points to.⁵⁴ However, it is not clear if the erotic scenery refers to the past, present or future: is it the gardens they used to be together at a past time that their desire was fulfilled? Are the empty gardens the symbol of a paradise lost, or are there as reminder that they can be filled again?

I will come back to the theme of erotic space, but for the moment let me go to the next shift of time and place. After the description of the idyllic gardens, the time shifts to the present time (βόρητοι) and space (Lydia). There Arignota roams restlessly,

⁵⁴ Demetrius, *On Style*, 132.

remembering Atthis, her heart devoured by desire. She states her desire to go there (κῆθι δ' ἔλθην), she shouts (γάρυει) but her voice gets lost at the uproar of the sea. If this is the end of the poem, the image of Arignota at a desperate attempt to project her voice, to utter her desire, then is it a poem about the impossibility of uttering female desire. The words Arignota tries to utter are lost both in the sea staged by the poem and because of the corrupted state of the last lines. Moreover, Atthis' desire is not uttered either. Although we hear about her, we never hear her. What we do hear is Sappho's words, reading the desire of both, maybe her desire as well. But if it is impossible for female desire to be uttered how, is it then possible that she, a female, can utter her own desire and the desire of others? What is then that make her desire possible to utter?

For Sappho, composing and performing a poem about female desire is at the same time an act of reading and writing: reading the desire of others in order to write a poem. But while writing is usually taken to be an act to fix a certain meaning, for Sappho it is not. In Sappho's world fixity and stability of a "text" are undone by performance. For every time it is performed the time and spatial marker of the poem (here-there, now-then) change. If the poem itself enforces time and space shifts, permitting fluidity, a blurring of boundaries, performance goes one step further. Space and time become even more fluid since "here" and "now" change at any given performance and the act of saying the words is not an attempt to fix the moment, but the acceptance of the impossibility of its fixity. By the same token, an attempt to write desire yields to an attempt of reading desire as an acceptance of its unfixity. Writing the poem then is an act of "fixing" desire by admitting at the same time the impossibility of such fixity.

The desire Sappho reads is a feminine desire: but the person that desires and is desired is not easy to read. Did Arignota really desire Atthis when she was there? Did she really enjoy her song? Does she now roam restlessly, still lovesick? Is now Arignota really desired, looked as preeminent by the Lydian women? Or is it Sappho projecting her own desire for her? Is Arignota the mirror in which a collective desire for Atthis is reflected? Whose desire is it anyway? Sappho's, the audience's? Is the poem the voice of desire that Arignota fails to project across the sea? Although Sappho's reading of desire seems to be conceptualized as an ever receding print, a desire that is read but at the same time cannot be uttered, nevertheless the poem stands as an attempt to utter desire: in order to do so Sappho needs to read feminine desire in the framework of masculine discourse. Why is masculine discourse necessary for female desire to be uttered? Because, I argue, it is the only the male symbolic that poetic discourse is possible. In this sense, writing a poem is by itself an attempt to write female desire within male discourse? Is this possible? Or is the desire going to be transformed into male desire through male discourse? Sappho's attempt to utter female desire is an attempt to "create" female discourse. By using male discourse Sappho is also trying to supply her own female reading of it: a reading that attempts to shake the illusion of fixity that male discourse professes by upsetting the boundaries of time, space and language. In an act of destabilizing Sappho uses poetic *topoi* and language that evoke epic with twist of female reading.

The poem begins with a very "Homeric" metaphor and it is continued with an equally "Homeric" extended simile. Both figures of speech evoke epic, masculine discourse. Whether Arignota is a name or an epithet, the description of a girl as godlike

is full of Homeric undertones: in *Odyssey* 6, Odysseus is uncertain whether Nausicaa is mortal or not and decides to play it safe by asking⁵⁵:

"γουννοῦμαί σε, ἄνασσα· θεός νύ τις ἦ βροτός ἐσσι; (Od.6.149)

"Queen, I come here as a suppliant to you. Are you a goddess or a mortal, I wonder?

The question is not of course a real one: Odysseus knows Nausicaa is mortal but the question works as a "captatio benevolentiae". The fact that a mortal might resemble an immortal works as a compliment. It is also a Homeric way to describe outstanding individuals using epithets that mean similar to gods as δῖος, θεοειδής or ἡίθεος. It is very interesting also that the epithet ἀριγνώτος does appear at the same scene although not characterizing Nausicaa. But in an extended simile Homer compares Nausicaa and her companions playing with Artemis playing with the nymphs as following:

πασάων δ' ὑπὲρ ἥ γε κάρη ἔχει ἡδὲ μέτωπα,
ρεῖῖά τ' ἀριγνώτη πέλεται, καλαὶ δέ τε πᾶσαι·
ὥς ἢ γ' ἀμφιπόλοισι μετέπρεπε παρθένοσ ἀδμήs. (Od.6.107-9)

[just as Artemis] holds her head and eyebrows high above them all,
so recognizing her is easy, though all of them are beautiful—that's
how the maiden stood out then from her attendants.

Nausicaa is then compared to Artemis. Again it is not only the fact that Nausicaa is compared to a goddess that brings this close to Sappho, but also the terms of the comparison between the mortal and the immortal: both Artemis and Nausicaa look preeminent among a team of beautiful maidens. Which, of course, brings us back to Arignota, preeminent among the Lydian women? Moreover, both Artemis and Nausicaa are singing, being member of a chorus of women that sings and dance. They are however

⁵⁵ My discussion benefits from J.Winkler's discussion in *Gardens of Nymphs*. Winkler reads Sappho 31 as a re-creation of the same scene in the *Odyssey*. My reading re-creates both Winkler's reading on Sappho 31 and Sappho's reading of Homer.

having a leading role in song. Also the word used for the pre-eminence of Nausicaa among the other girls is μετέπρεπε, a term that evokes the Sapphic ἐμπρέπεται. Sapphic imagery then is closely following the Homeric: a mortal is compared to a goddess as a sign of her preeminence. At this point the presence of Homeric diction is also evident. The epithet attributed to the moon is βροδοδάκτυλος evoking very well known formulaic phrase. However, it is noteworthy that the adjective βροδοδάκτυλος is here used to modify σελάννα unlike Homer where is used to modify Eos.⁵⁶ As a metaphor, the image of rosy-finger Dawn makes a lot of sense since the sun rays look like fingers and the color of the sky in early morning is reddish as a rose. When the epithet is used with moon though it is quite puzzling: what does it mean? Since the metaphor is not anchored to the resemblance of the two objects compared to each other, the metaphor works in a different level of literary resemblance: the comparison is not between two objects but two texts that are in dialogue with one another. The usage of the same adjective points toward the traditional Homeric, male, discourse. But at the same time the use of different noun, moon is contrary to the audience expectation, with the defamiliarization pointing to a different, female, poetic discourse.

This image, I suggest, is written within female discourse. A well-known Homeric epithet used to modify Eos, sunrise, rosy-fingered is here used in an innovative way pointing to a difference: unlike the Homeric text, the Sapphic reference to the moon seems to have had associations with femininity in the mind of the audience. Sapphic imagery though goes further: the simile is expanded even more. What starts as a simile is almost lost in the lines following. At first it is Arignota that looks like the moon but

⁵⁶ The adjective used in Homer 27 times *always* modifies Eos (ῥοδοδάκτυλος Ἥως)

further it is the image of a real moon that is seen. A moon that spreads its light over the sea, over the flowery meadows. The figure of speech, as the figure of Arignota, is fluid, changing. What starts as a simile is now a description. But a description of what? As the space and time described is unidentified, with no tempo-spatial demarcation, at the same time this (un)epic light shows Arignota like a goddess or maybe a goddess like Arignota. This space and time then, I suggest because of its unfixity is female space, a space in which female discourse can be uttered.

Luce Irigaray in *When our Lips Speak Together* emphasizes the differences between male and female discourse, explaining that in male discourse the spatiotemporal relationships have a definite end; time and place are limited and vertical. On the other hand, female space and time are limitless, endless, fluid and horizontal. In this light, the limitless spatiotemporal relations as produced by the poem again point to its visibly feminine quality. The poem, I argued, presents a female limitless space in contrast with the confined male space.

In addition, the simile of the moon seems to point toward female discourse as well. The image of moon is always close to the female. Being grammatically feminine *σελάννα* is closely connected with female fertility and the female body.⁵⁷ The period of the moon seems to allude to female bodily functions.⁵⁸ *Σελάννα* is of course also a mythological person, a Titan, the goddess of the moon.⁵⁹ In mythology there is also a

⁵⁷ Stehle in Greene 1996, 148 and n. 12.

⁵⁸ Hence the etymological connection of *ἔμμηνος* (meaning both monthly and menstrual) with *Μήνη* (another name for Selene, see Homeric Hymn 32, to Selene). In English menstrual also comes from the Latin *mens*>month.

⁵⁹ Sappho seems to have written a poem on the love story of Selene and Endymion, according to the ancient scholiast see Campbell, v I, fr 199.

variety of goddesses associated with the moon, all of whom have connections with women's cults.⁶⁰ In Plutarch, Hera is connected to the moon as Zeus is connected to the sun. Therefore, he says, Hera is connected with women expecting a child, clearly pointing to the connection of moon with female fertility.⁶¹

Moreover, Irigaray argues that a male space is vertical, following the idea of rigid hierarchy, while female spaces are horizontal. Coming back to Fr 96, the image of moon usually brings to mind a vertical division (heaven-earth). In the Sapphic poem, though, the image of the moon is horizontal, stretching over the earth, creating a limitless space without fixed boundaries merging Lesbos and Sardis. The moonlight is spread over the sea; the moon is no longer up in the sky but on the sea. The movement of the female voice as a result is not upward:

Stretching upward, reaching higher, you pull yourself away from the limitless realm of your body. Don't make yourself erect, you'll leave us. The sky isn't up there: it's between us.⁶²

The sky is between them, spread horizontally as, according to Irigaray, it should in all female discourse. In addition, her voice is heard in the space between (γαρύει ... μέσσοι) in the last (?) fragmentary line.

Fr 96 can be read then as a poem writing female space and time, writing female desire and a plurality of female voices. Sappho stages Fr 96 then not as monologic as it

⁶⁰ Usually Hera, Hekate, Artemis, Eileithyia just to name the most prominent. All have connections with female fertility and childbirth. For Hekate as the goddess of the moon and associations of Artemis and the moon see Johnston 1990, 29-48 espec. 31, n.8.

⁶¹ Plutarch *Aetia* 282c4 ff. ἀλλ' αὐτὸν ἐν ὕλῃ Δία τὸν ἥλιον, καὶ αὐτὴν τὴν Ἥραν ἐν ὕλῃ τὴν σελήνην καὶ Λουκῖναν Ἥραν καλοῦσιν οἷον φαεινὴν ἢ φωτίζουσιν καὶ νομίζουσιν ἐν ταῖς λοχείαις καὶ ὠδῶσι βοηθεῖν.

⁶² Irigaray 1985, 213.

might seem at first sight. The narrator enables and generates a dialogue, creates a discourse blurring time and space, writing desire, writing of a body without fixed boundaries, in an unceasing mobility and restlessness. It is a dialogic presentation in which one persona enables the presentation of the other; a dialogic discourse that the choral performance will turn to polyphony. Moreover its discourse is feminine. Unfinalized and open, without boundaries, even literally: another fragment without beginning and end voicing the fluidity of female discourse. A fragment ending in the middle with its last word being μέσσον, not separating but mediating between past and present, enabling a dialogue regardless of space and time, not only between Arignota and Atthis but also between Sappho and Irigaray.

iv. Sappho's Homer: performing feminine voice in an epic world

Sappho, Aphrodite and the Homeric Diomedes: Fr 1

ποικιλόθρον' ἄθανάτ' Αφρόδιτα,
 παῖ Δίος δολόπλοκε, λίσσομαί σε,
 μή μ' ἄσαισι μηδ' ὀνίαισι δάμνα,
 πότνια, θῦμον,
 ἀλλὰ τυίδ' ἔλθ', αἵ ποτα κατέρωτα
 τὰς ἔμας αὐδὰς αἰοῖσα πῆλοι
 ἔκλυες, πάτρος δὲ δόμον λίποισα
 χρύσιον ἦλθες
 ἄρμ' ὑπαδεύξαισα· κάλοι δέ σ' ἄγον
 ὤκεες εἰτροῦθοι περὶ γᾶς μελαίνας
 πύκνα δίνεντες πτέρ' ἀπ' ὠράνω αἴθε-
 ρος διὰ μέσσω·
 αἶψα δ' ἐξίκοντο· σὺ δ', ὦ μάκαιρα,
 μειδιάσαις' ἄθανάτῳ προσώπῳ
 ἦρε' ὅττι δηῦτε πέπονθα κῶττι
 δηῦτε κάλημμι
 κῶττι μοι μάλιστα θέλω γένεσθαι
 μαινόλῃ θυμῷ· τίνα δηῦτε πείθω
 .. κάγην ἐς σὺν φιλότατα; τίς σ', ὦ

Ψάπφ', ἀδικήσι;
 καὶ γὰρ αἰ φεύγει, ταχέως διώξει,
 αἰ δὲ δῶρα μὴ δέκετ', ἀλλὰ δώσει,
 αἰ δὲ μὴ φίλει, ταχέως φιλήσει
 κωὺκ ἐθέλοισα.
 ἔλθε μοι καὶ νῦν, χαλέπαν δὲ λῦσον
 ἐκ μερίμναν, ὅσσα δέ μοι τέλεσσαι
 θῦμος ἱμέρρει, τέλεσον, εὐ δ' αὖτα
 εὐμαχος ἔσσο.

Ornate-throned, immortal, Aphrodite, daughter of Zeus, weaver of wiles, I beseech you. Do not overwhelm my heart with pain and anguish, mistress, but come here, if even before hearing my voice from afar you listened, and came leaving your father's palace the golden one chariot you yoked. And pretty, swift, sparrows brought you to the black earth, quickly fluttering their wings from the upper sky through the air, and soon they arrived. And you, blessed one, with a smile in your immortal face, you asked what is wrong with me, again, why am I, again, calling for you, and what I most wanted to happen to me, in my frenzied heart. «Whom am I to persuade this time to come quickly to your love? Who wrongs you, Sappho? For if she now flees, she will soon pursue, and if she now does not accept your gifts, she will give them to you, and if she does not love you, she will soon want it or not." Come to me now, again, and free me from harsh cares, and fulfill whatever my heart desires, and you yourself be my ally!

Fragment 1 has been often read as “Homeric”. According to many scholars Sappho stages her prayer to Aphrodite after the Homeric paradigm of the prayer of Diomedes to Athena in *Iliad* 5.⁶³ For Leah Rissman, the Homeric allusion supports “the metaphor of love as war in the poetry of Sappho”.⁶⁴ According to her readings, Sappho alludes, via language and content, to books 3, 5, and 14 of the *Iliad*.⁶⁵ Although she points to Sappho’s “Homericity”, Rissman fails to account for Sappho’s choice.⁶⁶ Svenbro’s reading proves to be richer in that he explains Sappho’s “adaptation of Homer” as a response to the socio-historical circumstances of her age. According to Svenbro then,

⁶³ For scholarship see Winkler 1996, 89-109 especially 92,n.17. Also duBois 1996, 79-88 and Rosenmeyer, 1988.

⁶⁴ Rissman, 1983,1.

⁶⁵ Rissman, 1983, 1-19.

⁶⁶ Rissman, 1983, 19.

Sappho turns to the epic world seeking the social stability that her era lacks, in an attempt to “re-establish the authentic values of the aristocratic class”.⁶⁷ However, his reading falls short to explain why Sappho’s hymn to Aphrodite is composed in first person singular with Sappho being the *persona loquens*. For him this makes Sappho a paradoxical poet since she fails to fully enter in the epic world, failing to live the epic tradition.⁶⁸

Svenbro’s rather awkward explanation fittingly points to the importance of the presentation of self in Fr 1. For, in an attempt to present a lyric self, using epic language creates a doubleness. Jack Winkler, in his reading of Fr 1, argues that the importance of gender consciousness in the reading of this poem is fundamental for the identification of self. Discussing the affiliation of the poem with the Homeric poems, he points out once more the kinship of Sapphic prayer to Aphrodite with the prayer of Diomedes in *Iliad* 5, but more importantly suggests that “Sappho’s use of Homeric passages is a way of allowing us to approach her consciousness as a woman and poet reading Homer”.⁶⁹ Winkler then explains Sappho’s choice by pointing to a Sapphic “double consciousness”, a consciousness “both of her ‘private’, woman-centered world and the other ‘public’ world”.⁷⁰

However, Sappho’s “setting up a female perspective on male activity”, as pointed out by Winkler, emphasizes the role of gender at the expense of the role of genre. Genre and gender, I believe, are emphatically intertwined in Fr 1, pointing to the construction

⁶⁷ Svenbro, 1975, 48-9.

⁶⁸ Svenbro, 1975, 49.

⁶⁹ Winkler 1996, 94.

⁷⁰ Winkler, 1990, 162-6. Full quote in 166.

of a “double” self, both lyric and epic, both male and female. In this reading, first I am going to explore the ways in which Sappho creates a polyphonic self, emphasizing the idea of dialogism, while at the same time she employs the Homeric allusions in order to work more voices into her poem. Opening up a dialogue of lyric with epic, of female and male, constructing polyphonic selves, Sappho explores the whole spectrum of possibilities of dialogism as opposed to monologic epic.

In Fr 1, time, memory, and the other are, once more, important for the construction of selfhood. The poem begins in the present uttering of a prayer to Aphrodite: "do not overwhelm my heart, mistress, with pain and anguish, but come here". The I ask for the other not only to listen, but also to be there, be present. It seems that Aphrodite can actually act from afar: the first person has felt the impact without being next to her. However, she is now asking (λίσσομαι) for her presence: come here, as you came before. The prayer now shifts its time level: all the verbs used are now in past tense, aorist: you heard my prayers (ἔκλυες), you left your father's palace (λίποισα), you yoked your chariot (ὑπασδεύξαισα), you flew through the sky, you came (ἦλθες), you smiled (μειδίαίσαισα). The description of the past interaction, of the past discourse is recalled by memory: you asked me what I wanted, why I called upon you (ἦρε' ὅττι δηῦτε πέπονθα κῶττι / δηῦτε κάλημμι). Instantly though, the time level shifts again to a pseudo-present: for it is not really a present dialogue, although it is in present tense (θέλω, πείθω, ἀδικήει).

However, the past seems to safeguard the present. The goddess now speaks to her addressee, who is for the first time named: what do you want *this time*. Whom do you want to bring to your love, who wrongs you, Sappho? The fact that the I is named for the

first time is important. First, because it is named by a you: it is the addressee, you, that says her name. It is the other who discloses the self and its passion. The other, the former addressee of the prayer is now the speaker, while the former speaker is the addressee. But, the former subject is now the object, not only of Aphrodite's speech but also of another woman's desire. The shift in roles is constructed through another time level shift: for this time Aphrodite speaks about a future: "for if she now flees, she will soon pursue, and if she does not accept your gifts, she will soon give them to you, and if she does not love you she will". In this constructed pseudo-future (διώξει, δώσει, φιλήσει), the object becomes subject: the beloved, becomes lover, while Sappho becomes the beloved, the object of her desire. The self is actually found as the object of somebody's interest: if love is actually out there, if Aphrodite hears my prayer, then the beloved will take my voice, she will become me, she will respond using my words.

By the end of the poem, the time shifts again to the present. However, the present is always intertwined with the memory of the past (καὶ νῦν) and the fabrication of the future, emphasized by the use of imperative (ἔλθε, τέλεισον, ἔσσο): come and save me, again, now, and fulfill whatever my heart desires, and be my ally. The memory of the past favor is crucial: for it safeguards not only the repetition of the favor, but the coherence of a self: for doing again what you did in the past means that you are the same person as you were in the past. Moreover it means that I am the same person I was, since you recognize the unchanged me⁷¹.

⁷¹ The construction of time can be outlined thus:

present→ utterance of prayer
past II→ aorists (former prayer, travel)
past I→ former dialogue
pseudo-present→ what I wish for
pseudo-future→ promises
present→ utterance of prayer (ring composition)

In Bakhtinian terms then, the Sapphic self only emerges through the presence of an addressee and the statement of the other person's desire. Self is being recognized as external, been seen and heard "through the mouths of others."⁷² It was indeed Aphrodite who uttered the name of the subject and its desire; it was through her that self was seen. Then, according to Bakhtin, it is only Aphrodite's surplus, and the other person's surplus that allows the self to finalize and complete its image by the end of the poem⁷³.

While it is evident that Aphrodite's surplus casts light onto the subject, by naming and helping it see itself, the poem seems to disclose another, different Sapphic self. It is a different Sappho, not the interlocutor of Aphrodite -s(appho) - but the composer of the poem -S(appho)⁷⁴. There is a division of the Sapphic self. Thus the lyric polyphony in Sappho consists not only in different voices in a poem, but also, and more importantly, in different voices of a self.⁷⁵ Sappho is able to manipulate time by constructing and mixing the time levels in the poem. She has a surplus vision of both interlocutors. She is the other of both Aphrodite and sappho. Sappho sees both Aphrodite as weaver of wiles, the goddess of love who can help and torment, and sappho, as the always tormented by unfulfilled love subject. Her surplus of vision gives the ironic tone of the poem, as she (S) gazes upon the ever-complaining, ever-seeking-for-love sappho. Moreover, the performance of the poem gives the complete picture of self: for only by acting,

⁷² Bakhtin 1986, 138.

⁷³ Morson -Emerson 1990, 184-5.

⁷⁴ The S and s will be used hereafter to signify Sappho as a poet (S) and as an interlocutor (s) respectively.

⁷⁵ Batstone, 2002, 105.

performing can self be seen, only by retelling a story, can self be artistically finalized and completed⁷⁶.

"I am conscious of myself and become myself truly only while revealing myself for another, through another, and with the help of another"⁷⁷.

The poem then, being performed by a group becomes more than a prayer. It becomes a consolation, to lovers whose love is unfulfilled. Moreover, it is both a self-disclosure and a self-consolation from Sappho to sappho.

The Sapphic staging of self, already shown as polyphonic, enables more voices to come on stage, when considering the Homeric allusions. Being performed before an audience well-versed in the Homeric poems, Fr 1 opens up a wider spectrum of voices. Is Sappho's Aphrodite the same as Homer's Aphrodite? Is Sappho Diomedes, or is she Aphrodite, wounded by a mortal in battle?⁷⁸ Sappho inscribes the interlocutors of the poem within the epic tradition, creating richer, even more polyphonic lyric selves. Aphrodite comes down through the sky, leaving the palace of her father, as Hera and Athena do in the *Iliad*⁷⁹. Moreover, her lyric interlocutors speak the language of epic. Sappho's Aphrodite talks about giving and receiving gifts, a well-known *Iliadic* theme. At the same time the perspective seems to change. The lyric chariot is carried not by horses but by sparrows.⁸⁰ The lyric gifts are not going to persuade a warrior to go back to the battle, but a beloved to fall in love. In the *Iliad* women themselves seem to be the

⁷⁶Morson -Emerson 1990, 188

⁷⁷ Bakhtin 1984 ,287.

⁷⁸ On this "multiple identification" see Winkler, 1990, 170 (his term).

⁷⁹ Winkler, 1996,93. *Iliad* 5,719-72.

⁸⁰ Rissman, 1983,9.

gift, the exchanged object. In Sappho though, women, just like Homeric heroes, ensure their friendship through gift-giving.⁸¹ In Homeric vocabulary *φεύγω* and *διώκω* describe warriors chasing each other, not lovers. Thus, in the lyric context epic vocabulary both carries on the allusion to war, pointing once more to the metaphor of love as war, and on the other hand reverses the epic vocabulary, giving it a new lyric twist.

Thus, Fr 1 sets up a lyric perspective for an epic world, as interplay between genre and gender. According to Bakhtin, polyphonic texts allow “multiple speakers present their value centers and their consciousness without hierarchy and using different language styles”, even different genres.⁸² Sappho is using Homer as one of her voices in her poem, re-reading the Homeric poems, in an act of re-writing monologic, epic male discourse as polyphonic female lyric discourse. Reading and re-writing Homer, Sappho takes part in the writing of dialogic discourse. The poem then reenacts a double poetic self, a male and a female self as well as a lyric and an "epic" one, expanding the limits of her prototype⁸³.

v. Sappho's Helen: Fr.16 and 44

If fragment 96 can be seen as Sappho's re-reading Homer, her engagement in Homeric poetics is even more evident in fragment 16. There Sappho discusses Helen's choice in a mythological example that re-works the Iliadic narrative through a much

⁸¹ Wohl, 1998, 65-6.

⁸² Morson-Emerson 1990, 236; 238-9; 241.

⁸³ I follow here Winkler's discussion on fr 1: Sappho has a double consciousness because she knows both the male and the female world, while Homer is limited to the male point of view. Winkler then sees Homer as monologic. Contra, see Peradotto and Nagy in Brahmam, 2002.

different perspective. Is the difference in perspective due to *genre*, the ideology of lyric as opposed to the one of epic, or is due to *gender*, Sapphic fragments pointing to an ideological difference between Sappho's and Homer's worlds? Can Sappho's re-writing of the epic world be seen in antagonistic terms? Does Sappho come back to epic themes in order to subvert them and turn them into lyric or female narratives? Does she privilege her point of view as opposed to the epic one, female discourse over masculine discourse?

Fr 16. 1-20

Οἱ μὲν ἰππῶν στροφήν οἱ δὲ πέδων
οἱ δὲ νάων φαῖς' ἐπ[ι] γᾶν μέλαι[ν]αν
ἔμμεναι κάλλιστον, ἔγω δὲ κῆν' ὅτ-
τω τις ἔραται·
πά[γ]χυν δ' εὖμαρες εὖνετον πόησαι
πάντι τ[ο]ῦτ', ἃ γὰρ πόλιν περικέθοισα
κάλλος ἀνθρώπων Ἑλένα [τὸ]ν ἄνδρα
τὸν []ιστον
καλλ[ί]ποι]ς' ἔβα 'ς Τροίαν πλέοι[σα
κωῦδ[ε] πα[ί]δος οὐδὲ φίλων το[κ]ήων
πά[μ]παν] ἐμνάσθη, ἀλλὰ παράγαγ' αὐτάν
[]σαν
[]αμπτον γὰρ []
[]...κούφως τ[]ση[.]ν
..]με νῦν Ἀνακτορί[ας] ὀνέμεναι-
ς' οὐ] παραιοίτας,
τᾶ]ς <κ>ε βολλοίμαν ἔρατόν τε βᾶμα
κάμάρυγμα λάμπρον ἴδην προσώπω
ἦ τὰ Λύδων ἄρματα κᾶν ὅπλοισι
πεσδομ]άχεντας.

Some people say it is an army of horsemen, others of infantry, still others of ships is the most beautiful thing on the black earth: but, I say, it is whatever one desires. And, it is utterly easy to make this understood to everyone. For, Helen, she who surpassed mankind in beauty by far, abandoning her most noble husband sailed off to Troy. Nor did she think of her child, nor her beloved parents, not at all. But she was led away... lightly...Which now reminded me of Anactoria, now absent. For I would rather see her desired walk and the sparkling beauty of her face than the Lydian chariots and armed infantry.

The poem begins with a priamel, a very hierarchical, rhetorical device. Different ideas about what is the most beautiful thing are produced in ascending order with the

final element being privileged among the others. In Fr 16, popular ideas about what is the most beautiful thing are set forward only to be refuted: but I say, it is whatever you love. The priamel as a devise then is very climactic, hierarchical: going from the least to the most important and concluding with what obviously is the most important of all. The priamel is used, for example, in martial elegy to prove the point that nobody deserves to be the subject matter of poetry but the brave soldier:

οὐτ' ἄν μνησαίμην οὔτ' ἐν λόγῳ ἄνδρα τιθεῖν
οὔτε ποδῶν ἀρετῆς οὔτε παλαιμοσύνης,
οὐδ' εἰ Κυκλώπων μὲν ἔχοι μέγεθος τε βίην τε,
νικῶνι δὲ θεῶν Θρηικίῳ Βορέην,
οὐδ' εἰ Τιθωνοῖο φυὴν χαριέστερος εἴη,
πλουτοίη δὲ Μίδεω καὶ Κινύρεω μάλιον,
οὐδ' εἰ Τανταλίδεω Πέλοπος βασιλεύτερος εἴη,
γλῶσσαν δ' Ἀδρήστου μιλίχόγηρυν ἔχοι,
οὐδ' εἰ πᾶσαν ἔχοι δόξαν πλὴν θούριδος ἀλκῆς· (Tyr. 12, 1-9)

I would not rate a man worth mention or account either for speed of foot or wrestling skill, not even if he had Cyclops' size and strength or would outrun the fierce north wind of Thrace; I would not care if he surpassed Tithonus' looks, or Cinyras' or Midas' famous wealth, or more royal than Pelops and Tantalus or had Adrastus' smooth persuasive tongue or fame for everything except military prowess.⁸⁴

The choice for Tyrtaeus is obvious but it is also a choice directed by his *genre*: martial elegy is all about military excellence and his priamel, mythological characters are refuted in favor of real soldiers that deserve to be the subject matter of poetry. It is interesting that Sappho begins where Tyrtaeus left off: she is comparing soldiers to each other, only to state that it is not soldiers, or war that are the most desirable thing. As she moves away from military elegy her subject matter moves from soldiers to the most famous military expedition, the Trojan war; as far as genre is concerned she also moves from elegy to epic both diction and a mythological example. Sappho uses the phrase ἐπ[ὶ] γὰρ μέλαι[ν]αν to point to a specific poetic genre. Being a well-known formulaic phrase it

⁸⁴ For Tyrtaeus I used both the edition and translation (with minor changes) of M.L. West.

directly points to Homeric epic.⁸⁵ Also, as far as subject matter is concerned, Sappho, goes back to the mythological characters Tyrtaeus refutes by letting Helen be her case study. Helen is a great example not only because she is the most beautiful woman anyone can think of, but also because she left her excellent husband behind and went to Troy not caring about her children or parents. In Helen's priamel then, it was not her husband, or her children or her parents that were the most beautiful thing but it was him, the Trojan, unnamed, prince. It is interesting to notice that Sappho starts talking about the objects of men's desire-army, cavalry, and navy- to continue about Helen as both an object of desire but also desiring subject. Helen is the woman who surpasses everyone in beauty and for that she is desired. But she is also a subject who desires: not her husband, children or parents but someone else. Seeing Helen as a female subject of desire leads to the next stanza where the speaking subject is again such a subject: Helen's story reminds Sappho of Anactoria- her object of desire. It is Anactoria's step in dance not the formation of soldiers, her shiny face not the shining armor that she desires. The end of the poem then, in a ring composition brings back the priamel: some desire the army, some infantry, yet some cavalry; but it is Anactoria, I desire.

I discussed above how the priamel, a common poetic device, changes from Tyrtaeus to Sappho due to the *genre* of the two poems. What about the gender in the two, or better three poems: for if you take the reference to Homeric Helen into account, Sappho's poem is re-working not only martial elegy but also Homeric epic, both examples of masculine discourse. The references to armed soldiers is a reference to masculine ideals, military prowess, bravery, kleos, but also masculine desire : the three

⁸⁵ For the phrase see Il 2, 699; 17,416;22,494; Od 11,365;11,587;19,111. Also in Sappho Fr 1, another "Homeric" fragment.

different male versions of ideal beauty are then first presented, in order to be concluded by her own personal idea of beauty: “I say, beauty is whatever each of us desires”. Beauty is then a personal, subjective desire. There is masculine aesthetics, the aesthetics of war, the aesthetics of epic. There is also another point of view, the feminine lyric aesthetics: beauty is desire. Inscribing the male discourse of war and masculinity in the discourse of desire is then Sappho’s innovative point of view. Military prowess, courage or love for the fatherland, all belong to the male discourse, the way male poetry presented the desire of war. It is nothing but desire; desire for masculinity, the discourse of war is simply the masculine version of erotic discourse.⁸⁶

As a device *priamel* usually compares elements that have something in common. Sappho’s *priamel* seeks what is the *κάλλιστον* among people and answers the question by equating *κάλλος* with desire. The most beautiful is whatever one desires: this is what both Helen and Sappho know, this is what Homer does not. If the poem then is about desire, then Sappho’s privileged final element seem to be not confining, limiting one’s choice, as the *priamel* usually does. In Tyrtaeus’ poem for example the subject matter of poetry is limited to military excellence, while all others- athletic, rhetoric, monetary, physical- are less, if at all important. In Sappho on the other hand, the final element does not limit but expands one’s choice. The final element, whatever one desire is all encompassing: one’s desire does contain armies, cavalry, infantry, navy, beautiful women, both male and female desires. This is a very anti-hierarchical manipulation of a typically hierarchical rhetorical device. Sappho’s *priamel* is not a catalogue in ascending order: it is an all encompassing circle, a ring composition as the structure of the poem

⁸⁶ Similarly in Winkler, 1996, 97 “it is clear to Sappho that all men are in love with masculinity and all epic poets are in love with military prowess”.

reveals. The mentality of masculine discourse, as is evident in both elegy and Homeric epic leads to a narrow set of options that gives way to Sappho's more dialogic possibility.

Jack Winkler in his "Gardens of Nymphs" uses the idea of double circle to talk about Sappho's consciousness: hers is a larger circle enclosing that of Homer's.⁸⁷ Winkler reads fragment 1 as a case study for Sappho's re-reading the Homeric scene between Aphrodite and Diomedes. He then argues that Sapphic poetry is not, contrary to common belief, confined in a narrower circle of feminine interests but it is more expansive because her poetry re-reads and therefore incorporates masculine interests. In Winkler's discussion the fact that Sappho identifies herself not only with feminine but also masculine Homeric characters represents Sappho's capability of adopting multiple points of view in a single poem.⁸⁸ Fragment 16 then can be also seen not only as a re-reading of masculine discourse but also as an attempt to expand the horizons of its limited viewpoint: even if one does not read οἱ μὲν ... οἱ δὲ ... οἱ δὲ... as masculine but rather as generic, some not necessarily men, the three first elements of the priamel are limiting the idea of desire to war, while the fourth, Sapphic, element expands it to whatever one desires. Sappho's circle of desire then is double, a concentric circle that it encompasses the three aforementioned elements. At the same time there is no hierarchy, but a dialogue between the elements, a dialogue of desire. A desire which is not one, a polyphonic desire that includes both masculine and feminine discourse emphasized by the non gender specific ὅττω τις.

Sappho begins the poem with a discussion of κάλλος. In an attempt to answer the question what is the most beautiful thing in the world, she first presents a triple version

⁸⁷ Winkler 1996, 96.

⁸⁸ Winkler, 1996, 94.

of beauty: army of horsemen, infantry or ships. The triple οἱ genderizes the voice of people who think troops of soldiers are the most beautiful thing. The question of aesthetics is then for Sappho closely tied to genre and gender.

The version of male aesthetics is then at the same time the epic version of the Homeric tradition. In Book 3 Paris is getting ready for battle and the poet dedicates ten lines in description of his armor, a description used again for Patroclus in book 16.⁸⁹ But these male aesthetics go beyond the limitations of genre. Denys Page, in his classic *Sappho and Alcaeus*, notes that Alcaeus follows the same order of description of the armor that is found in *Iliad*⁹⁰ devoting Fr 140 to the description of a hall full of armor: shining bronze arms fill the room exuding masculinity and warlike sentiments. After 12 lines of armor description Alcaeus concludes: “These we have been unable to forget, ever since we first undertook this task”.⁹¹ It is this aesthetics of masculinity as presented

⁸⁹ Il 3, 328-38 (Paris) and 16, 130ff (for Patroclus). For armor see Page, 1955, 211-223.

αὐτὰρ ὃ γ' ἄμφ' ὥμοισιν ἐδύσετο τεύχεα καλὰ
 δῖος Ἀλέξανδρος Ἑλένης πόσις ἠὲ κόμοιο.
 κνημίδας μὲν πρῶτα περὶ κνήμησιν ἔθηκε
 καλὰς, ἀργυρέοισιν ἐπισφυρίοις ἀραρυίας·
 δεύτερον αὖ θώρηκα περὶ στήθεσσι δύνεν
 οἷο κασιγνήτιο Λυκάονος· ἤρμοσε δ' αὐτῷ.
 ἄμφι δ' ἄρ' ὥμοισιν βάλετο ξίφος ἀργυρόηλον
 χάλκεον, αὐτὰρ ἔπειτα σάκος μέγα τε στιβαρόν τε·
 κρατὶ δ' ἐπ' ἰφθίμῳ κυνέην εὐτυκτον ἔθηκεν
 ἵππουριν· δεινὸν δὲ λόφος καθύπερθεν ἔνευεν·
 εἴλετο δ' ἄλκιμον ἔγχος, ὃ οἱ παλάμηφιν ἀρήρει.

⁹⁰ Page, 1955, 212.

⁹¹ Alcaeus 140.

μαρμαίρει δὲ μέγας δόμος χάλκῳ, παῖσα δ' ἄρηι κεκόσμη-
 ται στέγα
 λάμπραισιν κυνίαισι, κατ' τῶν λεῦκοι κατέπερθεν ἵππιοι λόφοι
 νεύοισιν, κεφάλαισιν ἄνδρων ἀγάλματα· χάλκῳ δὲ πασ-
 σάλοις
 κρύπτοισιν περικείμεναι λάμπραι κνάμιδες, ἄρκος ἰσχύρῳ
 βέλεος,
 θόρρακές τε νέω λίνῳ κόιλαι τε κατ' ἄσπιδες βεβλήμεναι·
 παρ δὲ Χαλκίδικαι σπάθαι, παρ δὲ ζώματα πόλλα καὶ
 κυπάσσιδες.
 τῶν οὐκ ἔστι λάθεσθ' ἐπεὶ δὴ πρῶτισθ' ὑπὸ ἔργον ἔσταμεν
 τόδε.

in the Alcaean and Homeric male discourse that Sappho is alluding to, trying to establish the difference between them and her female aesthetics. The shining armor and the men unable to forget the war are then contrasted with the Sapphic idea of beauty and what she is unable to forget and at the same time with Helen's idea of beauty and her forgetfulness.

The first stanza problematizes the idea of beauty: "Some say, some say, some say, but I say..." Beauty is certainly not the same for everybody. The three different male versions of ideal beauty are then first presented, in order to be concluded by her own personal all encompassing idea of beauty: "I say, beauty is whatever each of us desires". Beauty is then a personal, subjective desire. Here is masculine aesthetics, the aesthetics of war, the aesthetics of epic. There is also another point of view, the feminine lyric aesthetics: beauty is desire. Inscripting the male discourse of war and masculinity in the discourse of desire is then Sappho's innovative point of view. Military prowess, courage or love for the fatherland, all belong to the male discourse, the way male poetry presented the desire of war. Sappho then strips this discourse of all pretenses. It is nothing but desire; desire for masculinity, the discourse of war is simply the masculine version of erotic discourse.

Sappho's poem then gives a comprehensive account by supplying the feminine version of erotic desire. When talking about Helen, Sappho both follows and separates herself from the poetic tradition in both speaking the language of epic and at the same time translating it to her own. According to the epic point of view, Helen is the embodiment of beauty and the meeting point of war and beauty: her beauty is notorious as the cause of war. Moreover she is always the beautiful object of erotic desire. In

Sappho though Helen is not the object of erotic desire but the subject. What is important for Sappho is to present not the beautiful object for everyone to see but Helen's personal idea of desire.⁹² Helen is then acting upon her own judgment disclosing her personal version of what beauty is. Not children, husband or parents, but a subjective desire. Helen is not following the masculine code of values, which prescribes what is acceptably desirable for women. She is choosing and following her own desire. In Sappho it is not the name of her lover that is important. She even omits the names of Paris or Menelaus altogether emphasizing not the male but the female subjectivity. It is Helen as a subject and the active pursuit of Helen's desire, which proves her point.

Sappho's Helen refuses to comply with the rules of masculine discourse and escapes her epic persona, becoming a lyric Helen. For Sappho then, Helen is the embodiment of this translation, a meta-phora, which Sappho represents as a transfer from male to female discourse. Being in the middle of her poem, Helen, herself moving from the epic-masculine system of values to her own personal space dominated by her own desire, becomes the poetic means of transition from male to female discourse, from the Homeric or Alcaean to Sapphic.

The idea of transition is actually the common denominator between Helen and Anactoria. It is probably the way that Helen moved from Sparta to Troy (κούρως) that triggers Sappho's memory and reminds her of the departed friend. In *Iliad* 3 the elderly Trojans, seeing Helen coming to the tower, admit that she is worthy for all their suffering. In *Agamemnon*, Helen is described to flee Sparta in the same way, using the

⁹² For Helen as both viewer- subject and viewed-object see Worman 167-169. For Worman she is both an active pursuer of beauty and the object of Aphrodite's persuasive power.

synonym *ρίμφα*, with an emphasis to her step.⁹³ Anactoria's step is now remembered as generating desire (*ἔρατόν βᾶμα*), the shining beauty of her face is evoked through memory. It is now Sappho's voice, stating what beauty is for her. According to Sappho, the ideal embodiment of beauty is Anactoria, a now missing friend, with a beauty as legendary as Helen. The analogy between the two women is clear: both beautiful, both departed, both beauties captured by poetry.

Following the Bakhtinian terminology then, in Fr 16, Sappho is presenting the idea of desire and beauty as polyphonic and dialogic -not only a dialogue of genres, epic and lyric, or discourses, masculine and feminine. First, comes the idea of beauty, as a desire for war, then an epic idea of beauty as seen in Helen's version, and finally the own, all encompassing lyric version. The Sapphic voice joins the chorus of the multiple points of view, of the many voices that the poem stages. Her voice however is one of many, not the prevailing one. This is exactly what makes the poem dialogic: many voices without hierarchy. Given though that Sappho's lyric ideology is different that the epic, how can those ideologies be presented without hierarchies? Julia Kristeva, discussing the ideology of polyphony, explains that:

“The polyphonic text has no ideology of its own. It is an apparatus for exposing and exhausting the ideologies in their confrontation”⁹⁴

Sappho then shows the difference between epic and lyric idea of desire, staging a confrontation of ideologies emphasized by the military vocabulary. On one hand, epic discourse in which desire equals masculinity through warfare. In the Sapphic poem, Anactoria, although she left is not the cause of a war. On the contrary the speaking

⁹³ Il 3,154-8. Aesch. Ag. 407-8. *βεβάκει ρίμφα διὰ /πυλᾶν ἄτλητα τλᾶσα*.

⁹⁴ Kristeva, 1973,114.

person, Sappho, finding herself literally between thousands of soldiers, she denies the masculine idea of owning desire, while naming her object of desire. But there is no wish for taking back what is lost. Anactoria is the object for her desire but at the same time she is a subject of desire: seen as such, as subject whose personal idea of beauty might have been different from Sappho's opens up a variety of choices. Did Anactoria leave because she was seeking her own desire? Does Sappho then mean it to be a self-consolation poem? Anactoria's desire is as valid, as important as my desire? At the end, it is all about whatever someone desires. Sappho, once more, states her indifference for hierarchies, ownership and monologism opening up space and time reading an unfixed and unfixable fe(male) desire.

vi. Exchanging women: male vs. female discourse in Sappho and Alcaeus

The idea of ownership as a basis of the masculine value system is easily detected not only in epic, but also in lyric male-authored texts. The idea of owning is usually closely connecting with exchanging. Owning always gives the owner the right to exchange his property. The movement of the object from one man to another defines their subjectivity as well as their relationship. Gift changing in *Iliad* 6, for example, establishes the renewed friendship between Glaucus and Diomedes.⁹⁵ Women seem in this context to “play the role of precious objects”⁹⁶ and to be “the supreme gift among

⁹⁵ Wohl 1998, 62.

⁹⁶ Vernant 1980, 49.

those which can only be obtained as reciprocal gifts”.⁹⁷ The movement of the female object from one man to another defines the two men as subjects, a giver and a receiver, but on the other hand defines woman as an object of exchange.⁹⁸ Helen then can be seen as such in the context of the aforementioned value system. Being exchanged from Tyndareus to Menelaus -after an *agon* between suitors, Helen is taken from Paris and Menelaus fights to get his prize-bride back.⁹⁹ The *Iliad* revolves around another *agon* to take Helen back. Helen herself is often seen as a possession, regularly closely connected with the booty of war.¹⁰⁰ Presenting the same story, as the frame for the description of Peleus and Thetis, Alcaeus paradigmatically exploits the dynamics of this value system, engaging himself in a discourse similar to the Homeric.¹⁰¹

Alcaeus 42¹⁰²

ὥς λόγος κάκων ἄ[
 Περράμω<ι> καὶ παῖσ[ι
 ἐκ σέθεν πίκρον, π[
 Ἴλιον ἴραν.
 οὐ τεαύταν Αἰακίδαι[σ
 πάντας ἐς γάμον μάκ[αρασ καλέσσαισ
 ἄγετ' ἐκ Νή[ρ]ηος ἔλων [μελλάθρων
 πάρθενον ἄβραν
 ἐς δόμον Χέρρωνος· ἔλ[υσε δ'
 ζῶμα παρθένω[ι]· φιλο[τας δ'

⁹⁷ Morris, 1986, 8, quoting Lévi-Strauss. For women as gifts to be exchanged see *Iliad* 9.263; 11.123; 19.194.

⁹⁸ Wohl, 1989, 29.

⁹⁹ For marriage exchange as an *agon* see Wohl, 1983, xiii ff

¹⁰⁰ Thus the formulaic Ελένην καὶ κτήματα “Helen and possessions”. *Iliad* 3, 281-2. εἰ μὲν κεν Μενέλαον Ἀλέξανδρος καταπέφνη / αὐτὸς ἔπειθ' Ἑλένην ἐχέτω καὶ κτήματα πάντα. Also 3,285;3, 458;7,350;7,401; 22,114; See Wohl, 1983, 84.

¹⁰¹ Alcaeus 42. Also Ibykos 1.

¹⁰² For Alcaeus I am using the edition of Liberman (who is usually in agreement with E. M. Voigt's older one). Page's edition is also taken under consideration mainly for its valuable although ample additions.

Πήλεος καὶ Νηρεΐδων ἀρίστ[ας
ἐς δ' ἐνίαυτον
παῖδα γέννατ' αἰμιθέων [
ὄλβιον ξάνθαν ἐλάτη[ρα πώλων,
οἱ δ' ἀπώλοντ' ἀμφ' Ἐλέναι
καὶ πόλις αὖτων.

As the story goes, because of your evil deeds, Helen, bitter anguish came once to Priam and his children from you and Zeus destroyed holy Troy with fire. No, she was not a woman of the same kind, she who the righteous son of Aeacus, inviting all the blessed gods to wedding, married, taking her from the palace of Nereus, a frail maiden, toward the house of Chiron. And he loosened the chaste girdle of the maiden, and the love of Peleus and the best of the daughters of Nereus flourished, and at the same year she gave birth to a son, the best of the demigods, blessed rider of chestnut horses. But they perished because of Helen -both the Phrygians and their city.

The poem begins with Alcaeus stating that his poetic discourse conforms to the dominant masculine discourse.¹⁰³ He is going to be a part of the narrative of a dominant ideology (λόγος) that blames Helen for the destruction of Troy by Zeus. Alcaeus is going to conclude his narrative by blaming Helen one more time. However, the main body of his poem refers to another woman. Alcaeus' poem polarizes an antithesis of feminine behavior: on one hand, the example to be avoided, Helen, and on the other, the bride of Peleus and mother of Achilles, the paradigm of the woman *par excellence*.

The woman, unnamed from the beginning to the end, whereas Helen is named twice, is the exemplary woman, exchanged from her father to her husband in order to bear legitimate children and carry along the patriarchal line. The daughter of Nereus is becoming the wife of Peleus and the mother of Achilles.¹⁰⁴ Thetis is everything Helen is not. She does not act, does not choose. She is led from the one household to another, as a

¹⁰³ In Kurke 1992, 100, marriage is identified with the world of men “where the bride is exchanged as a precious object between two men and the household they represent”.

¹⁰⁴ It is actually the case that both Peleus and Thetis are named by patronymics. For the significance of the “name of the Father” in male ideology of exchange women based on Marx (and Lacan), see Irigaray 1985, 173.

frail, passive maiden, she soon becomes a mother. Being the daughter then a bride and finally a mother, she fulfills all the requirements ascribed to women. Helen, on the other hand, destroys Troy, abandons her husband and child, follows her lover, and chooses to live in an illegitimate, childless union. Alcaeus then, presents the two possible models of female behavior: the woman who conforms to patriarchal ideology and the one who does not, bringing destruction to innocent victims.

According to Irigaray, male discourse is based on the ideology of women as exchanged objects between masculine subjects. Passing from fathers to husbands, women do not have a right to their own desire; the economy of exchange -of desire- is a man's business.¹⁰⁵ It is then exactly this ideology that Alcaeus' poem reinforces by showing the marriage as an exchange between men and praising Thetis' denied desire by juxtaposing her desired silence with Helen's active, therefore shameful, pursuit.

Alcaeus returns to Helen in Fr 283. There he describes Helen as maddened (ἐκμάνεισα) following Paris from Sparta to Troy, abandoning her husband and children. The description of Alcaeus resembles Sappho's description in Fr 16.¹⁰⁶ In Alcaeus

¹⁰⁵ Irigaray 1985, 177.

¹⁰⁶ Alcaeus 283
 καιν[.]ων.υν[]ν[
 ωνεον.ππ.[]
 κάλενας ἐν στήθ[ε]σιν [ἐ]πτ[ό]αισ-
 θῦμον Ἀργείας Τροΐω δ[.]αν[
 ἐκμάνεισα ξ[ε.]ναπάτα πιπ[
 ἔσπετο νῶι,
 παῖδά τ' ἐν δόμ[ο]ισι λίποις[
 κᾶνδρος εὔστρωτον [λ]έχος .[
 πεῖθ' ἔρωι θῦμο[
 []δαδ[.]στε
 []πιε..μανι[
 [κ]ασιγνήτων πόλεσσ[.
 [.]έχει Τρώων πεδίω δα[
 ἔν]νεκα κήνας,
 πόλ]λα δ' ἄρματ' ἐν κονίαισι[

though, Helen is maddened, totally irrational, following Paris after being deceived by Paris and persuaded by Aphrodite. The fragment ends with another phrase of blame against Helen (ἐννεκα κήνας,) and a description of a bloody war scene of Troy, full of dusty chariots and killed soldiers (ἄρματ' ἐν κονίαισι, φόνω).

According to Irigaray's understanding, female discourse creates an *aporia*, exactly because it does not conform to, or simply differs from male discourse. The feminine is then “envisaged as a limit of rationality itself, raising a question, even a crisis.”¹⁰⁷ Helen's voice then, is simply irrational, since her choice does not conform to the wishes of the male discourse. This Helen is closer to the epic Helen, the self-blaming Helen. In Sappho, Helen's decision is rational, based on her personal opinion on what beauty is. Her judgment is based upon her idea of beauty, which is different from other people's. Sappho then dissociates rationality from passion. Eros does not make people irrational; it is different kind of rationality. However, Sappho's logical coherent, determined Helen is nothing like Alcaeus' Helen. The latter preserves and continues the epic ideology while the former attempts to resolve the *aporia*, not by conforming to the traditional idea of rationality but by creating a new female rationality.

Sappho's interest in epic is further pursued with Fr 44. The poem is composed in dactylic meter, although not dactylic hexameter and shares certain features of the epic dialect.¹⁰⁸ More importantly, Sappho one more time demonstrates her innovative look at epic material. Choosing a subject matter that does not appear in—at least extant- epic

[].εν, πό[λ]λοι δ' ἐλίκωπε[ς]
[]οι..[]νοντο φόνω δ.[

¹⁰⁷ Irigaray 1985, 149.

¹⁰⁸ Page 1955, 65 refers to the “abnormalities” in meter and diction.

cycle she gives her own version of epic. Sappho's epic is not the bloody battles, men fighting for military prowess or because of an unfaithful woman. Subtly alluding to *Iliad* 6, for some an anti-epic scene between Hector and Andromache, Sappho does not focus on their last *homilia* followed by their ultimate separation, but the beginning of their life together. Sappho then uses characters the audience would know from the epic cycle in different roles. With the sound of epic still in their ears though, the audience again is met with a polyphony of voices. The epic voice meets the lyric, masculine discourse meets the feminine. Once more Sappho's poem is both polyphonic and utterly feminine:

Κυπρο[-22-] ας·
κᾶρυξ ἦλθε θε[-10- .]ελε[...].θεις
Ἰδαος ταδεκα...φ[...].ις τάχυσ ἄγγελος
< “ >
τάς τ' ἄλλας Ἀσίας [.].δε.αν κλέος ἄφθιτον·
Ἑκτωρ καὶ συνέταιρ[ο]ι ἄγοις' ἐλικώπιδα
Θήβας ἐξ ἱέρας Πλακίας τ' ἀπ' [ἄ]ν<ν>άω
ἄβραν Ἀνδρομάχαν ἐνὶ ναῦσιν ἐπ' ἄλμυρον
πόντον· πόλλα δ' [ἐλί]γματα χρύσια κᾶμματα
πορφύρ[α] καταὔτ[με]να, ποίκιλ' ἀθύρματα,
ἀργύρα τ' ἀνάρ[ι]θμα [ποτή]ρ[ια] κἀλέφαις”.
ὥς εἶπ'· ὀτραλέως δ' ἀνόρουσε πάτ[η]ρ φίλος·
φάμα δ' ἦλθε κατὰ πτόλιν εὐρύχορον φίλοις.
αὐτικ' Ἰλιάδαι κατίναι[ς] ὑπ' ἐντρόχοις
ἄγον αἰμιόνοις, ἐπ[έ]βαινε δὲ παῖς ὄχλος
γυναικῶν τ' ἅμα παρθενικά[ν] τ[...]. cφύρων,
χῶρις δ' αὖ Περάμοιο θυγ[α]τρ[ε]ς [
ἵππ[οις] δ' ἄνδρες ὑπαγον ὑπ' ἄρ[ματα]
π[]ε[]ς ἡίθεοι, μεγάλω[ς]τι δ[
δ[] . Ανιοχοι φ[.....] [
π[]ξ[α] . ο[
< desunt aliquot versus >
ἵκελοι θεοί[ς]
] ἄγνον ἀολίε
ὄρματα[]νον ἐς Ἰλιο[ν]
αὐλός δ' ἀδυ[μ]έλης []τ' ὀνεμίγνυ[το]
καὶ ψ[ό]φο[ς] κ[ροτάλ]ων []ως δ' ἄρα πάρ[θενοι]
ἄειδον μέλος ἄγν[ον] ἵκα]νε δ' ἐς αἰθ[ερα]

ἄχῳ θεεπεσία γελ[
 πάντῃ δ' ἦς κατ' ὁδο[
 κράτῃρες φιάλαι τ' ὅ[...υεδε[...εακ[...]
 μύρρα καὶ κασία λίβανός τ' ὀνυμείχυντο
 γυναῖκες δ' ἐλέλυδον ὅσαι προγενέστερα[ι
 πάντες δ' ἄνδρες ἐπήρατον ἵαχον ὄρθιον
 Πάον' ὀνκαλέοντες ἐκάβωλον ἐὺλύραν,
 ὕμνην δ' Ἑκτορα κ' Ἀνδρομάχαν θεοεικέλο[ις.

Cyprus... Idaeus the herald came, a swift messenger, and spoke those words... and of the rest of the Asia undying fame. Hector and his friends are bringing the bright-eyed, lovely Andromache from holy Thebes and Plakia in the ships sailing the salty sea. And there are many bracelets and perfumed purple dresses, ornate trinkets, countless silver and cups and ivory. Thus he spoke. And his father excited leapt off his throne. And the news spread to the friend in the wide city. At once, the sons of Troy yoked the mules to the well-wheeled carriages, and the whole crowd of women and young maidens with fair ankles went on them. And the daughters of Priam rode separately and men yoked the horses to chariots...similar to gods...similar to gods...holy song.... rose in Troy. Sweet pipe mingled with lyre and the sound of the castanets, and maidens sung clearly a holy choral song, and the beautiful sound reached the sky...and everywhere in the streets...bowls and cups and cassia and myrrh and frankincense were mingled. And older women cried out joyfully and all men raised a loud cry calling Apollo Paeon, the Archer, the player of lyre praising Hector and Andromache, similar to gods.

Sappho's rewriting of epic is then both a re-writing of subject matter and epic-masculine ideology. Sappho's description of Troy is not Homeric. The Homeric Troy is the city of war, the city within the walls. In Sappho it is a city of peace, a city opening its walls for the bride and the groom to enter. There are no arms, soldiers and chariots, no death. Priam does not mourn for his son, Andromache does not lament Hector. There are no descriptions of chariots or battles, and the herald brings happy news, the news of an up-coming wedding not a funeral. The carriages are full of gifts for Troy, not booty of war coming out of Troy. The Sapphic poem is then using epic language, its motifs, even its characters to a different effect, in order to re-write epic in a totally feminine way.

The male aesthetics of war is the first to be reversed. There is no catalogue of war booty; cattle, women, or armor; this is an un-Homeric catalogue of gifts. There is jewelry, drinking cups, ivory, purple cloths, objects of peace, not war. Although the

catalogue itself is an epic feature, its subject is reversed by lyric. It is not a catalogue of ships, but a catalogue of wedding gifts.

Sappho's insistence on the idea of immortality is important in this poem. Three times mortals are described as "equal" or "similar to gods"¹⁰⁹ First young men, then probably Trojans in general, and finally Hector and Andromache. The emphasis on the resemblance to gods, alluding to the idea of immortality differs from the Homeric depiction of Trojans, Hector and Andromache. In book 6, which the audience probably had in mind when listening to this poem, presents the couple as close to death as possible. Hector himself refers to his death; Andromache refers to her destiny after Hector's death. Finally, the *homilia* is concluded with a lament, when Andromache laments her still alive husband¹¹⁰.

The difference between the two passages then becomes clear. The female discourse of wedding songs opposed to the male discourse of war and death. The fragment describes Andromache's wedding day probably picking up to a little reference in Homer. In book 22 Andromache faints upon hearing the news of Hector's death.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ ἡίθεοι (18), ἵκελοι θέοις (21), θεοεικέλο[ις (34)

¹¹⁰ Π 6, 495-502.

ἄλοχος δὲ φίλῃ οἶκον δὲ βεβήκει
ἐντροπαλιζομένη, θαλερὸν κατὰ δάκρυ χέουσα.
αἶψα δ' ἔπειθ' ἵκανε δόμους εὖ ναιετάοντας
Ἕκτορος ἀνδροφόνιοι, κιχήσατο δ' ἐνδοθι πολλὰς
ἀμφιπόλους, τῆσιν δὲ γόον πάσῃσιν ἐνῶρσεν.
αἶ μὲν ἔτι ζῶν γόον Ἕκτορα ᾧ ἐνὶ οἴκῳ·
οὐ γάρ μιν ἔτ' ἔφαντο ὑπότροπον ἐκ πολέμοιο
ἵξεσθαι προφυγόντα μένος καὶ χεῖρας Ἀχαιῶν.

¹¹¹ Π. 466-11.

τὴν δὲ κατ' ὀφθαλμῶν ἐρεβεννὴ νύξ ἐκάλυψεν,
ἦριπε δ' ἐξοπίσω, ἀπὸ δὲ ψυχὴν ἐκάπυσσε.
τῆλε δ' ἀπὸ κρατὸς βάλε δέσματα σιγαλόεντα,
ἄμπυκα κεκρύφαλόν τε ἰδὲ πλεκτὴν ἀναδέσμην
κρήδεμνόν θ', ὃ τά οἱ δῶκε χρυσὴ Ἀφροδίτη

While collapsing the veil she was wearing at her wedding day falls. Sappho then explores the Iliadic reference focusing on Andromache as a bride, not as a widow. Instead of the inversion of a wedding, with the veil falling on the ground denoting the end of the marriage, Sappho chooses to present a god-like, immortalized couple and a wedding song. The song, in a sharp contrast with the Iliadic lament, fills the end of the poem. The description of the song recalls one more time, feminine discourse reversing the epic world of death. It is a seemingly Homeric world but on a closer look there is nothing Homeric about it.¹¹²

Feminine discourse in Sappho's song is again detected as an open-ended, sensual language that defies dichotomy and categorization. In Sappho, all senses seem to be engaged in the description of the festivities. Smell, sound, and vision are mingled in a way that celebrates fusion.¹¹³ Indeed, all senses seem to be mingled¹¹⁴: the sounds mingle, the smells mingle, when the crowd mingles, women and men singing together and so does the wine in the mixing bowls. Even Apollo's names are all called together. Apollo is called in their song by all his epithets: he is Paeon, archer and lyre player. Categories then are fused, in this ecstatic description of a wedding ceremony, nothing is static, everything is moving, both metaphorically and literally, since Hector and

ἤματι τῷ ὅτε μιν κορυθαίολος ἡγάγεθ' Ἐκτῶρ
ἐκ δόμου Ἡετίωνοςί

¹¹² Page 1955, 71, esp n.2-5. notes that the catalogue of objects is certainly not Homeric. The words for incense, castanets, ivory, bracelets, cups etc do not occur in Homer.

¹¹³ Breaking the categories and schemas of the male dominant discourse is for Irigaray the prerequisite for female discourse, 1985, 212 "how can we speak as to escape from their schemas, distinctions, oppositions."

¹¹⁴ It is the actual word for mingling that appears twice in the poem *ὀνεμίχυντο*, *ὀνεμίγνυ[το]*. Also note that the different spelling of the same verb points to a further mingling of dialects, more obvious to the ancient listener than the modern reader.

Andromache and the crowd is moving in carriages and chariots. It is the same quality of woman, in Irigaray's description, that Sappho's language reenacts:

"You remain in flux, not congealing or solidifying. What will make that current flow into words? It is multiple, devoid of meanings, simple qualities"¹¹⁵

Not only does Sapphic language then transform epic language into feminine discourse, but it also challenges male ideology employing the description of a wedding, usually used to reinforce such an ideology. It is Alcaeus' description of the wedding of Peleus and Thetis, discussed above, that presents an exemplary male description of a wedding as exchange of women between men. In Sappho, a similar description celebrates the feminine point of view, female language and feminine voice. A polyphonic, fused voice, a sensual celebration, a fusion of smells, sounds and images.

Sappho's Homeric fragments visibly disclose the differences between male and female value systems, showing both sides of Helen's story: the epic one but also including her own personal side of the story, in a polyphonic female discourse where Helen's voice is heard next to Sappho's voice, without disregarding Homer's voice. This "double ideology" points once more to the polyphonic quality of Sapphic poetry. Thus, instead of ascribing any kind of ideology to Sapphic poetry, any kind of imitation or failed imitation of the male world, as Svenbro would suggest¹¹⁶, it is, I argue, more poignant to see Sapphic poetry as an arena not of antagonism, but discussion and evaluation of ideologies, as Kristeva suggests. Thus, the fragments point not only to fragmented selves and voices but also to fragmented ideologies.

¹¹⁵ Irigaray 1985, 215.

¹¹⁶ Svenbro 1975, 49.

vii. Voices *in* and *as* fragments: Sappho 31 and Catullus 51.

As for the “voice” it is not the *phoné* which comes down to us from Greek texts and is identical to the speaker: it is a disembodied *phoné* which has lost its truth and is anxious about the locale of its emission: the place of the speaking subject.

-Julia Kristeva, *The ruin of a Poetics*

Fr. 31

Φαίνεται μοι κῆνος ἴσος θεοῖσιν
ἔμμεν' ὄνῃρ, ὅστις ἐνάντιός τοι
ἰσδάνει καὶ πλάσιον ἄδῃ φωνεί-
σας ὑπακούει
καὶ γελαίσας ἡμέροεν, τό μ' ἦ μὰν
καρδίαν ἐν στήθεσιν ἐπτόαισεν,
ὥς γὰρ <ἔς> σ' ἴδω βρόχε' ὥς με φώναι-
σ' οὐδ' ἐν ἔτ' εἴκει,
ἀλλὰ † καμ† μὲν γλῶσσαι †ἔαγε† λέπτον
δ' αὐτικά χρωὶ πῦρ ὑπαδεδρόμηκεν,
ὀππάτεσσι δ' οὐδ' ἐν ὄρημ', ἐπιρρόμ-
βεισι δ' ἄκουαι,
†έκαδε †μ' ἵδρως ψῦχος κακχέεται τρόμος δὲ
παῖσαν ἄγρει, χλωροτέρα δὲ ποίαι
ἔμμι, τεθνάκην δ' ὀλίγω 'πιδεύης
φαίνομ' ἔμ' αὖται·
ἀλλὰ πᾶν τόλματον ἐπεὶ †καὶ πένητα†

He seems to me equal to gods, this man who sits opposite you and listens to your sweet voice and your lovely laughter; but my heart, honestly, flutters in my chest, the time I look at you I cannot speak any longer, but my tongue breaks, at once fire runs through my skin, my eyes cannot see, my ears ring, cold sweat pours from me, terror seizes me, totally, I am more pale than grass and it seems to me that I am close to death. But everything must be endured, for even the poor...

The staging of this poem involves three persons, one more time: a male person is identified: he is similar to gods, and the object of another person's affection, a female speaking, and laughing, subject, and a third female part, uttering the *phoné* of the speaking subject.

The speaking subject, the lyric I is totally shattered, presented in pieces. On the one hand, every part of the speaker's body is broken: the heart is trembling, fire flows under the skin, the tongue is in pieces, eyes cannot see, ringing ears cannot hear, a tremble seizes the body: all senses are dysfunctional: vision, hearing, speech: all vital signs declining. It is nothing but a person close to death; it is an image of an almost dead person. On the other hand, totally contrasting the lyric I are a godlike person sitting across, facing the third, speaking, subject who speaks, laughs, is heard and seen. The self is presented in pieces but almost magically also as a whole: in a mirror image the self and its opposite: a speaking, laughing, beautiful, loved, desired, immortal self and a silent, pale, undesired, dying other.

However the dying, dysfunctional self, is more powerful than it seems. For, it is in this critical point the self actually sees itself: it is the moment of self-mirroring, of self-consciousness: This self is able to see both the self and the other(s). Compared to the happy couple, two people seeing each other, only, this self's vision is more privileged. It sees what other people cannot see. However shattered and disparate this self is, it is nevertheless a self that sees itself, finding itself, where it cannot be. In a critical point, self emerges: this self is not only disparate because of its dysfunctionality. It is also a divided self who is both disabled (because of the loss of all senses) but, at the same time, able for poetic composition. For this shattered, broken self is uttering a very accurate description of erotic pathology. The self in 31 has two different voices: a voice uttering incapability and another uttering capability. What kind of self is that?

It is a lyric polyphonic self, I suggest. Using the Bakhtinian categories, the I for self is here: the subject is aware of how she looks and feels. The subject is also capable

to comment her situation, to encourage the self (with the last extant line of the poem). She is also capable of seeing the other: how he and she appear to her. What about the I for others, though?

It is this form of otherness, I suggest, that the performance of the poem supplies. Through this performance, the shattered lyric self, is uttered by many voices, and heard by many ears. Self appears to others, and the third category is completed, self is shown at its complete form. Composing the poem is not the same. As Bakhtin suggests, seeing the self in the mirror is not finding the *I for others*: it is just impersonating such another: “My body, my voice cannot be the same form, as it is for someone else. You cannot be a real other”¹¹⁷. It is only through performance though that the other appears, exercising its surplus vision on the self. It is the moment of performance in which what could not be seen before is seen by the others, and the image of self is completed. The function described here is artistic; for the surplus of the audience allows it to create an image of the speaking I, to create a finalizing environment in which the I is located for the audience. It is the same function of an author, or a poet relating to her/his hero, since she/he provides an image for the hero¹¹⁸. The performance then works as the mirror in which self is seen as complete. The poet can see the poem as other, the speaking I can hear the voice as other, and the audience can see the complete image and hear the whole spectrum of polyphony this poem orchestrates.

Is there room for another self in this poem? Is there room for more voices in this polyphonic lyric choir? Catullus seems to think so. For he thinks that the choir can be

¹¹⁷ Morson -Emerson 1990, 180.

¹¹⁸ Morson -Emerson 1990, 185.

not only larger but also bilingual: so, he "translates" the poem in Latin, adding more voices, remembering, recomposing, and at the same time performing the Sapphic poem:

Poem LI

Ille mi par esse deo videtur,
ille, si fas est, superare divos,
qui sedens adversus identidem te
spectat et audit
dulce ridentem, misero quod omnes
eripit sensus mihi: nam simul te,
Lesbia, aspexi, nihil est super mi
lingua sed torpet, tenuis sub artus
flamma demanat, sonitu suo
tintinant aures geminae, teguntur
lumina nocte.
otium, Catulle, tibi molestumst:
otio exsultas nimiumque gestis:
otium et reges prius et beatas
perdidit urbes.

He seems to me equal to gods that man- if It is permitted to say- he surpasses the gods, who sits opposite to you and gazes at you over and over and hears you laughing sweetly- miserable me, that snatches away all my senses: for the minute I set my eyes upon you, Lesbia, nothing is left in me; my tongue is numb, a subtle flame runs through my limbs, both my ears resound their own sound, my eyes are covered by night. Leisure, Catullus, will be the ruin of you. In leisure you rejoice and desire it too much. Leisure has destroyed before kings and blessed cities.

There is of course a poetic dialogue taking place: a poetic dialogue between two poets of the same genre: Catullus, talking to Sappho, defines himself in poetic terms: he actually imitates her voice, he takes her words, and he makes her poetry his. He talks to her not only metaphorically but also literally: he addresses the woman from Lesbos with her own words, and she answers back.¹¹⁹

The resemblance between the two poems is, I think, rather obvious. What I am more interested in is the differences: it is not the voice of a woman suffering that we hear, but of a man's. It is not Sappho, who is suffering, it is Catullus. She is now the

¹¹⁹ For a discussion of the poems, to which this discussion is much indebted, see Miller, 101-103. Miller however talks about the impossibility of Sappho's dialogism in his 1993 article, an idea I am directly opposed to, as my discussion of Sappho's poem shows.

object of desire, not the subject. The difference hides a resemblance. In both cases it is the lyric I who is suffering. But, it is the Roman poet who becomes the lyric I now. It is Catullus who, by stating his incapability, proves his capability of writing poetry. It is not only a poetic consciousness emerging, but also a meta-poetic one. Catullus' intertextual game casts another light on lyric self-definition, as the Catullan lyric self is defined or redefined by its Greek predecessors.

Taking for granted that his poem would not be performed, how does Catullus complete the image of self, how can he supply the self with the I for others, that in the case of Sappho was supplied by performance? It is by the very act of mimesis, of using Sappho's words, I suggest, that Catullus becomes both a member of Sappho's choral performance and a member of the audience: for saying her words, makes him a performer of that song, a song he heard before, as a member of the audience.

At the same time, his utterance is not identical: by differentiating himself from Sapphic tradition he utters a different poem. His new poem though is filled with echoes and reverberations of the Sapphic poem. His poem is filled "with other utterances to which it is related by the communality of the speech communication"¹²⁰: it is this Bakhtinian dialogism that the poem performs. Catullus' self is more disparate than Sappho's. While she presents a two-folded self, able to sing, unable to speak, Catullus' self encompasses both his disparate self and the reminiscence of Sappho's disparity ending up with an even more disparate self. Moreover, with the reversal of the roles new meanings become possible. For Sappho is no longer in 51 unable to speak. It is Catullus, who takes her place and functions as Sappho. Catullus becomes a Sappho, a Sappho who

¹²⁰Bakhtin 1986, 91.

sees addresses and gives advice to Catullus in the last stanza. Catullus then acts as a member of Sappho's chorus. His self is in three pieces; a poet, a choral singer, and audience.

Having lost the performance, Catullus inserts the performance in the poem. Filling it with dialogic overtones, the performance is not lost. In order to fully understand his utterance, we need to become an audience of both his and Sappho's performance. Catullus tries to supply the missing performance with poetic means fully understanding the necessity of the audience for a completed self-image. For it is only through the other that the self can be found, it is only by polyphony that self can be emerged.

If Sappho 31 is already a dialogic poem presenting a polyphonic self then Catullus 51 is more so, by engaging in a further dialogue with an already dialogic text. Moreover, Catullus as the speaker of Sapphic lines becomes a complex speaking subject. I think the discussion on Sappho 31 has made it clear that the voice of the poem is much more complex than “a *phoné* identical to the speaker”.¹²¹ For staging a dialogic self, with a dialogic identity doubles the *phoné* and *presenting* a problem: if the self is different at different time levels, as seen from different audiences then how can the “voice” be identical to the *phoné* of speaker? Whose *phoné* is this? Moreover, what becomes when Catullus borrows the *phoné* of Sappho? Whose voice is it? Is it Catullus or is it Sappho, or is it both? Or, if the voice heard in the last stanza is Sappho’s addressing Catullus by name, which Sapphic *phoné* is this? Is it the same he hears in her poems?

¹²¹ Kristeva 1973, 110. “As for the ‘voice’ it is not the *phoné* which comes down to us from Greek texts and is identical to the speaker: it is a disembodied *phoné* which has lost its truth and is anxious about the locale of its emission: the place of the speaking subject.”

Bakhtin in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, describes polyphonic self as following:

"[it is] a conversation, a struggle, of discrepant voices with each other: voices speaking from different positions and invested with different degrees of authority".¹²²

It is this struggle and discrepancy, I think, that is the main characteristic of lyric self. The uttering of this self then becomes more than a *phoné* identical to the speaker. It becomes a dialogic voice. For, the expression of feeling, turning to the traditional Romantic view, is not the expression of one, or unified voice. It is the very struggle of selfhood, as it is processed through the other, through memory, through different time and place. It is more the process of constructing a self, than the performance of an already made, stable, unchanged self which lyric exposes. For lyric selfhood is not a single *phoné* within but a particular way of combining many voices within. Consciousness only takes shape as a process of interaction among authoritative and esoteric, persuasive discussion. It is a disembodied, fragmentary *phoné* in an attempt to find its body.

¹²² Bakhtin 1984, 217.

CHAPTER 2

Weaving the body: feminine voice and alterity in Homer's Iliad

i. In the beginning was the (masculine) word

Although the discussion about the composer(s) of the Homeric poems has not settled yet, it can hardly be disputed that the *Iliad* is a male –authored, androcentric poem. Unlike the sex of the poet of the *Odyssey*, the gender of the poet of the *Iliad* has never been contested. It is mainly a masculine world based on masculine virtues given away by many different masculine voices, as it is a poem in which men are fighting or talking about courage, military prowess, bravery. And although the project of finding a feminine voice in the *Iliad* needs to be carefully argued in order to sound convincing, it seems that the project of finding masculine voices is rather self explanatory. In discussing epic speech and performance in the *Iliad*, for example, Richard Martin argues that *muthos*, a technical term implying authority and power has an undeniably male orientation.¹ In the masculine epic world, masculine language and masculine behavior are inextricably connected: in the words of Phoenix, a man needs to be both a warrior and a

¹ Martin 1989, 87. For definition of *muthos* see 22-3.

good speaker of *muthoi*.² To be a man you have to talk like a man. That is not to say that the matter of masculine voice is a simple one, that there is one, unified “masculine voice”. Unlike the feminine voice, masculine voice in *Iliad* is however an uncontested, “real” voice, be that the voice of its male author or its male protagonists. In the context of the discussion about feminine voice in the *Iliad* then, a digression is more than needed: if the *Iliad* is the language of heroes, does the language of heroines fit into it?

Moreover, apart from being composed by a male poet and spoken by male characters does the Homeric masculine voice manifest itself as “masculine”? And if so how is this masculinity defined? In a project mainly concerning feminine voice then, it would be useful first to listen to the masculine voice in an attempt to find a definition of it. Listening to masculine voices in the *Iliad* would be of great help: men talk about what it means to be a man, defining or re-defining masculinity, but also problematizing the concept itself and sometimes challenging its boundaries. What is a masculine voice, what makes it masculine? How do men talk and define masculinity? Consequently, mapping masculine voice then will provide some insight to the more obscure feminine voice and find its place in the *Iliad*. At the same time, I will argue that although both gendered voices are a construction that is based on a binary opposition system that privileges the masculine over the feminine and situates the feminine in the margins of a “phallogocentric” system.

² Il.9. 443 μύθων τε ρητῆρ' ἔμεναι πρῆκτῆρά τε ἔργων. Also Martin 1989, 27 “the heroic ideal of speaking and fighting virtuosity is always being propounded in the poem”.

In the beginning of book 3 Paris challenges the “best of the Achaeans” to fight with him in a single combat. Menelaus seizes the opportunity to fight his wife’s lover and take revenge for his wounded manly honor. But when Paris sees Menelaus coming his way, he is panicked; he draws back seized in fear. Of course, this unbecoming reaction invites Hector’s wrath. For Hector this is not a man’s behavior. There is a certain male code for man behavior and Paris seems to have forgotten it. Hector needs to remind him and define manliness since his brother clearly exhibited lack of knowledge on the subject.³

Δύσπαρι, εἶδος ἄριστε, γυναιμανές, ἡπεροπευτὰ
αἶθ' ὄφελος ἄγονός τ' ἔμεναι ἄγαμός τ' ἀπολέσθαι·
καί κε τὸ βουλοίμην, καὶ κεν πολὺ κέρδιον ἦεν
ἢ οὕτω λώβην τ' ἔμεναι καὶ ὑπόψιον ἄλλων.
ἦ που καγχαλόωσι κάρη κομόωντες Ἀχαιοὶ
φάντες ἀριστῆα πρόμον ἔμμεναι, οὐνεκα καλὸν
εἶδος ἔπ', ἀλλ' οὐκ ἔστι βίη φρεσὶν οὐδέ τις ἀλκή.
ἦ τοιόσδε ἐὼν ἐν ποντοπόροισι νέεσσι
πόντον ἐπιπλώσας, ἐτάρους ἐρίηρας ἀγείρας,
μιχθεὶς ἄλλοδαποῖσι γυναικ' εὐειδέ' ἀνήγες
ἐξ ἀπίης γαίης νυὸν ἀνδρῶν αἰχμητῶν
πατρί τε σῶ μέγα πῆμα πόλῃ τε παντί τε δήμῳ,
δυσμενέσιν μὲν χάρμα, κατηφείην δὲ σοὶ αὐτῷ;
οὐκ ἂν δὴ μείνειας ἀρηίφιλον Μενέλαον;
γνοίης χ' οἴου φωτὸς ἔχεις θαλερὴν παράκοιτιν·
οὐκ ἂν τοι χραίσμη κίθαρις τά τε δῶρ' Ἀφροδίτης
ἦ τε κόμη τό τε εἶδος ὅτ' ἐν κονίῃσι μιγείης.
ἀλλὰ μάλα Τρῶες δειδήμονες· ἦ τέ κεν ἦδη
λάινον ἔσσο χιτῶνα κακῶν ἔνεχ' ὅσσα ἔοργας. 3.39-57

“Evil Paris, best in looks, mad woman- seducer. How I wish you never had been born or died unmarried. That’s what I’d prefer, and it would be so much better than to live in shame, hated by others. Now long-haired Achaeans are mocking us, saying we’ve put forward as a champion one whose looks are good, but there is no might in his heart or prowess. Were you like that back on that day you gathered up your faithful comrades, sailed seafaring ships across the ocean, mingling with foreigners, and carried back a beautiful woman from that far-off land a bride of warrior spearmen, thus bringing on great suffering for your father and your city, all your people—joy to your enemies and to yourself disgrace? And can you now not face Menelaus? If so, you’d learn the kind of man he is whose wife you took. You’d get no help then from your lyre, long hair, good looks—Aphrodite’s gifts—once face down, mingled with dirt. Trojans must be very timid men. If not, for all the evil things you’ve done by now you’d be wearing a coat made of stones.”

³ For Homeric passages I use the edition of Allen.

It is very interesting that in defining masculinity for his brother Hector feels the need to rename him: he is not Paris; he is Δύσπαρις his evil twin. Having failed the test of proving himself as an adequate man, Paris' own identification is at risk. For part of his identity, is his identity as a man. Paris though is rebuked with epithets not appropriate to a man: he is beautiful, crazy as a woman and deceitful: in Hector's eyes Paris *is* a woman. Or at least a man that does not deserve to be a man, deprived of reproduction, better off barren and unwed. At least this is a better option than being the laughing stock of the Achaeans, calling him a beautiful coward. To the eyes of the enemy, but also to the eyes of his brother Paris possesses beauty, a feminine virtue, but not any male virtue, strength and valor. It is βίη φρεσὶν and ἀλκή that a man should have. Having a καλὸν εἶδος is for a man useless quality, and in the *Iliad* the phrase is only used for men and only as a flying device.⁴ It is not surprising that the phrase is used once more to characterize Paris but other than that is reserved to characterize women in the *Iliad*. Even the punishment for his cowardness is not one appropriate to a warrior. His punishment is a coat, a dress, a suitable way of death for a woman like character.

As a man-warrior Paris is inferior: he is not the best of the Trojans, he is the best in looks. After all, he abandoned the battle field.⁵ Paris is however a prince, he should therefore act as a general. What Paris now calls into question is the Trojan's ability to

⁴ The phrase καλὸν εἶδος is used only once in Homer. Most common is the phrase εἶδος ἄριστος/η is used 8 times in the *Iliad* mostly for women (5 times). The phrase is used once more for Paris by Hector (13.769), and once for Hector by Glaukus (17.142).

⁵Or in the words of Odysseus, 11.407-10: I know that those who leave the war are cowards. The man who wants to fight courageously must stand his ground with force, whether he's hit, or whether his blows strike the other man."

choose, be represented and commanded by a valiant general. Paris' beauty seems to be his only asset, but this is hardly appropriate for a warrior. Hector goes back to Paris' past to unfavorably judge his "military expeditions": he went to Sparta to get Helen. Of course, this is hardly a war affair. In Hector's words though it *is* a military expedition: Paris sailed over to Greece in his ship having gathered his trusty comrades, bringing back the daughter of warriors who wield the spear.⁶ Using Homeric stock phrases, Hector describes Helen's abduction as warfare. His description however uses military language only to undermine his brother's deeds. Even his so called military expedition, the closest he will ever get to war is unmanly. On the contrary his opponents, even Helen, are measured by a masculine scale, she is the bride of valiant warriors (νυὸν ἀνδρῶν αἰχμητῶν, 49)

Showing his brother that his own definition of the war is distorted, Hector argues that this was hardly a war appropriate to a real man. He mixed with the foreigners, brought a foreign woman to Troy a misery for the city, a joy for his enemies and shame to himself. If Paris were a real man first he wouldn't have abducted Helen. Or at least now he could stay, fight Menelaus. Since Paris does not know how to be a man, fighting Helen's husband is again going to be a lesson for him: he will learn what kind of man Menelaus is, a better man than himself. He will also learn that his own "weapons", hair, beauty, lyre and sensuality are useless for a real man. Again according to Hector, Paris is described as a coquettish woman in sharp contrast with Menelaus, a real warrior- man.

⁶ Il 1.269-72 Nestor to Achilles:
καὶ μὲν τοῖσιν ἐγὼ μεθομίλεον ἐκ Πύλου ἐλθὼν
τηλόθεν ἐξ ἀπίης γαίης· καλέσαντο γὰρ αὐτοί·
καὶ μαχόμεν κατ' ἑμ' αὐτὸν ἐγὼ· κείνοισι δ' ἄν οὔ τις
τῶν οἱ νῦν βροτοὶ εἰσιν ἐπιχθόνιοι μαχέοιτο·

Using Menelaus, his opponent, and Helen's husband as a paradigm of masculinity, Hector is trying to shame his brother and bring him back to battle. His flyting speech was successful since Paris proposes Hector to set up a single combat with Menelaus to decide the outcome of the war: whoever wins gets Helen and all the wealth. This very manly single combat will have a feminine prize, because masculinity is not only defined in terms of the feminine—since masculine is the non-feminine— but also prized and exchanged through the feminine: the prize of a man is a woman. The definition and worth of a man cannot be accomplished without reference to the other: the feminine.

As in the aforementioned passage, talk about bravery and defining masculinity is a favorite subject in heroes' conversations. In book 11, Diomedes has been wounded by an arrow that Paris -secretly- hurls at him. Of course, Diomedes, mocks him for his “feminine” ways: real men fight man to man:

Τὸν δ' οὐ ταρβήσας προσέφη κρατερὸς Διομήδης·
 τοξότα λωβητὴρ κέρρα ἄγλαε παρθενοπίπτα
 εἰ μὲν δὴ ἀντίβιον σὺν τεύχεσι πειρηθείης,
 οὐκ ἂν τοι χαίσιμῃσι βιὼς καὶ ταρφέες ἰοί·
 νῦν δέ μ' ἐπιγράψας ταρσὸν ποδὸς εὐχεαι αὐτῶς.
 οὐκ ἄλέγω, ὥς εἴ με γυνὴ βάλοι ἢ πάις ἄφρων·
 κωφὸν γὰρ βέλος ἀνδρὸς ἀνάλκιδος οὐ τιδανοῖτο.
 ἦ τ' ἄλλως ὑπ' ἐμεῖο, καὶ εἴ κ' ὀλίγον περ ἐπαύρη,
 ὅξυ βέλος πέλεται, καὶ ἀκήριον αἶψα τίθησι.
 τοῦ δὲ γυναικὸς μὲν τ' ἀμφίδρυφοί εἰσι παρειαί,
 παῖδες δ' ὀρφανικοί· ὃ δέ θ' αἵματι γαῖαν ἐρεῦθων
 πύθεται, οἰωνοὶ δὲ περὶ πλέες ἢ γυναιῖκες. (11.384-395)

“You useless archer, brave only with your bow, seducer, if you stepped out to face me with real weapons, that bow and clutch of arrows would be no use to you. So now you’ve grazed me on my foot, and you boast like this. It’s nothing—like some blow from a woman or witless child. A weapon from a coward has no bite at all. But from me, it’s different, even a slight hit. My spear is sharp. The man it hits, it kills. His wife tears at her cheeks, his children then are orphans. Earth is blood-soaked where he rots, with vultures instead of women round him.”

Diomedes, again, talks about masculine behavior which is mainly warrior behavior. In a poem like the *Iliad* a man is usually equated with a warrior and manly etiquette is usually warrior etiquette. A real man then, that is a real warrior, should not shoot from afar, hiding. On the contrary only man to man fighting can be acceptable. Dying in battle is not the warrior's fear. Diomedes' anger does not come out of the possibility that he could have died, but out of the possibility that he did not die an honored death. For him dying struck by a spear is a welcome-manly death.

In order for Diomedes to explain what it means to live and die as a man he refers to the *other*: Paris is a guy with beautiful hair- looks like a girl, looks at girls, and throws like a girl. However Diomedes does not care about the arrow that just wounded him, not at least more than he would care if a woman or a kid would have thrown it. However, Diomedes, a real man, can throw a spear like one, and the desired death is one appropriate to a man. His dead opponent is lamented by his wife, and the birds flying over his body are more than the women crying at his funeral. The imagery Diomedes is using to sketch what it means to be a real man-warrior again uses the feminine as a reference. Not only is the warrior behavior antithetical to the feminine, i.e. Paris' behavior, but the feminine is called upon as the other side of the war coin. Diomedes in his speech is clear on how different a role masculine from feminine is and how important is this separation to be sustained. He ridicules Paris for crossing the boundaries: by looking like or even at girls (κέρρα ἄγλαῖ παρθενοπίπτα). Diomedes by presenting the ridiculous idea that a woman or a child would even throw an arrow also draws a firm line between the two: war is for men to fight. Then he introduces the only space that men and women can coexist in war that is at the hero's funeral. On one side the death of the hero,

on the other the lament of his wife and the other women at his funeral. This is the only time of co-existing without crossing of boundaries and quite appropriately, it is the scene that will close the *Iliad* itself. Andromache first lamenting her dead husband with Hecuba and Helen following with their laments and the rest of the women wailing. The worlds of man and woman seem to be firmly distinct. Men refer to women as the other, as what they are not, what they should not be. Even meetings with them are scarce, with the exceptions of the time of death.⁷

The *Iliad* seems then to be divided in two worlds that unite at the time of death: men and women meet there in the presence of the other. In the case they meet before, with death lurking anyway, the division between the two worlds holds strong.⁸ The meeting of Andromache and Hector in book 6 is a good example of this. In that Hector points out to Andromache that he himself thinks about leaving her back after his death but he cannot comply with her request, leave the battle field and wage war from within. The space enclosed by the walls is not the appropriate space for a hero. Hector himself, goes in the city to talk to his mother about offering a prayer to Athena but is in a hurry to go back. He will not even sit although both Hecuba and Helen ask him to. Men in the *Iliad* belong outside the *oikos*. An inversion of this model results to blame. Paris is mocked by his brother for being in his chamber and not fighting.⁹ Equally for Hector, waging war behind the wall then would be a source of public blame:

ἦ καὶ ἐμοὶ τάδε πάντα μέλει γύναι· ἀλλὰ μάλ' αἰνῶς
αἰδέομαι Τρῶας καὶ Τρωάδας ἐλκεσιπέπλους,
αἳ κε κακὸς ὥς νόσφιν ἀλυσκάζω πολέμοιο·

⁸ Arthur, 1987, 9-44

⁹ Il.6.326ff.

οὐδέ με θυμὸς ἄνωγεν, ἐπεὶ μάθον ἔμμεναι ἐσθλὸς
αἰεὶ καὶ πρώτοισι μετὰ Τρώεσσι μάχεσθαι
ἄρνύμενος πατρός τε μέγα κλέος ἢ δ' ἐμὸν αὐτοῦ.
(6.441-6)

“Wife, all this concerns me, too. But I feel dreadfully shamed among Trojan men and women in their trailing gowns, if I should, like a coward, slink away from war. My heart will never prompt me to do that, for I have learned always to be brave, to fight alongside Trojans at the front striving to win *kleos* for my father and myself.

Hector will deny all the things that make him a hero, will deny himself of his *kleos*. For Hector *kleos* is also tight with *aidos*. It is shameful for the hero to stop fighting because he is afraid of his own life. His duty as a warrior and as a man is to fight: leaving war will mean that he is *κακὸς*. (443) Hector however is *ἐσθλὸς* (444); therefore he needs to fight for his country, be at the first line and bring -but also preserve- *kleos* for himself and his family (445-6). Hector does not want to die in battle and he knows that this is possible if he goes out to fight. However, fleeing war is not an option for a hero: he is accountable to the Trojan people (*aidos*), and his family (*kleos*). His relationships with his family and fellow-Trojan are defined through *kleos* and *aidos* and so do past, present and future actions: Hector is embarrassed of what the Trojans will say if he abandons the battle-field but also of his possible failure to win as much *kleos* as his father did. Moreover, his quest for *kleos* holds strong even in the future. If they lose the war, then Andromache is going to be a slave in Greece and there she will still be seen as the wife of Hector. And only if he keeps fighting he will be remembered as the best of the Trojans:

καὶ ποτέ τις εἶπῃσιν ἰδὼν κατὰ δάκρυ χέουσσαν·
Ἔκτορος ἦδε γυνὴ ὃς ἀριστεύεσκε μάχεσθαι
Τρώων ἵπποδάμων ὅτε Ἴλιον ἀμφεμάχοντο.
ὥς ποτέ τις ἑρέει· σοὶ δ' αὖ νέον ἔσσεται ἄλγος
χῆτεϊ τοιοῦδ' ἀνδρὸς ἀμύνειν δούλιον ἦμαρ.
ἀλλὰ με τεθνηῶτα χυτὴ κατὰ γαῖα καλύπτει
πρίν γε τι σῆς τε βοῆς σοῦ θ' ἐλκηθμοῖο πυθέσθαι. (6.459-65)

‘That woman is Hector’s wife. He was the finest warrior in battle of all horse-taming Trojans in that war when they fought for Troy.’ Someone will say that, and it will bring still more grief to you, to be without a man like that to save you from days of slavery. May I lie dead, hidden deep under a burial mound, before I hear your screaming, as you are dragged away.”

Hector’s unwillingness to fight will bring the fall of Troy and slavery for his family. He is the only one who can fight for their freedom. But their freedom is still closely connected to his *kleos*: even when his wife will be dragged in slavery, people in Greece are going to talk about him, how he was preeminent in battle (ἀριστεύεσκε μάχεσθαι). This projection of her gruesome future serves as an argument against Andromache’s unrealistic suggestion. He would rather die before he sees her become a slave. However, in Hector’s mind his death in the battle –field is combined with the idea that his *kleos* is going to be spread beyond Troy, in Greece with his widow being a living proof of his heroism. Hector’s essence is defending his city, his wife, and his people. Past, present and future are all seen through his identity as a warrior and a man. For in his mind the notions of a man and warrior are as inextricably connected as they are distinct from the notion of a woman. It is imperative that the two notions to defined and separated by spatial terms:¹⁰

ἀλλ' εἰς οἶκον ἰοῦσα τὰ σ' αὐτῆς ἔργα κόμιζε
ἰστόν τ' ἡλακάτην τε, καὶ ἀμφιπόλοισι κέλευε
ἔργον ἐποίχεσθαι· πόλεμος δ' ἄνδρεσσι μελήσει
πᾶσι, μάλιστα δ' ἐμοί, τοὶ Ἴλίῳ ἐγγεγάασιν. (6.490-3)

So you should go into the house, keep busy with your work, with your loom and wool, telling your servants to set about their tasks. War will be the concern of men especially mine, of all those who live in Troy.

¹⁰ For a discussion of the Homeric polis as identified with the feminine see Scully 1981, esp.11-14.

War is men's care, especially his own. Andromache on the other hand should go back home, take care of her own ἔργον. There is a sharp line between the two; Hector cannot possibly cross these boundaries without his masculinity-and the *kleos* derived from it-being at stake. The fact that is Andromache cannot give him advice on war; this is not simply her job. Similarly, if Andromache ends up in Greece, carrying water from the spring, crossing the boundaries of her *oikos*, abandoning her household tasks, her identity as a free Trojan woman would have been lost. The two worlds of men and women are distinct, divided by the walls of Troy. Are then the two voices, masculine and feminine, divided? Can we even talk about such a division?

ii. Toward a possibility of feminine voice in the *Homeric epics*

In a poem about war, whose subject matter is the glorious deeds of men “κλέα ἄνδρῶν”, any question regarding feminine voice would seem almost irrelevant. The poem was composed by a male (or males) in an androcentric tradition and was performed in a male dominated society. Be that as it may, the *Iliad* does contain a big number of feminine voices as well. This thesis is not going to argue that the masculine voice of the *Iliad* is more real than the feminine one because it was composed by a male poet. Nor am I going to argue that the voices in the poem are characterized by the sex of the character uttering them. It is completely clear to me that both masculine and feminine voice is a construction of the same male poet. Seeing gendered voice as a cultural construction, instead of a biological distinction, then, permits any poet, whatever their sex might be, to construct gendered voice that cannot be simply discussed under the headline of realistic,

or psychologically appropriate but need to be discussed in the context of ideology. But even if we define feminine voice as a cultural construction, not as a physical voice uttered by a woman, feminine voices in the *Iliad* are still male constructions of “Woman” and as such it is still worth asking the question: why are they constructed as feminine?

It is not to be forgotten that according to its composer the *Iliad* can be seen a feminine voice as a whole. In both proems of the poem, both in its opening and what is traditionally called the second proem in book 2, the poet names the Muses- traditionally feminine divinities- as the source of his inspiration.¹¹ In the opening lines of the *Iliad* the Muse is summoned to sing the wrath of Achilles (μῆνιν ἄειδε θεὰ Πηληϊάδεω Ἀχιλῆος, 1). Again, in book 2 the poet asks the Olympian Muses for help.¹² The Muses know, while the poet does not, (ὕμεῖς γὰρ θεαὶ ἐστε πάρεστε τε ἴστε τε πάντα, / ἡμεῖς δὲ κλέος οἶον ἀκούομεν οὐδέ τι ἴδμεν, 2. 485-6). He needs their help in order to remember and sing. The invocation to the Muse I believe cannot be simply dismissed as an epic *topos*. The attribution of the origin of a poetic voice to the feminine remains a fact to be considered and serves as a basis for Iliadic, as well as archaic poetics in general, to

¹¹ For the femininity of the Muses see Murray in Zajko-Leonard 2006 and Sharrock in Spentzou-Fowler 2002. For the Muses in Hesiod see Arthur 1983 and Bergren 1983.

¹² *Il.* 2.484-93

Ἔσπετε νῦν μοι Μοῦσαι Ὀλύμπια δώματ' ἔχουσιν·
ὕμεῖς γὰρ θεαὶ ἐστε πάρεστε τε ἴστε τε πάντα,
ἡμεῖς δὲ κλέος οἶον ἀκούομεν οὐδέ τι ἴδμεν·
 οἳ τινες ἡγεμόνες Δαναῶν καὶ κοίρανοι ἦσαν·
 πληθὺν δ' οὐκ ἂν ἐγὼ μυθήσομαι οὐδ' ὀνομήνω,
 οὐδ' εἰ μοι δέκα μὲν γλώσσαι, δέκα δὲ στόματ' εἶεν,
 φωνὴ δ' ἄρρηκτος, χάλκεον δέ μοι ἦτορ ἐνείη,
 εἰ μὴ Ὀλυμπιάδες Μοῦσαι Διὸς αἰγιόχοιο
 θυγατέρες μνησαίαθ' ὅσοι ὑπὸ Ἴλιον ἦλθον·
 ἀρχοὺς αὖ νηῶν ἐρέω νῆας τε προπάσας.

be thought in gendered terms. Still, again the feminine voice evoked by the poet and “heard” by the audience is a male construction.

Considering archaic poetry in those terms, Ann Bergren in “Language and the Feminine in Early Greek Thought” discusses the *Theogony* as an exemplary text for the relationship between language and the feminine in early Greek thought. According to her, the process is always the same: “a male author ascribes a kind of speech to a feminine and then makes it his own”.¹³ For Bergren, the attribution of such knowledge to the feminine is based on the idea of a feminine capacity for both truth and imitation of truth, as is stated in the well-known lines of the *Theogony* (28-9):

ἴδμεν ψεύδεα πολλὰ λέγειν ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα,
ἴδμεν δ’ εἴτ’ ἐθέλωμεν ἀληθέα γηρύσασθαι.

We know how to tell many false things like to real things, but we know to sing the reality when we will.¹⁴

The poet, according to her, is first confronted with the double nature of feminine speech, but thanks to the Muses’ inspiration, acquires their capacity for knowledge and speech and thus appropriates those feminine attributes.¹⁵

The idea of feminine speech as capable of both truth and imitation of truth is more explicitly stated in *Theogony* than it is in the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*. Nevertheless, the inherent duplicity of feminine speech is evident in the Homeric discourse as well. But what is more important is that the ambiguity of feminine speech as such, thus, resembles

¹³ Bergren, 1983, 69.

¹⁴ The translation is Bergren’s following West and others. Contra, Heiden 2007, translating “lies equivalent to truth”. For Bergren we are dealing with “fiction that imitates fact”. Heiden, however, argues that the Muses only speak the truth since even their lies are some how equivalent to it and demonstrates how Hesiod is trying to “argue” against such a dichotomy in poetic discourse. see 171 ff with detailed notes.

¹⁵ Bergren, 1983, 71.

the ambiguity of poetic speech: women and poetry can both tell the truth, or deceive. Poetic discourse is then inextricably connected with feminine discourse via its relation to truth in the Greek mind. But does this metaphor allow the presence of a discernible feminine discourse in a male-authored poem like the *Iliad*? Or is the possibility of a feminine discourse silenced by being a part of a larger masculine discourse?

Another traditional epic metaphor connects poetry with weaving: the poet himself is a “weaver” or a “sewer” of words (*rhapsodos*).¹⁶ The metaphor is easy to explain: weaving is about binding threads together in order to create a cloth. Thus, the song is necessarily a fabric: stitching words together, creating a *text*.¹⁷ Moreover, the object of the verb to weave (ὀφάινω) can be either a web (ἵστός) or μῦθος (words), a word itself connected with poetic composition. Another cluster of words as the object of weave can be μῆδεα (devices, plots) or δόλος (ruse) and μῆτις. As a result, weaving is connected not only with poetry but more specifically with the potentially deceptive quality of poetry. The analogy between weaving, deception and the feminine is reinforced by two divine figures: Μῆτις is the mother of Athena, goddess of weaving, patroness of Odysseus, the man of many guiles (πολύμητις). And since weaving is traditionally connected with women, the word ὀφάινω brings poetry, deception and women together

¹⁶ For the word *rhapsoidos* (he who stitches the words together) and the connection to weaving see Durante 1976,177-9. Also for Nagy 1989, 297-8 the very name *Homeros* means “he who fits the song together”. For the metaphor of poetry as weaving see Snyder 1981,esp. 193-4 and Scheid-Sverbro 1996.

¹⁷ The term is used by Nagy and Durante as an immediate connection with *oral* poetry. For Martin, the poem as we have it is not an action, a poem composed in performance, but an artifact. Moreover, the word *text* is useful in the present discussion since it evokes the connection between composing and weaving. Barthes, for example, talks about writing as the “weaving of voices”. For him this *interweaving* (sic) of voices create the text (S/Z, 21.) I think reading the *Iliad* as a interweaving of voices is a very fruitful and provocative way to read the poem.

one more time.¹⁸ And as the embodiment of this notion in Homer, Circe and Calypso, both deceptive women, weave and sing at the same time.¹⁹

Bergren delineates feminine poetics by connecting the weaving ability of women in archaic poetry with the making of signs and thus with composing poetry. Moreover, she establishes the idea of doubleness as an important element of feminine voice and μήτις as an inherent characteristic of feminine speech.²⁰ The connection between weaving and poetry had, of course, been previously established in epic and lyric tradition alike; however, there was no attempt to identify the features of this feminine poetics.²¹ However, for Bergren, the connection between language and the feminine is primarily not linguistic. “Greek women do not speak, they weave”.²² The woman’s web then becomes according to her “a metaphorical speech, a silent substitute for the lack of verbal art”.²³ Bergren’s argument is reinforced by the fact that she discusses the story of Philomela who literally weaves as a substitute for her lost voice. Homeric mortal heroines, however, do speak. Helen, Andromache and Penelope, (to exclude the semi-divine Circe and Calypso) all speak. There are also all weavers in the Homeric poem, which begs the question: can their weaving be seen not as a substitute of female voice but as a metaphor for a different kind of speech?

¹⁸ For the connection of μήτις and weaving see Bergren 1983, 73.

¹⁹ Od. 5.59-62 (Calypso); 10.220-3;10.226-8;10.254-5 (Circe)

²⁰ Bergren 1983, 73.

²¹ Snyder 1981, 193-96.

²² Bergren 1983, 71.

²³ Bergren, 1983, 72.

In the beginning of the *Odyssey*, when Penelope asks the Phemius to sing a different song, Telemachus asks her to refrain from uttering such a judgment: *muthoi* is none of her business. It is her web that she should care about.²⁴ Telemachus does not deny his mother the right to speak. What he denies Penelope is the right to talk about poetry, the right to utter *muthoi*.²⁵ The lines remind us of Bergren's comment. She cannot speak a *muthos*, but she can weave. Her web is her *muthos*. Penelope then is seen as a poetic figure because she is a weaver. At the same time, as her weaving is inherently tight to a trick she is an embodiment of feminine μῆτις. Deception, poetry and the feminine are then coming together one more time. Bergren's comment though seems to see textiles as a substitute for discourse: you weave because you cannot talk. Penelope however does both: she both weaves and utters *mythoi*.²⁶

The aforementioned passage is usually discussed in a search of the Penelopean self. Is Penelope an agent, a subject or an object of the suitor's desire? As Felson-Rubin suggests, "she functions both as a subject, a weaver of plots, and as an object constituted by the gazes of male characters."²⁷ The fact is that Penelope can be seen as a subject

²⁴ Od. 1. 356-9:

ἀλλ' εἰς οἶκον ἰοῦσα τὰ σ' αὐτῆς ἔργα κόμιζε,
 ἰστόν τ' ἡλακάτην τε, καὶ ἀμφιπόλοισι κέλευε
 ἔργον ἐποίχεσθαι· μῦθος δ' ἄνδρεςσι μελήσει
 πᾶσι, μάλιστα δ' ἐμοί. τοῦ γὰρ κράτος ἔστ' ἐνὶ οἴκῳ.

²⁵ For the distinction between *muthos* and *epos* see the classic discussion of Martin, 1989. For Martin *muthos* is authoritative speech that implies power and needs to be seen as performance connected to a specifically recognized *genre* (12) Note that Ford (1981) argues that the connection of the word *epos* to epic poetry is later than the sixth century. Also note the fact that both Penelope in the *Odyssey* and , so does Helen, 3 times in the Iliad and twice in the Odyssey(Il.3.171, 3.427, 6.343 and Od.4.234, 240).

²⁶ Some good passages for Penelope: 17.497;19,252;21,87;23.301.

²⁷ Felson-Rubin1994, 15.

only when she is connected with her weaving. Her web is her voice but it is not only though that trick she becomes an agent. However, Penelope is also an object, frequently seen as the ultimate prize. And for Marilyn Katz, it is this indeterminacy that constitutes the main characteristic of the poem whose embodiment is Penelope herself. As a character, Penelope “calls into question the relation between identity and the self it represents”.²⁸ As a poet-weaver figure, the essence of the Penelopean self, “Penelope's renown”, according to Katz, seems to be a double and ambiguously problematic concept and this ambiguity is carried further when connected with her function as a weaver-poet figure.

Barbara Clayton's recent book discusses how Odyssean scholarship refers to the text using weaving images and she finds that this is an indication of “a poetic mimesis of the weaving process that lies at the heart of the Odyssean text”.²⁹ Furthermore, according to Clayton, weaving and reweaving are crucial in the context of a “Penelopean”, thus feminine, poetics. Continuing Bergren's idea, Clayton argues that just as *mêtis* evokes a feminine method, so poetic activity by Penelope's web constitutes “a feminine poetics that brings together notions of gender, language and poetic production that challenge androcentric ideology. The [male] poet weaves a feminine alterity into the fabric of the *Odyssey*”.³⁰ Clayton, exploring a “Penelopean poetics”, begins from the idea that Penelope's web, being done, un-done and re-done, never fixed, always the same

²⁸ Katz 1991, 193.

²⁹ Clayton 2002, 4 with notes. Clayton refers to phrases such as “woven episodes”, or “interweaving of passages” phrases echoing the Aristotelean comment on the “woven” or perplexed *Odyssey* [συνέστηκεν] ἢ δὲ Ὀδύσσεια πεπλεγμένον [ποίημα] *Poetics* 1459b.14)

³⁰ Clayton 2004, 19.

yet different, models bardic performance. She develops this by incorporating Cixous' ideas of a feminine writing of the body. For Cixous, a feminine text defies closure, it does not stop, and therefore it is difficult to read.³¹ On this basis, the *Odyssey*, with its endless stories, is a celebration of feminine poetics. It is indeed the process of reweaving, of doing and undoing the text that is distinctly feminine. Penelope's web is the text of alterity, an open-ended text positioning itself apart from the *mythoi* of men.³²

Clayton's idea, however, seems to ignore the fact that the epic poem, seen as oral poetry and performance is inherently open-ended. Thus, connecting the openness of feminine discourse with only one of the two poems seems to me as problematic. Her discussion begins from the premise that *Odyssey* is an explicitly "feminine" poem in sharp distinction with the "masculine" *Iliad*. According to her, "there is an important linking of the weaving metaphor with a specifically Odyssean poetics". And Clayton goes on to argue, "*Odyssey's* apparent affinity with weaving reveals a gendered difference from the *Iliad*".³³ For Clayton, *Odyssey's* affinity to weaving is double-folded: on one hand the poem's structure and the way scholarship talks about it, always bringing up the weaving metaphor and on the other the prominent figure of Penelope, a weaver. However, her argument is more based on Aristotle that she actually admits. *Odyssey* is woven, perplexed while the *Iliad* simple (συνέστηκεν ἡ μὲν Ἰλιάς ἀπλοῦν καὶ παθητικόν, ἡ δὲ Ὀδύσσεια πεπλεγμένον [ποίημα] *Poetics* 1459.13ff.)

³¹ Clayton 2004, 44.

³² Clayton 2004, 83.

³³ Clayton, 2004, 5.

Scholars however have argued that the *Odyssey* is as tightly structured as the *Iliad*. The *Iliad* might not contain the embedded stories of the *Odyssey* there is however a tight structure of episodes that repeat in a movement that resembles weaving. Bruce Heiden, for example, discussing the book structure in the *Iliad* shows very convincingly how it follows a cyclic design based on thematic resonance describing the epic path (sic) as “a helix with three revolutions”.³⁴ Although Heiden does not employ the metaphor of weaving, the idea of interweaving episodes is clear in his discussion.³⁵ The idea of weaving is connected with the structure of the poem. Clayton, I believe, does not explain what makes Penelope unique as a weaver image and the *Odyssey* particularly feminine. If the figure of the feminine weaver-poet can be found in both poems why doesn’t the figure of Helen, a prominent weaver in the *Iliad*, become an equal invitation to think about the *Iliad* as feminine discourse? If Penelope’s blank web challenges us to do our own readings³⁶, doesn’t Helen’s web, the only Homeric web whose signs are visible, beg for our reading?³⁷

³⁴ Heiden 2003, 162. For extensive bibliography see Heiden, esp. nn 1,3, and 6.

³⁵ I am very tempted to connect Heiden’s idea with Helen’s appearance in three (3, 6, 24) nodal books of his division. It seems to me that her appearance in those books reinforces her connection with poetic fabrication.

³⁶ Clayton 2002, 34.

³⁷ The “content” of Homeric webs is usually not described. Circe’s and Calypso’s and Penelope’s are never described. Andromache’s web is described as embroidered with flowers (22.441). Helen’s web with the depiction of the battles of Greeks and Trojans is the only web Homer describes as a web that tells a story.

iii. Feminine voice and female poetics in the *Iliad*, or Why Helen?

This chapter is then going to discuss a possibility of feminine voice in the *Iliad* using Helen as a model weaver -poet. However, the fact remains that Helen is not the only female character or the only feminine voice in the *Iliad*. So, why Helen, or why only Helen? Because, I believe, the poem itself presents Helen as a special case of feminine voice, a voice connected with poetic *muthoi*. Such a connection cannot be established regarding other female characters, as for example Andromache, the presence of whom as a weaver I will discuss later. But, if one follows Martin's distinction on *muthos* and *epos*, only the former seems to be connected with poetry, or authoritative speech.³⁸ Not accidentally, the only two mortal women using the word in the Homeric epics are Helen and Penelope.

Moreover, the figure of Helen then as a female-poet weaver emerges in the *Iliad* in a similar way that Penelope is presented in the *Odyssey*. In *Iliad* book 3 Helen weaves a *double* purple carpet featuring the many battles of Greeks and Trojans. Weaving the only web that is described as telling a story, Helen becomes a prototypical poet-weaver, a semiotic woman, as Bergren would have put it. Making a textile that evokes the subject matter of the poem, the scene brings together weaving and feminine poetic discourse in the context of the *Iliad* in the most obvious way. In addition, the image of Helen is closely connected with poetry itself not only through weaving but also as a self-aware author of *muthoi*. She is also aware of herself as a fit poetic subject since, while talking to

³⁸ Martin 1989, 12. For Martin "*muthos* always implies public speech and involves a performance before an audience", 37. Moreover, he concludes that "the term *muthos* is the name that the poet gives to actual genres of discourse which are also poetic genres", 42. For *mythos* and Helen see Worman, 2001.

Hector she knows they are going to be a song for the generations to come.³⁹ Given that female speakers, as much as female poets, can attest to a special kind of feminine discourse or even feminine poetics, is it then possible to imagine Helen not only as a speaker or even a protagonist but also as a poet-figure weaving her own poem, her own epic, in Homer's *Iliad*? Is Helen weaving her own alterity in Homer's web? If so, why does Homer let her do so? Focusing on Helen, as a weaver and speaker, this thesis will consider her as a poet-figure composing her own narrative in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. My discussion will first be engaged with Helen as a poetic figure, trying to map the characteristics of her poetics. Is her poetics characteristic of the feminine poetics found when considering Penelope in the *Odyssey*? Or is Helen's poetics different?

Most scholarship on Helen focuses on character and rhetoric: Nancy Worman suggests that Helen's style in Homeric epic is shifting, changeable, inclusive, and therefore difficult to categorize, signifying not only dangerous aspects of women but also of poetic and rhetorical effect⁴⁰. Helen appears as a threatening and attractive figure and thus her presence arouses an anxiety to her audience as to how this style might be a threat to a right-minded judgment. Helen's speech is for Worman mainly deceptive. Helen fashions a versatile performance that borrows stylistic habits of male speakers in an

³⁹ οἶσιν ἐπὶ Ζεὺς θῆκε κακὸν μόνον, ὥς καὶ ὀπίσσω / ἀνθρώποισι πελώμεθ' αἰοίδιμοι ἐσσομένοισι. (*Iliad* 6, 357-8). Helen references to posterity have often been seen as manifesting an anomalous (for a feminine character) concern with *kleos* which connects her with the poet as in Bergren 1983. a connection of Helen with the Sirens and the Muse see Pucci, 1979, and Suzuki, 1989. Also for an extensive discussion of the Siren's discourse see Doherty, 1995. For the same idea as connected to Helen's sensitivity to how she represents herself and how she is perceived by others see Worman, 2002, 47 and esp. n.19 for detailed bibliography.

⁴⁰ 2001, 19. Worman discusses Helen's discourse in two articles (1997, 2001) and more fully in her 2002 book.

attempt to deflect blame.⁴¹ In her speech there is a gap between meaning and intention since she transposes locutions from their usual contexts to form locutions unique to her.⁴² Moreover, according to Worman, in the *Odyssey*, Helen's speeches invoke various models of authoritative speech: the Muses, the poet, and the prophet. The changeable quality of Helen's voice reflects her indeterminable and yet authoritative status in Homeric epic⁴³. And yet, Helen is always involved in the "mechanics of deception".⁴⁴

Helen is therefore seen as a constantly elusive, uttering a voice "that is not one, that is multiple and layered", according to Worman's Irigarayan phrasing.⁴⁵ Seen as a polyphonic, multi-layered voice how does this voice fit the Homeric narrative? Can it be seen as a parallel narrative within Homer's professing a different, feminine poetics within the Homeric text? In the *Language of Heroes*, R. Martin discusses and dismisses the possibility, argued by Friedrich and Redfield that Achilles in the *Iliad* is characterized by individual speech patterns and thus one can talk about a "language of Achilles".⁴⁶ At the same time he does accept the fact that Achilles language can be seen as more complex or pleonastic, even more poetic, but this is only because Homer chooses to make his speak like that. In other words, for Martin, Achilles speaks differently because he is different; he is after all the monumental hero of the poem. For him though Achilles can be seen as a

⁴¹ Worman 2002, 54.

⁴² Worman 2001, 21.

⁴³ Worman 2002, 56.

⁴⁴ Worman 2002, 56.

⁴⁵ Worman 2001, 20.

⁴⁶ Friedrich and Redfield 1978, 265-7.

poet figure *qua* performance; in other words it is his own poetic craft Homer reveals in the speeches of Achilles. In Achilles “we can hear the speech of Homer”.⁴⁷ In the context of a discussion of feminine voice in the *Iliad*, then, the question arises: is the speech of Helen the speech of Homer as well?

Richard Martin does briefly refer to the speeches of Helen.⁴⁸ Although his book is focused on the language of (male) heroes, his discussion of the use of *muthos* is necessary because the poet uses the word *muthos* to refer to speeches of Helen.⁴⁹ Given the fact that the word *muthos* does have “a male, heroic in-group orientation”, and in that way shouldn’t be expected to be uttered by heroine, Martin argues that the use of the word can be explained by the fact that the word introduces a lament- a form of *muthos* appropriate for a woman.⁵⁰ There are, however, more speeches of Helen, prefaced with a *muthos* formula: in the *Teichoskopia*, introducing the heroes, to Paris, the famous bedroom scene, and to Hector in book 6. Those speeches are not public laments. In what follows I will argue that Helen’s speeches are actual *muthoi*, and therefore can be seen as examples of poetic performance in the *Iliad*.

Helen then can be seen both as a speaker and a performer in the *Iliad*. Connected with weaving she can also be seen as a prototypical poet. Can she also attest to a different kind of feminine poetics composing her own epic within the Homeric epic? This discussion will attempt to answer some of the main questions that arise from this premise.

⁴⁷ Martin 1989, 223.

⁴⁸ Martin 1989, 87-8.

⁴⁹ Il. 3.171; 3.235; 3.427; 6.343.

⁵⁰ Martin 1989, 88. Also n. 73.

How can we define this peculiar kind of feminine poetics? Moreover, when emerging from a male-authored text, what is its connection with the "masculine" poetics of the text it is incorporated in? Does a feminine poetics attempt to subvert the "male" text or simply engage in a dialogue with it? Alternatively, do the masculine poetics try to silence or dominate the feminine poetics? Why does the male author choose to incorporate "feminine poetics" in his work? Finally, do the feminine poetics of a male author attempt to imitate the feminine poetics of a female author? How can we read his "imitation process" in order to reveal the essence of a feminine poetics as at least the author perceived it? Is the feminine voice of the male author different from that of the female author? The present discussion will then try to address the manifold problems concerning feminine voice stated above by looking at the cases of women as speakers and women "composers" of poetic diction in the Homeric poems, focusing to the voice of Helen.

As a poet-performer, I propose, Helen narrates an alternative story; a story that is left out; her personal story of guilt, mistakes, her suffering, and her actions. Through her *muthoi* the Trojan War is narrated again: not with the wrath of Achilles as its central piece but with Helen: the war is now revolving *around* her *woven* in the main narrative. A world of her story, her war, and her *kleos* combined with her blame and her eternal fame. This counter epic is not counter fighting against the *Iliad*. It is incorporated, interwoven: if the *Iliad* is the epic about the war in the camps and battlefield, Helen's epic is about the inside war, the war of Helen and against Helen: her private battles and her private opponents.

In treating Helen as a poet-weaver, weaving her own alternative text(ile) in the *Iliad*, I will also see her as an embodiment of doubleness. Not only because as a poet-

performer she is Homer's double, but also because her duplicity is spatial, ontological and discursive: As a Greek in the Trojan camp, she is a figure of spatial doubleness. Her mobility and spatial doubleness are legendary in literature: for Stesichorus, Herodotus and Euripides she is actually in Egypt and Troy at the same time. Moreover, her doubleness goes beyond the spatial sphere; it is situated at the core of Helen, at the very essence of her being. Her national, human or theological identity is double; she is a Greek by birth and a Trojan by marriage, born by a human and a swan, both a mortal and divine figure⁵¹. But, also as poet-figure being herself elusive, difficult to be categorized and duplicitous, she is a paradigmatic embodiment of the elusiveness of poetic discourse. Helen's status is thus a-priori double. Where does she belong? What is her perspective? Discussing the scenes of Helen and about Helen, this thesis will discuss the duality pertaining not only to her place but also her point of view: belonging to both worlds, Helen shares a privileged vision and knowledge belonging only to gods and the poet. Helen's discourse carries this inherent doubleness. Seen as a poet-weaver then, she is composing her own epic in the epic: a story of war *around* her. As a result, Helen is constructing her own "Homer" against, or through the epic bard.

The feminine poetics of Helen I will be discussing do differ from the Homeric. Helen's is based on the idea of unfixity and movement. It is, I suggest, the poetics of mutability. As a semiotic woman (weaver) Helen generates *semata* as she renames or negotiates new significations. As Worman shows, transposition of locution is a characteristic of her discourse. At the same time, she herself needs to be interpreted,

⁵¹ Clader 1976.

recognized acting as a *sêma*.⁵² Trying to see and interpret Helen is not a simple matter as she cannot be a definite *sêma*. She then can be seen a *sêma* of unfixity. At the same time, trans-positioning herself, moving herself from one camp to the other, in the sense that she does not belong to the Greek camp or to the Trojan; she becomes an embodiment of transposition. Helen, as a speaker and poet, *transfers*, destabilizes, *dislocates*.

As a poet creating new *sêmata*, Helen's narrative generates stories within the *Odyssey*: Menelaus responds to her story with another story in *Odyssey* 4. She also generates controversy outside the epic Cycle. Even if the legendary Stesichorean *Palinode* was never an answer to a first invective against Helen, it can be at least seen as another *sêma* of a poetic quality generating different versions. Even Helen's body, is divided: is it a real body or an *eidolon*? Helen's body is then discussed on poetic terms, problematized in the same way that poetry does, in terms of *mimesis* and verisimilitude. Helen's body is not only a poetic body, but also a feminine poetic body: a fertile feminine body bearing unending stories.

⁵² For the word see Nagy 1983. Nagy connects *sema* with *noos* since *sema* requires recognition, an act of interpretation. (36) The word connected with this function is usually *anagnosko*, a word whose meaning later became "to read". Nagy also connects *sema* with poetry and its audience "the Greek poem is a *sema* that requires the *noesis* of those who hear it" (51). My discussion of Helen as a *sema* will build this connection to reading and "textuality" in Helen's discourse. Nagy also connects *sema* with poetry and its audience "the Greek poem is a *sema* that requires the *noesis* of those who hear it"

iv. Weaving the double: Helen as a poet

When we first see Helen in the *Iliad* she is in her chambers, weaving a tapestry, when Iris, in the resemblance of Laodice summons her⁵³. Helen is here presented in the process of making an artifact, emphasizing her creative ability. She is weaving a *double*, purple web:

τὴν δ' εὖρ' ἐν μεγάρῳ· ἥ δὲ μέγαν ἱστὸν ὕφαινε
δίπλακα πορφυρέην, πολέας δ' ἐνέπασσεν ἀέθλους
Τρώων θ' ἵπποδάμων καὶ Ἀχαιῶν χαλκοχιτώνων,
οὓς ἔθεν εἵνεκ' ἔπασχον ὑπ' Ἄρηος παλαμάτων· (Il. 125-8)

She found Helen in her room, weaving a large cloth, a double purple textile, and she was weaving into it the toils of horse-taming Trojans and bronze-clad Achaeans, which she suffered for her sake at the hands of Ares.

Scenes of women weaving are to be expected in the Homeric epics. The scene though bears further consideration for a couple of different reasons: first of all it is Helen's debut in the *Iliad* and, as Kennedy points out, her debut to world literature.⁵⁴ At the same time, Helen is weaving in this first appearance and given the fact that weaving and poetic discourse are connected, Helen's first appearance connects her with poetry. Moreover, unlike Penelope's web, her web is being described. At this point the verbs the poet is using to describe Helen's activity should be looked at more closely. The first one is the common used verb to weave (ὕφαινε). But it is the second verb ἐνέπασσεν that bears further consideration. First because it is a rare word used only in two passages in Homer or archaic poetry in general. And second because it brings up a further connection to poetics. The verb means "sprinkle into" and in this case "weave into" pointing to the

⁵³ Il. 3. 125 ff

⁵⁴ Kennedy 1989,5.

fact that the pattern is rather woven into at this time not embroidered afterwards.⁵⁵ It is then again a comment on structure as the scenes belong to the carpet, are a structurally tight to the artifact. The verb is again is used in *Iliad* 22 in a similar context: Andromache weaves another web with a floral pattern when she hears the news of Hector's death. The use of the same verb in those scenes can be attributed to context, but the use in fact of the same line, marks the two passages as parallel in many different ways.⁵⁶ The scenes are staged in such a way as to provoke the reader to read them together, not only because they share a lot of similarities but also because they are fundamentally so different. Reading those scenes together, I believe, helps to better investigate the connection of weaving with poetry in Homer and illuminates Helen's unique connection with poetic activity.

Both scenes open in the same way. Helen and Andromache both weave a web described to the audience of the *Iliad*. However, both domestic scenes are interrupted by war. Helen is summoned by Laodice to go up to the walls of Troy in order to witness the duel between her ex- and her current husband and share her knowledge about the warriors with Priam, while Andromache hears the lament raised by the death of her husband. They both leave their chambers to go out, there are both summoned to witness the war. Helen will identify the warriors at the battlefield, an activity that will emphasize her omniscience. Andromache is going to see her dead husband. Both passages though share

⁵⁵ Kirk, 1983, 280.

⁵⁶ Compare Il.22.441. δίπλακα πορφυρέην, ἐν δὲ θρόνα ποικίλ' ἔπασσε with Il. 3.126 δίπλακα πορφυρέην, πολέας δ' ἐνέπασσεν ἀέθλους

the weaving theme. But are Andromache and Helen both to be seen as poet- figures? In other words, is weaving always connected to the poetic activity merely *qua* weaving?

It is my intention here to show that there is a dialogue between two scenes, a dialogue that connects Helen but not Andromache with the poetic activity. In using the weaving imagery the text creates two different possibilities; to read the web as text or not, to read the weaver as a poet or not. Opening up both possibilities the Homeric text becomes more inclusive. At the same time, the text chooses Helen as a trope for the web of song. She is moving back and forth the same way the thread does, creating a web. Helen's mobility creates a story as the movement in the loom creates the carpet. Homer, I suggest, does not merely employ a well-known metaphor. As he connects her mobility and her discourse with poetry he initiates a trope; Helen is seen as a text, a trope to be used in literature ever since.⁵⁷ Helen does not weave the *Iliad*; *Iliad* weaves Helen.

When Andromache is described as weaving in the innermost part of her chamber her web is described as a floral pattern. (ἀλλ' ἥ γ' ἴστων ὕφαινε μυχῷ δόμου ὑψηλοῖο δῖπλακα πορφυρέην, ἐν δὲ ἑθρόνῃ ποικίλ' ἔπασσε. 440-1). Unlike Helen, weaving the battles of Greeks and Trojans Andromache's web is not connected with an epic subject matter. Moreover, Andromache's disconnection with the Iliadic story-line is emphasized in the passage. Andromache does not know Hector is dead. Although the audience, as much as the internal audience of all the Trojans and Greeks know, Andromache does not know. No messenger has yet come to her.⁵⁸ Andromache is secluded. Unlike Helen, the

⁵⁷ See for example Suzuki and Gumpert, 2001 for Helen in Roman, English, French, German, and Modern Greek literature.

⁵⁸ Il. 22.437-9 :

embodiment of mobility, Andromache is in the chamber where she does not hear or see she cannot even be seen. Andromache's seclusion then is seen as opposed to Helen's omniscience. She is the one who can see everything, know everything, even summoned to share her knowledge with the others during the *Teichoskopia*. Andromache's inability for poetic knowledge and activity is then evoked in the passage at hand: when Andromache does hear and realize Hector's death she immediately drops her shuttle. (τῆς δ' ἐλελίχθη γυῖα, χαμαὶ δέ οἱ ἔκπεσε κερκίς, 448). Her sufferings are not going to become the subject matter of her web, her knowledge, or her vision is not emphasized and are not to be compared to the poet's as is the case for Helen. On the contrary, the text does point to Andromache's blurred vision and knowledge: she does not know about the death of her husband until she hears the lament; her vision is almost lost as she almost faints. And the only garment described is not her web but her headband, which is not at the making, as Helen's web, but torn out.⁵⁹ Opposed to Helen's ability to create new *sêmata*, Andromache is destroying a *sêma*. Her headband, given to her by Aphrodite, a wedding headband as a symbol of marital bliss, is now destroyed just like the union it symbolized. The headband is now an empty, useless *sêma*.

ᾠς ἔφατο κλαίουσ', ἄλοχος δ' οὐ πῶ τι πέπυστο
 Ἑκτορος· οὐ γάρ οἱ τις ἐτήτυμος ἄγγελος ἐλθὼν
 ἡγγεῖλ' ὅττι ἅ οἱ πόσις ἔκτοθι μίμνε πύλων.

⁵⁹Il. 22, 466-72

τὴν δὲ κατ' ὀφθαλμῶν ἐρεβεννὴ νύξ ἐκάλυπεν,
 ἦριπε δ' ἐξοπίσω, ἀπὸ δὲ ψυχὴν ἐκάπυσσε.
 τῆλε δ' ἀπὸ κρατὸς βάλε δέσματα σιγαλόεντα,
 ἄμπυκα κεκρύφαλόν τε ἰδὲ πλεκτὴν ἀναδέσμη
 κρήδεμνόν θ', ὃ ἅ οἱ δῶκε χρυσῇ Ἀφροδίτῃ
 ἥματι τῷ ὅτε μιν κορυθαίολος ἡγάγεθ' Ἑκτωρ
 ἐκ δόμου Ἑτίωνος, ἐπεὶ πόρε μυρία ἔδνα.

On the contrary, it is the description of Helen's web and the connection of its subject matter to the *Iliad* itself that emphasizes her creative-poetic function. Her text(ile) is first described and discussed: it is a double purple web. Double can first denote size.⁶⁰ The carpet also is two-dimensional: there are two levels; there is a background (the purple cloth) and a foreground (the battle scene). Moreover, this double artifact points to a double subject, since it depicts both Greek and Trojans. But most importantly Helen is weaving the war: her web touches the core of the *Iliad* theme itself. Is Helen then weaving the *Iliad*? One dares to say so, since the *Iliad* is a poem about the battles of Greek and Trojans.⁶¹ But, it is not to be forgotten that according to its proem the *Iliad* professes to be a poem about the wrath of Achilles. Helen's textile then is and is not the *Iliad* since it is diverging from it. Helen's carpet- poem pictures the many battles both camps endured for her sake (ἐθ'εν εἴνεκ'). Helen's poem is about the war for her, switching the thematic center of the Iliadic epic. Presenting Helen as weaving a different version of the Trojan War, the poem brings our attention to the alterity of Helen's poetic voice. Helen is weaving a poem *like* the *Iliad*, the *Iliad*'s double. But her voice is going to be distinctly different from the poet's bringing up a second level of poetic discourse in the epic.⁶² In this context then, Helen herself is a level of the Homeric textile, and the *Iliad* a double textile just like Helen's web.

⁶⁰ Large enough to be worn double: Kirk 1985, 280

⁶¹ Gumpert 20015 with past scholarship (n .6).

⁶² See also Kennedy 1986, 6. Kennedy points to the fact that Helen's web as a visual counterpart to the bard's song. I am hoping to show how Helen's poetic activity can also be seen *as* performance that is Helen's web is not only seen but also performed. The fact that Helen does not sing, which is Kennedy's deciding factor (1989,8) does not mean, I believe, that she cannot be seen as performing poetry. Odysseus is often seen as a bardic figure although he never sings (see e.g Pucci or more recently Worman)

The fact that Helen's carpet functions as poetic discourse can be further discussed when looking at the scene more closely. Laodice, actually Iris in her likeness, calls Helen to see the wondrous deeds of Τρώων θ' ἵπποδάμων καὶ Ἀχαιῶν χαλκοχιτώνων (131). The line repeats 127 verbatim. The repetition, I believe, points directly to Helen's web: what Helen is weaving is exactly what is happening at the battlefield. Laodice summons her to see her carpet. Moreover, the web of significance here is much more complex. Laodice serves both as a reader (reading what she sees) and performer, as she recites her words. Moreover she calls Helen to listen to her work but at the same time she calls her to look outside, to see the *Iliad*. The whole scene then can be seen as brief but important comment on poetry- performance, text-author and audience, emphasizing the metapoetic flavor of the whole scene. At the same time it can be a metapoetic comment pointing to the inherent duplicity of poetic discourse and at the same time emphasizing a duplicity that Helen as a speaking subject embodies.

Helen holds a unique, double place in the *Iliad*. Her duality can be first located in spatial terms. Her status as both the wife of Menelaus and Paris places her in both camps. She is the only Greek living among the Trojans. At the same time, as the cause of war, she is the woman for whom Greeks went to Troy. Helen changes places and causes others to change places as well. As she changes places, the Greeks move closer to Troy and her walls are under attack. In an epic space rigidly divided between two opposing camps, Helen seems not only to belong in both but also to demand that the boundaries be negotiated.

Helen's double existence is then mirrored in the tapestry: she belongs in both worlds: Greece and Troy, in and out. She is both Greek and living in Troy, belonging in

the *oikos* and outside the *oikos*, as a foreign woman. She is as the embodiment of the carpet, bringing war in the *oikos*. She is in the house but the war outside is waged for her. Thus, she is identified with the artwork she is making. She is double, as the carpet, she is telling a story, as the carpet does. She brought war to her *oikos* by deserting it. Now being in a different *oikos* she is bringing war in it. Helen then stands in the middle, she is the borderline. Outside a single combat between her husbands is going to take place: the two men are going to fight for her, or better around her (περὶ σεῖο, 137): she is the middle point of their actions. Helen is between two husbands fighting for her.⁶³ But at the same time she is transgressing the boundaries between Greece and Troy, private and public, male and female, text and author.

It is the crossing of boundaries, this movement from the inside to outside that is already figured in the passage at hand. For the carpet itself points to the movement from inside to outside and vice versa. As a domestic artifact, a carpet is made in the *oikos*, usually in the women's chambers. This carpet though brings in the *oikos* scenes belonging to the battlefield: there is then a movement from inside to outside. Moreover, the war-the external and masculine-, invades women's chambers- private and feminine. A tapestry can then be seen as a war in the *oikos*, then negotiating the boundaries between in and out, domesticity and battlefield, Greek and Trojan.

But Helen's poetic activity cannot only be connected with her weaving activity but also with her function as a narrator. As a speaker, Helen calls attention to this peculiar position between Greeks and Trojans. She keeps referring to Menelaus as her husband,

⁶³Il.3. 136-138: ἀντάρ Ἀλέξανδρος καὶ ἀρηΐφιλος Μενέλαος/ μακρῆς ἐγγείησι μαχέσονται περὶ σεῖο ἔτῳ δέ κε νικήσαντι φίλην κεκλήσῃ ἄκοιτις.

but the same applies for Paris, as well. The same terms (πόσις or ἄκοιτις) are used for both Paris and Menelaus.⁶⁴ She calls Menelaus a former husband, but a husband nonetheless. The same applies for her kin. Agamemnon is called brother in-law (δῶερ) just as Hector.⁶⁵ When a duel between Menelaus and Paris is decided, Helen is announced as the ἄκοιτις of the winner.⁶⁶ As an ἄκοιτις her position is marginal and at the same time mobile. The word seems to gain a new meaning with Helen⁶⁷: she is no-one's wife or the wife of both. As an ἄκοιτις she creates a grammatical indeterminacy: the ἄ- seems to become both privative and cumulative, she is both without a partner and having too many.⁶⁸ Hence, the indeterminacy of her situation becomes an indeterminacy inscribed in language. Helen's language then can be seen as poetic discourse not only because as a weaver she is connected with poetry and the poetic duplicity, but also because she is herself connected with mobility and doubleness both as a subject and as a speaker. Not only does she change places but her discourse shifts linguistic use. It is then the ability of her poetic discourse to produce, shift and alter language.

Before the single combat between Menelaus and Paris, Agamemnon prays to Zeus after a sacrifice and swears an oath⁶⁹: if Alexander slays Menelaus he will keep Helen

⁶⁴ For Menelaus 3.424. For Paris 3.329;7.355;8.82;24.763.

⁶⁵ Agamemnon : 3.180. Hector: 6.344;6.355, 24.762.

⁶⁶ Il. 3, 138: τῷ δέ κε νικήσαντι φίλην κεκλήσῃ ἄκοιτις.

⁶⁷ Semantically the word is connected with stability: see for example the stable bed of Odysseus and Penelope as a sema of her loyalty.

⁶⁸ see LSJ sv α-: it can be either στερητικόν (expressing want or absence) as in ἀθάνατος or ἀθροιστικόν, ἐπιτατικόν: as in ἄκοιτις .

⁶⁹ Il. 3, 276-91

and the treasure, if not then the Trojans will have to give back Helen, the treasure and pay such a recompense (τιμὴν) as seems right. In Agamemnon's words then Helen is a part of the τιμὴν they are fighting for. In the warriors' mouth, Helen is the recompense of war, talked about and connected with the treasure, with the same formula: Ἑλένην καὶ κτήματα⁷⁰. The image of Helen as a prize is pertinent in the whole epic, especially in formulas as the one mentioned before. It is important to remember that the sign is not only generated by the others. It is also a self-generated sign. Helen sees herself as a prize, and presents herself thus. In weaving her carpet she is broidering not the war but the contests of Greeks and Trojans (πολέας δ' ἐνέπασσεν ἀέθλους, 127). Ἄεθλος is a contest for a prize.⁷¹ The Trojan War is a competition, it is a war fought for her, with her as a prize⁷².

Helen is moreover always standing, as a prize⁷³, in the middle of men fighting for her: the single combat will take place ἀμφὶ γυναικί. The preposition ἀμφὶ emphasizes Helen's status as in between the two spaces, the Greek and the Trojan, and picks up the duality I discussed before. The preposition, according to LSJ, followed by a dative, usually signifies place and means on both sides or around, usually without a distinct notion of place.⁷⁴ It is interesting that LSJ gives second meaning of the preposition, a causal one, but the passages quoted refer only to Helen, they are therefore translated

⁷⁰ For the formula see 3.70;3.91;3.282;3.285;3.458;7.350;7.401;22.114.

⁷¹ LSJ sv.

⁷² Clader, 7.

⁷³ In another passage ἀμφὶ is used with another "prize": Patroclus' corpse in 17.369.

⁷⁴ See LSJ sv ἀμφὶ.

because of Helen. Although Helen is the cause of war, and the causal undertones are always there in her case, the preposition, I suggest, is mainly used as a construction of place. It denotes the doubleness of Helen, her double belonging in both places, both sides⁷⁵. It is however an unnamed Helen, a woman. Helen, as a sign, generates more definitions; she generates, by the very act of her being exchanged, one more vocabulary entry. Helen generates more signs, creates language to be unstable extends its boundaries without being able to be named, stabilized. In a traditional genre as epic, governed by formulas and motifs then, Helen seems to be an interruption, an alterity that causes language extent beyond its usual boundaries. At the same time Helen cannot be defined as one, she is always defined as multiple. The attempt to define Helen generates more Helens, more language in order to define her. And it is in Aeschylus that the attempt to name Helen creates a compound Helen⁷⁶:

Χο. τίς ποτ' ὠνόμαξεν ᾧδ'
 ἐς τὸ πᾶν ἐτητύμως—
 μή τις ὄντιν' οὐχ ὀρώ-
 μεν προνοί-
 αῖσι τοῦ πεπρωμένου
 γλῶσσαν ἐν τύχῃ νέμων; —τὰν
 δορίγαμβρον ἀμφινεικῇ
 θ' Ἑλέναν; ἐπεὶ πρεπόντως
 ἑλένας, ἕλανδρος, ἑλέ-
 πτολις...

Whoever gave her that name,
 a name so altogether true—
 was there someone we can't see
 with some perception of fate
 whose tongue happened to bestow upon her
 that war bride the prize of both —Helen.

⁷⁵ The two quotes are 3.157: τοιῆδ' ἀμφὶ γυναικὶ πολὺν χρόνον ἄλγεα πάσχειν· and 3.254 μακρῆς ἐγγείησι μαχήσοντ' ἀμφὶ γυναικί.

⁷⁶ Aeschylus Ag. 681-91. For Aeschylus I use the edition of Gilbert Murray.

Hellen indeed-how fitting
a hell for ships, a hell for men,
a hell for cities, too.

The chorus wonders how Helen is named (ὠνόμαξεν) but language fails them. Whoever did so need to divide, separate (γλῶσσαν νέμων) language in order to name her, exactly because she is multiple. Helen is again between two husbands, between two people fighting for her (ἀμφινεικῇ).⁷⁷ The Aeschylean chorus then is confronted with the impossible of naming Helen. Finally, the chorus comes up with a whole list of names for Helen. And her name (s) is befitting for her: it seems for a moment that there is a sign with Helen as a signifier. But only for a while. For in the next line Helen generates more signs, in order to be named, she again becomes more than one, she is a pun, a figure of speech.

v. Performing duplicity: Helen as a performer

Helen decides to follow Iris to the wall. Before she exits her room, though, she covers herself. Helen, going outside is veiled with a shining head-cover (ἀργεννῇσι καλυψαμένη ὀθόνησιν). The veil is covering, yet shimmering, bringing attention to the person carrying it. Helen walking toward the wall continues to be connected to a work of art. She is something to look at. At the same time, the word ὀθόνη is evoking performative contexts. The usual word for head-cover is πέπλος. However the word occurs one more time in the *Iliad* in the description of the shield of Achilles. There boys and girls are dancing, girls bearing veils (λεπτάς ὀθόνας).⁷⁸ Hence, the word choice

⁷⁷ Note that the preposition ἀμφὶ is in use again for Helen.

⁷⁸ Il.18.595.

provides one more connection between Helen and poetry, performance and art, a connection which Andromache's torn off headband denies.

When Helen appears before the Trojan elders she is first seen and admired thought worthy of the long war. What they see though cannot be Helen's face. She is seen from a distance and she is covered. What they see is what looks like Helen. Moreover the elders do not say anything about Helen's facial characteristics, or even her beauty. Helen, they say, looks like an immortal goddess⁷⁹. In a traditional Homeric simile something is usually compared to another known part so that the first is better defined via its resemblance with the second. In the same scene for example, the Trojan elders are similar to cicadas⁸⁰. The cicadas, lazily chattering on a tree during the summer time is an image, and sound, known to a Greek audience. However, the second simile is not exactly of the same kind, because nobody actually knows how an immortal goddess looks like. When seeing Helen the elders talk about a likeness to something they have not seen before. They are then not talking about a person but a figure, using at the same time a simile, a figure of speech.

Helen is then spoken of as something that demands a figure of speech in order to be described. Helen then cannot be described with an already existing discourse. She forces language to change in order to serve her own purposes, since language cannot adequately express her. The sight of Helen then destabilizes language, just like poetry does. The connection of Helen to poetry is reinforced with the cicadas' simile before. For in Plato cicadas are the representatives of the Muses on earth, the ones who can

⁷⁹ Ll.3 158. αἰνῶς ἀθανάτησι θεῇς εἰς ὅπα ἔοικεν

⁸⁰ Il. 3.150-3. The same verb is employed here to convey the simile (τεττίγεσσιν ἑοικότες)

appreciate poetry and know who appreciates poetry the most⁸¹. Not only do the Trojan elders see Helen, they see Helen as poetic speech, and they are both the audience of Helen and her poetic performance. Moreover, in this context, cicadas are not only the audience of poetry but also function as literary critics. The Trojans then, as the Platonic cicadas, can see and appreciate a work of art and being endowed with the gift of the Muses, being themselves artistic, can talk about it in the proper way. What the Trojans say about Helen is not very sensible. The moment they see Helen they decree that it she is worth fighting for:

οἱ δ' ὥς οὖν εἶδονθ' Ἑλένην ἐπὶ πύργον ἰοῦσαν,
 ἦκα πρὸς ἀλλήλους ἔπεα πτερόεντ' ἀγόρευον
 οὐ νέμεσις Τρῶας καὶ ἐϋκνήμιδας Ἀχαιοὺς
 τοιῇδ' ἀμφὶ γυναικὶ πολὺν χρόνον ἄλγεα πάσχειν
 αἰνῶς ἀθανάτησι θεῇς εἰς ὧπα ἔοικεν (Iliad 3.154-60)

Seeing Helen approach the tower, they spoke winged words softly to each other: “There’s nothing shameful about the fact that Trojans and well-armed Achaeans have endured great suffering a long time over such a woman. For she looks just like an immortal goddess, awe-inspiring.

Critics have emphasized the fact that it is the awesome beauty of Helen that makes the Trojans forget their sufferings while seeing her. However, the Trojans see the figure of Helen, and yet they know how to decipher this figure, As an audience of Helen’s performance, as the elders not only see but they are able decipher its meaning. Helen’s

⁸¹ Plato, *Phaedrus* 259b6-c6

λέγεται δ' ὥς ποτ' ἦσαν οὗτοι ἄνθρωποι τῶν πρὶν Μούσας γεγονέναι, γενομένων δὲ Μουσῶν καὶ φανείσης ὥδῃς οὕτως ἄρα τινὲς τῶν τότε ἐξεπλάγησαν ὑφ' ἡδονῆς, ὥστε ἄδοντες ἠμέλησαν σίτων τε καὶ ποτῶν, καὶ ἔλαθον τελευτήσαντες αὐτούς· ἐξ ὧν τὸ τεττίγων γένος μετ' ἐκεῖνο φύεται, γέρας τοῦτο παρὰ Μουσῶν λαβόν, μηδὲν τροφῆς δεῖσθαι γενόμενον, ἀλλ' ἄσιτόν τε καὶ ἄποτον εὐθὺς ἄδειν, ἕως ἂν τελευτήσῃ, καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα ἐλθὼν παρὰ Μούσας ἀπαγγέλλειν τίς τίνα αὐτῶν τιμᾶ τῶν ἐνθάδε.

image is then looked upon as a work of art, symbolizing the cause of war. She is then seen not only for what it is to the bare eye but what lies beneath, literally, for what is under the veil. Her face is again described as invisible, a rhetorical figure, or an *eikasia*, a likeness, an image (ἔοικεν).

However, Helen is a performer that cannot only be seen, but can also speak and see for herself. Her performative skills are going to be further explored in the *Teichoskopia*. The word itself can be interpreted in both ways: she is seeing and also she is seen from the wall. Helen then is both the object of the elders' gaze and as a subject of gaze as she is looking down to the battlefield, creating a double gaze. But Helen's gaze is double in one more way: Not only she can see at both camps but she also conveys a different perspective, a perspective acting as a double to the poet's. Acting as a poet herself, Helen's gaze differentiates itself from the main Homeric narration. Shifting Homeric narration, emphasizing different or left out versions of the Trojan War Helen's discourse is performed as different.

Priam calls Helen besides him. In his address to Helen vision is prominent. Priam himself can see. But it seems that he does not know. How can Priam not know who the Greek warriors are after 10 years of war? Granted, he is not fighting because of his old age, but still he should have seen them before. The fact that poetry does not have to be realistic does not answer the question. The problem, as I see it, remains. Why does Priam need to hear from Helen? Or, to take it one step further, why do *we* (both the modern and ancient audience) need to hear it from Helen?

Priam calls Helen in order to identify Agamemnon; to him he is a man that looks like a king. It is not a matter of sight but a matter of knowledge. Knowledge and naming

is going to be Helen's task. Again knowledge and naming is commonly the task of the poet. Before asking her to name the heroes though, Priam goes on to talk about his personal gaze on Helen. He sees her as his dear child, and he does not blame her for the war. Then he asks her to see, but at the same time he is adopting Helen's gaze for a while. Priam asks her to take a look at the battlefield so that she may see her former husband, her kin and her beloved ones. For a while, he sees with the eyes of Helen, the double vision that can look at both sides and talk about double husbands, kin and friends. As Helen's audience, Priam and the elders can now see and understand, seeing through her eyes as we do reading the Homeric poems. But seeing through her eyes, we gain a different perspective of the Trojan War. Helen not only narrates, she stages her performance, she is now the director, directing our gaze to her world, a world slightly diverging from the Homeric.

After listening to Helen, Priam goes on to talk about his point of view. He does not believe it is her to blame for the war, but the gods. It is not clear that Priam is taken by the sight of Helen. Yet he, just like the Trojan elders shares the opinion that it is not her fault. And like them he finishes his speech with a simile. Agamemnon looks like a king the same way Helen looked like a goddess to them. However, Priam's simile is a real one, he has seen a king before, he is actually a king himself. Priam talks about the things he knows and looks for Helen's guidance for the things he does not.

Helen begins her speech by naming. But she is not naming Agamemnon just yet. Helen in addressing Priam names him, not as the king of Troy but as her father in law. Helen is shifting the discussion to the private side not the public side, to the side of the Trojans, not the Greeks, inside the walls not outside. Space in Helen's discourse keeps

shifting. Then another shift occurs; this time a temporal one. Helen goes on to talk about the time that she decided to follow Paris to Troy. Along with the temporal shift the doubleness is reinforced by a double perspective. Helen says, I left Greece following your son, Priam's perspective, and leaving my child, my companions. Helen is divided, one more time between Greece and Troy; in one line 174 Helen is following Paris and leaving Greece, (υἱέϊ σὼ ἐπόμεν θάλαμον γνωτούς τε λιποῦσα / παῖδά τε τηλυγέτην καὶ ὀμηλικὴν ἐρατεινήν, 174-5), embodying the spatial shift which is structurally reinforced by the enjambment. As Helen is leaving, language and structure follows her.

In addition, the shift is also a temporal one between past and present. Her words include a wish “if only I died before I did those things” (ὥς ὄφελεν θάνατός μοι ἄδεῖν κακὸς).⁸² The wish is projected to the future but it refers to the past. On the other hand, the infinitive ἄδεῖν refers to the past but it actually refers to the present (for now she knows death would be pleasing to her but not back then). And she concludes with the present. Things did not happen that way (ἀλλὰ τὰ γ' οὐκ ἐγένοντο) so all she can do is cry (κλαίουσα τέτηκα).⁸³ While everything happens outside and in the present, Helen shifts the story line inside and in the past. She talks to Priam about her, giving her perspective, her story. She then talks about her inner feelings and her emotional situation shifting the focus of her narration to herself, while time and space constantly shift. Finally Helen names Agamemnon. In naming the hero to Priam she keeps giving her personal mark: Agamemnon is of course a great king, but being named by Helen he is a double, both a great warrior and her former brother in-law (δαῖρ αὐτ' ἐμὸς ἔσκε, 180).

⁸² Il 3.173

⁸³ Il 3.176.

In naming Agamemnon he is also re-defining him according to her own view point. To everyone else, Agamemnon is the king, to Priam he is the enemy but to her it is a brother-in-law. It is Agamemnon as physically and metaphorically seen by Helen.

Continuing her performance, Helen talks now about herself, how she sees herself. The covered figured gets unmasked but what it is revealed is not a real face but yet another figure of speech; she looks like a dog κυνώπιδος, 180. Helen now calls herself a bitch, redefines herself, altering the way people look at her. Her self-definition is self-gazing: to herself she looks like a bitch. In sharp contrast to the gaze of the elders Helen is not a goddess, she is a beast. In another shift Helen, is now transgressing the ontological realm before she denies her mere existence (εἴ ποτ' ἔην γε, 180). In her ontological shift from the human to bestial, from existence to non existence, language again moves with her. The form ἔην being first but also third person singular creates an indeterminacy. Is Helen or Agamemnon the subject? Is there an “I” implied or is it a she, Helen again gazing at her former self?

Priam’s reaction to her speech is astonishment and wonder (ἠγάσσατο φώνησέν τε, 181). The verb ἄγαμαι is usually used in contexts of storytelling, pointing to Priam’s reception of Helen’s story as poetic discourse.⁸⁴ In addition, Helen’s stories not only excite the old man but they also make him narrate more stories. Priam is not only the audience of Helen: following her lead he takes part in her performance, mimicking her voice. The story of Priam seems to have created a slight discomfort to scholars. In his commentary on the *Iliad* Kirk notes “there is no detectable logic in all this”. Kirk

⁸⁴ μῦθον ἀγασσάμενοι Διομήδεος ἵπποδάμοιο. Il. 7.404; 8.29; 9.51,431, 694,711

primarily fails to understand the need for Amazons to be presented as enemies of Trojans since in other passages they fight beside them. But he also notes that his narration “is probably a result of adapted materials although he might also have been anxious to impress Helen”.⁸⁵ Kirk’s uneasiness is justified since Priam does not usually utter these Nestorian narrations. And, his explanation is partly true. Although I do not quite understand his alleged need to impress Helen here, the comment about adapted material goes straight to the point. For, Priam’s stories, I suggest, bear the mark of Helen, as he adapts her discourse, shifting the time and space from here and now to there and past, and creating a transgression similar to the one of Helen coming to Troy.

Priam’s story is not a story about Agamemnon, in the same way that Helen’s story was not about him. Priam talks about his journey to Phrygia where he fought as an ally against the Amazons. The time has shift to the past, when Priam was still a young man, able to fight. The place is not Troy but Phrygia, not a battle between Greeks and Trojans but a battle between Phrygians and Amazons. Priam just like Helen transgresses time and space, personalizing his story. He also brings in his story the same kind of indetermination Helen carries with her. For the Amazons, the feminine warlike nation, are presented as enemies although, as Kirk observes, they are usually their allies. Amazons, like Helen, are the foreign, the feminine, and the indeterminate. Between friend and enemy, Helen and the Amazons, are the foreign, distractive powers that haunt Priam’s narration and make him mimic Helen’s voice. And he is not going to be the only one.

⁸⁵ Kirk 1985, 291.

After Priam's second question about a hero, Helen very shortly recognizes Odysseus, emphasizing his cunning intelligence (πολύμητις, εἰδὼς παντοίους τε δόλους καὶ μῆδεα πυκνά, 200, 202). It is however Antenor-another follow performer-who narrates a long story about Odysseus in the fashion of Helen's stories. The story is about an embassy concerning Helen. Menelaus and Odysseus talk to a Trojan assembly. The story is then again about transgression, about Greeks mingling with Trojans, just as Helen does. The verb ἔμιχθεν (209) emphasizes the peculiar situation of Greeks in a Trojan assembly, and its sexual overtones bring to mind the resemblance with Helen's situation. Moreover, the emphasis on performance brings the two speakers very close to Helen; both Menelaus but mostly Odysseus are described as performers and therefore can be connected to Helen's poetic performance.

ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ πολύμητις ἀναΐξειεν Ὀδυσσεὺς
 στάσκειν, ὑπαὶ δὲ ἴδεσκε κατὰ χθονὸς ὄμματα πῆξας,
 σκῆπτρον δ' οὐτ' ὀπίσω οὔτε προπρηγὲς ἐνώμα,
 ἀλλ' ἄστεμφές ἔχεσκεν ἄϊδρει φωτὶ ἐοικώς.
 φαίης κε ζάκοτόν τέ τιν' ἔμμεναι ἄφρονά τ' αὐτῶς.
 ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ ὅπα τε μεγάλην ἐκ στήθεος εἶη
 καὶ ἔπεα νιφάδεσσιν ἐοικότα χειμερίησιν,
 οὐκ ἂν ἔπειτ' Ὀδυσῆϊ γ' ἐρίσσειε βροτὸς ἄλλος.
 οὐ τότε γ' ᾧδ' Ὀδυσῆος ἀγασσάμεθ' εἶδος ἰδόντες. (Il. 3.216-224)

But when Odysseus of many wiles got up to speak, he just stood, eyes downcast, staring at the ground. He didn't move the sceptre back and forth, but gripped it tightly, like some ignorant man. You would say the man were some fool or someone idiotic. But when that great voice came out from his chest with words like winter snowflakes, no man alive could rival Odysseus. We were no longer so astonished at his appearance.

The connection of the passage with contexts of poetic performance, indeed with rhapsodic performance is, I believe, rather obvious. Odysseus stands there holding a staff (both a sign of a herald and poet) and begins his speech. Moreover, there is a peculiarity in this speech. Odysseus looks like a fool (ἄϊδρει φωτὶ ἐοικώς) but talks like a wise

man, there is a discrepancy between appearance and words. Odysseus is either playing a role, or his words have the deceptive power of poetry. His position, standing fixed in the ground then contrasts his mobile words (falling on the ground as snowflakes). As a poetic figure, both fixed and mobile, Odysseus stands out as a poetic figure, causing wonderment to the Trojans just as Helen's words did to Priam some lines ago (ἀγασσάμεθα). The scene of Odysseus then is a performance within a performance: while both Priam and Antenor were performing at the lead of Helen, while yet another major performer-figure comes to join Helen's chorus.

The last person Priam asks about is Ajax. Here Helen response is limited to a single line. For the rest 13 lines of her response, Helen does not talk about Ajax. Her response shifts to Idomeneus and then her brothers Castor and Polydeuces. One more time Helen's words show her duplicity and fluidity. Idomeneus himself embodies this shift. He stands besides Ajax, among the Cretans. He is a liminal figure, between the Greeks, between gods and mortals pointing again to the marginal position of Helen herself⁸⁶. Her marginal position is then again mentioned. As guest friend of her former husband Menelaus, Idomeneus used to stay with them every time he travelled in Sparta from Crete (πολλάκις μιν ξείνισσεν ἀρηιφίλος Μενέλαος / οἴκῳ ἐν ἡμετέρῳ ὅποτε Κρήτηθεν/ ἵκοιτο, 232-3). Helen still calls the *oikos* of Menelaus in Sparta "ours" (ἡμετέρῳ), again emphasizing her duality: for she is now in Priam's *oikos*, actually talking to him still referring to Menelaus' house as hers⁸⁷.

⁸⁶ *Iliad* 3.230-231: Ἰδομενεὺς δ' ἐτέρωθεν ἐνὶ Κρήτεσσι θεὸς ὥς ἔστηκ', ἀμφὶ δέ μιν Κρητῶν ἀγοὶ ἡγερέθονται.

⁸⁷ I suggest that the usage of the pronoun reflects a poetic choice and it is not only a metric choice.

Along with her duplicity, Helen's poetic discourse is also well-informed. . Going on with her description she emphasizes both her vision and her knowledge: she sees and knows all the heroes and she is able to name them (235-6). Again, there is a twist that makes her story different from the Iliadic story line. Helen appears as a poetic figure in contest with Homer. In the second proem of the Iliad, a passage with a heavy metapoetic tone, the poet confesses his inability to name all the warriors (πληθὺν δ' οὐκ ἄν ἐγὼ μυθήσομαι οὐδ' ὀνομήνω, 2.488).⁸⁸ Helen however is able to name every single of them, but she will not. The language Helen uses point directly to the proem (οὐνομα μυθησαίμην - μυθήσομαι οὐδ' ὀνομήνω) to emphasize both Helen's poetic ability and her superiority directly engaging in a poetic contest with Homer. The position of both passages reinforces one more similarity and foils Helen's speech within an antagonistic context. Helen is introducing her own catalogue of warriors just as Homer was introducing his catalogue of ships in book 2.

In the *Language of Heroes*, R. Martin discusses how both the poet and his monumemetal character, Achilles use the same rhetorical device, comparing the second proem we discussed above with a similar phrase of Achilles during the Embassy (9.379-86): he will not stop being angry at Agamemnon even if he gives him "10 or 20 times as

⁸⁸ Il 2. 484-493

Ἔσπετε νῦν μοι Μοῦσαι Ὀλύμπια δώματ' ἔχουσαι·
 ὑμεῖς γὰρ θεαὶ ἐστε πάρεστε τε ἴστε τε πάντα,
 ἡμεῖς δὲ κλέος οἶον ἀκούομεν οὐδέ τι ἴδμεν·
 οἳ τινες ἡγεμόνες Δαναῶν καὶ κοίρανοι ἦσαν·
 πληθὺν δ' οὐκ ἄν ἐγὼ μυθήσομαι οὐδ' ὀνομήνω,
 οὐδ' εἴ μοι δέκα μὲν γλῶσσαι, δέκα δὲ στόματ' εἶεν,
 φωνὴ δ' ἄρρηκτος, χάλκεον δέ μοι ἦτορ ἐνείη,
 εἰ μὴ Ὀλυμπιάδες Μοῦσαι Διὸς αἰγιόχοιο
 θυγατέρες μνησαίαθ' ὅσοι ὑπὸ Ἴλιον ἦλθον·
 ἀρχοὺς αὖ νηῶν ἐρέω νῆας τε προπάσας.

many gifts”. The device is similar: specify a condition, state hyperbolic numbering, offer a counter condition.⁸⁹ The device then I also similar with Helen’s rhetorical device, but there is certainly a reversal. Helen is able to perform the hyperbolic condition, she says she can do exactly what the poet cannot, but chooses not to. If Martin can see Achilles’ rhetoric functioning as the poet’s alter ego, I believe Helen can be seen as an alter ego as well. The difference is this: although Achilles is a performer (playing the lyre and singing, or speaking like Homer), Helen acts like Homer, weaving her speeches within his poem, imitating and at the same time competing with him. And the competition, an inherent characteristic of antagonistically performed poetry, is not from Helen’s side only.

Although Helen says she can see everyone, she confesses that there is someone she cannot see. Her look upon the battlefield is again personalized and, once again, double-literally; she is looking for her twin brothers, Castor and Polydeuces, another famous double. She wonders about them and her justification is again double: they either never came to Troy or they are unwilling to fight, being ashamed for their sister⁹⁰. Helen’s knowledge is this time limited but the poet, who just before lost a race against Helen, strikes back: he does know. In a very emphatic apostrophe, the poet-talking directly to his audience- states his knowledge. Again Helen’s narrative and Homer’s compete against each other, and this time Homer is the winner: he knows they are both dead. (Ὡς φάτο, τοὺς δ' ἤδη κάτεχεν φυσίζοος αἴα / ἐν Λακεδαίμονι αὔθι φίλῃ ἐν πατρίδι γαίῃ, 243-4).

⁸⁹ Martin 1989, 224

⁹⁰ Iliad 3, 235-42.

The traditional story about Castor and Polydeuces though is a little different. According to Pindar, for example, Polydeuces and Helen are the children of Zeus and Castor and Clytemnestra children of Tyndareus. When Castor is killed by Idas, Polydeuces surrenders half his immortality to his brothers and they alternate days on Olympus and underworld.⁹¹ The myth is known to Homer since in the *Odyssey* Homer explains that Castor and Polydeuces are dead but alive at the same time in a passage very similar to the *Iliadic* one:

Κάστωρ ἄ θ' ἰππόδαμον καὶ πύξ ἀγαθὸν Πολυδεύκεα,
τοὺς ἄμφω ζωοὺς κατέχει φυσίζοος αἴα·
οἳ καὶ νέρθεν γῆς τιμὴν πρὸς Ζηνὸς ἔχοντες
ἄλλοτε μὲν ζώουσ' ἑτερήμεροι, ἄλλοτε δ' αὖτε
τεθνᾶσιν· τιμὴν δὲ λελόγχασιν ἴῃσα θεοῖσι. (*Odyssey* 11.300-4)

Horse-taming Castor and Polydeuces, the illustrious boxer. Life-giving earth has buried them both but they are still alive. Even in the world below Zeus honors them. On every other day they are alive and then, on alternating days, are dead. And they have won respect reserved for gods.

Doesn't the poet of the *Iliad* know what the poet of the *Odyssey* does? Or is it that he prefers not to mention it? Why does he silence this version in the *Iliad*? The poet of the *Iliad*, I suggest, does not want this ambivalence. Homeric poetics in the *Iliad* need to be limited to one version, letting all ambiguity be a part of the poetics of Helen. In this way the text draws a firm line between the poetics of Helen and Homeric poetics. For the *Iliadic* poetics the ambivalence is closely tight to the sub-realm of the poetics of Helen.

Helen is connected with poetic activity as presented through weaving and performing. Helen is connected with poetry because she is weaving a story on her carpet, a story narrated, performed and seen by the Homeric audience. It is a story that brings out the similarity and at the same time points to the alterity of Helen's voice with the *Iliad*

⁹¹ Pindar *Nem.* 10 49-90.

itself. The web then is not only connected generally with poetic activity but especially with Helen. The poetic discourse of Helen is interwoven in the Homeric poem, emphasizing her mobility and duality not only as a character but also as a poet.

vi. The language of Helen: memory, praise and blame.

Coming back to Richard Martin's discussion, he explains that *muthoi* always correlate with three discourse genres: commanding, flyting (defined as a boast-and-insult contest) and recollection. According to him, these three genres "demand to be treated as "poetic" performances".⁹² If the poet of the *Iliad* employs those three genres in his poem, then Helen could be characterized as a poet-performer should she employ similar or same genres in her performances? Unlike Martin, I see Helen not only as a performer of lament, but as a performer of *muthoi*, which allows her to be seen as a conscious performer and a poetic figure.⁹³ Unlike Andromache and Hecuba, only participating in lament while speaking in public, Helen appears as a unique feminine voice engaging in genres other than lament in both public and private settings.⁹⁴ In what follows, I argue that Helen does employ both performances of memory and flyting, someone might say all three genres since Martin admits that command and flyting as complimentary and "at times minimal", which further demonstrate her poetic function in the epic.⁹⁵

⁹² Martin 1989, 89.

⁹³ Martin 1989, 88. For Martin, Helen's use of *muthoi* is anomalous because of the male orientation of the word. For him it be explained by the fact that Helen is performing a lament-a legitimate public genre of female discourse, 87-8.

⁹⁴ As Martin observes, Hecuba does use the word as well during the lament.

⁹⁵ Martin 1989, 67.

Consequently, I will show that Helen not only uses all genres but also uses them in a different way emphasizing thus the alterity of her poetic voice.

Blame and praise is a basic dichotomy in the *Iliad*. Warriors are praised for their noble deeds, courage in battle. The opposites, cowardliness, insolence, disrespect are to be blamed among them. The dichotomy is well preserved and involves even physical appearance: Agamemnon is praised, for example, by Priam in the *Teichoskopia* for being both handsome, powerful king, and good warrior.⁹⁶ On the other hand, Thersites is blamed not only for being disrespectful toward the king but also for being ugly and of lower class. The dichotomies are rigid: noble-handsome-brave versus lowly-ugly-coward. In flyting then, Homeric heroes employ both as they blame their enemy by boasting, thus praising themselves. Furthermore, when the Iliadic heroes are shown as performing acts of memory, they usually engage similar *mythoi* using “lies or boasts”.⁹⁷ In the *Iliad* the language of heroes draws a sharp line between praise and blame, the first being self inflicted while the latter directed to the addressee. It is in Helen discourse, then, that those dichotomies are deconstructed. Helen seems to transgress the boundaries set by the mainstream Iliadic discourse between praise and blame, beauty and ugliness, noble and coward. She also seems to mix the boundaries of discourse as seen above: while engaging in performance of flyting (boast and insult) she does insult without boasting or praises her addressee while insulting herself. Similarly, while performing feats of memory she does not do so in order to praise herself, as she either praises others or blames herself.

⁹⁶ Il 3, 167-70 (for Agamemnon). For Thersites Il 2, 212ff

⁹⁷ Martin 1989, 77.

In book 3, Helen's meeting with Aphrodite and subsequently with Paris seems a rather traditional Homeric scene. The goddess appears to her in the likeness of an old maid, and summons her to go to her chamber where Paris waits for her. In the *Iliad* there are a lot of similar scenes where an immortal in the disguise of a mortal visits a hero. It is however this traditional scene that is going to be altered in the presence of Helen. Aphrodite appears to Helen in order to lead her in the arms of Paris. Her words to Aphrodite, however, are not appropriate when addressing a goddess. Helen is using language of blame, language used either by the ugly, lowly mortal warriors or in any case by warriors trying to pose themselves as better than their addressee. Aphrodite on the other hand is immortal, beautiful and undeniably better than Helen. Why is Helen using language of blame toward the goddess, challenging the traditional epic diction? Again, I will argue, Helen alters language by evoking traditional language but at the same time upsetting its dichotomies between blame-praise, mortal-immortal.

Aphrodite appears in the likeness of an old Spartan maid to Helen, or better to the audience to whom the poet explains the disguise of the goddess. The superiority of the gaze of Helen is obvious as she does not see nor speak to an old maid. She sees and speaks to Aphrodite. Again, Helen's vision is privileged: not only does she see the goddesses' beautiful neck, lovely breast, and sparkling eyes but she also understands who is in front of her despite the disguise (ἐνόησε θεᾶς περικαλλέα δειρὴν/στήθεά θ' ἱμερόεντα καὶ ὄμματα μαρμαίροντα, / but she perceived the goddess' beautiful neck, her breasts full of desire and her glittering eyes, 396-7). Helen can probably see the face of the maid, as Homer explains, but it is her knowledge that makes her gaze different. What she sees, in contrast to what the Trojan elders have seen, is not a likeness, a simile; it is

the goddess: her neck, breasts, and eyes. Is this the goddess to whom Helen resembles to, according to the Trojans? ⁹⁸ If so, Helen sees what the audience or the Trojans cannot see. Her reaction is amazement (θάμβησέν), just like the Trojans. But her words, unlike them, are not of reverence toward an immortal god. Using the address δαιμονίη Helen denotes a close relationship with the goddess, a relationship among equals.⁹⁹ Helen then is looking at her double: she is looking not at Aphrodite but at another Helen. Not only does she look like her but she also acts like her. Helen first points to her mobility, her own double status: she asks the goddess where is she going to lead her now, to what race of people dear to her (ἦ πῇ με προτέρω πολίων εὖ ναιομενῶν / ἄξεις, are you going to take me still further off, to some well-populated city somewhere, 400-1), suggesting that it was Aphrodite who lead her to Paris, and Troy. For she, after Menelaus' victory will be expected to go back to Greece (Μενέλαος/νικήσας ἐθέλει στυγερὴν ἐμὲ οἴκαδ' ἄγεσθαι, and Menelaus has just won and wants to take me, a despised woman, back home with him?). Helen is again between two worlds, between Greece and Troy, moving back and forth. However this time, Aphrodite is acting like her double. After all leaving Troy, someone should take her place: Helen suggest that Aphrodite might want to do that: "you can be his wife, even his slave"(περὶ κεῖνον οἷζυε καὶ ἐφύλασσε, / εἰς ὃ κέ σ' ἢ ἄλοχον ποιήσεται ἢ ὃ γε δούλην, and lead a miserable life with him, caring for him, until he makes you his wife or slave.408-9), she says disrespectfully to Aphrodite. As a double, Aphrodite must act just like Helen, transgressing not the space from Troy to

⁹⁸ II 3.158.

⁹⁹ The address is always used among equals, either gods to gods (1.561;4.31) or more often mortal to mortal (2.190;2.200;6.326;6.407;6.486;6.521;9.40;13.810;24.194;). This is the only passage that a mortal addresses a god with this word.

Greece but the civic space from wife to slave, from goddess to mortal. It is this double nature that Aphrodite as double needs to mimic. In blaming Aphrodite then Helen is emphasizing doubleness both by focusing on transgression and by identifying herself with the goddess. Helen in blaming Aphrodite blames her double, she is blaming herself. And it is exactly this same position between two spaces that Aphrodite recognizes and uses as a threat against her:

μή μ' ἔρεθε σχετλίη, μή χωσαμένη σε μεθείω ...

μέσσω δ' ἀμφοτέρων μητίσομαι ἔχθεα λυγρὰ

Τρώων καὶ Δαναῶν, σὺ δέ κεν κακὸν οἶτον ὄλῃαι (414-7).

“Don’t provoke me, you obstinate girl. I might lose my temper; abandon you, ...lest I devise grievous hatred from both sides, Greeks and Trojans alike. Then you’d suffer death in misery.

It is actually a double threat: Helen belongs in the space in between (μέσσω) and the goddess has the power to make it a hostile space for her, turning both camps against her. At the same time what Aphrodite threatens her with is that she will stop being her double. Aphrodite is going to leave her, be separated from her. She is going to devise evils and Helen is going to suffer. Language splits the double Helen into two now. There is an “I” and a “you”, breaking the mirror and putting Helen in a different position from Aphrodite. Now Helen will then be trapped in this hostile middle not being able to move anymore. Isn’t this a dreadful punishment, stealing away the essence of Helen?

Following the goddess silently, Helen comes into her chamber where Paris waits for her. The goddess gives her a sit opposite Paris, setting the stage for their dialogue. The scene is loaded with metapoetic terms, pointing to a performance. Helen has walked in the room covered, lest the Trojans see her. At the same time Paris enters the room in

his own costume, looking more like a dancer than a warrior.¹⁰⁰ But once more Helen is not going to follow directions. In what is set to be scene between lovers, at least Aphrodite's stage directions are pointing to this genre, she upsets the expectation. Helen reproaches her husband using harsh words. But it is not only harsh words that do not belong in a bedroom scene. In Helen's words space is again transgressed, and binary oppositions deconstructed.

Helen's performance is again identified as a *muthos* although not a public speech or lament. During this *muthos* Helen's discourse seems to be mimicking masculine epic language. In flyting her husband Helen talks as a warrior herself, trying to shame a fellow warrior so that he will go to battle. The scene resembles to the one between Hector and Paris at the beginning of the book.¹⁰¹ There, Hector said similar harsh words to Paris in order to make him fight with his challenger. Helen is now in Hector's place.

The scene deserves further consideration in order for the differences and similarities with Helen's speech to be further discussed. Hector rebukes his brother for not fighting against Menelaus. The scene is very typical for masculine epic discourse since a warrior commonly rebukes another warrior for being coward. However, the scene is very interesting for one more reason. In blaming Paris, Hector emphasizes the rigid dichotomies of the masculine discourse, setting boundaries that are not to be crossed. Paris is blamed exactly because he crosses the boundaries; he is then not fitting subject matter of a masculine epic. Paris is shown as actually upsetting the distinctions: he is both

¹⁰⁰ Il. 3, 392-4 · κάλλεϊ τε στίλβων καὶ εἵμασιν· οὐδέ κε φαίης / ἀνδρὶ μαχεσσάμενον τόν γ' ἐλθεῖν, ἀλλὰ χορὸν δὲ ἔρχεσθ', ἥε χοροῖο νέον λήγοντα καθίζειν.

¹⁰¹ Il. 3, 38 ff.

good looking and a coward, he is leaving Troy to go to another country, he is “mingling” with foreign people (μιχθεῖς ἄλλοδαποῖσι, 48). Paris is himself an embodiment of transgression. But this is not the way a Homeric hero should act. He is therefore going to die if he keeps acting this way. His death is evoked twice, the first time Hector wishes that he were dead (αἴθ' ὄφελος ἄγονός τ' ἔμεναι ἄγαμός τ' ἀπολέσθαι, 40) and the second he imagines his death (ὅτ' ἐν κονίῃσι μιγείης, 55). In the world of masculine epic transgression is not appreciated, it is blamed.

In the case of Helen, the evoked similarity between the two scenes is already a transgression of boundaries since Helen enters in the masculine realm of *muthoi*. Is Helen then performing a masculine *muthos*? Or is her *muthos* different?

ἦλυθες ἐκ πολέμου· ὥς ὄφελος αὐτόθ' ὀλέσθαι
ἀνδρὶ δαμείς κρατερῷ, ὃς ἐμὸς πρότερος πόσις ἦεν.
ἦ μὲν δὴ πρὶν γ' εὖχε' ἀρηϊφίλου Μενελάου
σῇ τε βίῃ καὶ χερσὶ καὶ ἔγχει φέρτερος εἶναι·
ἀλλ' ἴθι νῦν προκάλεσσαι ἀρηιφίλον Μενέλαον
ἐξαὐτίς μαχέσασθαι ἐναντίον· ἀλλὰ σ' ἔγωγε
παύεσθαι κέλομαι, μὴδὲ ξανθῷ Μενελάῳ
ἀντίβιον πόλεμον πολεμίζειν ἠδὲ μάχεσθαι
ἀφραδέως, μή πως τάχ' ὑπ' αὐτοῦ δοῦρὶ δαμήης (3.428-36)

“You’ve come back from the fight. How I wish you’d died there, killed by that strong warrior who was my husband once. You used to boast you were stronger than warlike Menelaus, more strength in your hands, more power in your spear. So go now, challenge war-loving Menelaus to fight again in single combat. I’d suggest you stay away. Don’t fight it out man to man with fair-haired Menelaus, without further thought. You might well die, come to a quick end on his spear.”

Just like Hector, Helen both wishes he were dead and fantasizes his death in the hands of Menelaus and alludes to the superiority of his opponent. But unlike Hector, Helen’s speech does not attempt to persuade him go back to battle: on the contrary she wants Paris to stay behind, lest he died in the hands of her former, husband. For Hector,

Paris needs to be shamed toward battle, for Helen Paris is received back home, in shame. The two scenes are then complementary: the narrative before complements the narrative after the single combat, the gaze of the warrior the gaze of the wife, the public life the private. More importantly, the feminine discourse of Helen complements the masculine discourse of Hector. Helen's discourse mixes the two: mirroring Hector's heroic language, she transforms it to something totally different reversing the genre she is employing. A generic flyting scene would consist on self boast and insult of the opponent. In this scene, Helen performs both roles: she does insult Paris at the same time she reverses Paris' previous boasts. Through her *muthos*, both his words and his deeds are deemed unworthy. Paris fails as a Homeric hero but is rescued in her own version, her own epic.

Her *muthos* is then again connected with her poetic function. The scene brings the war in the *oikos* in the same way that Helen's carpet did. Looking back to the carpet scene this scene stages an indoor war between the two former husbands with Helen in the middle. Helen then, like Hector, dares Paris to challenge Menelaus, but upon saying these words she hastens to take it back. The scene has created an *aporia*: how can she challenge him to go fight and then ask him to stay? Helen though is again a double: challenging him to fight, following Hector's paradigm, and then asking him to stay following Aphrodite's.¹⁰² Helen is a double, a split self between the two, one more time. And her language conveys this shift: Her talk begins with a death wish for Paris and ends

¹⁰² Compare opening "ἤλυθες ἐκ πολέμου· ὡς ὄφελος αὐτόθ' ὀλέσθαι / ἀνδρὶ δαμῆεις κρατερῷ, ὃς ἐμὸς πρότερος πόσις ἦεν" (3.428-9) with closing statement "ἐξαὐτίς μαχέσασθαι ἐναντίον· ἀλλὰ σ' ἔγωγε / πᾶνέσθαι κέλομαι, ...μή πως τάχ' ὑπ' αὐτοῦ δουρὶ δαμῆης" (3. 433-6)

for a fear for his life, capturing the doubleness of her discourse. It is, again, this doubleness that separates her discourse from the main Iliadic one.

Hence Helen's discourse is again seen as different by comparison, as the main Iliadic discourse strives to manifest its principals. However, it is also interesting that, in trying to present its need for rigid boundaries, Homeric language manifests its lack. It is then necessary for it to fashion a sign, the same way Helen's discourse does to describe her. In calling him *δύσπαρι* (39) then male discourse transgresses the limits it tries to sustain, and falls under the spell of Helen's discourse.

Blame does show up again in Helen's discourse but this time it is self inflicted blame, a motif that transcends the entire poem from book 3 to book 24. What is then the poetics of this self-blame and how does it work in the poem? How is self-blame connected with the alternative discourse of Helen?

The next time we see Helen in the epic, in book 6, she is still in her chamber with Paris. Paris is looking at his weapons, while Helen is sitting among the maids, working. Hector rebukes Paris for his idleness: he should be using his weapons not look at them. The scene is actually divided in two dialogues: between Hector and Paris and between Hector and Helen. In the first dialogue, Hector rebukes Paris and Paris defends himself, practically saying that he is going to follow him to battle. The second dialogue is constructed in a similar way. Again, there is a rebuke followed by compliance. However, in the second dialogue, both the blame and the yielding come from the same person, Helen. Helen's blame then is self-constructed. Although blame for all other characters comes from different persons, Helen's blame comes from herself. Helen engages herself in a different poetic activity. While the masculine epic poetics construct both blame and

praise for the characters in it, Helen's poetics constructs blame as a part of identity, as a poetic activity that allows her poetic discourse to be stabilized. Moreover, while in Homeric poetics characters engage in self-praise, Helen's self-blame is unprecedented. Or, to be more precise, blame for Helen unprecedented. It is only through her own voice that Helen is blamed in Homer.

Helen's speech begins with an address to Hector, δῶερ (344). The point of interest in this dialogue though is not Hector. The focus of her speech shifts quickly with the second word, from Hector to herself: κυνὸς κακομηχάνου ὀκρυόεσσης (Hector, brother of this horrible, conniving bitch). 344. With this triple genitive Helen again addresses as *her* brother-in law. Again, as in the *Teichoskopia* in book 3, Helen in her narratives always shifts the focus to her. She addresses herself with shameful words, in the same fashion that Hector addressed his brother not long ago. His reproach consisted on the fact that Paris had forgotten his duty as a warrior. Helen both justifies Hector's reproach but also differentiates herself. Paris is oblivious, since he does not know people's indignation and reproach against him: On the other hand she does realize her guilt, her mistake, and she knows that she should be blamed. Helen then tries to see and name herself in a way that language could not up to this point. She attempts to finally the *sêma* for Helen to go from the image of Helen to a stable self.

Her attempt for stability then appears as a death wish, the ultimate rest: In her words to Hector she repeats her wish to die, a wish stated before when talking to Priam:

ὥς μ' ὄφελ' ἥματι τῷ ὅτε με πρῶτον τέκε μήτηρ
οἴχεσθαι προφέρουσα κακὴ ἀνέμοιο θύελλα
εἰς ὄρος ἢ εἰς κύμα πολυφλοίσβοιο θαλάσσης,
ἔνθα με κύμ' ἀπόερσε πάρος τάδε ἔργα γενέσθαι. (6.345-7)

I wish that on that day my mother bore me some evil wind had come, carried me away, and swept me off, up into the mountains, or to the waves of the evercrashing sea. Then I would have died before these deeds happened.

Although Helen wishes she were dead, her death has nothing to do with stability. Her desired death is as mobile as her life. In her death fantasy Helen is as mobile as ever, moving in the sky, sea and water, transgressing every possible boundary. It is then language itself that denies the possibility for Helen to be stable. In her discourse stability is not an option; Helen will be forever different and deferred.

Helen seems to realize this fact so she comments on her fame both in a social, moral but also theological level. She speaks about people's opinions and moral judgments (νέμεσιν τε καὶ αἴσχεα πόλλ' ἀνθρώπων, 351). She moreover talks about Zeus' plan (οἷσιν ἐπὶ Ζεὺς θῆκε κακὸν μόρον, Zeus gave us an evil fate, 357) but also Paris' folly (ἄτης). She is also in a position to know that innocent people like Hector suffer because of her (ἐπεὶ σε μάλιστα πόνος φρένας ἀμφιβέβηκεν, since this trouble really weighs upon your mind, 355). Her vision and knowledge are presented as broader than other epic characters, a vision only pertaining to the poet. However her vision seems to be challenging the poet's. She not only knows about Zeus' plan, a basic part of the Iliadic structure, but she moreover seems to be aware of her own deeds as a possible poetic subject matter (ὥς καὶ ὀπίσσω ἀνθρώποισι πελώμεθ' ἀοίδιμοι ἔσσομένοισι, so we may be subjects for men's songs in human generations yet to come, 358). Not only is this another comment that emphasizes her poetic standpoint but also a direct comment of the importance of her story. In a poem about Achilles' wrath Helen points to the fact that she is going to be famous, as an epic character. Is this epic the *Iliad*? Or is she talking about her own discourse, her own alternative epic? Her metapoetic statement points to the fact

that Helen speaks as a poet, a poet who not only has the ability to use tropes, metaphors and similes but also to know the effect of the poetry to its audience. Her comment also points to the immortality of her poetic discourse. Her epic is going to transgress time and space the same way she does. Her song is as mobile as she is.

It is then not surprising that her last appearance in the epic is also connected with poetic activity and performance, emphasizing the fact that Helen's discourse is and will always be mobile. Even after the death of the hero that foreshadows the sack of Troy, Helen keeps composing and performing her own epic. As an *exarchousa* she is lamenting Hector (Ἑλένη τριτάτη ἐξῆρχε γόοιο, 761). Although she is not the only one to sing a lament (the lament of Hecuba and Andromache precede) Helen's lament does not fall to the same category. Although Hecuba's and Andromache's lament talk about their imminent fate in slavery her lament is the chance for her to compose more lines of her epic narration, a narration that is not going to stop in the end of the poem. Moreover, her narration is a *muthos*: a poetic performance of memory, praise and (self) blame.

The lament again begins with the expression of personal perspective: she addresses Hector as her brother in law, turning the focus to her. She then goes on to say her own story. Now the epic is shortly narrated from her perspective from the beginning till the time being. Helen is performing her memory: her following Paris, abandoning her country and going to Troy twenty years ago, and her life in the palace of Priam. All the details of Helen's life, never mentioned by now, are described. This narrative is clearly presented as a different one: this could not have been a part of the main Homeric narrative. It can only be narrated as a part of Helen's epic. It is the story of her own personal war that Helen describes: the personal strives in the *oikos*, and the Trojan

hostility against her. Hector was the only person who never said anything bad to her (ἀλλ' οὐ πω σεῦ ἄκουσα κακὸν ἔπος οὐδ' ἀσύφηλον).¹⁰³ On the contrary he always would take her side and cease the strife in the *oikos*, a strife arousing because of her:

εἴ τίς με καὶ ἄλλος ἐνὶ μεγάροισιν ἐνίπτοι
δαέρων ἢ γαλόων ἢ εἰνατέρων εὐπέπλων,
ἢ ἐκυρή, ἐκυρὸς δὲ πατήρ ὧς ἥπιος αἰεὶ,
ἀλλὰ σὺ τὸν ἐπέεσσι παραιφάμενος κατέρυκες (768-71).

In fact, if anyone ever spoke rudely to me in the house—one of your brothers or sisters, some brother's well-dressed wife, or your mother—for your father always was so kind, as if he were my own you'd speak out, persuading them to stop.

Hector was not only the bulwark of Troy; he was also the bulwark of Helen. Her death leaves her, as Troy, without defense in the Trojan palace. It is her personal drama exposed here, her living in a hostile city where everybody shudders at her (πάντες δέ με πεφρίκασιν, 775). Helen's lament again engages in both blame and praise. Trojans blame against her and self-blame, and on the other side, praise for Hector. In her narrative though both praise and blame come not from public opinion, or commonly accepted epic moral principles. They both focus on her personal view. Hector is praised but not as a warrior, a characteristic commonly emphasized in the main epic narrative. In her narrative, Hector is praised for his mildness, his good nature, his gentleness (σῆ τ' ἀγανοφροσύνη καὶ σοῖς ἀγανοῖς ἐπέεσσι, 772). This is certainly not Hector, as we know him. It is not his strength, his courage, his patriotism, all the values he embodied in the context of the *Iliad*. It is a different value center, a new shifted perspective. Helen's

¹⁰³ κείσε δ' ἐγὼν οὐκ εἶμι - νεμεσσητὸν δέ κεν εἴη / κείνου πορσανέουσα λέχος - Τρωαὶ δέ μ' ὀπίσσω / πᾶσαι μωμήσονται ἔχω δ' ἄχε' ἄκριτα θυμῷ. (2. 410-12).

lament is therefore personal: she mourns the loss of a friend (φίλος) not the Homeric hero:

τὼ σέ θ' ἄμα κλαίω καὶ ἔμ' ἄμμορον ἀχνυμένη κῆρ·
οὐ γάρ τίς μοι ἔτ' ἄλλος ἐνὶ Τροίῃ εὐρείῃ
ἥπιος οὐδὲ φίλος, πάντες δέ με πεφρίκασιν. 774-5).

Now I weep for you and for my wretched self, so sick at heart, for there's no one else in spacious Troy who's kind to me and friendly. They all look at me and shudder with disgust.

Hector is dead as far as the Iliadic epic is concerned. But for Helen his death is the opportunity for a new song. And she knows that Hector is still going to be alive in her song as she told him the last time they met. In the end of the *Iliad* Hector is a *sêma* of death and *kleos* in Helen's performance, as he is himself in a *sêma*.¹⁰⁴

vii. In place of conclusion, or Helen's doubles

Helen's epic has not ended yet. As she transgresses the *Iliad* to the *Odyssey*, she is still an *eidolon*, an unfixed image. Helen in the Homeric epic is the embodiment of the double and the mobile. And although the image of Helen that inspired many poets after Homer there is, however, a difference between Homer and the poets after him. While Homer realizes that doubleness is the essence of Helen, Stesichorus for example misses the importance of this doubleness. While understanding her mobility, the idea of doubleness troubles him. As a result he denies the Homeric Helen and presents his own version of the Helen.

¹⁰⁴ Il. 24.779· ρίμφα δὲ σῆμ' ἔχεαν

Οὐκ ἔστ' ἔτυμος λόγος οὗτος,
οὐδ' ἔβας ἐν νηυσὶν εὐσέλμοις,
οὐδ' ἵκεο Πέργαμα Τροίᾳς·

This is not a true story. You did not embark in the well-built ships. You did you go to the citadels of Troy.

The Stesichorean version presents Helen's mobility as a problem to be "fixed". Helen is too mobile, too double to be just one. It is therefore rather ironic that trying to fix her double nature he presents a self-undermining solution: there are, after all two Helens. In trying to subvert the Homeric myth, get rid of the doubleness of Helen Stesichorus reinscribes the myth by affirming it. In an attempt to erase her inherent doubleness Helen becomes two. At the same time the doubleness is predicated on hierarchy and morality. Of those two Helens one is a real, superior, chaste Helen, and the other is a fake, inferior, deceptive Helen.

Karen Bassi discusses Stesichorus' *Palinode* as a "discourse of denial". For Bassi, Stesichorus' poem is set up as textual antagonism via which Stesichorus intends to affirm the validity of his poem by pointing out Homer's insufficiency.¹⁰⁵ Stesichorus' version of the Helen story is, according to Bassi, pietistic and paternalistic. He attempts to present a chaste Helen who could never go to Troy leaving her husband back. In (re)inventing a chaste Helen however, Stesichorus reaffirms the concept of feminine subject as duplicitous and deceptive. His Helen is created in the likeness of Pandora, following the tradition of the ambiguous and deceptive female.

In discussing the *Palinode* as a text in a dialogue with the Homeric, the Hesiodic as well as the Platonic text-in which it is found- Bassi concludes that the *Palinode* as a

¹⁰⁵ Bassi 1993, 51.

text reveals a desire “both to chasten Helen and a reluctance to do so”.¹⁰⁶ In this way the *Palinode* retains the duplicity that the text tries to erase. In fighting a double Helen, the *Palinode* creates two. What is more, the *Palinode* itself is predicated on doubleness. Being not an ode but one more ode, a Palin-ode, the text is already a double. According to LSJ *παλιν*- in a compound word means double.¹⁰⁷ By re-visiting his first poem, the one that caused Helen’s angry response and his blindness, Stesichorus goes on not to write a different poem but to write on his previous poem. The beginning of the *Palinode* then sounds as his first poem negated. It is important to remember that Stesichorus refers to his own poem as much as he refers to Homer. As a result, in claiming truth and proving Homer wrong, he first needs to disprove his former self. The οὐκ ἔτυμος λόγος (non true story) of the *Palinode* refers to Stesichorus himself as much it might refer to Homer. In writing a poem about Helen then Stesichorus himself attains the “ambiguity” of feminine discourse he is trying to erase. He becomes the poet who is able to tell truth and lies as the Hesiodic Muses do.¹⁰⁸ If this latter version is true it is the ἔτυμος λόγος that can only mean that that the former was ψεύδεα.¹⁰⁹ At the same time, as Bassi observes, there is a discussion about likeness in the context of the *Palinode*. The discussion again evokes the Hesiodic Muses who can tell “many lies equivalent to truth”.

¹⁰⁶ Bassi 1993, 69.

¹⁰⁷ LSJ s.v

¹⁰⁸ For a discussion of the passage see Bergren 1983, 69 ff and Pucci 1977, 8ff. Also for the translation and discussion of the phrase see Heiden, 2007, esp.171ff.

¹⁰⁹ see the well-known Hesiodic claim in Theog, 27.ἴδμεν ψεύδεα πολλὰ λέγειν ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα,

Hesiod refers to ὁμοῖα ἐτόμοισιν, equivalent to truth, leaving the nature of the equivalence unresolved. And Stesichorus never says that the *Palinode* is ἔτυμος λόγος; he goes only as far as to say that the prior was not.

After his *Palinode* then, does Stesichorus establish himself as a truthful male poet, a poet who can affirm his own validity by representing feminine discourse as ambiguous? The answer is, of course, negative but we should not rush to attribute the failure to Stesichorus alone. One should not forget that Stesichorus' poem was handed down to us via Plato. Seen in the context of the *Phaedrus* the whole Recantation story is narrated as a discussion on poetic discourse. Given Plato's mistrust concerning poetry then the story of Recantation is a comment on the misrepresentation of truth by poets. Socrates' point in narrating the episode of Stesichorus' blindness is to deny poetic discourse. If the *Palinode* is a discourse of denial, as Bassi discusses, it should not be forgotten that it is a paradigm for Socrates' denial of poetic discourse. Socrates in performing his speech will be "wiser" than the poets, both Homer and Stesichorus. For he is going to recite his speech uncovered and free of shame.¹¹⁰ Socrates recantation evokes both Homer and Hesiod, both the shameful Helen and the deceptive Pandora. Both women are presented as covered in Homer and Hesiod. Helen goes out to the wall covered in a shining veil and Pandora will be presented covered in a similar veil. Both veiled women are connected with feminine discourse and deceptiveness and this is exactly the type of discourse Plato denies. Plato refers to Stesichorus' Helen because she wants to connect her with deceptive poetic lies or mirages of truth as opposed to the essence of truth only

¹¹⁰ See Plato *Phaedr.* 243b3-7. ἐγὼ οὖν σοφώτερος ἐκείνων γενήσομαι κατ' αὐτό γε τοῦτο. πρὶν γάρ τι παθεῖν διὰ τὴν τοῦ Ἑρώτος κακῆγορίαν πειράσομαι αὐτῷ ἀποδοῦναι τὴν παλινωδίαν, γυμνῇ τῇ κεφαλῇ καὶ οὐχ ὥσπερ τότε ὑπ' αἰσχύνης ἐγκεκαλυμμένος.

philosophical discourse can reach.¹¹¹ In the *Republic* he will again refer to the same story. What made the Greeks fight for Helen was their “ignorance of truth”.¹¹² What they did not know was the fact that what they saw in Troy was not Helen but her “eidolon”.

What is then important in the discussions of Bassi and Gumpert is the fact that they recognize an agon between Plato, Stesichorus, Hesiod and Homer in the context of both the *Palinode* and the text in which it is found. What I would like to suggest nevertheless is that the same preoccupation with *eidolon*, *mimesis*, and poetic discourse can be found already in the Homeric text as connected with Helen. Helen can then be seen as problematizing the nature of poetic discourse and raise a discussion about truth and illusion. At the same time the fact that she is a feminine character connects her discourse with feminine discourse. Thus, in Homer, Helen becomes a *sêma* of feminine poetic discourse, and an embodiment of its mobility. Being connected with doubleness and unfixity Helen and her discourse are accepted and incorporated in Homeric discourse as *différance*. Homeric Helen will never be stable and immobile; she will never belong to one place. However, unlike the Homeric Helen, Stesichorus’ Helen cannot move. She never left, always stayed in Sparta. Stesichorus then is trying to crystallize Helen, make

¹¹¹ For a discussion of Plato and Helen with references to the *Palinode* see also Gumpert 2001, 18 and 47-50.

¹¹² See Plato’s *Republic* 586b7-c6. Ἐὰρ οὖν οὐκ ἀνάγκη καὶ ἡδοναῖς συνεῖναι μεμειγμέναις λύπαις, εἰδώλοις τῆς ἀληθοῦς ἡδονῆς καὶ ἐσκιαγραφημέναις, ὑπὸ τῆς παρ’ ἀλλήλας θέσεως ἀποχραινομέναις, ὥστε σφοδροῦς ἑκατέρας φαίνεσθαι, καὶ ἔρωτας ἑαυτῶν λυττῶντας τοῖς ἄφροσιν ἐντίκτειν καὶ περιμαχίτους εἶναι, ὥσπερ τὸ τῆς Ἑλένης εἶδωλον ὑπὸ τῶν ἐν Τροίᾳ Στησίχορος φησι γενέσθαι περιμάχητον ἄγνοίᾳ τοῦ ἀληθοῦς;

her immobile. His attempt however fails for what he ends up with is not Helen; it is a fake, an *eidolon*. Helen then, one more time seems mobile, unfixed, a *sêma* of unfixity.

It is then obvious to this point that Helen can be seen as a poetic voice in the *Iliad*. Herself a poet-figure seen both while composing (web) and performing (*Teichoskopia*) her position in the *Iliad*, I suggest, is a different poetic voice, a voice of alterity, differentiating herself from the main Homeric voice. Moreover, not only is she different but this difference needs to be seen as the main characteristic of her discourse. In a wider context of Iliadic discourse then, Helen's discourse is a different, feminine discourse not only situated in the heart of a "masculine" poem, but interwoven in it. The poetic difference then is also gendered, not only because it is uttered by a feminine but because it carries with it, and moreover displays as its main characteristic doubleness associated with the feminine in archaic poetry. And it is in Helen, the ultimate subject, or object, of desire that both alluring beauty and doubleness meet. However, doubleness is not, I believe, synonymous with deception. Helen's words in the *Iliad* are neither beautiful nor deceptive. They are- simply stated- different, obeying the rules of an alternative discourse. Understanding her discourse as marked by a difference, an alterity, will help to map down the characteristic of her discourse, a feminine discourse contesting and co-existing with the main Iliadic one, a discourse uttered by a woman who embodies difference, doubleness and alterity in all possible ways: ontological, linguistic, spatiotemporal and gendered.

CHAPTER 3

Performing the other: female choruses and (fe)male voice in Alcman

i. Introduction: problems and questions

In a discussion of female voice, female choral performance needs special consideration since it is a public voice. Although scholars have discussed the problematic even paradoxical nature of a public female voice, nevertheless choral performance is a locus for female voice to be uttered and heard, since the female performers present themselves in public to a mixed audience which can see and hear them.¹ From the dances of Heliconian Muses and Delian maidens to Lesbian or Spartan girls, representations of female choral performances are not scarce in Archaic Greek poetry, starting from Homer and Hesiod and of course Alcaeus, Sappho and the Homeric Hymns. Fragments of choral poems composed to be performed by female choruses, however, are preserved neither well nor in abundance. Alcman having flourished in the 7th c B.C in Sparta and having composed songs for women's choruses is the earliest choral poet.² In a fashion appropriate to archaic poetry, his most extensive, albeit fragmentary, piece of

¹ Stehle 1998, 73-4.

² For dating problems see Davison 1968, 176-9.

femalechoral performance was recovered to us by pure chance; a badly damaged papyrus from Saqqara, brought to light in 1855, contained Alcman's *Partheneion*.

The fragment, published most recently by Calame in 1983 as Fr 3, has provoked many readings, with no consensus. The scholarly interest about the *Partheneion* seems to be unabated to this day, as the 2008 book by Ferrari clearly demonstrates. Moreover, it is undeniably very important in a discussion of feminine voice for many reasons: Not only because its members are female but also because their performance is a point of self-reference. The chorus refers both to the visual appearance and the voice of the female dancers, presenting itself *as* a female chorus. They explicitly name two *parthenoi* the chorus-leader, Hagesichora, and Agido and also provide a catalogue of members of the same chorus. The chorus refers to itself in first person singular or plural, using feminine participles and pronouns. Performed on an occasion connected to a female deity, sung by a chorus of women, and referring to its virginal performers the poem can then be used to enlighten questions regarding female identity and voice. Therefore, I am going to read Fr 1 as a gendered-and sexed-³ performance, emphasizing both the gender and sex of the performers; not only female bodies are on display but also the girls refer to their female identity and their female bodies, staging and emphasizing their female identity before an audience.⁴

In this point one more fact should be taken under consideration: the feminine voice although performed by a female chorus, nevertheless has a male author, Alcman. The voice of the choral dancers then is both a physically female voice and a feminine voice, a

³ I use the terms gender and sex to distinguish between their social and biological dimension respectively.

⁴ Stehle 1998, 71.

construction of female self. The fact that the feminine voice of the chorus is emphasized, regardless of its author, further points to voice as a construction. Feminine voice is important to Alcman and by constructing a female voice he makes a meaningful choice. He considers it as a position in language that can be adopted by both male and female authors since it does not essentially belong to one sex. Traditionally Alcman's choice is seen as a convention of the genre since a *Partheneion* needs to be performed by young women *qua* genre. But this necessity of genre does not dictate the emphatic reference to the femininity of the chorus, or the self-referential comments. If he is trying to be realistic or immortalize the moment of the performance, why does he constructs the performance as a gendered one? How does the gender of the authorship or the performer matter, does it change the audience reception? What I will discuss is why who utters and who constructs the voice matters. Alcman choosing the *Partheneion* as the genre of his poetry also chooses to present an institutionalized construction of a public female voice. The question I am going to ask is whether the construction of a feminine voice in the case of Alcman result to the construction of a "real" feminine voice, as seen in Sappho but also in the male-authored Homeric text, or a voice dictated by male ideology. Furthermore, my discussion will show how the text deals with the contradiction of male-authored and female performed voice, of representation of feminine voice as "real", in other words how the text stages female performance, identity and feminine voice as ideology.

ii. The fragment

Fr.1 (3C) ⁵

1.] Πωλυδεύκης·
2. οὐκ ἐγὼ]ν Λύκαισον ἐν καμοῦσιν ἀλέγω
3. Ἐνα]ρσφόρον τε καὶ Σέβρον ποδῶκη
4.]ν τε τὸν βιατὰν
5.]. τε τὸν κορυστὰν
6. Εὐτείχη] τε φάνακτά τ' Ἀρήιον
7.]ά τ' ἔξοχον ἡμισίων·
8.]ν τὸν ἀγρέταν
9.] μέγαν Εὐρυτόν τε
10.]πώρω κλόνον
11.]. τε τῶς ἀρίστως
12.] παρήσομες
13.].ρ Αἶσα παντῶν
14.] γεραιτάτοι
15. ἀπ]έδιλος ἀλκὰ
16. ἀνθ]ρώπων ἐς ὠρανὸν ποτήσθω
17. πη]ρήτω γαμῆν τὰν Ἀφροδίταν
18.] ἀν[α]σσαν ἢ τιν'
19.] ἢ παῖδα Πόρκω
20. Χά]ριτες δὲ Διὸς δ[ό]μον
21.]σιν ἐρογλεφάροι·
22.]τάτοι
23.]τα δαίμων
24.]ι φίλοις
25.]ωκε δῶρα
26.]γαρέον
27.]ώλεσ' ἥβα
28.].ονον
29.].ταίας
30.]έβα· τῶν δ' ἄλλος ἰῶι
31.] μαρμάρωι μυλάκρωι
32.].εν Ἀΐδας
33.]αυτοὶ
34.]πον· ἄλαστα δὲ
35. φέργα πάσον κακὰ μησαμένοι·

⁵ For the text I follow Calame's edition, 1983 unless otherwise indicated. The translation, unless otherwise indicated, is mine.

36. ἔστι τις σιῶν τίσις·
37. ὁ δ' ὄλβιος, ὅστις εὖφρων
38. ἀμέραν [δι]απλέκει
39. ἄκλαυτος· ἐγὼν δ' αἶδω
40. Ἀγιδῶς τὸ φῶς· ὀρῶ
41. ρ' ὥτ' ἄλιον, ὄνπερ ἄμιν
42. Ἀγιδῶ μαρτύρεται
43. φαίνην· ἐμὲ δ' οὔτ' ἐπαινῆν
44. οὔτε μωμήσθαι νιν ἅ κλεννὰ χοραγὸς
45. οὐδ' ἀμῶς ἐῆι· δοκεῖ γὰρ ἤμεν αὐτα
46. ἐκπρεπῆς τῶς ὥπερ αἶ τις
47. ἐν βοτοῖς στάσειεν ἵππον
48. παγὸν ἀεθλοφόρον καναχάποδα
49. τῶν ὑποπετριδίων ὀνείρων·
50. ἢ οὐχ ὀρήις; ὁ μὲν κέλῃς
51. Ἐνητικός· ἅ δὲ χαίτα
52. τᾶς ἐμᾶς ἀνεψιᾶς
53. Ἀγησιχόρας ἐπανθεῖ
54. χρυσὸς [ῶ]τ' ἀκήρατος·
55. τό τ' ἀργύριον πρόσωπον,
56. διαφάδαν τί τοι λέγω;
57. Ἀγησιχόρα μὲν αὐτα·
58. ἅ δὲ δευτέρα πεδ' Ἀγιδῶ τὸ φείδος
59. ἵππος Ἰβηνῶι Κολαξαῖος δραμήται·
60. ταῖ Πεληάδες γὰρ ἄμιν
61. Ὀρθρίαι φᾶρος φεροίσαις
62. νύκτα δι' ἀμβροσίαν ἅτε σήριον
63. ἄστρον ἀφηρομέναι μάχονται·
64. οὔτε γὰρ τι πορφύρας
65. τόσσοις κόροις ὥστ' ἀμύναι,
66. οὔτε ποικίλοις δράκων
67. παγχρύσιος, οὐδὲ μίτρα
68. Λυδία, νεανίδων
69. ἱανογ[λ]εφάρων ἄγαλμα,
70. οὐδὲ ταῖ Ναννῶς κόμαι,
71. ἀλλ' οὐδ' Ἀρέτα σιειδῆς,
72. οὐδὲ Σύλακίς τε καὶ Κλεησισήρα,
73. οὐδ' ἐς Αἰνησιμβρ[ό]τας ἐνθοῖσα φασεῖς·
74. Ἀσταφίς [τ]έ μοι γένοιτο
75. καὶ ποτιγλέποι Φίλυλλα
76. Δαμαρ[έ]τα τ' ἐρατά τε φανθεμῖς·
77. ἀλλ' Ἀγησιχόρα με τείρει.
78. οὐ γὰρ ἅ κ[α]λλίσφυρος
79. Ἀγησιχ[ό]ρ[α] πάρ' αὐτεῖ,

80. Ἀγιδῶϊ ..ε.. αρμένει
81. σωστήρ[ιὰ τ'] ἄμ' ἐπαινεῖ.
82. ἀλλὰ τᾶν [...][...]οῖ
83. δέξασθε· [σι]ῶν γὰρ ἄνα
84. καὶ τέλος· [χο]ροστάτις,
85. φείποιμί δ', [ἐ]γὼν μὲν αὐτὰ
86. παρσένος μάταν ἀπὸ θράνω λέλακα
87. γλαύξ· ἐγὼ[ν] δὲ τᾶι μὲν Ἀώτι μάλιστα
88. φανδάνην ἐρῶ· πόνων γὰρ
89. ἄμιν ἰάτωρ [ἐ]γε[ν]το·
90. ἐξ Ἀγησιχόρ[ας] δὲ νεάνιδες
91. ἱρ]ήνας ἐρατᾶς ἐπέβαν·
92. τῶ]ι τε γὰρ σηραφ[ό]ρῳ
93. αὖ]τῶς ἐδ.....
94. τ[ῶ]ς κυβερνάται δὲ χρῆ
95. κῆν νᾶϊ μά[λ]ιστ' [ἀ]κούην·
96. ἃ δὲ τᾶν Σηρην[ίδ]ων
97. ἀοιδότερα μ...[
98. σιαὶ γάρ· ἀντ[ι]
99. παίδων δεκ.....[.]ει·
100. φθέγγεται δ' [...][...][...] Ζάνθῳ ῥοαῖσι
101. κύκνος· ἃ δ' ἐ[π]ιμέρῳ ξανθᾷ κομίσκai
102. []
103. []
104. []
105. []
106.
107.

...Polydeuces. As for myself, I will not count Lycaethus among the dead or Enarsphorus and swift-footed Sebrus and the violent...and the helmeted Euteiches and the king Areius and ...preeminent among the demigods. As for ..., gatherer of the army, and great Eurytus in the press of the battle, and ... finest...we will not pass over. For Fate and Poros (?) most ancient of all gods...their unfounded power. Let no man fly to heaven or attempt to marry neither Queen Aphrodite nor some ...nor a daughter of Porcus. The Graces with love dripping down their eyes in the palace of Zeus...more...god...to friends...gave gifts...lost youth...throne...futile...went...of them one did by an arrow another by a marble millstone...in Hades...and unforgettably they suffered since they plotted evil. There is such a thing as the revenge of Gods. Blessed is the man who happily weaves the web of his day to the end, a stranger to tears.

But I sing of the light of Agido. For I see her as the sun; whom Agido calls to shine as a witness for us. But I cannot either praise or blame her for our illustrious choregos does not let me, not at all. For she seems to me preeminent, just as if one sets among the grazing herds a strong, prize winning horse, with clashing hooves, a steed of winged dreams. Well, don't you see? The one is an Enetic race horse. But the hair of my cousin Hagesichora is blooming like undefiled gold. And that silver face of hers! Do I speak clear enough? Here is Hagesichora! And that second one in beauty is Agido, she runs like a Colaxean horse next to an Iberian. For these

Peleiades, rising up like Sirius, the star, are fighting us in the ambrosial night as we are bringing our offerings to Orthria. For to defend ourselves neither the abundance of purple is enough, nor the ornate solid golden dragon, or the Lydian headband, the pride of soft-eyed girls, or Nanno's hair will suffice, or Arete, the godlike, or Thylakis and Kleesithira. Nor going to Aenisibrota's you are going to say: I wish Astaphys would be mine and Phillylla look at me, or lovely Damareta or Vianthemis...But Hagesichora wears me out...For is not fair-ankle Hagesichora close to us, but close to Agido, praising our celebration? But receive their prayers, Gods! For both accomplishment and end belong to gods. Chorus leader, if I may speak, I am only a young girl, screeching in vain like an owl on a rafter. But even I above all yearn to please Aotis. For she is the healer of our toils. But it was thanks to Hagesichora that the young girls trod the path of lovely peace. For just like the trace-horse or a ship too, one must obey the helmsman most of all. For she is of course not as melodious as the Sirens, for they are goddesses, but ours choir of ten sings as loudly as one of eleven. And she sings as a swan by the waters of river Xanthus. And she with her lovely golden hair...

iii. Recent scholarship

In reading the Partheneia of Alcman, deciphering the voices of the female chorus has been addressed by scholarship using different approaches and methodological tools. In his groundbreaking study of the Louvre Partheneion, Claude Calame uses anthropological models of tribal initiation to discuss Alcman's poem. For him "the ritual activity of adolescent girls ...is comparable to the institution of tribal initiation".⁶ Calame's discussion emphasizes on both the social and ritual aspect of girl's choruses. According to him, choruses of young boys and girls played an important role in the social life of the archaic city as an institution of transition: through choral dancing and singing society attempts to "integrate adolescent boys and girls into adult society by preparing them for the role of citizen and his wife".⁷ As a result, Calame reads the fragment as a rite of passage from girlhood to adulthood, from the status of a young virgin, (παρθένος) to a woman and wife (γυνή).

⁶ Calame 1997, 262.

⁷ Calame 1997, 264.

Eva Stehle is again using the anthropological model, discussing the *Partheneion* as a community performance as well. Emphasizing the gendered voice of the chorus she concludes that choruses generally “publicly demonstrate their internalization of gender roles, while reinforcing the construction of these roles for the audience”.⁸ Discussing matters of performance and self-representation, she emphasizes the chorus’ references to their own voice, concluding that female performers emphasize their inability to speak. In doing so, Stehle admits, reading the *Partheneion* we are faced with a contradiction: their performance needs to follow the commands of a society that more or less forbids them to speak.⁹ The desideratum of their performance is then to “publicly demonstrate their lack of voice”.¹⁰

Furthermore, it has been noticed in recent scholarship that the interesting problem of feminine voice and subjectivity is reinforced by the structure of the poem: Based on the bipartite division of the song, Robbins discusses the first, heavily damaged and largely ignored by scholarship, part of the poem trying to recover the mythological story but also emphasizing its connections with the second part. For Robbins there are “important thematic connections” between the two parts: the first part of the poem introduces the themes of battle and race and the second part brings back and reworks the

⁸ Stehle 1998, 72.

⁹ Zeitlin 1990 and Goff 1990 discuss the complexities of women speaking in public. Their discussion, although focusing in tragedy, is also helpful here.

¹⁰ Stehle 1998, 73.

same themes. As a result, she concludes, the legend recounts a moral and the second part “puts the moral into practice” enacting the idea that force “cedes to grace”.¹¹

Going back to Robbins’s discussion about the interdependence between the two sections of the poem, Clark emphasizes the construction of a gendered body and voice in the poem.¹² Discussing the poem, she concludes that the division between the two sections of the poem reveals not only a different social model for men and women to follow, but also a differentiated authority as far as the narrator is concerned.¹³ In her explanation, the girls, having internalized their socially subordinate role, undermine their own speech and at the same time reproduce male-structured codes for the next generation, codes that will make them passive, desired, beautiful objects.¹⁴ At the same time both Robbins and Clark agree that the fact that first section, the catalogue of warriors, employs a strong authoritative male speech while in the second the authority of the chorus’ speech is problematic, almost impossible.¹⁵ Moreover, in both discussions, the themes of race and war are discussed as insignia of male discourse.

Robbins’ article touches upon the metaphorical language of the poem in passing under the rubric of masculine discourse. For her, the language of race and battle are employed as metaphors anchored in the world of men.¹⁶ In her article then there is no

¹¹ Robbins 1994, 14- 16.

¹² Clark 1996, 143, 146-7.

¹³ Clark 1996, 151.

¹⁴ Clark 1996, 168.

¹⁵ Robbins, 1994; Clark, 1996.

¹⁶ Robbins 1994, 9.

further discussion of the metaphoric language other than it is gendered. However, the network of metaphors is too complex to be explained away in two categories. Metaphor as an important subject for the Partheneion has been previously discussed by scholarship. Scholars have been intrigued and perplexed by the complex networks of metaphors attempting to connect them with the performance of ritual. According to Lonsdale, for example, the use of animal and bird metaphors can be directly related to the performance. Although he does not argue that the chorus members would be dressed up as animals, nevertheless he believes that choreography was pointing to the metaphor, through mimetic dancing.¹⁷ The metaphors used in the poem however cannot be all explained away through performance. Most recently Peponi raised the question discussing the perplexing imagery and use of metaphoric language in the fragment, discussing how the metaphor of light is used interchangeably with deictic pronouns creating a shift between vision and visualization asking the audience both to see and contemplate on the performance.¹⁸ In an insightful reading, she argues that “the imaginary world (described via metaphors) is constantly remodeled and reshaped”.¹⁹ For example, in the extended horse race metaphor, the images (and breeds) of race horses change. Why would that happen if the only purpose would be either describing the choreography or in an allegorical level allude to competition that points to male military organization?²⁰ Furthermore what is the function of the specific metaphor? Why are the dancers

¹⁷ Lonsdale 1993, 200.

¹⁸ Peponi, 2004.

¹⁹ Peponi 2004, 303.

²⁰ Lonsdale 2004, 202.

compared to specific race horses? Keeping that in mind, we can also see that the metaphors employed by Alcman are not exclusively taken by the world of race and battle nor do they always reinforce the opposition force vs grace that Robbins attempts to read in the poem.

In the present chapter then, I will show that discussing the underlying problem of representation of female speech can shed light on problems of perplexing imagery, fragmentation or metaphorical language. My main thesis begins from the fact that the maidens of the *Partheneion* fail to perform a feminine discourse to show that this can be seen as a double failure: As a performance of discourse consists on both the visual and vocal element then maidens are staged not only as speechless but also as unrepresentable. Speechless, because they are either incapable of uttering any voice or as mimicking a language that does not belong to them. Moreover, using metaphoric language while describing the dancers, the chorus is pointing to an ever-changing, shifting spectacle that cannot be fully seen. It is through metaphors that the young girls are represented as animals, racing horses, doves, swans or metals emphasizing their unrepresentable quality. The performance described then is a blurry, abstract image resembling the subjectivity of the dancers.

iv. Scholarship and methodology

Discussing gender relationships in Alcman both Stehle and Clark turn to modern theoretical approaches. Claude Calame uses modern anthropological models to reconstruct the ritual practice behind the *Partheneion*. Clark uses the theoretical work of Cowan and Bourdieu to talk about the body as social construction while Stehle is heavily

indebted to Zeitlin's work on female identity and the construction of the female persona. For my own discussion of gender in the *Partheneion* I turn to the work of Luce Irigaray.²¹ Since I want to emphasize not only gender relationships but also female discourse, Irigaray's discussion will help to elucidate matters of female voice in the *Partheneion*. Irigaray's discussions dispute the male-structured structures of language and attempt to find a place for female discourse within society. In this context, the *Partheneion* presented in and as a public performance problematizes female discourse in the public sphere. Since Stehle argues that the voice of the young girls in the *Partheneion* is deemed impossible, then why the need of performing female voice as such? How does it bring up social structures or civic ideology? Is the *Partheneion* simply a manifesto of phallogentric discourse or does it challenge a male structured traditional society such as Archaic Sparta?

In his study of the *Partheneion* Claude Calame uses anthropological models of tribal initiation to discuss Alcman's poem. For him "the ritual activity of adolescent girls ...is comparable to the institution of tribal initiation".²² Calame also points out that poems like the *Partheneion* "confirm the role of tribal initiation in the instruction of sexuality"²³ In other words, in Alcman's archaic Sparta young girls are educated through certain ritual activities. The passage from girlhood to womanhood is concluded by a choral performance of songs as the *Partheneion*, performed in a public festival. The young girls dance in public as they are initiated into the realm of adult life prepared for

²¹ Irigaray 1985, especially 8, "Women on the Market" and 9, "Commodities among Themselves"

²² Calame 1997, 262.

²³ Calame 1997, 261.

the next step, their marriage. In Calame's words "the public forum played a central role in the system of *distribution* and *exchange* of new women, *placed at the disposal of the adult social body* by initiation".²⁴ Calame's choice of words is very important here. For, reading the poem with a Marxist theory of exchange of women is, I propose, going to help solving some of the enigmas of the *Partheneion*.²⁵

Moreover, Luce Irigaray in her essay "Women on the Market" further develops Marxian ideas when she points out that the organization of patriarchal societies is based upon the exchange of women. The passage into order of a society, into the symbolic order, is then linked with the institutionalized gazing upon women as objects of transaction; if that fails the society falls back into animality or anarchy. Women, like signs, myths and commodities are made to be exchanged and always refer back to men.²⁶ Women, signs, myths, commodities and men seem to be the basis of the *Partheneion* as well: the poem can be read as the representation of these exchanges, or even as an exchange itself. For performance is in itself an exchange in which, performed by and referring to women, to myths but also commodities, the poem publicly signals a transition and the beginnings of a series of (marital) transactions.. In such a performance, female voice and representation are critical. Discussing the *Partheneion* with Irigaray brings together matters of ritual, gender, female voice and representation in an unexpected but, I believe, most fruitful way.

²⁴ See Calame 1997, 262 (Italics are mine).

²⁵ For an anthropological view on the exchange of women see also the seminal work of Gayle Rubin 1975. In classics, important discussions can be found in Kurke 1991; Rabinowitz 1993; and Wohl 1998.

²⁶ Irigaray 1985, 170-1.

Often seen as a ritual transition the fragment can be read not only as a passage into order of a society but also as a (failed) attempt of the female to enter into the symbolic order. Since according to Lacan, entry to the symbolic order happens in the register of visible, in other words the self needs to recognize itself through a visual experience, I believe performance can be seen as a mirror, in which self and audience see and recognize each other. Under this light, the female chorus is constructed as otherness, alterity, even non-being, and in the context of the *Partheneion*, as silent. Regarding language, an attempt to find their own voice ends up to be a futile one: female citizens can only enter the city performing male discourse, speaking a male language. Moreover their performance then is then linked to male discourse qua performance: both elements of performance (the visual and verbal) become parts of a male discourse. The female dancers of the chorus both gaze at each other through a male lens and engage in an institutionalized gazing upon women as objects of transaction; Women in the *Partheneion*, like signs, myths and commodities are made to be exchanged and always refer back to men.

v. Singing the other: feminine voice in Alcman's *Partheneion* 1 (1P, 3C)

The *Partheneion* “begins” in a quite enigmatic way, presenting us with an interesting problem right at its beginning.²⁷ The fragmentary quality of the *Partheneion* prevents any certain arguments about the length or the possible beginning of the poem.

²⁷ Even the title *Partheneion* is more of a traditional, working title than a genre. The title probably comes from Alexandrian categorization since there is no indication that it was an established literary genre, at least in the archaic period. The consensus is that *partheneia* are choral songs performed by young women (in Calame's opinion for an audience of young women only). For a discussion of the problems concerning the genre, see Calame 1997, 2-3.

Scholars have been speculating on both matters. Page, in his commentary on the *Partheneion*, points to the fact that in the papyrus one more column-now lost- preceding our first column and consisting of 35 lines would open the poem. Thus, according to Page, the missing two and a half stanzas would consist on an invocation to the deity and the beginning of the legend, the middle part of which is the beginning of our fragment. If he is right, the whole poem would have consisted on 10 complete 14-line stanzas; the first five are devoted to the legend and the second five to “personal references”.²⁸ According to Page then this peculiar girl song is indeed divided in half: beginning with the mythological example containing the catalogue, it ends with the personal references to members of the chorus, a catalogue of female dancers. It would be fair then to conclude that the fragment is divided in two parts, a “male” and a “female” part.

Scholarship from Page’s commentary until the mid-90’s focused on the second part of the poem, sometimes briefly discussing the first before getting to the most “important part”. On the other hand, some scholars tried to recover the myth of the first part, discussing it in detail but missing -or even denying- any thematic resonances between the two.²⁹ Robbins’ discussion is important mainly because she was the first one to bring out interdependence between the two sections of the poem.

Robbins, however, does not draw any solid conclusions about the overall significance of this bipartite division: a mere opposition Force vs. Grace does not seem very convincing especially in the context of performance. Why would a chorus of girls

²⁸ Page 1951,1-2.

²⁹ Page 1951, 26-44. Clay 1991, 53, summarizes the discussions about the legend and even denies any connections of the two parts.

reenact the particular themes of force and battle? What is the function of the double-gendered language of the poem? Admittedly war and race metaphors evoke a male world but the question that should be asked is how this male language works when performed by a girl's chorus, and whether the fact that it is constructed by a male author matters.

Regarding the gendered language of the *Partheneion*, Cristina Clark on the other hand does emphasize its role, but inadequately discusses the role of gendered voice. For example Clark points out that the authority of the chorus in the first section of the poem is stronger unlike the second part. This "problematic authority" comes into play when "the chorus shifts character" between the two sections of the poem.³⁰ It is not, I believe, a change of *character* but a change of *voice*: it is the same physical female voice that shifts from authoritative to non authoritative because it shifts from a male paradigm of warriors to the feminine paradigm of chorus dancers, from masculine to feminine voice. Thus, it is imperative to discuss the shift from one voice to the other: why does the chorus even make this shift?

More importantly, I will argue, the interaction of vision and speech is crucial for a discussion of female voice because of its bipartite division but also because it problematizes the inherent division between the male authority of the author and the female "authority" of the performers. The male-female world division is at play at all times in the *Partheneion* underlying its structure and its performance. In what follows then, I will discuss the bipartite division with an emphasis on the female voice of the second part of the poem. How do these two voices interact with each other, if they do,

³⁰ Clark 1996, 168.

and why the division? Is it connected with the “problematic authority” of the chorus? Do the two parts join in forming an integral whole?

a. Gender and structure: the male paradigm

Restoring the lost stanzas of the poem can be no more than pure speculation. Traditionally the poem should have begun with an invocation to a deity. Page and Calame both agree on the rough outlines: the mythological exemplum following is a catalogue of the sons of Hippocoön probably in reference to the battle with Heracles and some connection with the Tyndarids. It is also possible that the myth was connected with a local cult or Laconian legend. If Page is right, the myth narrated in the *Partheneion* would be connected with a local legend according to which the Hippocontides fought with the Tyndarides for a bride or brides.³¹ In such a context, the advice that no mortal should attempt to marry a goddess, or the daughters of Porcus and maybe the Graces, would be appropriate. What follows is a problematic mention of Poros and Aisa as the eldest of Gods, and finally after some lines that cannot be restored, a mention of enigmatic sinners-who offended the gods? - That probably proves the maxim: there is such a thing as the revenge of the Gods. Then, the transition through the *gnome* to the more secure and self-referential second part of the poem, marked with the first person personal pronoun and verb: ἐγὼν δ' αἰεὶδω, 39.³² But is this the first self-reference of the chorus?

³¹ Page 1951, 31-33

³² Page 1951, 30-44 with a summary in 44. Calame 1971, 3.2, 52 ff.

If the *Partheneion*, as both Page and Robbins claim, begins with a short introduction, maybe an invocation to a female goddess, right before the legend then the introduction of the chorus to the audience would probably belong there. However, the first personal pronoun (ἐγὼ) we have referring to the *persona loquens* is to be found in line 2, followed by a first person plural verb in line 12. Those first self-references of the chorus are connected with its poetic activity: the chorus refers to its own song, its composing process. The speaking I refers to its own catalogue of the heroes and the mind process behind it: the I does not count Lycaethus among the dead ones (οὐκ ἐγὼ]ν Λύκαισον ἐν καμοῦσιν ἀλέγω, 3). The speaking I either excludes Lycaethus from his catalogue of heroes³³, or states that all the heroes mentioned should not be considered dead because of their glorious deeds. Together with the παρήσομες in line 12 (omit, pass over) the chorus speaks first in first person singular and then in first person plural about its own cataloguing of heroes, the thinking process and the composing of its own song but also the performance: this is what I choose to mention, this is what matters to me, seems to be the underlying issue. In narrating the legend, the persona of the chorus is not a simple narrator; the persona does state its own mind, followed by the gnomes. First a prohibition in lines 17-8 [μή τις ἀνθ]ρώπων ἐς ὠρανὸν ποτήσθω / [μηδὲ ἐπη]ρήτω γαμῆν τὰν Ἀφροδίταν (let no mortal try to fly in heaven or marry immortal Aphrodite) and then an affirmation in 36 ἔστι τις σιῶν τίσις (there is indeed such a thing as the revenge of Gods) followed by a gnome that leads to the second part of the poem: ὁ δ'

³³ Following Page 1951, 27 and 82. If it is a catalogue of the sons of Hippocoön, Lycaethus (son of Derites according to the marginal note) cannot belong there.

ὄλβιος, ὅστις εὖφρων ἀμέραν [δι]απλέκει/ ἄκλαντος (blessed is he who cheerful weaves through the web of the day not shedding a tear, 37-8).

Although the second part of the poem is usually seen as self-referential, I think that there are enough references at the first part as well that support the argument that the chorus referring to itself in line 39 should not be seen as a first. The second section of the poem though should be studied more carefully for its connection with female voice since the *parthenoi* do speak about themselves and their activity as dancers. What I would like to stress, though, is that there is a strong connection of their female voice with the first part of the poem. The *parthenoi* refer back to the first section, and this “dialogue” helps to elucidate this interesting but also strange voice.

b. Gender and structure: the female paradigm

The first line of the second section of the poem points to the self reference with a double marker.

ἐγὼν δ' αἰδῶ
'Αγιδῶς τὸ φῶς· ὀρῶ
ἦ' ὥτ' ἄλιον, ὄνπερ ἄμιν
'Αγιδῶ μαρτύρεται
φαίνην· ἐμὲ δ' οὐτ' ἐπαινῆν
οὔτε μωμήσθαι νιν ἅ κλεννὰ χοραγὸς
οὐδ' ἀμῶς ἐῆι· (39-45)

But I *sing* of the light of Agido. For I *see* her as the sun that Agido summons to shine on us as a witness. But I cannot either praise or blame her for our illustrious choregos does not let me, not at all.

The personal pronoun ἐγὼν marks the chorus as the subject and the verb αἰδῶ refers to the vocal function of the speakers. The chorus describes its function and in the next line starts describing Agido a prestigious member of the chorus. The focus is now on the performance of a special chorus member. If Agido represents the chorus at its finest,

the member that all chorus members look up to in amazement, then their representation will be crucial for the identity of the whole chorus. Agido is first mentioned in genitive. They do not sing of Agido but of Agido's light (Ἀγιδῶς τὸ φῶς, 40). The metaphor continues as a simile: the chorus sees her as the sun (ὥτ' ἄλιον, 41).³⁴ In the chorus's words then Agido is light, a very bright image that does not however have a voice. The description of the chorus then falls short and the chorus goes on to talk about their rather inadequate description of her vocal talent. The chorus itself cannot actually talk about Agido, cannot either blame or praise her (οὐτ' ἐπαινῆν / οὔτε μωμήσθαι, 43-4). The chorus refers to its two basic functions *qua chorus* but only to say that here they are negated.³⁵ This chorus cannot do what other choruses do, that is either blame or praise, for the choregos in no way lets them (ἄ κλεννὰ χοραγὸς / οὐδ' ἄμῶς ἐῆι, 45-6). The main function of a chorus, of course, is to speak, perform a song, and utter a voice. But this specific chorus, in its own words cannot sing neither in blame nor praise. What is the genre of their song then?

The chorus first sings in line 39 (ἀείδω) followed by the description of its inability to sing.³⁶ Moreover, descriptions of the sound of their song are even more perplexing. The references of the chorus to its own voice are again connected to a network of metaphors. We do not have a further description of the song at this point but later in line 85, the chorus resorts to a metaphor:

ἐγὼ [ν] δὲ αὐτᾶ / παρσένος μάταν ἀπὸ θράνω λέλακα / γλαύξ

³⁴ For metaphors in general and images of light in particular see Peponi, 2004.

³⁵ See Nagy, 1999 for the terms *ainos* (praise) and blame in Greek lyric.

³⁶ Parthen.43-5: ἐμὲ δ' οὐτ' ἐπαινῆν / οὔτε μωμήσθαι νιν ἄ κλεννὰ χοραγὸς / οὐδ' ἄμῶς ἐῆι□

I, myself, a parthenos, screech in vain from the roof beam, an owl. (85-7)

The exact meaning of the metaphor is hard to grasp but the reference to the screech of an owl however does not seem like a compliment. Whether it is an ill-omened cry or not, the screech of an owl is a comparison to the song of a chorus and cannot be a favorable one.³⁷ Moreover, the maiden's voice is not only unmelodic but also futile (μάτᾱν) . Their voice is then disqualified in terms of both philology (it does not belong to a genre), aesthetics (does not sound good) and efficiency (does not have any point) by being likened to an owl screech. Moreover, the voice of the women is nothing but a likeness, not an actual voice.

Again when the chorus refers to Hagesichora's song the description is again a perplexing metaphor:

ἀ δὲ τᾶν Σηρην[ίδ]ων
ᾠδοτέρᾱ μ...[
σιὰ γάρ · ἀντ[ί]
παίδων δεκ....].[.]ΕΙ· (96-99)

But she better in singing than the Sirens... For they are goddesses, but instead of ...ten children sing.

The marginal notes can help to restore the text, informing as that chorus usually consist on ten or eleven members and most scholars understand the passage as follows: “yet, she is of course not more melodious than the Sirens, for they are goddesses: but this our choir of ten sings as well as eleven children”³⁸ The passage is still problematic and its meaning rather mysterious, but is certain that Hagesichora's voice is compared to the

³⁷ Stehle 1996, 76.

³⁸For marginalia and emendation see Page 1951, 97. And Calame 1983, 347-8. Translation is Campbell's . Ferrari's discussion argues for 10 as a number connected with cosmic order, Ferrari, 2008, 98ff

voice of the Sirens, again not a human voice but a strange divine voice.³⁹ If the aim of the comparison is to describe her voice, does it actually help to describe how her own voice sounds like? Hardly, because Hagesichora even when she is given a voice, she does not have a voice of herself.

Hagesichora however, is mimicking the voice of the other, the Sirens. The comparison should probably be read as favorable. Sirens are divinities and in Alcman they are identified with the Muses in fr. 86 Calame: ἅ Μῶσα κέκλαγ' ἅ λίγηα Σηρήν (the Muse, the clear-toned Siren, cries out). Moreover, their divine voice is described in the Alcmanic fragment as a non-human voice. The verb λάσκω is commonly used to describe a bird cry, a sharp, piercing sound.⁴⁰ Again the voice of Hagesichora-no matter whether described as divine or bird like- is described as non human with the use of the same verb used earlier to describe the voice of the chorus maidens in line 86. The voice of maidens there was unfavorably compared to the screech of an owl. The same verb is however used in fragment 86 to describe the voice of the Muse. Then it is not only the voice of Hagesichora or the chorus that cannot be described in human terms. Generally, female voice, divine or mortal, cannot be described in human terms; it resembles either the divine or the bestial.

And later when the chorus refers to the voice of Hagesichora her voice is again, nothing but a likeness: she sings like a swan at the streams of Xanthus (100-1):

³⁹ For a discussion of Hagesichora as a Siren see also Calame 1977, 80-2

⁴⁰ See LSJ sv and also Calame 1983, 467.

φθέγγεται δ' [ἄρ'] ὦ [τ' ἐπὶ] Ξάνθῳ ῥοαῖσι / κύκνος⁴¹. Swan song is traditionally considered as beautiful, but notice that the voice of the choregos, if *she* is singing, is still compared to a bird. In fact, Alcman uses the verb φθέγγεται, a verb used for both human and animal cry to denote the problematic, liminal nature of female voice.⁴² Although it is evident that the choregos' voice is by far superior to the voice of the chorus, it still remains a non-human voice.

This example is not the only one in which the voice of the birds and women are connected in the Alcmanic corpus. In fragment 91, we find out that Alcman learn to compose poetry by listening to bird voices⁴³:

φέπη τάδε καὶ μέλος Ἀλκμᾶν
εὖρε γεγλωσσαμέναν
κακκαβίδων ὅπα συνθέμενος

Alcman devised these verses and choral songs by putting to words the tongued cry of partridges.

Both words, movements and music then, according to the fragment, are inspired by birds and thus, Alcman composes his choral songs as an imitation. To Alcman, female voice sounds as a different voice, different from human voice. Both the voice of the choregos and the one of the chorus is then, a likeness. An otherwise unrepresentable voice, represented only via similes. Composing songs for young women then, Alcman

⁴¹I follow Calame who translates Hagesichora as the subject of the verb. Page, 1951,97 takes the Chorus as the subject of φθέγγεται

⁴² It is a matter of contestation if the subject of the verb is Hagesichora or the chorus. Calame believes it is Hagesichora (1983,347-8 while Page 1951, 97 believes otherwise. Be that as it may, the verbs in both cases describe a female voice.

⁴³ Also fr 140 Calame: νοῖδα δ' ὀρνίχων νόμῳ / παντῶν

chooses to represent female voice as different from human voice, stressing a matter inherent to female voice: its alterity and problematic representation.

The maidens in the *Partheneion* although they have a voice, cannot have their own language. They can only mimic the voice of the other: animal voice or the only possible human voice, the voice of the male subject. The poem then emphasizes the problem of language for its female protagonists. Since the *parthenoi* in Alcman's poem cannot become subjects in language, they use the language that is available to them. The language formed by the male-only possible-subjects. The only possible way of existing and speaking is if women look like men, they fight, compete, and make war and peace. Then, they not only look like men, but also speak like men. In the existing structure of Spartan society, to be a subject is to take the male position, re-enact the masculine order by identifying with the Name of the Father⁴⁴. Mimicking a language that does not belong to them, the women in the *Partheneion* seem to carry on the Father's name as their own, mirroring also structures that it is not their own. For, to assume masculine language means assuming masculine roles and masculine ideology.

Coming back to the first, male part of the poem, the catalogue of the male warriors plays a very important part. Naming the warriors in the first part of the poem is to identify them as subjects, warriors and citizens, capable of language. The second female catalogue mirrors the first: one more attempt for the female speakers to identify themselves as subjects. The catalogue of the female choral dancers is the only part of the poem that comes closer to a possible subjectivity by naming the subjects. Does the

⁴⁴ Whitford 1999, 37.

second catalogue of girls work toward subjectivity as the first one? Do the girls of the chorus finally find their own voice by naming themselves?

Claude Calame, discussing the names of the Spartan girls points out the following:

“With its reference to merit and reputation in the eyes of the people [Areta, Damareta, Kleesithira], its appeal to feelings of affection evoked by diminutives [Nanno and Philylla], and its metaphors inspired by the plant world [Sulakis, Astaphis and Vianthemis], the system of signifiers of the names of the adolescents taking part in the Spartan choruses seems to conform to the Greek norm.”⁴⁵

For Calame then, the names of the girls not only indicate their identity but they also mark their social role. During the performance of the *Partheneion* then the girls identify themselves in front of the Spartan society and validate their social role by projecting the values appropriate to their gender. Moreover, according to his discussion, the name is a metaphor for their identity⁴⁶:

“In its literary usage the Greek proper name becomes the equivalent of a rhetorical figure: In addition to its designating role, it performs an indisputable figurative and descriptive function, one deriving from the play on etymology. The name is a metaphor for the identity of its bearer”.

In an attempt to name themselves then, find a language for their subjectivity, the girls of the Alcmanic chorus have to resort to metaphors. Their names are *semata*, as they are, they mirror a foreign language. Via their name, their identity is taken away, deferred. They become metaphors, figures of speech. They are named, called and seen as either mirror images of men, little hunters, plants or dolls but never as young women *per se*.

⁴⁵ Calame 1995, 181. As far as the meaning of the proper names Calame, 180 discusses it as following: Excellence (Areta), Damareta (who excels in the heart of Demos), Kleesithira (famous in hunting), Sulakis (poppy heart), Astaphis (raisin), Vianthemis (violet), Nanno (the little doll), Philylla (the beloved child). Agido (leader) and Hagesichora's (who leads the chorus) are named after their choral function. For a discussion of the names as fictional see also Ferrari, 2008.

⁴⁶ Calame 1995, 185. “In its literary usage the Greek proper name becomes the equivalent of a rhetorical figure: In addition to its designating role, it performs an indisputable figurative and descriptive function, one deriving from the play on etymology. The name is a metaphor for the identity of its bearer”.

Even the names of protagonists of the poem, perform a descriptive function. Hagesichora and Agido are both inextricably connected with their choral identity. As the former is the one who leads the chorus and the latter the leader, their identity is defined by their performance as if they only exist for and during the performance. In the level of poem structure, the second catalogue of women then mirrors the first catalogue of male warriors points to the problem of female subjectivity and female language. The first catalogue points to mythical figures. The second catalogue mirrors the first: what is seen in the mirror is a likeness just as female language is nothing but the mimicry of the male language by female speakers, a language made by and for others. Uttered by women the language then sounds as either non-human, animal cries, or mimicry of the other. By the same token, women are in the *Partheneion* not only speechless but also invisible.

i. Seeing the other: Feminine representation in Alcman's

Partheneion

ἐγὼν δ' αἰδῶ
 Ἀγιδῶς τὸ φῶς· ὁρῶ
 ἢ ὥτ' ἄλιον, ὅνπερ ἄμιν
 Ἀγιδῶ μαρτύρεται
 φαίνην· ἐμὲ δ' οὔτ' ἐπαινῇ
 οὔτε μωμήσθαι νιν ἅ κλεννὰ χοραγὸς
 οὐδ' ἀμῶς ἐῆι· (39-45)

But I sing of the light of Agido. For I see her as the sun that Agido summons to shine on us as a witness. But I cannot either praise or blame her for our illustrious choregos does not let me, not at all.

Going back to the introductory lines of the chorus, the representation of a phantasmatic Agido seems as problematic as her voice, discussed earlier. Since Agido is

a chorus member par excellence-as both her name and representation proves- then her representation will be crucial for the identity of the whole chorus. How is then Agido represented? What are her facial characteristic? Although the chorus refers to her they do not actually speak about her: in their own words, they sing of Agido's light (Ἀγιδῶς τὸ φῶς, 40). The metaphor continues to a simile: the chorus sees her as the sun (ὥτ' ἄλιον, 41).⁴⁷ In the chorus's words then Agido is light, a very bright image that does not allow her physical characteristics to show. The description of the chorus then falls short and the chorus goes on to talk about their rather inadequate description. Then the chorus' descriptive gaze moves to the choregos:

δοκεῖ γὰρ ἡμεν αὐτὰ
ἐκπρεπῆς τῶς ὥπερ αἴτις
ἐν βοτοῖς στάσειεν ἵππον
παγὸν ἀεθλοφόρον καναχάποδα
τῶν ὑποπετριδίων ὀνείρων. (45-9)

For she seems to me preeminent, just as if one sets among the herds a strong, prize winning horse, with clashing hooves, a steed of winged dreams.

It is the chorus' impression of what we hear: the choregos seems to them preeminent, she looks like a glorious triumphant horse among the common grazing ones. The description is again more suggestive and subjective than descriptive and real. The verb is δοκεῖ not ἐστί, followed by yet another metaphor: Agido was like the sun, the choregos is like a horse. The metaphor seems to point to choral representation since the verb στάσειεν suggests a further similarity between the image of horses and dancers. The verb ἵστημι followed by the noun χορὸν is used as a technical term for setting up a

⁴⁷Peponi, 2004, 299.

chorus.⁴⁸ A prize winning horse among everyday common horses is like a preeminent, beautiful girl among everyday girls. Again the chorus seems to undermine its status while praising the preeminence of the choregos.

The sight of the chorus however, is not a direct sight: what they say they see is conveyed by a highly metaphorical language. The image is not realistic, it is rather an impression.⁴⁹ The line to follow though seems to work as a reality check: ἦ οὐχ ὀρήϊς; don't you see? Who does the chorus address now? Is the addressee the other dancers or the audience of the choral performance? I believe that the audience of the performance is directed to look at Agido. As their gaze is turning to her it constantly goes from description to metaphor, from image to imagery: as the chorus asks the audience to see at the same time it is asking them to visualize: Theoretically speaking, what follows should have been a realistic description of what one can see.

ἦ οὐχ ὀρήϊς; ὁ μὲν κέλῃς
Ἐνητικός ἅ δὲ χαίτα
τᾶς ἐμᾶς ἀνεψιᾶς
Ἀγησιχόρας ἐπανθεῖ
χρυσὸς [ὦ]ς ἀκήρατος
τό τ' ἀργύριον πρόσωπον,
διαφάδαν τί τοι λέγω;
Ἀγησιχόρα μὲν αὐτά
ἅ δὲ δευτέρᾳ πεδ' Ἀγιδῶ τὸ φεῖδος
ἵππος Ἰβηνῶι Κολαξαῖος δραμήται

Don't you see? The one is an Enetic race horse. But the hair of my cousin Hagesichora is blooming like undefiled gold. And that silver face of hers! Do I speak clear enough? Here is Hagesichora! And the second one in beauty is Agido, she runs like a Colaxean horse next to an Ibenian.

⁴⁸ See for example line 84 where Agido herself is called [χο]ροστάτις, for the phrase ἵστημι χορὸν see for example Pind. Pyth. 9.114; Bacch. 11.112; Aeschyl. Fr. 204; Soph. El. 280 etc. Also see Peponi 2004, 315-6 for a connection of the verb στάσειν with Alcman himself.

⁴⁹ Peponi 2004, 302.

The race horse metaphors though still go on: the one girl looks like an Enetian horse. Then the choregos is finally named as Hagesichora but the description of her facial characteristics is still a metaphorical one: her hair is of gold, her face of silver. Once more Hagesichora is mentioned in genitive: it is not Hagesichora but it is Hagesichora's hair, her face. Then the chorus again addresses the mysterious second person for a comment on its own description: "Do I speak clear enough?" The chorus' description was neither clear nor visual but it goes on to introduce Agido as well, as the second in beauty, using more metaphors: she is a Colaxean horse running next to an Ibenian. There has been a lot of philological talk about the exact meaning of the equestrian metaphor⁵⁰. What is important for this discussion, though, is that the description that carries on the race horse metaphor does not describe realistically but again metaphorically. Even when she is named and shown to us with the use of the deictic pronoun (Ἀγσιχόρα μὲν αὐτά·, 57) she is never described as a girl: she is either a piece of gold, or silver, or a race horse. But how are girls connected with horses?

In Spartan rites young boys had to live in bands as a part of their education and passage to adulthood. The bands are known as ἀγέλαι (herds). If the race of horses then does not stand as a metaphor of a ritual race, then the metaphor could have been to invoke similar initiatory Spartan practices for boys. The metaphor is further corroborated by the use of term βότα, in line 47, another synonym for ἀγέλη. If this hypothesis is right, then Alcman is comparing a chorus of young girls with a herd of young boys. Why the gender leap?

⁵⁰ For a detailed summary and bibliography see Clark 1996, 157-8. For references and discussions on the breed of horses see Devereux, 1965;1966.

What follows are four lines that have generated immense controversy among philologists but might be helpful to elucidate the horse race imagery. It seems very probable that the chorus would go on to describe Agido and Hagesichora further and this is how the ancient scholia interpreted the lines. But again the reference does not describe actual characteristics of the girls but carries on a different metaphor, equally difficult to decipher: A metaphor of the chorus girls as Πεληάδες, that is either stars, or doves fighting what seems to be the rest of the chorus.⁵¹

ταὶ Πεληάδες γὰρ ἄμιν
ὀρθρίαι φᾶρος φεροίσαις
νύκτα δι' ἀμβροσίαν ἄτε σήριον
ἄστρον ἀνηρομένα μάχονται (60-3)

For these Peleiades, rising up like Sirius, the star, are fighting us in the ambrosial night as we are bringing our offerings to Orthria.

The metaphor has been variously connected to the ritual but it is yet unclear.⁵² The φᾶρος the choral dancers are offering to the deity can either be a robe or a plough, a φάρος offered to a fertility goddess.⁵³ What is important though is that both metaphors connect the chorus with some kind of an *agon*, a race or battle. The metaphor of running horses points to a race, Hagesichora is second in beauty to Agido, again some kind of beauty contest, a different *agon*. Then lines 63 and 65 point to a battle: the use of the

⁵¹ The controversy is created by two different scholia one of which explains Peleiades as doves and the other as stars. For Bowra there seems to be no controversy since, according to myth, the Pleiads were the daughters of Atlas who were turned into doves and then set on the sky as constellations. See Calame 1977, 72 n.52 for a summary of scholarly arguments on this matter. Most recently, Ferrari 2008 argues in favor of Pleiades. For her the metaphor evokes the image of dance of constellation. For Ferrari the dance symbolizes the cosmic order reflected in the order of state.

⁵² See for example Page 1951, 52-7 for straightforward approach and Clay 1991, for a detailed summary and more recent references, especially 58-67.

⁵³ Page 1951, 78-9 prefers the spelling φάρος based on the marginal comment.

verbs μάχονται (fight) and ἀμύναι (defend) point to some kind of war. It is rather obvious that the chorus is using battle language to describe its performance, but why? How can battle language be used by virgin girls and why?

The question can be better enlightened when seen in the context of the next lines:

οὔτε γάρ τι πορφύρας
τόσσος κόρος ὥστ' ἀμύναι,
οὔτε ποικίλος δράκων
παγχρύσιος, οὐδὲ μίτρα
Λυδία, νεανίδων
ἱανογ[λ]εφάρων ἄγαλμα,
οὐδὲ ταῖ Ναννῶς κόμαι,
ἀλλ' οὐ[δ'] Ἀρέτα σιειδής,
οὐδὲ Σύλακίς τε καὶ Κλεησιθήρα,
οὐδ' ἐς Αἰνησιμβρ[ό]τας ἐνθοῖσα φασεῖς
Ἄσταφίς [τ]έ μοι γένοιτο
καὶ ποτιγλέποι Φίλυλλα
Δαμαρ[έ]τα τ' ἐρατά τε φανθεμῖς
ἀλλ' Ἀγησιχόρα με τείρει. (64-77)

For to defend ourselves neither the abundance of purple is enough, nor the ornate solid golden dragon, or the Lydian headband, the pride of soft-eyed girls, or Nanno's hair will suffice, or Arete, the godlike, or Thylakis and Kleesithira. Nor going to Aenisibrota's you are going to say: I wish Astaphys would be mine and Phillylla look at me, or lovely Damareta or Vianthemis...But Hagesichora wears me out...

Now ἀμύναι, picks up μάχονται carrying on the battle metaphor. It is not however a battle description that it is going to follow. Quite contrary to expectation it is not a war, or weapons we are talking about, or a catalogue of warriors: It is now a catalogue of female adornments: abundance of purple clothing, golden bracelets, headbands, followed by yet another catalogue of chorus girls. The catalogue of girls parallels the catalogue of warriors in the first section of the poem, the catalogue of the sons of Hippocoön, opening the poem, a catalogue connected with battle and violence.⁵⁴

The two catalogues are connected in many ways: Sevros is quick in feet

⁵⁴ See Robbins 1994, 11

(Σέβρον ποδῶκη, 4), picking up the race mentioned earlier. A hero whose name is now lost is wearing a helmet, in line 6 (κορυστὰν). The position of this hero seems to be symmetrical with the mention of the Lydian headband in the second catalogue⁵⁵. The object mentioned before is also a pure gold bracelet. The adjective is *παγχρύσεος*, a rare adjective connected with Athena's aegis tresses in Homer.⁵⁶ Another unnamed hero is preeminent among the demigods (ἔξοχον ἡμισίων, 8), while in the second catalogue Arete is godlike (Ἀρέτα σιειδής, 71). The two catalogues then seem to be connected, with the second picking up themes from the first one. And of course the similarity goes on to the catalogue of names. The first catalogue mentions the names of the sons of Hippocoon, while the second names the choral dancers taking place in the performance of the *Partheneion*. Robbins mentions the fact that the sons of Hippocoon according to tradition were eleven; the number of the choral dancers is eleven as well.⁵⁷ I do not believe that numbers are very important here although the symmetry would be remarkable if we had eleven warriors and eleven dancers.⁵⁸ What is important here, I believe, is again the division: the double catalogues. The structure only highlights ideology: the identity of the dancers (this blurred image I discussed before) can partly be

⁵⁵ They are both at the 4th line of the catalogue.

⁵⁶ See Il. 2.447-8. αἰγίδ' ἔχουσ' ἐρίτιμον ἀγέρων ἀθανάτην τε,
τῆς ἑκατὸν θύσανοι παγχρύσειοι ἠερέθονται.

⁵⁷ Robbins 1994, 10. For the eleven warriors also see Page 1951-26-30.

⁵⁸ Robbins 1994, 11, n.25. counts the eight girls in lines 70-6 Nanno, Arete, Thylakis, Kleesithira. Astaphys, Phillylla, Damareta, Vianthemis (excluding Aenesimbrotia following West and Puelma) and also three more unnamed girls in lines 66-69 (wearing a purple robe, bracelet and headband respectively). That gives her a catalogue of 11. I think it is easier to only count the girls mentioned in the poem: they are eleven if you count the 9 mentioned here plus Hagesichora and Agido mentioned earlier. Female choruses of 10-12 are well attested.

described to the audience by the only means available. That is via the similarity to the already known: a catalogue of warriors, language of battle, language of boy education, in other words a masculine world and point of view. In what follows then, I will attempt to show that the catalogue of female dancers mirrors the one of male warriors: women again not only sound as men, as discussed in the previous section, but are also represented as men were. Both the structure and the language of the poem points to a mirroring: both language and representation in language can only be masculine.

vi. Being the other: social order, performance and female chorality in Alcman

Since we lack the evidence of a clear description of ideology in archaic Sparta, poetry can be used to infer such an ideology. It is realistic to believe that choral performances, as public events, would both presuppose a certain ideological common ground and serve a social function. For Lonsdale for example, Alcman is composing not only a choral poem but also a script: the hierarchies, the order he imposes to the dancers reflects similar social hierarchies and orders. As a “choreographer of social order” then, to borrow Lonsdale’s terminology, Alcman teaches along with the choreography and song a new order, an order appropriate to women in Sparta guaranteeing the order of such a society.⁵⁹ If the *Partheneion* is a choral performance of young women marking their initiation into womanhood and preparing them for married life, as Calame would argue,

⁵⁹ Lonsdale 203-5.

then the function of such performances would be revealing the ideas of Spartan society regarding gender roles .

If the social function of the *Partheneia* then is connected with the passage of young women into the next stage, married life, the female chorus as protagonist would be performing their ideal roles. As we have seen, women do speak, speak of themselves, emphasizing both the choreography and their singing. The maidens are represented as performing in front of their audience; their voice is heard, their body is seen. The young women of the *Partheneion* however have a peculiar, problematic voice and their subjectivity is highly questionable.

Let me start with the subjectivity of the chorus members, a matter closely connected to the representation of the young women of the chorus.⁶⁰ It has been mentioned earlier that the subjectivity of the chorus members, including their choregos is rather unclear. Although we do have references to the young girls, a proper self, or a face is hard to be seen. What we have instead is a heavy network of metaphors that describe what the chorus members look *like*. Agido is like the sun, she looks like a racehorse among herds. Hagesichora's hair looks like gold, her face is like silver. Not one description of a girl, although our eyes are forced to look at them ἢ οὐχ ὁρῆις; "can't you see?" followed by what I can only take as a rhetorical question διαφάδαν τί τοι λέγω;. "Do I speak clear enough?"⁶¹ But does the chorus speak clear? Does it actually reveal anything? The adverb διαφάδαν comes from the verb

⁶⁰ For a good discussion of exchange and female subjectivity in Athenian tragedy see Wohl 1998, xxix-xxxvii.

⁶¹ *Parth.* 1, 50 and 56.

διαφαίνω, to let a thing be seen, to show or shine through. Through what? What is between us and the choral performance? What keeps us from seeing what is actually there? What we can see then is more a likeness rather than the image itself, a phantom-like reality, shown through a screen. It is very interesting that although the chorus does insist on verbs of sight, although it insists on using images and metaphors full of light, it does not really shed any light on what we see. It seems that the chorus is pointing to a spectacle that cannot be fully seen; a shiny, beautiful and yet abstract or veiled image.

Seen as a dialogue between the audience and the chorus then, the *Partheneion* would work both ways: the young girls perform the order of the society as an agreement to a social contract as it were; the audience renews his agreement and functions as a witness for the new members. But what exactly are they witnessing? What do they see?

Going back to the metaphoric images projected by the *Partheneion*, Agido is described as an Enetian horse, and some lines later Hagesichora is compared to Agido as second in beauty. It is not however their beauty as girls they measure against but their speed as horses, the third term employed by the metaphor: she runs as a Colaxean steed next to an Ibenian. The lines have generated scholarly controversy: are Agido and Hagesichora compared to each other or are both of them compared to the chorus?⁶² Whatever that may be, the comparison between the girls is a comparison between race horses: she does not dance better, sing better or even look better than the other girl. The poet does not compare them in terms of their “value” as choral dancers, or young girls. The comparison is possible only through a third term; the relation between them is only

⁶² Robbins 1996, 8-9.

possible “in terms of equivalence foreign to both”.⁶³ Again, some lines before, Hagesichora is described as pre-eminent among the other chorus dancers: it is again a metaphor that enables such a comparison: she is a winner horse next to a grazing herd.⁶⁴

The young girls are represented as animals, racing horses or later as doves if we take Peleiades to have such a meaning. We already saw how the use of the metaphor is used as a third term according to which comparisons between the girls can be possible. I cannot explain however the use of the specific metaphors. Why the animal imagery? The use of the horse imagery has been interpreted by scholars in a lot of different ways.⁶⁵ Discussing the network of the race horse, doves and stars metaphors, Peponi suggests that a possible connection of the image of horses, birds and stars can be traced in Homer where Diomedes’ running horses lift high up as if flying: οἱ δὲ οἱ ἵπποι / ὕψος' ἀειρέσθην.... τὼ δὲ ἐπιδρόντε πετέσθην (Il.23.500-506).⁶⁶ For her then, the logic of the metaphors goes as following: the two girls are visualized as running (race horses); they lift high up (doves), as high as the stars (Sirius).⁶⁷

C. Clark believes that animal imagery evokes “the physical attributes of grace, speed, sleekness, and playfulness” attributes appropriate to young girls.⁶⁸ Such an evocation though is rather inconsistent with Clark’s estimation that horse imagery is

⁶³ Irigaray 1985, 176.

⁶⁴ Partheneion I.45-8. δοκεῖ γὰρ ἡμεν αὐτὰ / ἐκπρεπῆς τῶς ὥπερ αἵτις / ἐν βοτοῖς στάσειεν ἵππον / παγὸν ἀεθλοφόρον καναχάποδα ...

⁶⁵ See Clark 1996, 156-7 and especially ns 49-53 for scholarship.

⁶⁶ Peponi 2004, 304-5.

⁶⁷ Peponi 2004, 306.

⁶⁸ Clark 1996, 155.

further used by the poet to describe female leaders because “no other leadership paradigm was available to him”.⁶⁹ How can the poet on the one hand emphasize feminine attributes and on the other evoke male paradigms? And it is true that the aforementioned attributes belong to horses, but are they emphasized in the poem or connected to the girls? The attributes emphasized are speed and predominance. If connected to a ritual race event speed makes sense but the evidence is rather inconclusive⁷⁰. Furthermore, there is no mention of girls running as for example in Theocritus’ “Epithalamion of Helen”.⁷¹ Can the metaphors, then, elucidate the blurry image of the dancing maidens?

“When women are exchanged”, says Irigaray, “woman’s body must be treated as an abstraction.” Women are not exchanged as such; they are reduced to their price, objects that manifest only that in their production human labor has been expended.⁷² On that premise, the young girls of the *Partheneion* are presented to us according to this principal: they should all have the same phantom-like quality, no personal characteristics. It is then, I believe, because of this exchange model that the young girls in the *Partheneion* are described *via* metaphors. As commodities their value does not inhere in them, is not connected with their own subjectivity. Rather, their value can be measured only against a third term that two commodities can compare to: the value of two women

⁶⁹ Clark 1996, 156.

⁷⁰ Both Pausanias and Hesychius talk about certain *dromoi*, races between maidens in Sparta. See Page 1951, 56-7 and Calame 1977, 192-3, 195-6.

⁷¹ Theocr. Id.18,22·ἄμμες δ’ αἱ πᾶσαι συνομάλικες, αἷς δρόμος ωύτός /χρισαμέναις ἀνδριστὶ παρ’ Εὐρώταο λοετροῖς, /τετράκις ἐξήκοντα κόραι, θῆλυς νεολαία

⁷² Irigaray 1985, 175.

can only be stated in relation to a third term, external to both of them.⁷³ This is exactly, I propose, what the horse metaphor is employed to do in the *Partheneion*.

According to Marx, commodities have two forms, a physical or natural form and a value form.⁷⁴ Given this distinction, girls as commodities will be presented as having two forms, a form that is not going to be their own, but the form of a commodity. Presented as animals, the girls acquire their natural form, a form found in nature, in the animal kingdom. On the other hand their value form is revealed as well. Hagesichora is described as having this double form: on one hand her hair is made of gold, her face is made of silver (ἀ δὲ χάϊτα ... Ἀγησιχόρας ἐπανθεῖ χρυσὸς [ὦ]ς ἀκήρατος/τό τ' ἄργυριον πρόσωπον, 51-5) . At the next line her natural form is a horse running next to Agido. Represented as both animals and metals the girls look more like commodities and less like real girls. Seen as such, female objects are used as a metonymy for the girls: a purple robe, a snake-shaped golden bracelet and a Lydian headband are mentioned instead of three girls that are wearing them.⁷⁵ The three girls are not only they commodities, they are also described as such.

For Irigaray, it is also important that for a commodity “its value is never found to lie within itself”. Consequently, commodities cannot mirror each other or themselves, like a man can be mirrored by another man. When a commodity is mirrored what can be seen instead is a likeness expressing the *fabricated* character of the commodity, the fact

⁷³ Irigaray 1985, 176.

⁷⁴ Marx *Capital* 1.1 , via Irigaray 1985,1975.

⁷⁵ See also Robbins 1994, 11, n.25.

that it is a product of man's labor.⁷⁶ The young girls of the chorus are then clearly represented as valuable objects, or valuable possessions: clothing, jewelry, or horses a valuable object mostly appropriate to men. Young girls are then not described by their facial or bodily characteristics but with the use of metaphor or metonymy. Their characteristics are then replaced with others belonging to a different sphere, that of male activity. "*Commodities, women, are a mirror of value of and for man*". In order to facilitate such use women give up their bodies for specularization: they serve as a "mirage" of man's activity. Women become a mirror through which man can see his own labor, the value he puts into things.⁷⁷

vii. Mirroring the other: metaphors and specula

Women in the *Partheneion* then do display their bodies: by performing in a public ceremony they make themselves seen. But the process of specularization is more perplexing. What the audience sees is women displaying themselves as reflection of women made *by* and *for* men. Their value, even their appearance is connected with the world of man's labor and activity. The emphasis on the fabricated character of their appearance is one piece of evidence for that. Secondly, the metaphors that describe the actions or appearance of women belong to the sphere of men's activity as well. C. Clark mentions the fact that the girls of the "chorus perceive themselves through a male lens".⁷⁸ I am not sure if the girls *perceive themselves* in such a lens; I think it is more the case that

⁷⁶ Irigaray 1985, 176.

⁷⁷ Her italics. Irigaray 1985, 177.

⁷⁸ Clark 1996, 147.

they project themselves in such a way since it is rather a construction of self than perception of self that the poem enforces. But the construction of self, is a construction of a (fe)male self that seems in appearance to be female but proves to be essentially male. *“Commodities thus share in the cult of the father, and never stop striving to resemble, to copy, the one who is his representative”*.⁷⁹ In a similar fashion, women in the *Partheneion*, act like men: fight, defend themselves, see and project themselves as men. And of course, they talk like men.

Let me once more go back to the race horse imagery. C. Clark has already pointed out the fact that the poet uses the male horse imagery “to describe the female leaders because there is no other leadership paradigm available to him”.⁸⁰ What is more important is that in fact the poem needs a leadership paradigm to begin with. In talking about relationships between women, the male poet employs the male paradigm of leadership, of authority. One needs to be the leader, the others need to follow. This is how male hierarchies work. This is not the only model though. Sappho for example in her work uses a model of equality, not of hierarchy. In describing a female chorus, why do we need to employ a paradigm of leadership? Why the need for an emphasis in rivalry, in agonistic relationships, why the need for a leader?

The poem emphasizes agonistic relationships between its members by resembling them to race horses: the first preeminence of one horse next to the others is emphasized. The horse is a running horse, one that wins in horse race contests (παγὸν ἀεθλοφόρον, 48.) Then the imagery returns to one more race: there a

⁷⁹ Her italics, Irigaray 1985,178.

⁸⁰ Clark 1996, 156.

Ibenian and a Colaxean horse running against each other in what seems to be a contest is the term against which Agido and Agesichora compare to. Through this metaphor, the relationship between the girls becomes one of rivalry. Ranking them as second and first in beauty or speed, the poet emphasizes the idea of agon that will unfold to one more metaphor: A star metaphor in which stars compete with each other. Agonistic relationships culminate in battle vocabulary: μάχονται- ἀμύναι. Why the need for battle language? Since the relationship between the women is fashioned after relationships between men, the language of women needs to be men's language as well. Not only because they are talking about war, which is a male practice, but also because they evoke the male language in the beginning of the poem. Bringing to mind the idea of war the poem is here connecting the first part of the poem with the second: the warriors of the first part, "revive" in the second, only dressed as chorus dancers. Once more their fabricated character is emphasized: they are indeed girls dancing before an audience, but they describe themselves as race horses, and they talk about war and horse races like men would do. The abstracted, fabricated figures of commodities become in likeness of their models. This is the model for the girls: acting like men, being a part of a man's world.

The structure of the poem then becomes an image of the social structure I am describing: the first section is mirrored in the second. A list of male warriors fighting each other becomes a list of female dancers fighting for Hagesichora's erotic allure. If the first list is a list of the Hippocontides in a mythic exemplum that would narrate the abduction of the Leucippides, the second list is a list of women in yet another erotic rivalry: they all fight for each other's erotic charms. Though it is clearly a description of a homoerotic relationship between the chorus members, the relationship is fabricated in

the likeness of a male world: that of women-commodities. Whether metonymies of valuable objects or named in a list, women are valuable objects, objects to be seen, admired and possessed, but also baneful objects:

Ἄσταφίς [τ]έ μοι γένοιτο
καὶ ποτιγλέποι Φίλυλλα
Δαμαρ[έ]τα τ' ἔρατά τε φανθεμῖς
ἄλλ' Ἀγησιχόρα με τείρει. (74-7)

May Astaphys be mine, and Philylla look at me, and Damareta and erotic Vianthemis. But Agesichora wears me out.

The presence of erotic relationships between the female chorus members, I believe, does not give us evidence in favor of female subjectivity. On the contrary, although we are talking about erotic relationships between the members of the chorus, women still see each other as commodities. They see themselves through the male eye. Being objects of economic exchange does not leave them space for a separate point of view. Their point of view is the male one, it is destined to be phallogocentric. Women in the *Partheneion* do not have the chance to look at themselves *qua* women, and desire each other as such. In an economy that reduces women to commodities any desire between women is inconceivable. Commodities only enter such relationships under the watchful eye of their “guardians”. And their interest requires that the commodities relate to each other as rivals; exactly as the exchange relationship among men alone are always rivalrous as well.⁸¹ Female homosexual behavior is nothing but an imitation of male erotic behavior, and as such women need to be involved in rivalrous erotic behavior.⁸²

⁸¹ Irigaray 1985,196. For rivalry also 184.

⁸² Irigaray 1985,194.

Going back to the *Partheneion*, the agonistic relationships between the members of the chorus find a better explanation: women need to compete with each other because they are made in the likeness of men. Girls compare Agido and Hagesichora, they imagine them racing against each other like race horses. Then, all chorus girls compete for each other's erotic interest, and again Hagesichora is the one most desired. Once more though the desire is described as a destructive, rivalrous force: Hagesichora wears them out. The use of the verb is rather curious since the verb is never used with person as a subject. Page, for example, suggests that the line makes sense if 'Αγησιχώρα με τείρει is meant to be equivalent of ἔρως 'Αγησιχώρας με τείρει.⁸³ In Homer, for example, it is usually old age that is used as the subject (ἀλλά σε γῆρας τείρει) or the verb is used in passive voice meaning to be distressed, to suffer distress.⁸⁴ The word ἔρως however is not present. The desire is not named; it is disguised under the cloth of destruction and suffering. And when some lines later the word does occur in its verb form (ἐρῶ) it is again connected with some kind of suffering or pain (πόνων), physical or emotional:

...· ἐγὼ[ν] δὲ τᾶι μὲν 'Αώτι μάλιστα
 φανδάνην ἐρῶ· πόνων γάρ
 ἄμιν ἰάτωρ [ἔγε]ντο· (Parth. 86-8)

But I above all yearn to please Aotis. For she is the healer of our toils.

⁸³ Page 1951, 91 for example says it only makes sense if 'Αγησιχώρα με τείρει is meant to be equivalent of ἔρως 'Αγησιχώρας με τείρει. Page is probably thinking the Hesiodic fragment (289 MW) δεινὸς γάρ μιν ἔπειρεν ἔρως Πανοπηίδος Αἴγλης (in reference to Theseus) preserved by Plutarch, *Life of Theseus*. As far as I know this is the only example for use of the verb in erotic context. It is tempting therefore to connect Theseus abduction of Ariadne with the legend in the beginning of the *Partheneion*.

⁸⁴ See LSJ s.v. *Iliad* 4.315 ;also 5.153;13.251;16.510;17.376; 21.51; 21.366 etc.

It is interesting that the desire of the chorus is emphasized with the use of the infinitive *φανδάνην*. The desire is double; Not only is there a desire (*ἐρῶ*) but also a desire to please (*φανδάνην*). However, this desire takes place in an emotional state of suffering, since the word *πόνος* is used to describe the present state of the collective *persona loquens* (*ἄμιν*). The lines have provoked much discussion since the identification of the possible deity invoked in the passage is still uncertain. Who is Aotis and how is she the healer of their toils? What kind of toil is the chorus talking about?

⁸⁵Diels, for example reads the *Partheneion* as an appeasement song (Suehnlied), the chorus performs in order to placate Orthria, and Jurenka wants the sufferings to refer to the second Messenia war, taking the lines with the statement concerning peace in lines 89-90, in which the chorus enters the path of peace by Hagesichora's agency (*ἐξ Ἀγησιχόρ[ας] δὲ νεάνιδες / ῥήνας ἐρατ[ῆς] ἐπέβαν*). Both interpretations rest on unconvincing evidence, but note Jurenka's connection of maidens with war. The chorus then seems to pick up the battle references (*μάχονται-ἀμύναι* lines 63-5) discussed previously. Through their choregos, Hagesichora, the passage suggests, the maidens enter the path of peace after being victorious in some battle. Although I do not believe it is necessary to conclude that this refers to an actual war (following Jurenka's interpretation), nevertheless the peace-war reference is difficult to ignore. Why does the chorus go back to the war motive while talking about its desire? Even again, why does the chorus need to talk about war every time it refers to itself? Constructed in the likeness

⁸⁵ See Page 1951, 93-6.

of men, as shown before, the chorus lacks not only subjectivity and desire but also language.

viii. Performing the other: Metaphor and performance in the second *Partheneion*

(2P, 26 C)

Another case in point would be the second *Partheneion*. The poem seemss to be another *Partheneion*, a poem written to be performed by a chorus of young women.⁸⁶ The poem is a display of the characteristics of female voice as shown in the first *Partheneion*. The chorus is again speaking about themselves and the choregos. But again the presentation of the female selves is happening through a network of metaphors⁸⁷:

Ἄ[σ]τυμέλοισα δέ μ' οὐδὲν ἀμείβεται
τὸ]ν πυλεῶν' ἔχοισα []
[ώ] τις αἰγλά[ε]ντος ἀστήρ []
ὠρανῶ διαιπετήs
ἢ χρύσιον ἔρνος ἢ ἀπαλὸ]ν ψίλ]ον
[..]ν
[]. διέβα ταναοῖs πο[σί·]
[-κ]ομος νοτία Κινύρα χ[άρ]ιs
[ἐπὶ π]αρσενικᾶν χαίταισιν ἴsδει·
[Ἄ]στυμέλοισα κατὰ στρατόν
[] μέλημα δάμωι
[]μαν ἐλοῖsα
[]λέγω·
[]εναβαλ' α[ί] γὰρ ἄργυριν
[].[.]ίsα
[]α ἴδοιμ' αἶ πως με...ο. φίλοι
ἄσ]σον [ίo]ῖs' ἀπαλᾶs χηρὸs λάβοι,
αἶψά κ' [ἐ]γὼν ἰ]κέτις κήνας γενοίμαν (64-81)

⁸⁶ Calame 1983, 393ff. Also Calame 1997, 4-6.

⁸⁷ For an interesting discussion of metaphoric language in the poem see Peponi 2008.

For Astymeloisa does not respond to me, but , holding a garland, like a star crossing the sparkling sky or a golden branch or a soft feather, she passed through with her delicate feet. The moist charm of Cinyras sits upon her virginal locks. Astymeloisa goes through the crowd, indeed the darling of the people.taking...I say... If only I were to see her loving me. If only she came nearer and took my soft hand, immediately I would be her servant.

As Astymeloisa is the only named member of the chorus, she is possibly a choregos figure⁸⁸. Again, as in the Louvre *Partheneion*, Astymeloisa's characteristics are not described. She is described through metaphors: she looks like a bright star, or a golden branch or she is a soft feather. The girl in question is again beautiful, but unrepresentable. The only human characteristic is her soft feet and her hair, moist with perfume. Other than that she is an image of light and softness. As Agido is described as light, so Astymeloisa is described like a star, or like gold, as Hagesichora's golden hair. The nexus of metaphors is similar between the two poems. And, as in the first *Partheneion*, the name of the girl is mentioned. Moreover, there is a sophisticated naming game in this poem. Astymeloisa's name is closely connected to her identity: she is called Astymeloisa, and indeed she is "the object of solitude for the citizens". In Calame's words "the poet takes apart her name attributing to her the signified indicated by its elements".⁸⁹ In naming her, Astymeloisa becomes a subject, but her subjectivity is still hidden under a name. Astymeloisa's self as well as an image is still not represented. Her name through an etymology game becomes a figure of speech: she is no more than a role, a poem character named after her part. Astymeloisa's voice is not heard, at least not in the surviving lines, nor is her face described. Quite the contrary, her lack of speech is emphasized: Astymeloisa says nothing

⁸⁸ See Calame 1977, 46, 92, 138ff and Calame 1997, 4. This is not however what Clay 1991, and Pavese, 1992 believe.

⁸⁹ Calame 1995,182.

in response, Α[σ]τυμέλοισα δέ μ' οὐδὲν ἀμείβεται. What we hear and see is an image of a beautiful, desired, albeit silent object.

Although we cannot hear the voice of Astymeloisa, the voice of the chorus is heard throughout the poem proclaiming their desire for the choregos. Astymeloisa then is surely the object of chorus' desire, but is the desireful voice of the chorus a female voice? Astymeloisa goes through the crowd (κατὰ στρατόν) being the darling of demos. The phrase κατὰ στρατόν is a common Homeric phrase meaning "throughout the army"⁹⁰. Using a very well known epic phrase, then, the poet directly evokes the Iliadic atmosphere and points to a masculine world: the world of battle, armies and military prowess.⁹¹ Although Astymeloisa seems to be seen through the eyes of the female chorus, their vision is tampered, altered through the interference of male perception. Their vision goes through an epic lens reflecting a masculine world. And when the vision of the chorus turns into words, it is hardly a female vision, a female voice. The shift from a seemingly female voice to a masculine voice is further supported by the re-naming the choregos: when the chorus etymologizes the name of the choregos, there is a subtle change. Although originally the name Astymeloisa derives from the words ἄστυ and μέλω, the chorus will instead derive it from δῆμος and μέλω. The slight shift from ἄστυ to

⁹⁰ see LSJ sv. The phrase occurs 21 times in the *Iliad*.

⁹¹ Compare Il. 11, 211-13 : Ἔκτωρ δ' ἐξ ὀχέων σὺν τεύχεσιν ἄλτο χαμᾶζε,
πάλλων δ' ὀξέα δοῦρα κατὰ στρατόν ὥχετο πάντη
ὀτρύνων μαχέσασθαι, ἔγειρε δὲ φύλοπιν αἰνήν.

δῆμος seems again to lead to a more “masculine” choice of words, a shift from geography to politics, from city to the (male) citizen.⁹²

Through the chorus’s gaze Astymeloisa herself seems to shift as well. In the beginning of the poem the chorus sees Astymeloisa as the image of supreme beauty. She is however but an inconsistent beauty, hard to grasp: she is soft, tender and delicate as a feather but at the same time she walks through the city as a general would walk through an army camp. Her image then seems to shift from a feminine image of a soft girl, to a masculine image of the valiant general. The dominant power of Astymeloisa is further exploited at the end of the poem. The voice of the chorus wishes Astymeloisa would only love her and hold her hand, but the relationship described is not among equals. The chorus, now described as a female with soft hands, wishes is to be subjugated, to be a suppliant; an ἰκέτις. The desire of the chorus is then a desire for subjugation, a desire as seen through male eyes. The desire of the female is then described as a male desire: the desire for dominating over the female. When speaking (of) female desire the female voice seems to only be able to identify with the male paradigm; as a result desire can only be described through the male eye and male voice.

If Calame is right though, Astymeloisa although she never address the chorus nevertheless she looks at them. Astymeloisa’s gaze is then described as following:

λυσιμελεῖ τε πόσῳ, τακερώτερα
δ' ὕπνῳ καὶ σανάτῳ ποτιδέσκεται·
οὐδέ τι μασιδίῳς γλυκ..ήνα· (61-3)

⁹² Also see Peponi, 2007, 362. Peponi sees Astymeloisa as the embodiment of desire suspended between the female chorus and the male audience reading a dramatic tension between the two.

With a limb-paralysing desire she looks at me more languishingly than sleep or death, and not in vain is she sweet...

Astymeloisa's gaze then is one of melting, sweet, limb-loosening desire. Is the desire described, a desire you can see in her or the chorus' eyes? Does she look at them full of desire or does her look alone induce desire? Who is looking at whom? If this is not her gaze is it then nothing more than a mere projection of the desire of the chorus? A chorus melting of desire, wishing to become her suppliant, a chorus that reads their own desire upon her eyes. A desire that is again, self destructing: for the desire of the chorus instead of bringing the two subjects together only blurs the boundaries between them. It is hard to see who is who, who sees what. The subjects are reduced into dreamy abstract images, between sleep and death, with their limbs loosened. This is hardly a representation of dancing girls: their loosened limbs deprive them of their choral identity. If indeed the beginning of the poem describes the chorus ability to dance then their desire cancels it:

ὑπνον ἀ]πὸ γλεφάρων σκεδ[α]σεῖ γλυκύν

]ς δέ μ' ἄγει πεδ' ἄγῶν' ἵμεν

μά]λιστα κόμ[αν ξ]ανθὰν τινάξω·

[].σχ[ἀπ]αλοὶ πόδες (7-10)

...will scatter sweet sleep from my eyes and leads me to go to the assembly where I shall rapidly shake my yellow hair ... and soft feet.

If then choral dancing is described as awakening from sleep, shaking of golden hair and soft feet, then the desire for Astymeloisa seems to disrupt the choral activity by returning them to the inertia of sleep: limbs are again loosened, eyes close again. The chorus then, as in the Louvre Partheneion, undermines their ability to perform adequately, both sing and dance, an inability created by their desire for the choregos. It is also the

case that their desire for their choregos, is described as *pothos*, longing for someone absent (πόσῳ), although Astymeloisa is there. The word choice then not only undermines their singing ability but also the performance itself by challenging Astymeloisa's visibility. Moreover, unlike the Louvre *Partheneion* where Hagesichora and Agido are described as singing, Astymeloisa is silent. There is however a description of a female chorus singing in the beginning of the *Partheneion*:

Ὀλυμπιάδες περί με φρένας
 ἵς αἰδᾶς
 ἵω δ' ἀκούσαι
 ἵας ὀπός
 ἵ..ρα καλὸν ὕμνιοισᾶν μέλος

Olympian Muses ... all around my heart...to hear the voice of those singing a beautiful choral song.(1-5)

Unlike the longer *Partheneion*, we can be certain that this is the beginning of the choral song. The song then begins most probably with an invocation to the Olympian Muses; this is the safest conclusion that the fragmentary state of the lines will allow.⁹³ Although we cannot be sure of the subjects (it might be the choral dancers or the Muses), nevertheless it is evident that there is a description of choral performance: there is singing and dancing (αἰδᾶς, ὀπός, ὕμνιοισᾶν μέλος) and there is an audience listening (ἀκούσαι). The problem of who is the singer and who is the audience has been previously discussed in scholarship: we are to take the Muses as the performers of the choral songs and the maidens as the audience of their choral ode *par excellence*, or Astymeloisa, the choregos might be singing, or there might be two semi-choruses, one singing, one

⁹³ See Calame 1983, 396f.

listening.⁹⁴ It is unfortunate that we cannot be sure of what is the subject of the only female voice described in the poem, although we are sure about the gender because of the feminine participle (ὑμνιοισῶν μέλος). It is most probable that the female chorus of virgins invoke the Muses to fill their heart with song, so that they themselves can sing after their fashion. But the song they are so eager to sing themselves is undermined by their *pothos* for the choregos. If we can emendate ἱμέρωι νέας ἀοιδᾶς in line two, following Page and Snell⁹⁵, then the desire for the song seems to be cancelled by the limb-loosening desire for the eyes of Astymeloisa.

ix. Sapphic skies: Toward a possibility for female desire and language

If desire for the choregos makes it impossible for the Alcmanic chorus to sing, then desire in Alcman seems to be cancelling the possibility for the utterance of female voice. Is it then feminine voice, especially when connected with desire, at all possible? Or is it always tangled in a network of metaphors, silencing and deferring the female subject?

In Sappho Fr. 96, both desire and feminine voice, in the context of a female group, are the subject matters of the fragment. Although the circumstances of this performance are largely unknown, the poem might have been performed in an occasion similar to the one of the *Partheneion*. Whatever the case might be, the fragment is another example of a

⁹⁴ Calame 1983, 396 with scholarship.

⁹⁵ Calame 1983, 396. For the phrase *imeros peri frenas* also see σίτοιο γλυκεροῖο περὶ φρένας ἱμερος αἰρεῖ. Hymn. Apol 461 and σίτου τε γλυκεροῖο περὶ φρένας ἱμερος αἰρεῖ, Homer Iliad 11, 89

public feminine voice, even if it is only performed in the context of the Sapphic *hetairia*.⁹⁶

[]Cαρδ.[..]
 [πόλ]λακι τυίδε [.] ὦν ἔχοισα
 ὠσπ.[...].ῶομεν, .[...].χ[...]
 σε †θεᾷ ἰκέλαν Ἄρι-
 γνώτα†, cᾱι δὲ ἐμάλιστ' ἔχαιρε μὸλπαι·
 νῦν δὲ ἐΛύδαισιν ἐμπρέπεται γυναι-
 κεσσιν ὥς ποτ' ἀελίῳ
 δύντος ἃ βροδοδάκτυλος <σελάννα>
 πάντα περ<ρ>έχοις' ἄστρα· φάος δ' ἐπί-
 cχει θάλασσαν ἐπ' ἀλμύραν
 ἴσως καὶ πολυανθέμοις ἀρούραις·
 ἃ δ' <ἐ>έρσα κάλα κέχυνται τεθά-
 λαισι δὲ ἐβρόδα κᾶπαλ' ἄν-
 θρυσκα καὶ μελίλωτος ἀνθεμώδης·
 πόλλα δὲ ζαφοίταις' ἀγάνας ἐπι-
 μνάσθεις' Ἄτθιδος ἱμέρωι
 λέπταν ποι φρένα κ[.]ρ... βόρηται·
 κῆθι δ' ἔλθην ἄμμ[...].ica τόδ' οὐ
 νωντα[.]υκτονυμ[...] πόλυς
 γάρυει [...]αλον[.....].ο μέσσον·

.....
 Sardis...often having her mind here... how we lived together... Arignota (honored) you as a goddess, and she rejoiced most of all in your song. Now she stands out among the Lydian women like the rosy-finger moon after the sunset, surpassing all the stars. And light spreads among the salty sea and the flowery fields; the beautiful dew is shed, the roses blossom and the soft chervil and the flowery honey-lotus. But she, roaming about far and wide, remembers gentle Atthis with desire and her tender heart is devoured inside, for your fate. ...come there...shouts... sea... middle ...

It has been noted before that the Sapphic fragment resembles the Alcmanic *Partheneia* in multiple ways: the utterance of homoerotic desire, the ties between a group of young women, even the metaphoric language seem to closely connect the three fragments. Moreover, in fr. 96, the extended simile in which the lost friend outshines all

⁹⁶ For a discussion of performance of Sapphic poetry see Stehle.

Lydian women like the moon outshines the stars, brings to mind the image of Hagesichora, looking like the sun in the eyes of the chorus, or the one of Astymeloisa, walking like a bright star of the starry heavens.⁹⁷ Desire, beauty and images of light seem to be inextricably connected in the lyric imagination. Do Alcman and Sappho merely employ a poetic *topos*, stock imagery or metaphoric language as it were, known and expected by their audience? Is the effect same in both poets? Can we talk about the same impossibility of female desire and language in the case of Sappho?

Let me first examine all three images of light. In Alcman the chorus leader is compared to the sun: “she looks to me like the sun” says the chorus in admiration of Agido’s beauty. In the second *Partheneion*, Astymeloisa walks pass the chorus as a shining star crosses the sky. In Sappho however we found a double comparison: she is to the rest of the Lydian women as the moon is to the stars. She is the brightest of the bright. The images of light keep returning in both Alcman and Sappho: in Sappho the simile/analogy progresses to description of a *locus amoenus* while in Alcman the light becomes gold, to come back in the image of the opposing P(e)leiades compared to Sirius, the star. The second image might be closer to the Sapphic as a comparison but notice that the image does not describe the choregos this time and the difference between the forceful Alcmanic vocabulary according to which the Peleiades fight against (ταὶ Πεληάδες ἄμιν... ἅτε σήριον ἄστρον ἀφηρομέναι μάχονται) and the Sapphic surpassing all the stars (πάντα περ<ρ>έχοις' ἄστρα). The polemic language, supported by more elements of the poem as shown earlier, is absent from Sappho although the

⁹⁷ *Parth.1* ἐγὼν δ' αἰίδω Ἀγιδῶς τὸ φῶς· ὁρῶ γ' ὥτ' ἄλιον,
Parth. 3 [ὦ] τις αἰγλά[ε]ντος ἀστήρ [] ὠρανῶ διαιπετής

comparison is still clear. In fact, the girl becomes an image of a moon-girl as it glides from simile to description of landscape, to description of the girl followed by a voice. The voice of a singing girl as treasured by memory joins the voice of performer(s) and the lamenting voice of the absent friend connecting the two landscapes via the image of light.

And while the element of comparison is common between the members of the chorus and the hetairia, in Sappho the relationship is not situated in an antagonistic (or polemic) context. There is still the element of personal preference, but the absent friend wishes to go back to the circle, go back to them (κῆθι δ' ἔλθην ἄμμ...).

Homoerotic desire is still there in all three poems: but while in Alcman the feminine voice is silenced by desire, the Sapphic voice is reinforced and inspired by it: it is the voice of desire, a past and present feminine voice, a voice reverberating and a voice performed. Thus Sapphic poetry finds a way for feminine voice to be heard, for desire to be uttered in feminine.

ii. Conclusion

As seen in both *Partheneia* then, young women have a peculiar, problematic voice and subjectivity. Women in the *Partheneion*, act like men: fight, defend themselves, see and project themselves as men. And of course, they talk like men emphasizing hierarchical models, or models of desire that emphasize the objectification of the beloved. Moreover, the inability of feminine discourse is emphasized: women in the *Partheneion* either mimic a male language or utter animal cries, an otherwise unrepresentable voice, represented only via similes.

Composing songs for young women then, Alcman chooses to represent feminine voice as different from human voice, stressing a matter inherent to feminine voice: its alterity and problematic representation. Mimicking a language that does not belong to them, the women in the *Partheneion* seem to carry on the Father's name as their own, mirroring also structures that it is not their own. For to assume male language means assuming male roles and male ideology. The voice of the chorus then is a "feminine" voice: a voice constructed as a female discourse only to highlight its inadequacies and its problematic nature and finally accept its defeat by mimicking the only possible male discourse. Hence, the young women of the *Partheneion* act, fight, compete and see as men. And of course, they talk like men emphasizing hierarchical models, accepting and reinforcing the laws and ideological conventions of a patriarchal society.

CONCLUSION

A Voice of Her Own

La femme n'existe pas
- J. Lacan
Can the subaltern speak?
- G. Spivak

This dissertation about feminine voice in archaic Greece began with both Spivak's question and Lacan's assertion in mind. Should one, following Lacan, exclaim that there is no such thing as a Woman or should one look for whatever possibilities for voice the subaltern woman has? .This first set of questions gets more complicated in the context of Greco-Roman literature and scholarship, followed by more questions. .Why is Diotima a woman? Why is Sappho a woman? Or even "Why is Sappho a man?"¹ The aforementioned questions hind to the major problem of the possibility of a female/feminine voice, and since archaic Greece is the birthplace of the "Western attitude toward women" then archaic poetry seemed the obvious starting place for discussion. ² How can Sappho, as a prototypical female poet, use the language and symbolic systems of a male dominated poetic discourse to speak as a woman? Attempting to answer this

¹ I am here referring to the articles by D. Halperin, M. Skinner and P. Gordon, see bibliography.

² See Arthur 1984.

question, I tried to build a case for a feminine voice that is historically contextualized, since it is constructed within the context of archaic Greece. At the same time, such a discussion would have implications outside the specific time and place, opening questions about the possibility of female speech in Greek and Roman literature in general. And since the term voice is seen as a synonym for “construction of female voice” such a broader analysis, would include not only female-authored but also male – authored texts. A discussion about female voice cannot begin with Sappho and end with Sulpicia.

In such a discussion, my objective was to explore a feminine voice that is neither essentialist nor victimized: if Sappho is able to speak at the same time within and against the specific androcentric society, then indeed the subaltern woman, and her voice, does exist. Moreover, if Sappho’s feminine voice is not anchored on her gender, it is a position in language rather than a biologically defined position, then this *écriture féminine* can be composed by male writers as well. As a result, such a discussion can be expanded not only to Corinna, Anyte, Erinna, Sulpicia, but also to Homer, Catullus or Ovid. There is much work that can be done once the “feminine voice” is situated within the cultural institutions that create it.

This dissertation explores the oppositional nature of Sappho’s discourse in the first chapter. In a dialogue with Winkler, I use Bakhtin’s and Kristeva’s view of dialogism and polyphony to find a Sapphic a self that eludes temporal and spatial constraints. First of all, the voice of Sappho is considered as the representation of a feminine voice and also self-representation: a voice of an elusive self, a polyphonic voice. Sappho’s dialogic, polymorphic, feminine voice defies the system of binary oppositions.

Sappho re-reads, re-writes epic but this time it is a feminine epic: polyphonic, dialogic and against dichotomies and hierarchies. The “Homeric” poems then reenact a double poetic self, a male and a female self as well as a lyric and an “epic” one, expanding the limits of her monologic prototype³. Reading “Homeric” passages and transforming Homeric to “feminine epic” Sappho invites the reader to do the same. Be a reader between control of meaning -a male gesture- and the (female) recognition that meaning can be shifting, elusive and uncontrollable, a reader whose voice is not one. Or in Irigaray’s words a reader who:

“... Remain in flux, not congealing or solidifying. What will make that current flow into words? It is multiple, devoid of meanings, simple qualities”.⁴

Concentrating on Homeric epic, Helen, both as a poet-weaver figure and as the subject matter of poetry, is discussed as the paradigmatic embodiment of feminine discourse. I argue that in the Homeric epics Helen as an alternative poetic figure: building on Martin’s distinction between *muthos* and *logos*, I show how Helen is a speaker of *muthoi*, not connected with poetic authoritative speech but also performing all three genres traditionally reserved for male “poetic figures”: flyting, commanding and recollection. But although she is staged as a poet-figure, being an outsider Helen can only be seen as other, her voice as the voice of alterity.

I mainly argue that Helen is seen as a figure of doubleness, and therefore not belonging in the masculine rigidly dichotomized paradigm. At the same time, being herself elusive, difficult to categorize and duplicitous, she is the paradigmatic

³ For a discussion of Homer and dialogism see Nagy and Peradotto in Branham, 2002.

⁴ Irigaray 1985, 215.

embodiment of the fluidity of feminine discourse. Helen is therefore seen as the constantly elusive object, uttering a voice "that is not one, that is multiple and layered".⁵ Helen's narrative in the *Teichoskopia* is read as not only an alternative, polyphonic discourse but also a generator of such discourses. Thus, Helen can be seen a different feminine poetic voice, a voice of alterity, differentiating herself from the main Homeric voice. The poetic difference then is gendered, not only because it is uttered by a feminine but because it carries with it, and moreover displays as its main characteristic doubleness, mutability. Seen under a Derridian light, Helen is the embodiment of alterity, spatial, temporal and linguistic transgression, not only a poetic body, but also a feminine body giving birth to unending stories.

The last chapter then offers a counter-example to Homer's inclusive discourse: Alcman's *Partheneia* stage a feminine voice only to exclude any access of the feminine to the symbolic system. His "feminine" voice succumbs to male dichotomies and male concerns and speaks a language whose polyphony is muted and silenced staging a rite of passage in to an androcentric society.

I argued that Alcman fails to stage a feminine discourse, although the male post can have such a choice as discussed in the Homeric paradigm. Although the girls of the *Partheneion* utter a female voice in the *Partheneion* are shown as either incapable of uttering any voice or as mimicking the predominant male discourse. The chorus is using battle language to describe its performance referring back to the first section, the catalogue of male warriors. Accordingly, at the second section a catalogue of feminine

⁵ Worman 2001, 20. Also for a larger discussion of rhetorical quality of Helen's speech see Worman 1997.

adornments parallels the first catalogue. It is a ventriloquized voice, performing a masculine discourse; a female chorus staged trying to be a part of a patriarchal society.

I also argued that the young women of the *Partheneion* stage their function in the Spartan society via their representation as commodities with no subjectivity, no voice, no desire, no language. Using metaphoric language while describing the dancers for example, the chorus is pointing to a spectacle that cannot be fully seen; an abstract image blurring the subjectivity of the dancers. Thus, the construction of selfhood is a construction of a (fe)male self that seems in appearance to be feminine but proves to be essentially male, emphasizing hierarchical models, or male models of desire. Composing songs for young women then, Alcman chooses to represent feminine voice as different from human voice, stressing a matter inherent to feminine voice: its alterity and problematic representation.

Protinus est oculis cognita nostra tuis-
An, nisi legisses auctoris nomina Sapphus,
Hoc breve nescires unde movetur opus?

Ovid, *Heroides* XV

This dissertation does not claim to be an exhaustive discussion of feminine voice. The feminine voice, as Irigaray argues, is not one. I hope that I have shown its multiple possibilities rather than fix a list the characteristics of feminine voice. This dissertation is also the writing of a feminine voice, itself fragmented, ununified with no tendency to categorize and form hierarchies. Hence, it does not pose as an exhaustive discussion of

female voice in archaic poetry. Sappho, Homer and Alcman function more like examples. An example of a female-author, one of a male poet who uses Helen as a figure of his own female speech, and another male author, Alcman, who fashions and silences feminine voice within the masculine discourse. Similarly, the conclusion can also be read as the beginning of a search of female/feminine voice beyond these examples. I did not discuss all of the female speakers in Homer: Penelope can be seen as another female poetic figure. A further discussion on the speech of goddesses in the *Iliad*, especially Hera and Athena would inform our understanding on how female goddesses negotiate their female position in the Pantheon. Do the same gender roles apply? Does the voice of a goddess come from a subaltern position as well? What about goddesses in Hesiod, or Pandora, the mother of “the most female women”? What about other female writers? Do they choose the same position in language that Sappho has? Can we talk about a “double consciousness” in the poetry of Corinna, or Nossis? And even more importantly, is their reading of Sappho similar to Catullus’ or Ovid’s?

I already discussed Catullus’ re-reading of Sapphic poetry in the end of my first chapter. A few last remarks can be added. When Catullus re-reads Sappho he plays her game, understanding the fact that female voice can be ventriloquized by the male poet. By doing so, he himself enters the position of the subaltern that can speak, can repeat the same words that the male poet does. He, of course, *is* a male poet. Then why does he need to speak through Sappho? Is it a gesture of the male re-claiming the poetic discourse that rightfully belongs to him? How do the same words sound coming out of his mouth? Is Catullus self-sarcastic when speaking to “Lesbia” as Sappho? Is he a poet in drag, caught in the act of gender-bending? The word play gives Sappho the double role of the

lover and the Lesbian poet, a poet who listens to a performance of her own poem. Does Catullus point to the fact that the female poet is always an outsider, always listening to her own poetry in a man's voice, in a man's words?

The couplet in the beginning of the sections comes from different reading of Sappho, that of Ovid. Or, most probably Ovid. But according to tradition the letter is composed by Sappho herself, this is yet another Roman-male translation of her poetry. Ovid, like Catullus, needs to speak with the voice of Sappho. Is his a way of morally legitimizing the lesbian poet by giving her a male lover?⁶ Why does he need to re-assign to Sappho the lines that Catullus used to describe his own erotic anguish, words first composed by Sappho?⁷ I believe it is not about a lesbian poet but about the Lesbian poet. And, more importantly, about the female poet who made it to the canon. Sappho is again ventriloquized by Ovid, who now does not translate her poem but gives Sappho her "female" voice back. The voice of the subaltern that cannot speak, the "feminine" voice of the Alcmanic maidens.

But, ironically, this is the male voice of Sappho. It is not accidental then that the letter begins with a question of authority-a quest for Roman *auctoritas*. "Did you know it was me writing the letter, did you know as soon as you picked it up, or did you have to read the name, Σαπφούς, or else you wouldn't know where this letter comes from?" There are multiple levels of irony here: these are the first lines of the poem. The question does not only refer to the fictional reader-Phaon- but most of all to the reader of the

⁶ For a good discussion and scholarship see Gordon 1997.

⁷ I refer to lines 111-2 *et lacrimae deerant oculis et verba palato/adstrictum gelido frigore pectus erat*. Compare with the Catullan *lingua sed torpet, tenuis sub artus / flamma demanat*.

Heroides. The readers then enter a game of authorship; as adequate (male) readers we are supposed to know Sappho is writing the letter. Or Ovid? Any learned reader, knowing his meters and grammarology would know that it cannot be Sappho; it is a Roman male poet composing elegy, not a Greek female poet using a lyric meter. But Sappho's name is there, in Greek, in an ironic, almost naïve attempt to establish Sappho as the author. Maybe Ovid is trying to embellish his work with some realistic detail. Or maybe, he is trying to ask the same question this dissertation asks. How can we tell whether it is a female voice or not? Is there such a thing as a female voice, or is the poet the master puppeteer who decides what words he will put in the female character's mouth? Is it a voice that matters?

Discussing Spivak's influential work, R. Young describes how the subaltern woman "is written continuously as the object of patriarchy".⁸ If he is right, then feminine voice is always an act of re-writing: not only the feminine voice of Sappho by the Roman poets is a re-writing, not only Sulpicia's appropriation by Tibullus, but also Sappho's own voice can only be a re-writing of feminine voice through the male voice. But this is where Sappho's, or Sulpicia's for that matter, success rests. She succeeds not *at* the field of male poetry but *against* the field of male poetry. The acts in which the Roman poets try to appropriate Sappho's voice- by borrowing her voice, writing letters in her voice, or include Sulpicia's poetry in Tibullus' table of contents, they are both acts of re-writing and a mis-writing. Their acts have political implications; as Sappho's *écriture féminine* is, of course, political. She writes the rupture of social structure by writing a rupture in language, by writing a fragmented, dialogic self rather than a unified stable self. For,

⁸ Young 1990. 164

situating the “feminine voice” within the cultural institutions that create it, seeing it as multiple and disruptive, and at the same time as a voice of repetition and parody, the premise on which this dissertation is based on, is a possible way to frame the answer of the question this dissertation asks: “is there a feminine voice?”.

According to this thesis then, it is evident that feminine voice can be found in Archaic Greek poetry. I see such a voice not as a natural, physical voice but as a constructed gendered voice. Building on French feminist writings and late Bakhtinian discussions, I tried to map down polyphony, multiplicity, fluidity and mutability as its main characteristics. This discussion tries to avoid essentialistic conclusions: for that matter, I demonstrated how both male and female authors are able to construct a feminine voice with the aforementioned characteristics. Hence, both Sappho and Homer produce a feminine voice, a multiple, dialogic, unfixed voice. In the case of Sappho feminine voice is constructed as the voice of the *persona loquens*, be that Sappho or the female performer. In Homer, such a voice is constructed as the voice of Helen, a poetic female figure. I have also tried to show that the use of such a feminine voice is an ideological choice with sociopolitical implications: in Alcman, the possibility of the construction of a feminine voice is denied to the female chorus. As a result, the voice of the chorus is mimicking the masculine language while reinforcing patriarchal structures. In conclusion, by showing that feminine voice can be constructed by both female and male authors I argued for the possibility that the feminine can speak from the subject position. *Écriture feminine* then offers a different position from which men and women can speak from an alternative position free from structured opposites, a voice heard in Archaic Greece.

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