

JERZY KRAWIEC
INDEPENDENT RESEARCHER, BERLIN

PANDORA AS A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN AND AN OBJECT OF DESIRE

ABSTRACT: The following paper discusses the way in which female beauty was conceived of in ancient Greek culture, especially in the Hesiodic description of the creation of Pandora. As I argue, some of the aspects of this creature that, according to some feminist academic writers, might have resulted from an unsympathetic perception of women, as a matter of fact, may be a part of a positively charged image of an ideal woman in Hesiodic epics. The alleged artificiality and superficiality of Pandora were most probably not meant to compromise her truthfulness or fertility, but instead were intended to attract males.

KEYWORDS: sexuality, gender construction, female beauty, body-modification, Greek culture

1. CONTEMPORARY READINGS IN ANCIENT MISOGYNY

In his comedy *Lysistrata*, Aristophanes described Greek societies hit by a peculiar sort of strike. All women decided not to satisfy their husbands' erotic needs as long as the men did not accept their demands regarding international affairs. As it usually happens in comedy, the women's strategy was perfectly successful. After a few days of sex deprivation, all the men could not help but surrender unconditionally to their wives' postulates. In 1996, Robert Fowler published his article *How the Lysistrata Works*, in which he explained to the scholarly community the

background of this comic plot. According to this scholar, Athenian spectators found the story convincing (in a way in which a burlesque story may be convincing), because in their opinion, being deprived of sex with their wives would have been a sorrowful condition. This is because Athenian men enjoyed sex with their wives, concluded Fowler.

Looking at Fowler's article from a point of view of common sense, it seems simply banal, as the scholar explained in it a joke that should have been self-evident and probably was always self-evident to most spectators and readers of the comedy, not only in ancient times. It was not, however, that obvious to classical scholars, including myself, as when I read the article, I found it revealing and disturbing at the same time. We classicists are used to thinking that Greek men had many different ways of achieving sexual satisfaction. First of all, since Dover (1978) and Foucault (1985), we do not think that they were confined to the choice of female partners.¹ Since Pomeroy (1975), we assume that those who for some reason fancied women, could choose the services of streetwalkers or πόρνοι. More demanding customers were free to mingle with ἐταῖραι, luxury sex workers, proficient not only in love-making but also in other arts including music, dance, and persuasion, which made them much more desirable than so called "respectful women," allegedly trained only in housewife's work.² And if for some reason one did not have time to visit a cheap brothel or enough money to pay a courtesan, he could always persuade or force a slave of either gender to render him erotic services. As for their wives, men allegedly abhorred them, a fact that is shown in various genres of Greek literature from the archaic period onwards.³ Especially significant seems to be Semonides, whose fragment 7, known as *Types of women*, mocks several kinds of females:

In the beginning the god made the female mind separately. One he made from a long-bristled sow. In her house everything lies in disorder,

¹ On homosexuality in ancient Greece, see esp. Halperin 1990; Hubbard 1998; Davidson 2007.

² On prostitution, among others: Davidson 1998: 73–136; Hamel 2003: 3–43; Cohen 2015.

³ On ancient misogyny, see e.g. Keuls 1985; Gilmoure 2001. For more nuanced views that try to break out with the inveterate assumptions, see Cohen 1991; Goff 2004.

smear'd with mud, and rolls about the floor; and she herself unwashed, in clothes unlaund'ered, sits by the dungheap and grows fat.⁴

And a little further:

Another was the offspring of a proud mare with a long mane. She pushes servile work and trouble on to others; she would never set her hand to a mill, nor pick up a sieve nor throw the dung out of the house, nor sit over the oven dodging the soot; she makes her husband acquainted with Necessity. She washes the dirt of herself twice, sometimes three times, every day; she rubs herself with scents, and always has her thick hair combed and garlanded with flowers. A woman like her is a fine sight for others, but for the man she belongs to she proves a plague, unless he is a tyrant or king [who takes pride in such things].

The only good candidate for wife out of the ten species described by Semonides happens to be that praised at the end of his catalogue:

Another is from a bee; the man who gets her is fortunate, for on her alone blame does not settle. She causes his property to grow and increase, and she grows old with a husband whom she loves and who loves her, the mother of a handsome and reputable family. She stands out among all women, and a godlike beauty plays about her. She takes no pleasure in sitting among women in places where they tell stories about love. Women like her are the best and most sensible whom Zeus bestows on men.

Even though the poem contains these 11 lines in which a bee-woman is praised, their number is relatively small compared to the other 107 extant verses that condemn women. Moreover, if such pseudo-statistics may be used as a piece of evidence, only one female species out of ten is described as noble and decent. More significantly, the reasons for which the bee-woman is praised are foreign to our taste, as she is described as a good housekeeper who does not ruin her husband's reputation. Certainly, there is nothing really sexy about a good woman.

⁴ Semonides is quoted in translation of Lloyd-Jones 1975.

2. HESIODIC ANTHROPOPOIESIS

This is the background against which Pandora is usually seen, and which she seems to fit perfectly. The *Types of women* is especially pertinent here, as there are several systematic parallels between this catalogue and the description of creation of the first woman in Hesiod, resulting from conscious strategies of an intertextual game applied by Semonides and identified by Nicole Loraux in her seminal essay *Sur la race des femmes et quelques-unes de ses tribus* (1978).

While focusing on the Hesiodic version of the Pandora myth, the scholar turned attention to several aspects of this creature. First of all, the poet explicitly states that all women come from her (*Th.* 590–591):

ἐκ τῆς γὰρ γένος ἐστὶ γυναικῶν θηλυτεράων
τῆς γὰρ ὀλοίουόν ἐστι γένος καὶ φῦλα γυναικῶν⁵

For from her comes the race of female women: for of her is the deadly race and tribe of women⁶

This suggests that within this vision women are not born from a union between men and women but belong to a separate species. This is further confirmed by the lexical choices of the poet, who speaks of γένος and φῦλα of women in a way that he does not speak of γένος and φῦλα of males. Instead, as Loraux observes, φῦλα γυναικῶν are contrasted with φῦλα ἀνθρώπων, which suggests that the term that designates “human species” excludes women. Indeed, this is how the Hesiodic story of humanity develops. Hesiod does not describe anywhere the moment of anthropogenesis in a proper sense of this term. Unlike in the Hebrew tradition, Greek humans or, perhaps, Greek males were not created. Apparently, they have always been around⁷ and, as the text of *Works and Days*

⁵ It should be noted that these two lines paraphrase one another, which means that in the original text they did not stand beside each other. Nevertheless, it is difficult to choose which one should be dismissed as an interpolation. See West 1966: *ad loc.*

⁶ Translations from Hesiod, unless stated otherwise, are by G.W. Most (Loeb).

⁷ See Leclerc 1993: 131–146 with further references in note 422. It is interesting to note that a similar pattern is also present in an admittedly mythical account of creation of humans and beasts in Plato’s *Protagoras* (320d), where both categories of mortal

suggests, if one may speak of a moment in which they came into being as a distinct ontological category, it was not signed by an act of creation, but by a series of acts of differentiation between them and the gods.

It all began when Prometheus divided a carcass of an animal between mortals and immortals.⁸ Only then, the two races that, until that moment, had dined together, were separated. Since then, humans eat flesh, something that Greek gods, by definition, do not.⁹ This is also when Pandora was made and given to the humans along with one additional thing. *Works and Days* speaks of her notorious *box* or *jar* with all misfortunes that make mortals' lives miserable. In *Theogony*, it is substituted with a more abstract concept (602–605):

ἔτερον δὲ πόρεν κακὸν ἀντ' ἀγαθοῖο,
ὅς κε γάμιον φεύγων καὶ μέρμερα ἔργα γυναικῶν
μὴ γῆμαι ἐθέλει, ὄλοδον δ' ἐπὶ γῆρας ἵκηται
χίττει γηροκόμοιο

And he bestowed another evil thing in exchange for that good one whoever flees marriage and the dire works of women and chooses not to marry arrives at deadly old age deprived of assistance.

In other words, as Jean-Pierre Vernant observed (1979), by providing us with material food, Prometheus made us, the male-human species, different from gods. Since then, unlike gods, we may enjoy our substantial meals, but at the same time we cannot do without them. Soon afterwards Zeus further confirmed this differentiation by giving us women along with the *ἔτερον κακόν*, the misery of old age, which makes us different from gods and makes women essential, as they are the only means of

beings are said to have been first moulded by gods from clay and fire and only subsequently given their distinctive attributes by Epimetheus and Prometheus. See Denyer 2008: *ad loc.* On the creation of humans in Near Eastern traditions contrasted with Hesiod, see Walcot 1966: 55–57.

⁸ It should be observed that this exchange of blows between Prometheus and Zeus only triggered the differentiation between men and gods, but it was not its first cause. See Leclerc 1993: 141–142. On the division of the animal at Mekone as an aition of animal sacrifice, see Vernant 1979; Rudhardt 1970 for the opposite view; Prescendi 2009 for a synthesis.

⁹ See *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, IV 131 with commentary of Vergados 2013: *ad loc.* See also Versnel 2011: 309–377.

providing male-human species with children, the substitute for the gods' everlasting youth and immortality. Thus, from a logical and ontological point of view, the making of Pandora is the moment in which humankind came into being as a category distinct from other living creatures.¹⁰

There is an obvious difference between the two models of Hesiodic anthropopoiesis, as only women were crafted from clay, whereas males emerged from what may be called primordial logical chaos by assuming some distinct features that made them different from other beings. It should be noted, however, that these two acts of creation not only coincided in time, but one was also instrumental to the other. Thus, Loraux was perfectly right to say that for Hesiod (and Semonides) women have been from the beginning, and continue to be different from males, belonging to something that may be called a separate species. At the same time, she observed that this marginalization of women is an effect of the mode in which the collective male grammatical and perhaps epistemological subject operates.

3. THIRD PERSON, SECOND SEX

There is, however, a little more to it than Loraux acknowledges. In the works of Hesiod, women become what Simone de Beauvoir calls the "second sex" due to the fact that the speaker of his epics and his implied audience are male. Paradoxically, this implies that the collective male *we* is split into two categories representing two various modes of participation in the collectivity. The didactic epics, after all, represent one of most outwardly unilateral modes of communication. The poetic persona of Hesiod becomes a teacher, who, without even trying to conceal his privileged position or negotiate its terms, by virtue of divine inspiration transmits his vision of the world to the passive¹¹ audience.¹² In this way not only does he address the male audience, but he also shapes them without even pretending that he is doing something else. Thus, Hesiodic epics may be read as a program of creating male as a distinct category.

¹⁰ See esp. Zeitlin 1996; Clay 2003: 100–128.

¹¹ I would like to stress that when using the adjective "passive," I do not intend to evoke any Foucauldian connotations.

¹² See especially Canevaro 2015; Hunter 2014: 40–122.

This means that the passages in which Hesiod talks about Pandora may be described as what J.L. Austin called *performative utterances*, as they serve as means not only of describing a cultural reality but also, and actually foremost, of constructing and projecting it. At the same time, the way in which Hesiod insists on the gender distinctions and their impregnability suggests that the ideology he advocated needed clear articulation, perhaps because it was not that deeply rooted.

At any rate, Pandora is presented to us in a way that is conditioned by the male point of view and that happens to be a means of expressing the male ideology based on the opposition *us, males/ the others*. Not by chance did she become a symbol of women's oppression under the reign of patriarchal culture in the writings of the second wave feminist academic writers, who tended to expose its tyranny in the ancient world,¹³ at the same time being unable to free themselves from the way in which it monopolized the language. It shall be noted, however, that even Hesiod permitted himself for a short while, if not to speak in the name of Pandora, at least to reflect her voice, or actually, her body language.

4. MORE SYMPATHETIC VIEW OF PANDORA

While describing the malicious powers of north winds in winter time, the poet turns attention to the interior of a house that keeps the blows away from its inhabitants (519–523):

καὶ διὰ παρθενικῆς ἀπαλόχορος οὐ διάησιν,
ἦ τε δόμων ἔνθοσθε φίληι παρὰ μητέρι μίμνει
οὐ πω ἔργ' εἰδυῖα πολυχρύσου Ἀφροδίτης·
εὖ τε λοεσσαμένη τέρενα χροά καὶ λίπ' ἔλαιαίω
χρῖσαμένη μυχίη καταλέξεται ἔνδοθι οἴκου

It does not blow through the soft-skinned maiden who stays at the side of her dear mother inside the house, still ignorant of the works of golden Aphrodite; after washing her tender skin well and anointing herself richly with oil she lies down in the innermost recess inside the house...

¹³ E.g. Cantarella's *Pandora's Daughters* (1987).

Small houses of peasants of the late eight century BCE¹⁴ certainly did not permit strict, so called oriental, seclusion of women that in the past was thought to be an ideal and reality of the classical Athens.¹⁵ This does not change the fact that in this brief passage Hesiod describes to his male audience what was certainly not meant to be seen by men. A teenage girl, called by Wolkow (2007: 255) “Winter Maiden,” is shown here in her sensual corporeality in a cosy warm interior that stands in sharp contrast with the windy and humid cold of the outdoors. And, as she does not expect to be seen by men (of whom she knows little), quite strikingly, she applies to her body only the two techniques that in slightly later periods would be associated with male athletes: she washes her skin and anoints it with oil.¹⁶

The field of so called body modification is an extremely fertile one, especially when it comes to testing various tools of semiotic analysis.¹⁷ Without getting into an area that is fashionable among some scholars and contested by some others, using statements such as that the biological sexed body is a cultural product,¹⁸ one may assume that culture leaves its imprint on the sexed body, shaping it according to its standards. If we consider all possible techniques, including dietary habits and workouts that shape the body following a given model, it turns out that in ancient Greece, of all the historical periods, an opposition between positively defined male and positively defined female can be indicated. Even though it is a complementary opposition rather than a strictly privative one, it may be very well described in neat and elegant binary categories so dear to structuralists.

¹⁴ See Navett 2010: 22–42.

¹⁵ See especially Cohen 1991; Patterson 1998: 5–43.

¹⁶ Canevaro 2015: 119 observes that the toilette of Hesiod’s *parthenos* resembles that of Aphrodite in *Odyssey* VIII 364–366 and *Homeric Hymn* V 61–67, which signals a clear link between the girl and the goddess. I would like to argue for the contrary, as Hesiod explicitly states that the girl has not, as of yet, learnt the works of Aphrodite. This is why his description of her actions includes washing and anointing, but excludes dressing up. See also Wolkow 2007: 255.

¹⁷ See Lee 2009; Lee 2015: 54–88; Gilchrist 1999: 54–78; further bibliographical clues: Fögen 2009.

¹⁸ See especially Laquer 1990 on the one hand and King 1998 on the other.

The ideal male body, reflected in art and descriptions such as that in the Aristophanes' *Clouds*, is embodied by the athletes.¹⁹ At first glance it seems to be an ideal of extreme simplicity and naturality. This, however, turns out to be a culturally constructed naturality, not only because, as Larissa Bonfante (1989) observed, even the nudity of Greek men may be described as a costume. More strikingly for everyone who has ever practised any sport discipline, the body of a Greek athlete is a product of long years of pain and sacrifice. Its *recherché* simplicity and artificial truthfulness, however, is opposed to the women's outward artificiality, since women, as seen and reproduced by male artists, are virtually always covered. Even such exceptions as Knidean Aphrodite confirm the rule,²⁰ since her so called "pudica pose" indicates that even the most impudent of the goddesses was not used to being seen naked.²¹ Perhaps it would be an exaggeration to say that until that shocking experiment of Praxiteles, Greek sculptors treated female bodies as mannequins on

¹⁹ The problem of (different levels) of male nudity in Greek art vs. the almost complete exclusion of female nudes (apart from clearly marked contexts such as depictions of violated Cassandra) has been widely discussed and nuanced. Of special interest may be Stewart 1997 (esp. 24–34). On athletic bodies, see Osborne 2011: 27–54; 1998; Bonfante 1989; Thuillere 1988.

²⁰ Certainly not without reason, the Knidean Aphrodite has been widely analysed from almost all angles. For the present discussion, of special interest are Salomon 1997; Osborne 1994: 81–85.

²¹ It seems quite telling that Friedrich (1978: 136–137), in his eagerness to demonstrate that Aphrodite has "been depicted nude from remote times," mentions representations of the Vedic goddess Ushas and "an Aphrodite or Aphrodite-like figure" in Mycenaean, Cycladic and Minoan art. When it comes to depictions of a figure that may be, to any degree, identified with Aphrodite, he states: "during the sixth and most of the fifth century there were no sculptures of any female in the nude; even the Aphrodites are fully clothed." Then, as the first really attested case of a nude Aphrodite, he quotes a lost work of Scopas and the Knidean Aphrodite by Praxiteles. It is also interesting that in a passage from *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* (161–167) that Loraux (1995: 224) quotes as evidence of the habit of conceptualising this goddess as naked, a scene of her undressing by Anchises is described. Curiously enough, no naked body is referred to. Instead, the passage contains a catalogue of fancy garments and jewels taken by the mortal lover into his hands. Clearly what was meant to be erotic was not the display of the female body, but rather its coverings. See also Bonnet, Pirenne-Delforge (2004: 856 *et passim*).

which to display decorative draperies.²² Yet, quite unquestionably the female eroticism (where it is legitimate to speak of eroticism) results from an interplay between the cover and what is underneath, whereas the body of a male athlete is, almost without exception, a theme on its own. Thus, to put it in the most synthetic way, male beauty is somehow internal, natural and biological, and the female is external, artificial, and cultural.

This is where we return to Pandora. Unlike “the soft-skinned maiden still ignorant of the works of golden Aphrodite,” who was not meant to be seen by men, she is described in a way in which a young unmarried woman would present herself to men when hoping to arouse their desire. She is sumptuously dressed and embellished by the gods. Moreover, in the *Works and Days* (63–64) we are told that Athena taught Pandora “to weave richly worked cloth.”²³ This is certainly one of most important skills that Greek girls learned before marriage, but it seems telling that this is the only one mentioned in the text, as it is a part of women’s beautifying process.²⁴ Pandora not only looks beautiful, but she can also make herself beautiful. Therefore, Loraux is certainly right to say that Pandora is represented as hardly more than appearances, but I would hesitate to agree that these appearances are deceitful because there is nothing behind the veil. She is simply described by a man to other men in a way in which a woman was meant to be seen by men.

²² See especially Osborne’s (1994: 85–86) analysis of dressed statues such as the Nike Sandalbinder.

²³ Robertson (2004: 150–161) observes that this detail might have been of paramount importance in the version of the myth inherited by Hesiod, in which the act of the creation of the first women at the same time functioned as an aition of clothing. Within this view, woman is inseparable from the clothes that are worn, produced, repaired and washed by her. Although Robertson’s theoretical premises, which are deeply rooted in a Frazerian paradigm, make some of his speculations difficult to accept, it seems that he is perfectly right when he emphasises that there was a good reason for decorating the base of the Athenian Athena Parthenos statue with the birth of Pandora, and that it was not necessarily intended to convey antifeminist messages. She was probably not what Hurwit calls (in his otherwise splendid article 1995: 185) an anti-Athena. Also of interest may be the observation of Pirenne-Delforge (2001: 84, n.6) that there might have been some kind of systematic analogy between this image and another statue of Pheidias, the Zeus at Olympia, which had the birth of Aphrodite depicted on its base.

²⁴ On textile production as typically women’s work, see Reuthner 2006; Barber 1994.

5. PANDORA'S FERTILITY

At the same time, it seems untrue that the alleged nothingness behind the veil compromises Pandora's potential motherhood or that it results from it, as it has been often claimed. For example Pauline Schmitt-Pantel (2009: 197) states: "sa fonction de fécondité, de fertilité est passée sous silence."²⁵ This does little justice to what Hesiod says about the race of women that originated from Pandora (*Th.* 602–607):

ἔτερον δὲ πόρεν κακὸν ἀντ' ἀγαθοῖο,
 ὅς κε γάμον φεύγων καὶ μέρμερα ἔργα γυναικῶν
 μὴ γῆμαι ἐθέληι, ὄλοδ' ὄν ἐπὶ γῆρας ἴκηται
 χήτει γηροκόμοιο· ὁ δ' οὐ βίτου γ' ἐπιτεδευῆς
 ζῶει, ἀποφθιμένου δὲ διὰ ζῶην δατέοντα
 χηρωσταί.²⁶

And he bestowed another evil thing in exchange for that good one: whoever flees marriage and the dire works of women and chooses not to marry arrives at deadly old age deprived of assistance; while he lives he does not lack the means of sustenance, but when he has died his distant relatives divide up his substance.

This passage shows that for a male constructed by Hesiod, the role of a female is inevitably related to reproduction as an indispensable condition of procreation. Moreover, for some reason, Hesiod does not even mention the possibility that a woman may be unable to have children.²⁷ What, on the other hand, seems to suggest that Pandora is sterile is that, as Loraux states: "nothing indicates that the woman is determined 'to

²⁵ See also e.g. Clay 2003: 119–120.

²⁶ The use of the word χηρωσταί (*LS*, s.v.: "far-off kinsmen") indicates that by γηροκόμος in the previous clause, Hesiod meant its opposite, namely: close relatives, children (not wife). See West 1966: *ad loc.*; Patterson 1998: 64–65. The lines that follow 607–612 most probably refer to the wife, not children. Thus, the γενέθλη in 610 quite clearly refers to woman's "breed," not her "offspring." I am grateful to XY for turning my attention to this.

²⁷ It shall be also noted that, according to Zeitlin (1996: 64–65) the Ἐλπίς, which did not leave Pandora's jar, is an allusion to a possibility of having good, as well as bad, children.

imitate the earth,' as she is in the orthodox tradition of Greek representations of fertility." By saying this, Loraux polemizes against the views inspired by the evolutionary model of Greek religion that were still held by many scholars in her time.²⁸ Accordingly, all animal and human fertility was to be associated with earth and Pandora as a creature made of clay could, and must have been, taken as an example of primordial chthonic deity turned into a mortal in a process that Dowden (1989: 44) calls "Euhemerism in reverse."

As Jane Harrison (1903: 276–285) observed, the name of Pandora ("all-giver"), along with its variant known from some inscribed depictions in vase painting, Anesidora ("sender of gifts"), is otherwise attested as an epithet of Demeter,²⁹ and, needless to say, in such a context it seems perfectly adequate. According to this scholar, already Hesiod did not understand the real meaning of her name and this is why he proposed a false etymology when saying (*Op.* 80–82): ὀνόμησε δὲ τήνδε γυναῖκα Πανδώραν, ὅτι πάντες Ὀλύμπια δώματ' ἔχοντες δῶρον ἐδώρησαν, πῆμ' ἀνδράσιν ἀλφιστήσιον. Harrison translated this passage as follows: "For name of her this was his choice, Pandora, because in Olympus the gods joined together then and all of them gave her, a gift of sorrow, to covetous men."

Loraux³⁰ suggested in footnote (1993: 84, n. 73) that introducing this etymology, rather than from a misunderstanding, might have resulted from a conscious choice of the poet who intended to downplay fertility of the mortalised goddess. Zeitlin (1996: 60) gave this statement its canon form: "Hesiod in fact explicitly separates woman from the bountiful earth by inverting the usual etymology of her name from the one who gives to the one who is given. Not 'the giver of all gifts,' as a related

²⁸ Graf (2003: 6) states that "the fertility paradigm dominated the study of Greek religion up to the death of Martin Nilsson in 1964," which, quite obviously does not mean that it lost its appeal to all scholars immediately after that date. While the term "fertility" seems to be virtually absent from the indexes of most influential books on Greek religion published in recent decades, its presence still persists in works of (sometimes illustrious) scholars whose interest revolves around subject matters less directly connected to the field of religion.

²⁹ Especially helpful is the inventory of sources in Musäus 2004: 56–63. See also Fink 1958: 5–28; Casanova 1979: 44–45, n. 17, 62–89; Oppermann 1994.

³⁰ Following Robert 1914: 24.

epithet of Gaia (Earth) indicates, ‘Pandora’ is here glossed as “the one to whom the gods have given all gifts.”³¹

The relationship between “primitive” fertility goddess and mortal heroine seems much less straightforward today than it was postulated by Harrison and it cannot be excluded that, as West (1978: 165) observed: “if the Athenians amalgamate her with the Pandora who rises from the earth, it is only because she has the same name.” And this coincidence of names might have had nothing to do with alleged origins of the story. Nevertheless, it seems quite clear that Hesiod made an effort to make sure that the first woman, whose creation he described, would not be confused with earth. Up to this point, I do agree with Loraux and Zeitlin. Does it follow, however, that by making this distinction Hesiod meant to say that Pandora was sterile? As long as we think in categories postulated by Harrison, an equation earth = fertility presupposes its converse not-earth = sterility. The connection between earth and fertility, however, was clearly much less rigid for the Greeks of the archaic period, as results for example from Semonides (21–26):

Another the Olympians moulded out of earth, a stunned creature; you see, a woman like her knows nothing, bad or good. The only work she understands is eating; and not even when the god makes cruel winter weather does she feel the cold and draw a stool near the fire.³²

Semonides associates here earth with idleness and lack of sensibility, which seems quite natural. Her greed may be a little more surprising, but the mention of it may allude, for example, to the familiar phenomenon of decay. Any organic substance known in antiquity left on ground for

³¹ It seems interesting that between Harrison and Zeitlin, the translation of the Hesiodic etymology shifted from “all of them gave her to men” to “the one to whom the gods have given all gifts.” Both interpretations are possible and both had already found respective adherents in ancient times (D. Chr. 78, 25; Hyg. *Fab.* 142; *Astr.* 2, 15), but it is the former that seems more plausible, because, among other reasons, as West observes (1978: *ad loc.*) “It is of her that δῶρον is used in the rest of the passage (85, 86, cf. 57), and it was the giving of her rather than the making was a πῆμ’ ἀνδράσιν.” Further arguments: Robert 1914: 25–26. See also Lyons 2012: 42.

³² Line 25 may be corrupted and there are several possible readings of it: the earth-woman is either too lazy even to pull her stool or she only pulls up her stool instead of adding fuel to the fire. In either case, she does little or nothing. See Lloyd-Jones 1975: *ad loc.*; Pellizer, Tedeschi 1990: *ad loc.*

a long time would gradually disappear and turn into soil. What is striking, however, in the context of ritualist theories of the nineteenth and early twentieth century is that Semonides did not think it necessary to explain that earth may receive without giving anything back. Thus, even if the Hesiodic etymology of Pandora's name was really meant to underline that she was not a chthonian deity, it does not seem that the poet introduced it in order to imply that she was sterile. And if he did, it was probably too sublime to be grasped by anyone less knowledgeable than Jane Harrison.³³

It should be rather said that as long as in a given culture women are generally expected to be fertile (which is certainly the case of Greek culture) and a given text of this culture explicitly acknowledges this fact (as *Theogony* 602–612 does), it is natural to suppose that a primordial woman mentioned in this text is also by default meant to be fertile, unless it is explicitly stated otherwise. Seeing that it is not stated, it follows that Hesiod's Pandora was a potentially fertile mother and if the poet did not dwell on it at much length, it is clearly because he took it for granted.

6. CONCLUSIONS

When Pandora is described as (*Th.* 589) δόλος αιπύς, ἀμήχανον ἀνθρώποισιν (“sheer guile not to be withstood by men”), it seems that the device of gods' vengeance was particularly suitable for their purposes not because she was not what she looked like, but because she was simply irresistible.³⁴ The artificial beauty of Pandora in this respect oper-

³³ Obviously, it may be objected that Hesiod's intention was not so much to dissociate Pandora from earth as it was to underline that she did not bring gifts to the male human race. Yet this would not have suited his purposes as much as an opposite statement, given that in the same sentence Hesiod turns the concept of gift into an ambiguous device of divine wrath. In this context, calling someone *All-giver* would have been as ironic as calling the privilege offered by Cyclops to Odysseus in *Od.* IX 369–370 a gift of hospitality.

³⁴ The beauty of Pandora may be thus said to operate in a similar way to the appetising fat layer displayed on the gods' portion set by Prometheus at Mekone (*Th.* 535–561). This parallel (noted by Vernant 1980: 178) has already become commonplace in the scholarly literature, but quite surprisingly, it has never been fully stressed that the trick designed by Prometheus was not based on deception, at least as we would under-

ates in a very similar way to an ancient actor's mask as conceptualized by Frontisi-Ducroux (1991) as a device that is not meant to conceal the original identity of its wearer, but to help him embody someone. Thus, the mask does not hide. What can be clearly seen under Pandora's veil and jewellery is, already familiar, "Winter Maiden", a girl, who reached her puberty and learned to desire and to be desired when the season shifted and the Dog Star ascended.³⁵ Within this construction of the female gender perceived by the male viewer as purely artificial, the beauty of Pandora is dangerous not because she is artificial and different from what she is not.³⁶ Although Hesiod does not deny that appearances may be deceitful, what he actually means is that this deception is sexy. And even though sex may not be that bad, it is certainly a poor substitute for immortality.

This obviously does not make of Hesiod a feminist in any modern sense of this word. Yet, it cannot be denied that he was sensitive to female attraction and that he expected his audience to share this weakness.

stand it. As Hesiod explicitly states (unless we dismiss it as an interpolation or clumsy justification of divine helplessness), Zeus knew what was under the fat (550–551) and nevertheless he reached for this portion. This is for two reasons. First, as it has been quite widely recognised (e.g. Clay 2003: 109–113), it is because Zeus was only looking for a pretext to punish human beings and Prometheus. Secondly (which seems to have been unobserved), this is because it results from the rules of the game between the two immortals. Prometheus asked his opponent to choose the portion that he found more desirable or appetising (τῶν δ' ἔλεν ὀπποτέρην σε ἐνὶ φρεσὶ θυμὸς ἀνώγει) and this is what Zeus did; he picked the one that appealed to his senses more than the other (which was covered with a disgusting stomach). See also Węcowski 2012.

³⁵ On the female desire rising under the Dog Star: *Op.* 586–587. See also Petropoulos 1994: 31–45.

³⁶ It needs special emphasis that the idea advocated by Loraux (cf. e.g. Clay 2003: 121) that Pandora was a copy without an original, and therefore an empty form, as seems to be suggested by the words παρθένωι αἰδοίηι ἵκελον ("the likeness of a shy maiden": *Th.* 572; *Op.* 71), has been justly dismissed by Pirenne-Delforge (2001: especially 98–99), who demonstrated that the first mortal woman was created in Aphrodite's image.

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