

**MAKING SILENCE SPEAK**

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WOMEN'S VOICES IN GREEK  
LITERATURE AND SOCIETY

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*Edited by*

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2001

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS PRINCETON AND OXFORD

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## CHAPTER SIX

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### Virtual Voices

#### TOWARD A CHOREOGRAPHY OF WOMEN'S SPEECH

##### IN CLASSICAL ATHENS

JOSINE H. BLOK

AN ATHENIAN housewife's intermittent balancing of speech against silence, of deference toward her husband against the need to act on behalf of her own responsibilities, is voiced by the heroine of Aristophanes' comedy *Lysistrata*. Explaining why the women, tired of the devastating war, have gathered on the Akropolis, she tells the magistrate who has been sent to check them:

All this while, ever since the beginning of the war until now, we have borne through our self-restraint with whatever you men choose to do—you did not allow us to utter a syllable, did you?—but all the same we did not agree with you at all. But well we knew all this time of your doings; and often, when keeping inside our homes, we heard of yet another absurd instance of your mismanagement. And while inwardly grieving but with a smile on our face, we would ask you again and again, "What did you decide to write further about the Treaty on the stone in the Assembly today?" But the husband would say: "What is that of your business? Keep your mouth shut!" and so I did keep it. [The magistrate says that she otherwise would have been beaten.] Therefore certainly I held my tongue. Soon we would hear again of another, even more damaging endeavor of yours; and we would ask: "Husband dear, how could you take such foolish decisions?"<sup>1</sup>

When *Lysistrata* reveals that the women have decided to swap roles with the men, she explains how this principle is to be realized: the men, as women, must be silent and obedient, the women, as men, will assume control in order to restore peace (*Lys.* 527–28).

The presentation and representation of gender roles in this scene, as in the whole of *Lysistrata*, are extremely complex, the more so because the role

<sup>1</sup> Ar. *Lys.* 507–18 (ed. Henderson 1987). I thank S.L. Radt for discussing the translations in this chapter with me; all remaining errors are mine.

of the heroine was played by a male actor.<sup>2</sup> Since in this play the women have left their private existence to occupy public space, the traditional order of life has become confused: the women have acquired a certain masculinity by leaving their homes, raising their voices, and taking charge of the city, while the public area of the Akropolis and neighboring spaces to some extent have been made feminine and private by the presence of so many women. An even more complicated question is how to evaluate the representation of daily life—the so-called historical reality of the average citizen in the audience—within the context of the comic theater. Against the background of a daily life structured by the distinction between public/politics/male and private/home/female, how is the inverted world of *Lysistrata*, and of the other “women’s plays” by Aristophanes, to be judged? Is the very idea of women taking over the management of the city so radically absurd in the eyes of the audience that everything said or done within the context of the play could only be seen as part of a topsy-turvy world?

Obviously the play could have its intended impact only because many elements were familiar. The make-believe was effective because it resembled the real.<sup>3</sup> The man in the Athenian street was both the implied subject of Aristophanic comedy and its object; he could identify with the main tenets of the play solely if he could somehow see and hear his own world onstage. He probably would have recognized in *Lysistrata*’s role-playing words his own wife might have spoken. In the lawsuit against the fraudulent courtesan Neaera, the accuser played upon the jurors’ anxiety by evoking similar discussions. What would they say, when they returned home after the trial and were questioned by their wives on their verdict?<sup>4</sup> In this context, so different from that of the *Lysistrata*, the speaker supposed the husbands to be ashamed upon questioning instead of beating their wives to silence, because such a supposition would contradict his speech, which hinged on the unique value of the Athenian citizen wife.

But not only words in the strict sense convey meaning. In the attempt to perceive significant patterns of behavior and intention, evidence from contemporary rural Greece and occasionally from other Mediterranean countries proves to be valuable, not as a litmus test for historical truth, nor as a seismograph of historical continuity, but as a comparative model providing an indispensable context for ancient material.<sup>5</sup> The way *Lysistrata* covers

<sup>2</sup> On the multilayered representation of gender in the *Lysistrata*, cf. Foley 1982; Saïd 1987; Hoibye 1995; Zeitlin [1981] 1996, though mainly dealing with the *Thesmophoriazousai*, is also relevant to *Lysistrata*; on the effects of role-swapping in speech, Sommerstein 1995; on male actors playing female roles, Taaffe 1993: 49–51, and Griffith’s contribution to this volume.

<sup>3</sup> Zeitlin ([1985] 1996: 361), who deals foremost with tragedy, but in her discussion of mimesis deals also with drama in general.

<sup>4</sup> [Dem.] 59 (*Against Neaera*) 110–11.

<sup>5</sup> For a methodological validation of this approach, which elicits much debate, see Versnel

her feelings with irony, outwardly complying with male authority but inside deeply critical of, indeed angry about, the men’s pretensions and actions, resembles the way women in Greek rural villages nowadays can express their resentment.<sup>6</sup> A woman will never overtly hold up her husband or male kin for ridicule, but she can verbalize her point of view through barely veiled mockery. Though a husband may ultimately beat his wife to silence, a threat about which the magistrate also hints in *Lysistrata*’s speech, he has actually lost some ground if the woman’s critique is well founded.<sup>7</sup>

Irony as a means to show social submission while undoubtedly implying independent criticism is one among many features of a social system in which people know that things are not what they claim to be.<sup>8</sup> The principal rules concerning the relations between men and women, both in ancient and in rural modern Greece, may be summarized in a brief formula: women should not be seen, nor should they speak or be spoken of.<sup>9</sup> Yet even strict norms are not altogether unequivocal. Even if they are not actually challenged or are just circumvented, they may be handled in a number of ways. In brief, the rules may accommodate contradictory forms of behavior that might seem incongruent to an outsider, but that insiders explain as fully acceptable, and even as assumed and included within the terms of the norm itself. In classical Athens the social mutedness that was required of women was not considered to be incompatible with the many women’s voices that could be heard both in public and in private.

Whether someone will be heard and by whom, and what someone may say, depends entirely, of course, on where the speaking person is. In theory,

1987; Winkler 1990a; Hunter 1994; Walcot 1996 (defending cultural continuity); and most profoundly Cohen 1991: 35–69 (arguing for comparability instead of continuity). I fully agree with the latter’s response to the criticism raised by M. Herzfeld, among others, of “Mediterranean” as a shorthand, encompassing concept: “I know of no other group of similarly well-documented societies which manifest the same patterns of social practices. . . . Despite many differences, there are typical patterns of social practices that characterize a wide range of Mediterranean communities” (Cohen 1991: 38, 40). Moreover, for the kind of history attempted here, which aims at understanding the mentality of ancient Greeks underlying the words and events documented in our sources, I strongly feel the need to visualize ancient society as a social system, essentially different from our own time and place. This envisioning depends on “thick description” and comparison, accounting for similarities as well as differences.

<sup>6</sup> Herzfeld 1991: 87–90.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*: 87–88, 91.

<sup>8</sup> “A society where, people claim, one can never know what goes on in another person’s mind” (*ibid.*: 90, with references); “*Meaning* is opposed to *verbality*, even in male contexts” (*ibid.*: 96); “One has no choice but to lie. If you don’t, you can’t manage” (quoted in Cohen 1991: 51); on lying as a structural ingredient of classical Athenian society, *ibid.*: 96; particularly in its lawcourts, Cohen 1995; on the “science” of physiognomy to read the truth behind people’s appearance, Gleason 1990.

<sup>9</sup> For modern Greece, cf. Herzfeld 1991: 96: “Women. . . are constantly and curiously told by their husbands and fathers, *Mi milas* [‘Do not speak!’].”



an ideal survey of women's voices in classical Athens would need to situate all instances on the coordinates of two sets of intersecting axes. One set of axes would designate space. The axis indicating real space would run from the center of the home to the threshold, then to the streets of the neighborhood and its marketplace into the fields outside of town. Its parallel axis, indicating conceptual space, would signify at one end private space, next an ambiguous sphere both private and public, then an unequivocally public sphere, and finally domesticated nature bordering the wild. The other set of axes would designate time: a smaller one to signify the hours of the day, and a larger one to indicate the days of the year, even so as to include the four-year span of the large festival celebrations. This ideal survey would reveal that women could not be seen or heard on the street around 8:00 A.M. or 5:00 P.M., but could quite easily be found around 10:00 A.M.—that is, when the men were going to and coming back from their work, the street and market would be a male domain, but when they were gone women would cross to visit a friend or do some shopping, making a perfectly acceptable use of the same public areas.<sup>10</sup> Public and private space are relative concepts, whose meaning is determined by use, and hence by time. Anthropologist Rayna Reiter calls this time-regulated pattern in the gendered use of space in Mediterranean villages and provincial towns a coordinated choreography.<sup>11</sup> Since a full description of the Athenian choreography is impossible to attain, the present chapter entails a provisional sketch based on a few representative cases. I trace women's speech predominantly along the axis of space, specified as much as possible by indications of time.

As soon as the question of speech and mobility is raised, one should define precisely whose speech and mobility one is discussing. It is generally assumed that in ancient Greece different groups of women followed quite different unwritten rules as to when they could be in what place. For instance, even allowing for changes over time, older women and slaves were freer to move about than younger citizen women because of the different positions they occupied with respect to procreative sexuality, respectability, availability, and protection. In Greece as a whole, Spartan women were held

<sup>10</sup> To some extent, the city of Athens must have differed from the rural villages in that urban labor and sociability retained a number of men in the public areas, thus in practice limiting women's mobility. However, to possess a house in the city usually included possessing landed property plus house in the countryside (Osborne 1985: 184–87), hence requiring men's frequent absence from the home, like Euphiletos in *Lysias* 1.11, 13, 39; in Menander's comedies it is taken for granted that the men, wherever they live, are habitually away to work their fields.

<sup>11</sup> Reiter 1975b: 257; cf. Cowan (1991: 187), who speaks of "the moral geography of public leisure space" in Sohos, a town in central Macedonia, indicating the areas where men and women may or may not be without incurring censure for immoral conduct. A full description of this choreography would include the movements and speech of men in public and in private; e.g., male family members gathered indoors at home in the evening and stayed overnight until the following morning; in winter men were more indoors than in summer.

to have enjoyed the greatest freedom, Athenian citizen women to have faced the strictest limitations. However, although I do not doubt that in classical Athens a flute girl would be in places at times that no respectable citizen wife would ever consider, the recent work on comparative basis just mentioned encourages a thorough reconsideration of this matter. In contemporary Greece, the relations between men and women form variations on a distinct theme. The degrees of male authority over the women, of men's acknowledgment of women's contributions to the household and the community, of women's loyalty either to their menfolk or to other women of the community, and the range of movement and exchange are correlated with patterns of household formation (*viril-* or *matrilocal*), of providing for dowries, and of inheritance policies.<sup>12</sup> It will require a more extensive analysis to determine which variations on the same theme the city of Athens and the rural villages of Attica exactly represented.<sup>13</sup> For the time being it is useful to adopt an open approach to the question of how distinctions in age, class, and status were effectuated in daily life. I focus here mainly on the "average" Athenian woman.<sup>14</sup> The difference between citizen and metic status was only occasionally relevant, for instance in certain religious

<sup>12</sup> Strong pressure and limitations imposed on young wives in *virilocal* communities in Greek Macedonia, Danforth 1991: 102–5; almost total separation of men and women in social life combined with a relative freedom of speech and movement for women in *matrilocal*, neolocal villages on Lesbos, Papataxiarchis 1991: 157; frequent separation of men and women combined with nearly paranoid authority of men over women on Crete, Kennedy 1986: 122–26.

<sup>13</sup> Foxhall's (1989) analysis of households within the Athenian community, corroborated by Hunter (1994: 9–42), fits well with the structure of Vasilika, a village in Boeotia described by Friedl (1962, 1986) where, given the structural limitations of Mediterranean village life, women enjoy relative freedom of movement and speech. Conversely, the very strict rules in Hatzai, a mountainous village in Crete described by Kennedy (1986), do not openly condone women even to visit female friends; in this respect, the Cretan situation is clearly different from that in classical Athens. The structure of housing and neighborhoods, and the relation between village and farmlands described by Osborne (1985), fit well with the "Mediterranean" pattern examined by Cohen (1991: 47–54). Likewise, the varied patterns in locality of burial (Osborne 1985: 130–31; Cox 1998: 38–67) suggest types of marriage, residence, and linkage that would allow classical Athenian women a mobility more resembling that of women in Vasilika than in Hatzai.

<sup>14</sup> One should even ask to what extent the distinction "urban/nonurban" came to influence the other categories. Considering that, by the late fifth century B.C.E., of an estimated 22,000 households, about 5,000 owned no land at all, and another 5,000 owned less than a "subsistence-portion" (Foxhall 1992: 156), a large number of male and female citizens had to earn their living by other occupations, which probably were proportionally more often located in the city than in the rural communities. Other factors, too, gradually added to differences in "lifestyle"; Sommerstein (1995: 83) concludes that some marked distinctions in speech sounds between men and women had to do with dialectic innovations that were adopted by women in a natural way but that were counterbalanced in the case of men by the formal speech used in the Assembly and lawcourts by dominant, educated speakers.

activities. In day-to-day practice, people were probably more interested in the distinction between respectable and not respectable.

Finally, one more factor is of vital importance: the question of whether the discourse pertaining to a certain time and space is likely, or even allowed, to be recorded.<sup>15</sup> Women's voices in classical Athens may be recovered in some primary material, yet for the greatest part are to be inferred from circumstantial evidence. It is through acquaintance with Greek rural communities today that we may envisage just how much of ancient life, including women's speech, is obscured by the limitations of our sources. By assessing the scope of mobility, exchange, and recording, we may tentatively map the opportunities for (citizen) women to speak and be heard.

### PRIVATE SPACE

The *oikos* ("household" and "family") was regarded as the proper space for free, respectable women. Considering that their domestic roles defined their lives and that they were expected to stay indoors, one would expect to find women's voices documented predominantly in situations inside the home.<sup>16</sup> However, this is not the case. Not only could women's voices be heard in public areas, but it is almost exclusively in public areas that *any* voices, including those of women, may be heard in our sources. This phenomenon cannot satisfactorily be explained by supposing that it is men's speech, and therefore public speech, that was documented.<sup>17</sup> Rather, it is

<sup>15</sup> There is yet another category: voices that were recorded but hardly ever intended to be heard by human beings, namely curse tablets (*defixiones*), spells, and prayers for justice, written down, probably read aloud, and then buried or deposited in a sanctuary or similar, appropriate place (Gager 1992 for the material; Versnel 1998, with full bibliography on recent interpretations, arguing for the term "prayer for justice"). In spite of the formulaic character of the actual texts, these spells allow a valuable insight in the private life and thoughts of ancient men and women. However, since this discourse was addressed to the deities in charge and was rarely meant to reach a wider mortal audience, it is not included in the discussion.

<sup>16</sup> Harding (1975) even argues that talking makes up a great part of women's domestic task in a Mediterranean village, in that childrearing, shopping, exchanging household utensils, and sharing experience with friends and neighbors all involve using words to get the job done; compare Dubisch 1991: 38–40 on "kin work."

<sup>17</sup> True, the voices raised at men's symposia in songs and conversations have been amply recorded and seem to be an exception to the rule that chiefly public speech is preserved in writing. However, it makes more sense to regard the *andron* ("men's dining hall"), where this symposiac discourse belonged, as an instance of public space inside the home; Humphreys [1983] 1993: 16–17. Cf. Bourdieu on a Kabylean house: "It can be divided into a male-female part and a female-female part" (quoted by Cohen 1991: 44). The architecture of Greek houses reveals flexibility in usage of space, the *andron* being the only room designated for specific use by (male) guests (Jameson 1990a and 1990b; Hunter 1994: 75–81). The modern equivalent of the *andron* as a center of male discursive sociability is the *kafetion*; cf. Papataxiarchis 1991.

speech in private space that was *not* documented; and women were intimately connected with the notion of privacy, which entailed precisely that part of family life that should not be talked about.<sup>18</sup>

Maintaining this privacy by silence was meant to look like the perfectly natural expression of a family's autonomy and self-restraint (*σφροσύνη*).<sup>19</sup> The *oikos*, being the foundation of a family's existence, concerned the family's men in particular in that the house, its (landed) property, and the lineage were inherited along male lines. Yet the women were the ones who guarded and maintained the *oikos* by their care, their economic management, and the continuity of the family. Women's performance both within the home and without was crucial to the family's social status. If the women were successful in their material responsibilities and in handling their reputation, the *oikos* thrived; for politically ambitious men, a prosperous *oikos* was vital.<sup>20</sup> If anything went wrong, be it mismanagement leading to debt or such female behavior that the neighbors would gossip about adultery, the family lost its honor for an indefinite time. The desire of both men and women to shield the life of the *oikos* against inquisitiveness increased their reluctance to report what went on inside.<sup>21</sup> Private family life thus became one of the best-kept secrets of Athenian history. No scene in classical drama is ever situated within the home; though the innards of the *oikos* whose fortune is the subject of the play may be revealed onstage, the threshold of the house was respected as a boundary.<sup>22</sup> Attic drama presents many women talking, and even talking back, but never doing so indoors. Conversations between husband and wife, which in reality would never have been conducted in public, are presented as taking place on the street in front of the respective dwellings, be they palaces, houses, or huts.<sup>23</sup> Only incidentally

<sup>18</sup> The most famous ancient phrasing of this rule is probably Pericles' advice (in Thucydides' words) to Athenian women that they should not be spoken of, neither for praise nor for blame (Thuc. 2.46).

<sup>19</sup> On the delicate balance between the openness and privacy of a family, Cohen 1991: 60, 80–81; on privacy: 83–97.

<sup>20</sup> For men's dependence on and collaboration with women, see Foxhall 1989; for men's responsibility, see, e.g., Creon's words to Haemon in Soph. *Ant.* 661–62: "The man who acts rightly in family matters will be seen to be righteous in the city as well," a poignant remark by a man whose disregard of his *oikos* leads to the ruin of his city. (I owe this reference to André Lardinois.)

<sup>21</sup> On the damaging effect of gossip, Hunter 1994.

<sup>22</sup> On innards (*splanchna*), the vital parts inside a human being where the emotions reside, as strongly associated with the feminine, Padel 1992: 106–13; Zeitlin [1985] 1996; and Maurizio's contribution to this volume.

<sup>23</sup> For example, Soph. *Trach.*: Heracles' house in Trachis; Eur. *Med.*: Jason's house in Corinth; Eur. *Alc.*: Admetus' palace in Pherae; Eur. *El.*: the hut of the peasant to whom Electra is married; Ar. *Ecl.*: the house of Blepyros and Pnixagora; Men. *Epit.*: in front of two houses of common citizens. Even two women are presented talking with each other on the street; Men. *Georgos* (ed. Sandbach 1990) 22–87.



are voices in private mentioned in a public context, like a reference in passing to the kinds of song traditionally sung to accompany routine jobs like spinning and weaving.<sup>24</sup>

The few instances where events inside the home, including what was being said by men and women, were recorded in writing often serve a purpose other than faithfully reproducing what had happened. Judicial orations are a case in point.<sup>25</sup> Euphiletos, defending himself in a speech written by Lysias for the killing of his wife's lover, described the orderly way his household was organized and his conversations with his wife in such detail as to impress the jury with his integrity and sensible management. Conversely, since a regular way to discredit someone's claims in court was to vilify his character, a litigant would present as much inside information damaging to his opponent as he could think of.<sup>26</sup> The fact that what was said was to a large extent determined by when and why it was said is exemplified by the conversation between the model gentleman-farmer Ischomachos and his young wife in Xenophon's dialogue *Oeconomicus*. Although the dialogue demonstrates why and how the *oikos* as a production unit of goods and children is as much the concern of the man as of the woman,<sup>27</sup> the conversation itself is not a credible representation of daily life, and probably does not claim to be so. The picture drawn by Xenophon of an omniscient Ischomachos instructing his initially ignorant wife how to run their *oikos* is far from the truth, as is obvious to anyone who knows anything about traditional agricultural households.<sup>28</sup> Instead, Ischomachos and his wife figure as actors in the role-playing typical of the dialogue as a genre. Because the dialogue form as a means of education involved question-and-answer between equal individuals, the dialogue was basically considered the province

<sup>24</sup> Ar. *Nub.* 1358: an old woman singing while grinding grain is mentioned as a usual event; cf. Ach. 14.618ff., listing spinning songs, lullabies, and wedding songs as women's songs, and compare Plato *Lysis* 205D: epic stories sung by old women.

<sup>25</sup> On judicial orations, see Gagarin's contribution to this volume.

<sup>26</sup> For many fine examples, see Hunter 1994: 96–119; for the political context of representation in oratory, Ober 1989; for the social context, Cohen 1995: 87–118 ("litigation as feud"); and see Gagarin's contribution to this volume.

<sup>27</sup> Conversely, one could argue that the success of the *oikos* was of such importance to the polis that *oeconomia* formalized women's status and power in a way that cut across the division between public and private spheres; this is argued for modern rural Greece concerning the *nikokyrio* ("household economy") by Salamone and Stanton (1986).

<sup>28</sup> Although in modern rural Greece girls, whose labor is important both in the home and on the fields, often marry at a later age than is reported for the elite of classical Athens (as, for instance, Ischomachos' wife), throughout it is clear that young women learn household management from their mothers from an early age, and not from their husbands; cf. Friedl 1962: 42–43; Salamone and Stanton 1986; Dubisch 1991: 36–38. There is no reason to assume that the situation in ancient Athens was any different in this respect. Xenophon justifies his implausible picture by having Ischomachos explain that his wife's knowledge of household management was not absent, but deficient (7.5–6).

of upper-class men.<sup>29</sup> As a woman, especially a young one, Ischomachos' wife cannot fully count as an equal, and at first she is rendered only as a *tabula rasa* to be inscribed by the useful admonitions of her husband.<sup>30</sup> When finally she draws her own rational conclusions, Socrates expresses his satisfaction, saying that Ischomachos demonstrates that his wife has a masculine mind by her understanding (*dianoia*: 10, 1). *Oeconomicus*, then, does not want to offer a portrait drawn to nature of an Athenian couple privately talking about their household, but rather seeks to demonstrate the superior value of rationality in the production of knowledge and in the management of private affairs.

Against the men's privilege to exercise authority both over the members of the household and over public discourse,<sup>31</sup> women in contemporary rural Greece have created a powerful weapon: emotional pressure. Inside the home they vent an ongoing reminder to their menfolk that it is thanks to them, the women, that they, the men, prosper, keep their honor, are provided for, that without the women the men would be good for nothing—indeed, that the men are utterly dependent on the women for their well-being.<sup>32</sup> The men, for their part, may really feel threatened by women's vocal force.<sup>33</sup> This discourse of self-righteous rebuke seems to have been a familiar device of classical Athenian women, too, as it appears to be echoed in Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazuzae* (785–847). After initial mockery, a reversal of men's abuse of women, the women's chorus points out to Mnesilochos, Euripides' kinsman who has intruded into the women's festival, that the men have lost the weapons they received from their fathers; but the women safely keep the ancestral possessions and work the looms they inherited from their mothers. By claiming that they "saved the father's heritage" (*ta patrōia sōizein*) while the men lost their spear "from the *oikos*" (*ek tōn oikōn*, 819–26), the women also reverse the gendered distribution of

<sup>29</sup> The participants usually were men, the most famous exceptions being Diotima, a priestess from Mantinea who instructs Socrates on the true nature of *eros* in Plato's *Symposium*, and Aspasia, Pericles' Milesian wife, who is one of the main speakers in Plato's *Menexenus* and is also referred to in the *Oeconomicus* (3.14). It is a matter of dispute, however, whether these women should be regarded as reflecting historical reality or as fictitious figures who are mainly the exponent of alternative points of view in these dialogues; cf. Halperin 1990b.

<sup>30</sup> Though Ischomachos calls the conversation with his wife "conversing" (*diakēgesthai*: 7.10, 8.23), Socrates defines it as instruction on Ischomachos' part (*didaskēin*: 7.9, 9.1) and obedient listening on hers (*hypakouein*: 9.1), and initially so does Ischomachos himself (7.7). For an interesting view on women's alleged incapacity of rationality, Padel 1992: 111–12.

<sup>31</sup> Herzfeld 1991: 94: "Men are the idealized masters of language."

<sup>32</sup> Friedl 1986: 52. In Attic comedy, women use *phēlos* and *phēlotos* (usually in the vocative case) in the sense of "dear" or "dearest" far more often than men (Sommerstein 1995: 72); this habitual expressing (invoking, confirming) of affectionate relationships can easily shade over into the kind of pressure discussed here.

<sup>33</sup> Hirschon 1978: 84–86.

properties. However, the women in the chorus find that the assets in their lives deserving the greatest praise are the sons they bear to fight and die for this same fatherland.

#### SEMI-PUBLIC SPACE

Beside tearing their hair, shrieking, and wailing, the nearest female relatives of the deceased ritually expressed their loss in poetic laments. From Homeric epic through the present day, Greek women have voiced their grief for the dead in these orally composed songs.<sup>34</sup> In ancient Greece, when a family member died, the first lamenting was raised inside the home, around the bier where the corpse was formally laid out. Probably the *prothēsis* had traditionally taken place outdoors until the restrictive legislation of the sixth and fifth centuries forced the laying-out to be held in the courtyard of the home.<sup>35</sup> It seems as though the principal laws, traditionally attributed to Solon, were aimed at curbing aristocratic display at funerals, but were not really effective in repressing female mourning practices, as may be inferred from the continuity of these scenes in vase-paintings (see Fig. 3).<sup>36</sup> By the late fourth century, *gynaikonomoi* were appointed, officials who had to check if the limits imposed on funerals were observed.<sup>37</sup> After the *prothēsis*, the funeral procession to the tomb brought the visual and audible signs of mourning into the public domain. At the tomb, where sacrifices and libations were made, women again lamented the dead. After the funeral proper, the dead were remembered on the third, the ninth, and the thirtieth days, and after a year. A combined public and private remembrance took place yearly at the *Genesia*, a festival that had been changed from a family-based ritual for deceased parents into a mourning day observed by the whole community.<sup>38</sup> Even if death came at unpredictable moments, gradually it was enclosed into a structured time.

<sup>34</sup> On the ancient and modern Greek lament from a comparative perspective, see Alexiou (1974), who moreover argues for continuity from antiquity to the present, and Holst-Warhaft 1992; on modern laments, Danforth 1982 and Caraveli 1986; for lament in tragedy, Foley 1993; on men's laments, Dobrov 1994; for an entirely different approach than that pursued here, Loraux [1990] 1998; for resonance in other kinds of poetry, see the contributions of Lardinois and Stehle to this volume.

<sup>35</sup> Alexiou 1974: 4–23; Holst-Warhaft 1992: 108–19; on the role of women in the death rituals, Stears 1998.

<sup>36</sup> Alexiou 1974: 17–19, 22.

<sup>37</sup> The institution of the office of *gynaikonomoi*, which also supervised weddings and women's festivals, indicates both the lack of success in curbing ostentatious mourning at funerals and the growing tendency toward bureaucratic "solutions" for civic problems; cf. Garland 1981: 177–79.

<sup>38</sup> Deubner 1932: 229; Parker 1996a: 48–50.

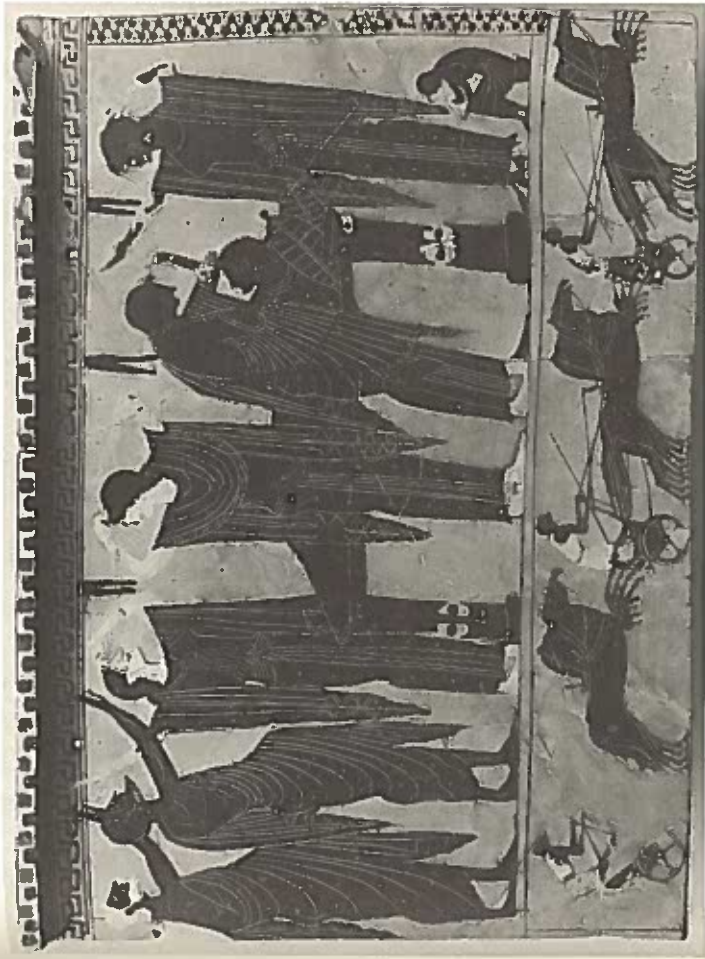


Fig. 3. Funeral *prothēsis* (laying-out of the corpse) on a black-figure plaque, c. 510 B.C.E. A male corpse is laid out on a bier, surrounded by female mourners who lament by striking their head and tearing their hair. To the left, two men extend their right arms with palms out, a gesture of farewell to the dead that may have been reserved for males: see Rehm 1994: 24 and 105. The lower level shows a chariot race.

The performance of laments, however, defied the boundaries between public and private space, accompanying the deceased from the domain of Hestia to that of Hermes.<sup>39</sup> The content of the songs was even more disturbing. Fiercely personal, they bewailed the deceased as a loss to the nearest (female) kin, not as a departed useful member of (male) society. The feelings of misfortune frequently turned into anger, pointing to others—officials, enemies, evils—as being guilty of this death and asking for retribution. Laments thus could create an atmosphere of revenge and often evoked social agitation. These effects have been documented at the performance of laments in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries,<sup>40</sup> but several

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Vermant [1965] 1983 for the classical analysis of Hestia and Hermes as the deities of the static feminine and the mobile masculine sphere respectively, here also representative of the movement from family/life to underworld/death.

<sup>40</sup> Caraveli 1986; Alexiou 1974.



critics have pointed to similar conditions in archaic and classical Greece. Then as well as now, the death of her husband robbed a woman of one who embodied her access to social respect and protection.<sup>41</sup> More generally, women were considered the true lamenters because they were thought both by men and by themselves to be the ones who suffered the greatest pain, indeed as the ones who knew the truth of fate and grief.<sup>42</sup> A striking example of social disturbance resulting from a woman's mourning is offered by Sophocles' *Antigone*. When King Creon has forbidden her to bury and lament her slain brother Polynices, Antigone acts on the spur of her personal loss instead of obeying the orders of the state, thus enforcing a conflict between the realm of the dead and that of the public city.

It is no coincidence that Sophocles chose women's responsibility for the death rituals to mold into a tragic theme. The overwhelming role played by death and retribution in tragic material incorporated the experience of grief and the performance of laments and dirges into the tragedies themselves.<sup>43</sup> The creation of tragedy, beside the institution of the *Genesia*, exemplifies the increasing involvement by the community in the mourning rituals in the sixth and fifth centuries. This tendency is revealed most conspicuously in the Athenian public funeral of the war dead and the oration in their honor given by a carefully selected speaker.<sup>44</sup> In this public ritual, the focus had moved entirely from the family toward the polis. The *epitaphios logos* ("funeral oration") claimed that it was for the community that the soldiers had died, and that the memory of the dead was to be publicly consecrated: they were to be praised, not lamented.<sup>45</sup> The women, having lamented before the public funeral, could no longer reenact the memory of their lost ones afterward, for the common war grave of the fallen soldiers buried tribe by tribe prohibited contact with individual dead. In tragedy and in the funeral of the war dead, the shift toward public fashioning of mourning meant allocating women's symbolic roles to the community of male citizens, while excluding women as active participants. Still, if the commemoration of the war dead effectively drove women to the margins of ritual mourning, this was not the case with the numerous deaths due to causes other than the bat-

<sup>41</sup> Holst-Warhaft 1992: 49–52.

<sup>42</sup> For modern Greece, see Caraveli 1986: 171–78; in classical tragedy, Alexiou 1974: 110–18; Foley 1993.

<sup>43</sup> Aeschylus: Cassandra in *Agamemnon*; the protagonists of the *Suppliant Women*; Electra and the chorus in *Choephoroi*. Sophocles: Ajax; Jocasta and Oedipus in *Oedipus Tyrannus*; Antigone; Deianira in *Trachiniae*; Philoctetes. Euripides: Alcestis; Hecuba and Polyxena in *Hecuba*; Medea; Phaedra in *Hippolytus*; Andromache in *Troades*; and Electra. All of these characters lament their own fate and death. Cassandra's description of burial and mourning ritual, Trp. 353–405; cf. Alexiou 1974: 112–13.

<sup>44</sup> On the change in classical mourning patterns, Holst-Warhaft 1992: 114–70; on the funeral oration, Loraux [1981] 1986.

<sup>45</sup> Holst-Warhaft 1992: 120–21.

tlefield. Burial and lamenting remained a family affair,<sup>46</sup> a ritual gaining momentum when women's voices filled the house and the graveyard.

Perceived from afar, a wedding procession could resemble a funeral.<sup>47</sup> A great number of people were involved, among whom women, notably the mothers of the bride and groom, played a prominent role. Loudly shouting, carrying presents, and holding torches, the participants in a wedding moved from a private home into the streets, thus apparently behaving like the affines of a recently deceased. Indeed, as a family ritual absorbing public space and attention, weddings became an object of supervision by *gynaikonomoi* just as funerals were by the late fourth century.<sup>48</sup> But at closer sight and hearing, mistaking the one for the other would be impossible. Central in the wedding train was the bride, veiled and decked with flowers, and flanked by at least two male kin or friends and one female friend.<sup>49</sup> Many others thronged around the central little group, dancing and singing as in a *kómos* (see Fig. 4).<sup>50</sup> If the families involved were wealthy enough to afford it, a cart and horses, attendants on horseback, a girls' chorus, parade boys, jesters, and acrobats could be part of the festive procession. Onlookers would gape at the noisy celebrants, and could join in the festivities by throwing fruits, leaves, and flowers on the bride. Although some fine descriptions of a wedding procession and hymns sung at such an occasion have been preserved in writing,<sup>51</sup> the best representations of the wedding events are to be found in vase-paintings. They show how in this festive ritual the bridal couple were held to be close to the gods, who finally provided the soft persuasive words (*Peitho*) that would secure harmony in the home.<sup>52</sup>

A marriage being a private arrangement between two households in the first place, it was only by the public celebration that the union was recognized as a formal bond. The crossing of the boundaries between private and

<sup>46</sup> They became increasingly so when, in the wake of the public funerals, even poor citizens came to aspire to a grave monument; Humphreys [1983] 1993: 121–22.

<sup>47</sup> Rehm (1994) has argued that in tragedy, wedding and funeral rituals were conflated, as a way to create in the audience an intense and ambivalent response to events of this kind on stage. I cannot be persuaded by this view; weddings and funerals have only a few general features in common, which are based on their structure *qua* ritual (cf. Zeitlin 1995b), and many more features that are so distinctive that any "conflation" would ultimately create bewilderment and displeasure rather than insight. Likewise, Jenkins (1983) had pointed to analogies between abductions and weddings in vase-paintings, even though the social meanings of these events were fundamentally different.

<sup>48</sup> On the *gynaikonomoi* supervising weddings of the elite, see Patterson 1998: 189.

<sup>49</sup> The description of the wedding is foremost based on Oakley and Sinos 1993.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Oakley and Sinos 1993: 27.

<sup>51</sup> For instance, Eur. *Alc.* 918–19, *Hel.* 722–24; *Hyp. Lyc.* 3–5. Descriptions of wedding feasts are numerous in New Comedy; hymns such as Sappho's fr. 44, and new ones, were sung. See also Lardinois' contribution to this volume.

<sup>52</sup> On *Peitho* on wedding scenes, Oakley and Sinos 1993: passim.



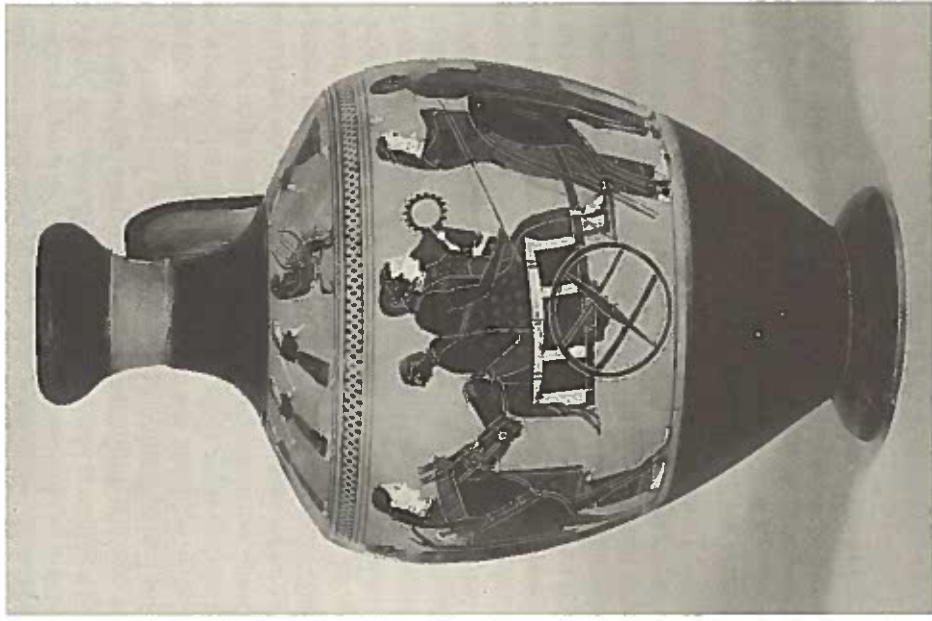


Fig. 4. Detail of a wedding procession (Attic black-figure *lekythos*, attributed to the Amasis painter, c. 560 B.C.E.). The groom and his bride, grasping her veil and a wedding wreath, sit on a mulecart that brings them from her family's home to his. They are escorted by various male and female figures. The dance scene on the shoulder shows wedding celebrants participating in various musical activities. See Oakley and Sinos 1993: 25, 29–30.

public space, the creation of festivities shared by women and men, and the marking of the event by the jubilant singing were prerequisites for recognition of the marriage as a legal union, and hence as the basis of legal offspring. Weddings could take place throughout the year, though the month Gamelion may have been a favorite period. At the Apatouria, the newborn citizen children—probably all boys and occasionally girls—were included

in the phratries, and their mothers were ritually celebrated for having given birth to new citizens.<sup>53</sup> Like the *Genesia* with its commemoration of the dead, the Apatouria confirmed the relationship between private and public events, including nature's unpredictable moments within the larger timetable of the *polis*.

### VOICES IN PUBLIC

Returning to the original premise that the possibility of being heard has everything to do with where someone is, we should now ask when (respectable) women were actually present in the streets of Athens and the Attic villages, and whether they made themselves heard so as to be somehow recorded.

The social rule in force with more or less strictness in Mediterranean societies that women ought to stay indoors.<sup>54</sup> It means that women go out only if they have a distinct and socially accepted purpose, when it is the right time to do so, and if they can behave in such a way—for instance, by being in the company of other women, children, or male kin—as to prevent the neighbors' gossip. When in Aristophanes' comedy *Eklesiazuzae* Praxagora returns home from being out just before daybreak, she cuts short her husband's suspicious grumbling by telling him she has assisted a friend in childbirth—one of the few acceptable missions involving absence from home at an unusual, even unpredictable, hour.<sup>55</sup> A clear picture of the wariness roused by a woman walking alone is sketched in a few lines ascribed to Theognis:

[SHE:] I hate a base (*kakos*) man, and having veiled myself I pass, with a heart light as a little bird's.

<sup>53</sup> On the debated issue of female phratry membership, see Lambert [1993] 1998: 178–203; on the Apatouria as a festival celebrating young mothers, Schmitt-Pantel 1977.

<sup>54</sup> For description and analysis of the separation of the sexes in Mediterranean societies, see the references in notes 5 and 12 above. The differences in speech between men and women in classical Athens should also be understood as a constructive element of a social distance that is separation underlying hierarchy rather than hierarchy tout court (as Sommerstein 1995 suggests). Walcot (1994), though referring to anthropological material, misses the point by comparing the Mediterranean model (traditional, sociocultural separation of the sexes from each other, with hardly contested dominance of males over females) with the separation practiced by radical feminists and blacks in the 1970s (voluntary, politically motivated separation by one group from the other, aspiring to a reversal of social dominance). On the flexibility of the category "female," notably in relation to the politics of space, see Herzfeld 1986.

<sup>55</sup> Ar. *Eccl.* 528–34.

[He:] But I hate a woman who always strays about, and a lascivious man who wants to plough another's land.<sup>56</sup>

The poem not only indicates the woman's timidity and her attempt to be invisible while the man interprets her presence immediately as a sign of promiscuity, but foremost it exemplifies how reputation depends less on actions than on glances, suspicion, and rumor. Adroit manipulation of appearances might cover up misconduct, while conversely the name of an innocent person could be ruined by mere gossip. The following brief discussion of women's movements outdoors in classical Athens thus fundamentally qualifies the rule to "stay indoors," but does not deny its validity, nor does it implicitly argue that women could be in public areas as frequently or as easily as men.<sup>57</sup> If women appear to have been far more outdoors than has often been assumed, the basic pattern still entails that men could be outside whenever they pleased, while women had to negotiate their movements with distinct limitations on the penalty of ruinous gossip.<sup>58</sup>

Although there is no evidence indicating the hour of the day when women would go out to visit friends, given the structural choreography of Mediterranean life it seems plausible that women did so when the men had more or less left the streets. The same rule no doubt applied to fetching water at the well, a popular meeting point for women better known from vase-paintings than from written evidence.<sup>59</sup> If a woman had to be outside at a different moment, for instance because she needed to borrow household utensils, clothes, or foodstuffs,<sup>60</sup> and she could not send a child or a slave, she either would make something of a display of the unavoidable causes that made her leave the house, or she would try to be as unobtrusive and furtive as suspicion could tolerate. Contacts within the neigh-

<sup>56</sup> Thgn. 579–82. It is uncertain if the two lines following the four quoted here ("Yet, while what has been done in the past cannot be undone, what belongs to the future should be guarded with care") are to be connected to the previous lines or not. M. L. West's changing of ἔχουσα to ἔχουσα (West 1989–92: ad 580) is not supported by the manuscripts and seems to me unnecessary. The relationship between the woman and the man speaking in these lines is unclear, and need not be anything specific. Martin (1997: 156–57) perceives here elements of "a traditional insult duel: the exactly structured pair of couplets is formally equivalent to modern-day Cretan *mandinades*, which are also used extensively in negotiating male-female relationships."<sup>57</sup>

<sup>57</sup> For a more elaborate discussion of this theme with many references to women's activities, cf. Cohen 1989, Just 1989: 105–25; Hunter 1994: 9–42.

<sup>58</sup> On the effects of gossip about women on women themselves and their kin, see Hunter 1994: 111–16.

<sup>59</sup> These women were not only slaves or poor women, but included well-to-do women; Mankidou 1992–93. For a list of these fountain scenes, see Webster 1972: 98, including scenes showing men molesting women at the fountain, an outdoor spot where women were surely to be found.

<sup>60</sup> On lending and borrowing, Ar. *Ecl.* 446–49; Theophr. *Char.* 10, 13.

borhood, seeing friends, or just asking the woman next door to lend her a few coins gave Athenian housewives ample opportunity to speak with each other, thus contributing to the ongoing murmur of gossip that shaped neighborhood relationships.<sup>61</sup> Thus women's voices were often feared, though obviously the men were equally involved in the "politics of reputation."<sup>62</sup>

Beside meeting with friends and relatives, most women of course had to leave their homes to work.<sup>63</sup> In the villages of the Attic countryside many poorer women worked in the fields,<sup>64</sup> and in cities like Athens they manufactured all kinds of goods, either at home or in workshops. Wares produced either by their own crafts or by others' were to be sold, as was the case with homegrown fruits and vegetables, cheese, and similar products. Again, women went to the market to set up their stalls or spread out the blankets on which to display their wares, probably before the men would fill the streets, and women merchants may have occupied a different part of the market area from the men, as in many Greek markets today.<sup>65</sup> This did not mean that market women waited silently for someone to notice them and their wares; female sellers of potherbs, omelettes, bread, and the like who yell, shout, or scold are stock characters of Attic comedy.<sup>66</sup> Housewives came to the market to buy goods and foodstuffs if they had no one else to do this for them, and probably many women had to do their own shopping. In this bustle, men and women mingled more than formal morality would allow.<sup>67</sup> Although the frequency of markets was no doubt influenced by the

<sup>61</sup> Lending some money: Ar. *Ecl.* 447; on gossiping, Harding 1975: 295–305; Cohen 1991: 83–90; Hunter 1994: 96–119.

<sup>62</sup> Cohen 1991: 54–69. In Eur. *Tr.* 651–52, Andromache, expounding the highest virtues of her home; conversely, see Theophr. *Char.* 28 for the male scandalmonger. Manipulating the reputation of the (male) litigants was a structural ingredient of Athenian lawsuits; cf. Hunter 1994: 96–111, 118–19; Cohen 1995: 61–87.

<sup>63</sup> For an overview of the many crafts and jobs performed by women, see Herfst (1922) 1979; Cohen 1989; Brock 1994, with references.

<sup>64</sup> Scheidel 1995 offers an impression of women's agricultural work.

<sup>65</sup> Theophr. *Char.* 2.9, 22.109. Cf. Herfst (1922) 1979: 36–40), who also argues for a different meaning of the *agora gymnastria*.

<sup>66</sup> Ar. *Plut.* 427–29, *Ran.* 857–58, *Lys.* 561–64, *Vesp.* 497–99.

<sup>67</sup> Respectable citizen women on the marketplace probably for shopping, Ar. *Lys.* 561–64; a girl getting out to sell a cock, Ar. *Ran.* 1350–51; cf. Brock 1994. Whether the difference between respectable and unrespectable would be observed by all parties concerned is not so easy to say, precisely because it was a socially contestable issue. Any woman who was outdoors or visible in such a way as to rouse criticism was typically accused of being adulterous, a whore, or both; cf. Dem. 57.30ff., where Euxitheos defends the honor of his mother, a market merchant; Ar. *Ecl.* 522, where Praxagora anticipates her husband's rebuke; Theophr. *Char.* 28.3, on the slanderer who accuses every woman of being a streetwalker. Cf. Cowan 1991 on the moral battles fought in a modern Greek provincial town over women who want to visit a *kafeteria*.



seasons, a market took place on the first day of every month, Noumenia, which was a religious feast day. Many Athenians gathered on the agora on this day, which was also a day for symposia and sporting, and people burned frankincense at the statues of the gods.<sup>68</sup>

Religious feast days, or more precisely women's festival days, are usually mentioned by scholars as one of the few opportunities for respectable women to get out of doors. It seems to be far less known, however, just how many feast days there were and that women were involved in the majority of them.<sup>69</sup> The Noumenia is a good example of the regular, minor religious feast day dedicated to a divinity and celebrated every month: beside Noumenia (on day 1), there was a day given to the *agatbos daimōn* (day 2), to Athena (day 3), to Heracles, Hermes, and Aphrodite (day 4), to Artemis (day 6), to Apollo (day 7), and to Poseidon (day 8). Day 16 was the day for private offerings to Artemis, and day 30 for the same to Hecate. Certainly "festival days" of this kind did not mean "holiday" in the sense of a non-working day, which applied only to the largest and most important festivals.<sup>70</sup> These included the great festivals celebrated by the whole community all over Attica, many of them lasting for several days, like the City Dionysia, the Thesmophoria, the Panathenaia, the Anthesteria. A number of minor religious events may be added to these, such as small-scale rituals that were only celebrated in certain demes, by individual families, or by the numerous cult communities. In sum, the total number of feast days in Athens amounted to about 170; there were almost as many festival days as nonfestival days, and far more festival days than the 145 attested meeting days of the Assembly.<sup>71</sup>

Religious activities were thus ruled by time, since most festival days were regulated by day, month, and in some cases by year in the religious calendars.<sup>72</sup> The calendars explicitly prescribed when a sacrifice would be made, what kind it would be, and by whom it would be made. The average Athenian would probably choose the specific day of the divinity to whom this day

<sup>68</sup> Mikalson 1975: 14–15.

<sup>69</sup> All references to Athenian festivals are based on a combined use of Deubner 1932, Mikalson 1975, Simon 1983, and Parker 1996a. I am aware that the religious calendar of Athens, which even presupposes a unified polis such as only emerged by the end of the sixth century, depends entirely on attempted reconstructions, and that the extant calendars of Thorikos, Erchia, Marathon, and the Salaminiotai (references in Parker 1987; van Straten 1995: 171–73; Scullion 1998) are often at odds with the surveys drawn up for Athens. My description of religious events only serves the focus of this chapter.

<sup>70</sup> As a rule, meetings of the Assembly did not take place on festival days, though there were some exceptions, and the council did meet on religious feast days if necessary. Mikalson 1975: 186–204.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*: 182.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. Bruunfeld 1981 and Foxhall 1995 for the relationship between women's festivals and the agricultural year.

was sacred to donate some offerings or to address oral or written prayers. Countless small votive offerings, prayers, curses, and other dedications have been found in the sanctuaries all over the Attic countryside and in the city of Athens.<sup>73</sup> These donations were offered by men and women alike, and obviously women went to these shrines to deposit their gifts to the gods.<sup>74</sup> On the monthly Artemis' day, for instance, several smaller and larger festivities in honor of the goddess took place in which women in particular were involved.<sup>75</sup> On this day many women would visit a shrine or sanctuary dedicated to Artemis to make a modest votive offering. Hymns and other songs to honor the goddess, performed by informal groups or by a chorus, accompanied the festivities.

Concerning the actual participation of women and men in cult, men seem to have been more involved with male gods and women with female goddesses, but the pattern is blurred by many exceptions.<sup>76</sup> For instance, Demeter and Kore were the foremost women's goddesses. Only women swore "by the Two,"<sup>77</sup> and three of the five most important festivals celebrating Mother and Daughter were exclusively women's feasts.<sup>78</sup> Two festivals dedicated to the Two, then, were also open to men: the Great Eleusinia welcomed everyone of each sex and status who spoke Greek, and

<sup>73</sup> Women's religious activity as testified by votive offerings is an important (corrective) addition to the evidence of sacred laws, which *as laws* represent men's exclusive authority over written documents. For a different interpretation of these laws, see Cole 1992.

<sup>74</sup> Although it is often impossible to identify the gender of a dedicant, and taking the literacy among women to have been lower than among men, the number of identifiable female donors (identified by typically feminine votives like pins, fibulae, and necklaces) is still revealingly large; cf. Kron 1996: 155–71 (I owe the reference to this invaluable article to H. S. Versnel). Even in "mixed" cults, female dedicants range from approximately 45% (Parthenon, Erechtheion) to a majority (Asklepieion) (Kron 1996: 165, with references); to these extant gifts, the offerings of perishable material, like cakes, fruits, and wooden objects, should be added.

<sup>75</sup> Mikalson 1975: 18.

<sup>76</sup> Likewise, access to temples and participation in sacrifice were regulated by a variety of prescriptions, in which gender played an important role. Cole (1992) argues for asymmetry in favor of males concerning availability of priesthoods and access to cults and sanctuaries; I am more convinced by Kron (1996: 140–49), who argues for more equal roles based on abundant material, and Osborne (1993), doing the same with additional theoretical arguments, although it seems impossible to define unambiguous criteria on which to decide (cf. Richlin 1993 on the dilemma between a "pessimistic" or an "optimistic" view).

<sup>77</sup> This fact was frequently used by Aristophanes in his transvestite scenes: Mnesilochos, having worn his way in female disguise into the Thesmophoria, firing swears by the Goddesses to escape detection (*Thesm.* 594); a woman who swears by the Two when the women have gathered on the Pnyx disguised as men is rebuked by Praxagora for giving them away (*Ecd.* 155–59).

<sup>78</sup> On the Thesmophoria as a feast of citizen wives, cf. Versnel [1992] 1993; on women's joking at these festivals, see O'Higgins' contribution to this volume.

the cultic personnel consisted of both male and female officials.<sup>79</sup> There were many Athenian festivals about which we simply do not know whether they were celebrated by men or women only. If sufficient evidence is lacking, it is certainly unfounded to assume that major groups, like all men or all women, were prohibited from participating.<sup>80</sup> A number of Athenian festivals were undoubtedly celebrated by men or women only; indeed, it appears that about twice as many festivals were celebrated exclusively by women than by men.<sup>81</sup> The same pattern of both exclusive and mixed participation applies to cult communities and small-scale cult practices on a local level.<sup>82</sup> In sum, a survey of all religious activities in classical Athens reveals that women were involved in most of them, by a very rough estimate around 85 percent of all religious events.<sup>83</sup> So on more than one out of every three days, a number of women, ranging from a few elite wives to all women, would leave their homes,<sup>84</sup> enter the public area on their way to

<sup>79</sup> Similarly, Poseidon seems a typically masculine god, yet the Posidonia festival included a plunge into the sea by both men and women (cf. Theophr. *Char.* 28.4). This was of course an opportunity to see and be seen, as illustrated by an anecdote about the *hetaira* Phryne's economy of visibility, quoted by Davidson (1997: 134) and by Rosenmeyer (in this volume).  
<sup>80</sup> I agree with Foxhall (1995: 108–9): "Despite Detienne's [(1979) 1989] assertion that women were excluded from the act of sacrificing most of the time, it certainly does not follow that they were excluded from participating in civic festivals." For fundamental criticism of Detienne, see Osborne 1993; for material contradicting Detienne, Bremmer 1994: 78.

<sup>81</sup> The following overview is based on Mikalson 1975 and compared with Deubner 1932; the lists even of these scholars are not exhaustive, and the evidence on many festivals is inconclusive. The following results are therefore utterly tentative and provisional. Certainly or very probably attended by women only: Stenia, Thesmophoria in Halimous, Thesmophoria, Skira, Halosia, Theogamia, Adonia, Tauropolia, Brauronica. Certainly or very probably attended by men only: Theseia, Dipoliteia, Olympiaia, Demokratia. Certainly or very probably mixed (numbers of each sex could range from a few to a majority): Artemis Agrotera, Delphinion, Kronia, Synoikia, Panathenaia, Genesia, Eleusinian Mysteries, Anthesteria, Bendideia, Plynteria, Chalkeia, City Dionysia, rural Dionysia, Apatouria, Lenaia, Mysteries at Agrai, Proerosia, Oschophoria. On the role of women in the Apatouria, see Schmitt-Pantel 1977; in the Oschophoria, Deubner 1932: 144. No attention is paid here to the distinction between citizens and noncitizens.

<sup>82</sup> E.g., many sacrifices involving women in the deme of Erkhia, Mikalson 1975; women's festivals in Piraeus, *IG II<sup>2</sup>.1177*, cf. Nixon 1995: 77; women as members of cult communities (local and private religious associations), Parker 1996a: 328–42.

<sup>83</sup> Analogous to the current revision of the views on Athenian women's economic activities and resources, recent work on women's religious significance calls for a similar change in perceptions on gender and religion. Men's prerogative in political decision-making was counterbalanced by women's prominence in religious matters, a juxtaposition of flexibility and action (Hermes) with permanence and reproduction (Hestia). This structure of complementary, asymmetrical responsibilities resembles modern rural Greece, where men dominate public worldly matters while women are considered to be the representatives and guardians of the spiritual in daily life, identified with the Mother of God; cf. Du Boulay 1986, 1991; I could not consult Hart 1993.

<sup>84</sup> For comic exaggeration of (old) women's religious activity, see Men. *Dys.* 260–63: "My

a sanctuary, and join in the celebration. They would raise their voices in saying prayers, singing hymns, and shouting as tradition required,<sup>85</sup> often accompanied by the singing of girls' choruses.<sup>86</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The opportunities for women in classical Athens to speak, be heard, and find their words recorded were determined by a set of rules, or rather by a hierarchical system of values. Within this system, the separation of the sexes ranked highest. It was sustained by a spatial and conceptual distinction between public and private spheres, a distinction functioning as a complementary opposition.<sup>87</sup> Private was predominantly associated with femininity, public with masculinity, but by no means exclusively so. Usage of space and hence its gendered definition depended on time, occasion, and context. The interior of the classical Athenian house was considered unequivocally private; if necessary, private space could be divided into men's and women's areas. The public domain entailed in principle everything beyond the threshold of the house, though landed property in the countryside (fields) was again a more or less private space. Flexibility characterized the usage of public space due to the preferred separation of the sexes: if men were crowding the streets, women would stay indoors; women went to a sanctuary or the agora when men were occupied elsewhere. People knew this coordinated choreography and stuck to it as much as possible; violation of its precepts was a sure way to risk public censure. Two types of occasion exemplify the ambiguities within this system: men's sociability in the *andrōn*, and the burial procession accompanied by women's laments. The first case seems to be a "public" area within the house, the second a "private" event intruding into public space; in this latter respect, the wedding procession resembled the burial.

mother going all around the district sacrificing"; *Misogynes* (F 326 *CAF*; 277 Körte [1957–59]): "We [a man describing women] are sacrificing five times a day" (cf. F 601 *CAF*; 796 Körte [1957–59]). Compare the mockery of the overcrowded sacrificial calendars in general in Ar. *Av.* 864–903.

<sup>85</sup> Women were required to utter a scream on the *moment suprême* of the sacrifice (Zaidman and Schmitt-Pantel [1989] 1992: 35). Ritual screaming by women, e.g., to the gods (wailing for Adonis) and in other cultic contexts, could signify both joy and mourning (cf. LSJ s.v. *ololazetei*; Collins 1995).

<sup>86</sup> On girls' choruses, Calame [1977] 1997; although initiation rituals lay at the heart of girls' choruses, their performances were not limited to events of this kind, as exemplified by the girls' singing during the *pannychia* of the Panathenaia (Calame [1977] 1997: 130–31), and at feasts like weddings; cf. Lardinois 1998a.

<sup>87</sup> "Complementary opposition": a term coined by Herzfeld (1986), and reconsidered by Cohen (1991: 36–37 and *passim*).



The evidence strongly suggests that what happened and what was said in private was in principle not recorded; exceptions on the whole appear to have served a specific purpose. A great part of women's lives and hence of their speech belonged to this private sphere, and thus did not survive in written evidence. Yet numerous duties and interests on behalf of the *oikos* and the polis brought women into the public domain. Since it was events in the public area that in principle were liable to be recorded, indeed publicized, women's presence there can be traced in extant sources. *Provided it was the right time and the right occasion*, women were perfectly entitled to be in public space;<sup>88</sup> they would not by definition lose their respectability by being there, nor was the public area suddenly changed into a feminized sphere. Of course, these occasions were fewer and more complicated than was the case for men, and women's voices were for the greater part represented in male discourses with all its consequences; but this does not invalidate the general pattern. This pattern is well illustrated by the numerous dedicatory inscriptions on votive offerings, honorary statues, and similar objects adorning the streets, temples, agora, and Akropolis of Athens and sanctuaries in the countryside. If the women who dedicated these objects were not present any more in the flesh, they proudly mentioned their names and the reasons for their gifts. Passersby were expected to read the inscribed words aloud. So the self-conscious words of the washerwoman Smikythe, who dedicated a water basin to Athena, and of Xenokrateia, who dedicated a sanctuary to the river god Kephissos to commend her little son,<sup>89</sup> could be reimbued with life—and they still can.

<sup>88</sup> Obviously I disagree with the view that women had by definition no right to any voice in public; instead I argue that at accepted occasions like chorus performances, women's voices in public did not require an apology; cf. Lardinois 1998c.

<sup>89</sup> Kron 1996: 162–63, 166–68, with references.

Praxiteles. We can take for granted that this letter is a reproduction, but an "honest" reproduction of an original, and we can "bring the text to life" by adding to it our own imagination, providing our own visual imagery, breathing life into its lines.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>49</sup> I am grateful to audiences at SUNY Buffalo, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Indiana University, and Northwestern University for their attention and suggestions. I also have benefited from the advice of M. Buchan, K. Eldred, S. Goldhill, R. L. Hunter, A. Lardinois, S. Lindheim, J. J. Pollitt, D. T. Steiner, and F. I. Zeitlin. Thanks go to A. Lardinois and L. McClure for the invitation to include this piece in their volume.

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