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Sociology in drama: The women of Euripides

Shind, Evelyn K., Ph.D.

City University of New York, 1994

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SOCIOLOGY IN DRAMA : The Women of Euripides

by

EVELYN K. SHIND

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in
Sociology in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City
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1994

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Sociology in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

SOCIOLOGY IN DRAMA: The Women of Euripides

by

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Adviser : Professor Charles Winick

This study examines ways of thinking about women in Athens during the latter half of the fifth century B.C.. It is based on and illustrated by a genre not often explored by sociologists -- drama -- namely the Greek tragic dramas of Euripides. The study is intended as a contribution to the better understanding of the diachronic affinities of a society's art, culture, dominant mentality, and the structure of its social relations. Sorokin (1957) in his study of change in these spheres maintains that they are interdependent and coherent wholes, manifestations of one system, and therefore, the process of change, once begun, assumes a parallel development in all domains. At a more fundamental level, Mead (1934) and others who have used the approach of Symbolic Interactionism endeavored to show that human consciousness must be understood as socially emergent, as a thought process that arises between the actor and his social

environment. Ideas, though developed by the individual, originate in the group, and encompass artistic expression as well.

A primary hypothesis tested was that the real substance of Euripides' dramas is the social thought peculiar to Athens in the latter half of the fifth century. The method used was a qualitative content analysis of Euripides' nineteen extant plays. It is appropriate because it allows for more non-content than content text when analyzing a small and fragmented sample. Content analysis is also uniquely suited for historical research.

The information elicited was primarily in the nature of values, norms, and social attitudes of Athenian society, as they related to free and slave women, and was inferred from the utterances and behavior of various characters as the plots dictate. To determine the extent to which the information elicited was reliable, the interpretations were interrelated with the more conventional historical evidence of the period. All told, Euripides' images of women proved to be quite accurate.

This study is also relevant to changing sex roles, and will be of interest to feminists, and those concerned with how thoughts and attitudes about women have changed over time, and how they vary according to ruling class, ethnicity, and structure of social relationships.

Acknowledgements

This study owes much to many people. Firstly, I feel called upon to mention the names of those classicists whose work I relied on so heavily, Gilbert Murray, Victor Ehrenberg, Sarah B. Pomeroy, and Mary R. Lefkowitz.

I also owe a great debt of gratitude to my committee :

First, a sincere tribute to Professor Charles Winick, distinguished sociologist, scholar of ancient Greek and Roman language and society, and my sponsor. Professor Winick worked tirelessly, and expeditiously to help fulfill the process when Professor Bernard Rosenberg was indisposed. I am eternally grateful to him. Also, very special thanks to Professors Lindsey Churchill and William Kornblum, who very graciously joined the committee only recently, despite great demands on their time, and without whose very valuable contribution this work would not have been possible. My sincere thanks to Professor Bernard Rosenberg, who originally inspired me to undertake this project, and whose advice, patience, and encouragement never flagged. Finally, very substantial thanks to the late Professor Sidney Aronson, whose tenure on the committee was abruptly cut short by his death, but who nevertheless, left his imprint on this work.

There are others who I am deeply indebted to : Dr. Bertrand R. Jacobs, who made the impossible seem possible. I also thank my computer friend, Ronald Wolman, who got me out of many tight spots.

Finally, I owe so much to those people who are closest to me, my mother and my sister. This dissertation is dedicated to them, and to the memory of my father, with pride and love.

E.K.S.

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CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

1. Objectives

This study examines ways of thinking about women in Athens during the latter half of the fifth century B.C.. It is based on and illustrated by a genre not often explored by sociologists ---- drama ---- namely the Greek tragic dramas of Euripides. Pitrim Sorokin (1957) in his study of change in major systems of art, culture and social relationships (Ancient Greece was one of the countries studied), argues that they have been interdependent and coherent wholes ---- or in his own words ---- " integrated logically and causally to a great degree " ; a society's art, the main spheres of its culture, its ways of thinking, its attitudes, or " dominant mentality ", and the structure of its social relations, are manifestations of one system, and therefore the process of change, once begun, assumes a parallel development in all domains. ¹ At a more fundamental level, George Herbert Mead, (and others who have used the approach of Symbolic Interactionism, or contributed to its foundation, such as, Charles Horton Cooley, John Dewey, Robert E. Park, Robert Redfield, W.I. Thomas, Louis Wirth) endeavored to show, that human consciousness, must be understood as socially emergent, as a thought process that arises between the actor and his social environment. Social attitudes, he believed, derive from and are continuously altered during the social act ; fundamental social attitudes are presumably those that are modified only over time.

According to Mead, all ideas originate in the group : despite the fact that an idea is developed by an individual, the mind of this individual is itself the outcome of social interaction ; and this would encompass artistic expression as well (Mead tells us : in the Greek world this was especially evident, community rules, more or less, " were accepted as essential " to artistic expression.). ² In short, for Mead, mind itself was social. Mead, prepared the way for linking the thinker to his audience, and styles of thought to the social structure. Also, influenced by the Germans, he paid attention to the social aspects of language, religion, and mythology. ³

Derived from Greek mythology, the tragic dramas are literary works that were created : in a particular place ; in a particular social environment, and in a particular " historical moment ". ⁴ The spirit of the tragic dramas emerged during the sixth century B.C. under Solon, who laid the basis for the first Athenian democracy along with the new awareness of the individual in relation to the state. Tragedy made its first appearance with the earliest work of Aeschylus' *The Suppliants*, around 500 B.C. and concurrent with the emergence of the Athenian *polis*, the first democratic city-state. Tragedy died toward the end of the democracy ---- within a span of about one hundred years. During its lifetime, tragedy was a supreme expression of the Athenian democracy, and an integral part of the social life of the *demos*. The dramatic performances at Athens were organized by

the state, and held at the festival of Dionysus before a vast audience. Admission was free, attendance was encouraged, and a high point of city life. The content of the Attic dramas is to be found largely in myth-based (see above) accounts of intrafamilial conflict to which the tragic poets brought their various perspectives. Euripides, as distinct from the other tragic poets (Aeschylus and Sophocles), and in keeping with the Sophistic doctrine of " man the measure ", degraded tragedy from its high-flown status. What had heretofore been a *dramatis personae*, more or less, recreated in the image of a previous epoch, now took on a new life, and women protagonists became important in a way never before accorded to them. In the process, Euripides, signalled the end of tragedy in the traditional sense, and this is what makes him so sociologically relevant. As George Thomson (1972) said :

Greek tragedy was one of the distinctive functions of the Athenian democracy. In its form and content, in its growth and decay, it was conditioned by the social organism to which it belonged. ⁵

What I hope to demonstrate with this study ---- by relying on the thought of Pitrim Sorokin, George H. Mead (see above) and where relevant, Max Weber ---- is that the real substance of Euripides' dramas is the social thought peculiar to Athens during the last half of the fifth century. ⁶ Athens, rocked by profound change, followed by civil war and great social upheaval was, at the same

time, responding to rationalizing influences. New ideas, new currents, abounded, such as, the secularizing and democratizing influence of the Sophists, and the infant science of the Hippocratic school. The great debate was over the distinction between *physis and nomos* (nature and culture). ' In the Weberian sense, the Athenians had become disenchanted with the laws of the state, and the state itself, once thought divinely established. The links with the mythical past had grown so tenuous that its " heroic figures " were becoming anomalous. As part of the social process, a new concept of human nature was emergent with more " realistic proportions ".

It was Euripides' vision that captured the gradual distancing from the old order, and the movement toward rationalization. It is evidenced in his many phrases savoring of the civil law courts, (such as, *Hippolytus*, L. 612^o) and in his depiction of commonplace characters, such as, slaves, nurses, and farmers, in the spirit of the democracy. He was a " modern " thinker, and even prophetic in his outlook : his social and psychological insights into his characters reveal human motives for action, rather than awe-struck responses to the commands of the gods ; and his staunch anti-war stance, such as, in the *Trojan Women* reveals a departure from traditional Greek attitudes ; also, his identification with both the victor and the vanquished speaks for enlightened thought, and prefigures Weber's concept of *Verstehen* (interpretative understanding). When Weber, and for that

matter, Mead, referred to meaning, they always considered situations from the point of view of the actor. '

Euripides' many innovations in both the form and content of the dramas, and his concern with Sophistic thought marked a watershed in Greek literature. ¹⁰ It was Euripides' attitude toward the myth that set him apart from the other tragic poets. He did not believe in the prerational image of human nature and destiny, as it was presented in the ritual form. Instead, he responded to the myth purely for its dramatic and theatrical effectiveness. Euripides used the myth for parody, satire, and ironic expression, without any belief in its meaning. He was a skeptic, and brought realism to the dramas (Aristotle, *Poetics* 1460b 34). ¹¹ But most of all, Euripides captured the *Zeitgeist* by questioning certain traditional attitudes toward his women protagonists, and in placing women, if only by his focus on them, on an eye level with men.

To summarize the objectives of this study : I will attempt to determine, with the tools of sociology, and by relying, chiefly, on the thought in Euripides' dramas, the conception of women, who lived in Athens during the latter half of the fifth century B.C.. A primary hypothesis to be tested is that, through the utterances of Euripides' characters we can, with reasonable accuracy, learn about contemporary attitudes toward women. I hope, I have made clear, that the " women " mentioned in the title of this inquiry

are not the characters who sustain the plots of the dramas, but the women of Classical Athens.

2. Rationale, Background, and Literature

The present study grows out of the conviction that the student of society has much to learn about human behavior and social experience from artists and their art :

Galileo was behaving in a way just like his exact contemporary Shakespeare when he offered an analysis of human character in his imaginary world which we recognize at once as true of real experience. Scientist and artist alike were creating possible worlds that would in some way explain the world of real experience. ¹²

Einstein and Picasso, not only lived at the same time : they shared a new and remarkably similar way of redefining the image of the world. ¹³

As a graduate student in sociology, I searched to find some connecting link between my study of the fine arts and comparative literature as an undergraduate, and my present concern with sociology. I was inspired to see this link by taking courses with Professor Bernard Rosenberg, in Drama as Sociology. There I learned something of the relationship between literature and society ; and how in its form and content, literature is an

indicator of the nature of a society. I had undertaken a comparative study of Euripides' tragic drama the *Orestes*, and Jean Paul Sartre's adaptation of the Orestes myth *The Flies*. Certain similarities in the historical contexts in which the plays had been written, namely large scale war, and great social upheaval, seemed to have impelled both men to redefine the model of humankind in a manner more suited to the realities of their day ---- existential man and woman. This deepened awareness of the role of literature in documenting and promoting social change gave further impetus to my study.

Since Euripides was a Greek dramatist and :

it was the Greek dramatists, philosophers, mathematicians, medical men and historians of the Classical period who provided the models for experimental science and the rational artist. ¹⁴

I would also be working with an original.

Athens in the days of Euripides was a small country town by modern urban standards, where everyone knew everyone else. At its peak it measured only about 1,000 square miles. ¹⁵ Its population for the year 431, according to Beloch, was as follows : Citizens 120,000 ; Metics (foreigners) 30,000 ; Slaves 80,000 ; making a total of 230,000 for the year the Peloponnesian war began (demographics from ancient times are

fragmentary and an issue of dispute.).¹⁶ Citizens, metics, slaves, visitors, and, some experts say, the women and children, attended the dramatic festivals at the large open-air theater. The tragic actors were the male citizens, and they cross dressed to perform the female roles as well. The affluent citizens helped subsidize the cost of productions. Ian Watts in *The Arts in Society*, Wilson (1964), states that " the supreme example of harmonious reciprocity between author and audience is probably that of Periclean Athens " and the tragic poets attained a status that the visual artists could not match. '¹⁷

The tragic dramas importance to the *polis* becomes even more evident when viewed as the largest shared experience for the community. Mead, (1934) points to the significance of the dramatic performances as a form of communication : in expressing current day situations through the use of mythic characters, the tragic poets took individuals " beyond the actual fixed walls " which resulted from their being members of different classes in the community. '¹⁸ Meetings in the *agora* to interact and communicate information, or to participate in, or witness, open-air parliament and outdoor law suits may have served a similar function, but they were much more limited in size. There were no newspapers. Writing was new to the Athenians of the fifth century. Literary works written on papyri were not known definitively, but probably had beginnings at the close of the sixth century and must have reached Athens by the fifth century

when it became the cultural center of Greece. Euripides knew and respected the written works of Sappho as did the educated youths of Athens. ¹⁹ Aristophanes points to Euripides as an owner of many books, when he has his protagonist Euripides speak the lines :

Well, first of all, a slenderizing regimen
I gave 'er Of beet juice, exercises, verse
of light and pleasant flavor, A broth of
bookish hand-me-downs from my immense
collection. (*Frogs*) ²⁰

Aristophanes' comedies of which the dates can be fixed, were written between 427-386, which might point to increased book trade in the last twenty-five years of the fifth century. There is considerable disagreement among the experts as to the size of the book trade ; opinions range from, what is described as, a " fairly large scale " book reading public to, limited circulation on a " personal, non-commercial basis." ²¹

Tragedy was also read, but according to Finley (1964), it was just by the very few, somewhere in the neighborhood of one, as compared with the tens of thousands who knew tragedies from participating in them, or attending the theater. ²² If this was so (see above), it should nevertheless be noted that tragedy was transmitted in writing ---- unlike Homer, who in about the tenth century had been transmitted orally, by bards and storeytellers ---- which itself, suggests a progressive

development of tragedy along rational lines in continuity with the rest of life (Weber, 1958).²³ In *The Consequences of Literacy*, Goody & Watt (1963) tell us, that the Greeks, by developing a flexible writing system, ²⁴ quite literally made history. The permanent records of the Greeks, they go on to say, stimulated skepticism and criticism of the mythic past, and received ideas as well. This advanced the rationalization of thought, what they term, a " logical-empirical mode of thought ", a process in which the distinction between " myth " and " history ", past and present, took on decisive importance. ²⁵ Tragedy, it would seem, had contributed to community consciousness at various levels.

Which raises the question of how widespread literacy was in the *polis* (reading and writing were considered separate skills ; and book circulation, if we ponder that as an indicator, might also have been determined by cost) ? As we shall see the evidence is inconclusive. Susan G. Cole (1961) says that reference to illiteracy in the literature of the period is rare, which can be interpreted to mean illiteracy was rare, or the reverse may be true, it was so common, it was rarely mentioned. Men in all places were likely to be more literate than women. As for the women, the evidence in tragedy is fragmented : only Euripides' *Phaedra* in all of tragedy is shown to have written, her suicide note is crucial to the plot (*Hippolytus*, LL. 856-861). Cole, goes on to say, that references to the literacy of Euripides'

other women protagonists are inconclusive.²⁶ Euripides, while not referring to a particular protagonist, does have the chorus of the *Medea* allude to some women as educated : " our sex is not without learning " (L. 1089) ; on the other hand, he portrays Iphigenia in the *Iphigenia in Taurus* (L. 584), as unable to write, she has relied on another person to write a letter for her. Schaps (1979) suggests that the women of Athens were largely illiterate.²⁷ Ehrenberg (1962) gives evidence that illiteracy was rare among the Athenians : " the high educational standard of the Athenian people cannot be doubted, and illiterate persons *anaalphabetes*, a word apparently coined by comedy, were rare. " He also cites Aristophanes' the *Wasps*, where it is said that citizens recorded their notes in court on wax tablets, and the *Knights*, where even the sausage-seller has some rudimentary knowledge of reading and writing. It is not clear, because of other statements Ehrenberg makes, whether this rudimentary knowledge extends to women as well.²⁸ Finley (1963) states that among the free population of Athens, both reading and writing (and mathematical) skills appear to have been " common attainments ".²⁹

Whether literacy was widespread or incipient, Euripides' dramas, in a large sense, embody the distinction between myth and history, past and present, for example : he captured the genuine psychology and values of his contemporaries ; and he shows how progressive ideas grew out of the real life of the society and

changed it. Euripides' individual protagonists act out these changes because, virtually stripped of their old social and supernatural moorings, they display a range of behaviors which are often anti-traditional and iconoclastic, thereby suggesting that these doomed figures from a distant past could be relevant to contemporary issues.

A. W. Gouldner, *Enter Plato* (1965) points to the new meaning in Euripides dramas. In past tragedy, the individual and the chorus represented the two sides of the self, the rational self and the " underside of the self ". In Euripides, the chorus recedes and the characters become, to some extent, self conscious beings, capable of revealing the underside of the self and society, while the gods seem to represent yet another facet of the self. These now multidimensional characters, show human passion, and emotion, to be as real as reason, and often, more powerful. ³⁰ In this Euripides anticipated the naturalists and the Freudians.

P. Sorokin (1957) contends that Euripides signalled a turning point in Greek literature (see above). According to the Sorokin typology, Euripides initiated a rising tide of *Sensate* literature whose chief manifestations are : more secular, less religious subject matter ; gradually gods and heroes are depicted as mortals ; and description itself becomes more realistic and empirically " scientific ". Sorokin views this trend as having been part of a larger movement toward a more sensate culture, a

more sensate mentality, and a correspondingly more sensate personality type. ³¹ Euripides' feminization of tragedy, as expressed in : his awareness of women's inner struggles and the challenges they faced as an underclass in a staunchly patriarchal society, devoted to warring ; his lifelike depiction of women's more intimate moments ; and his actual psychological portraits of them, (as we shall see below, and in the chapters on women) are certainly consistent with Sorokin's concept of the sensate.

The sociologist, Joan Rockwell, *Fact in Fiction* (1974) argues that the patterned connection between society and fiction is so discernable, and so reliable, that literature ought to be added to the regular tools of social investigation. Literature she goes on to say, can furnish us with two types of information : (1) " in a descriptive way, facts about laws, customs, social structure, and institutions. " ; (2) information about values and attitudes which, become most apparent in literature written during periods of great social change. ³²

Professor of history, Kenneth S. Lynn (1976) states that the psychic shifts in the personalities of characters in his analysis of nineteenth and twentieth century American literature were not accidental, but are related to historical events. He cites *The Grapes of Wrath*, as a product of the Great Depression, and *The Great Gatsby*, as a product of an age of " unprecedented prosperity ". ³³

The classicist, Victor Ehrenberg, *The People of Aristophanes*, (1962) used Old Comedy as his chief source for drawing out the " real life " of the people of the *demos*. Old Comedy, with Aristophanes thought to be its chief creator, largely replaced tragedy after Euripides. Ehrenberg, cites Euripides as the " true contemporary of Old Comedy in spirit as well as time ". He goes on to say, that Euripides was most influential in shaping Aristophanes' own mind and art, for he was the tragic poet closest to reality, whose characters speak in, " human fashion " (Aristophanes, *Frogs*, L. 1058), and whose dramas treat myth as a human affair. Ehrenberg says. that it was also Euripides who inspired Aristophanes' strong women characters. ³⁴ Old Comedy did away with the myth, the palace, and to a some extent, the heroic ; instead it satirized the *demos* and the people's changing relationship with it, in a merciless way. If anything, Euripides was probably more merciless in his criticism of the state, the class war, and the attitudes toward women ; for according to the experts, both then, and now, he was the truest " democrat " of all the poets. Aristophanes, was in reality, an upper class Athenian, who deplored the relaxation of traditional standards in the democracy. ³⁵

Other classical scholars acknowledge Euripides' realism and his pervasive use of satire and subtle wit which play havoc with the traditional form and meaning of the myths. ³⁶ There is less consensus on the subject of women's image in the dramas, and the

specific meaning of Euripides' " strong " women protagonists. Since contemporary prose texts give evidence of women's submissive role in the democracy, the questions raised turn on where Euripides found the role models for his dominant women. Opinions vary.

Feminist scholars in general, seem more skeptical of Euripides' so called departure from, tragedy's traditionally male ascendant perspective. They do however, acknowledge some difference in his conception of women (and men) : Sarah B. Pomeroy (1975) says Euripides' women " sing a new song " despite his reputation for misogyny. Pomeroy, doubts that " so subtle a dramatist as Euripides ", who criticized traditional Athenian beliefs would intend his misogynistic utterances for anything other than to examine traditional attitudes toward women in the democracy. She goes on to say that, his women characters are complex individuals, often seen as reacting to repressive societal pressures ; however, his dramas are not a brief for women's rights. ³⁷ Froma Zeitlin (1981) acknowledges Euripides as a pioneer in the feminization of Greek culture, and at the same time raises questions about his purported misogyny. ³⁸ Dominique Gerin (1983) agrees that Euripides makes a greater effort to sympathize with both male and female protagonists, but always within the enduring framework of female exclusion from the public life of the *polis*. ³⁹ Helene F. Foley (1981) emphasizes the difference in the conception of women in the dramas : drama often

represents women as powerful and publically involved in social issues ; prose texts, on the other hand, emphasize women's confinement to the *oikos* (the household). ⁴⁰ Mary R. Lefkowitz (1981) rejects the notion of the use of irony in tragedy. She says, the poets raised questions about women's place in society because, " the proper worship of Greek gods expects inquiry ". She also states that, based on recent studies, " the stories of poets' isolation and exile are fictitious. ". ⁴¹ Like Foley, she does not distinguish Euripides' views from those of the other tragic poets.

For the purposes of this paper (Sociology in Drama), the notion of Euripides' association with the " spirit of the comedy " is essential. It is within this conceptual framework that I can best situate Euripides " historically ". The term describes a period of transition in Athenian drama (of which Euripides' dramas are an intermediary form), which was linked to a period of transition from one culture to another (see Sorokin above). This initiated a vast contemporary movement toward naturalism, a concern with subjectivism, and the development of critical thought, in the community (see Mead above). For this, as I must remind myself, is not a paper on Euripides or his dramas, they are its chief sources, not its subject. Its subject are the women who lived in Athens during the latter half of the fifth century B.C.. The plots of the dramas are not to be used as evidence of historical fact. " It is the situation behind the plots which

count, the conditions of life against which the events and the characters of the stage stand out. " ⁴²

Nearly all of Euripides extant plays (nineteen in all) were written during the last twenty-five years of his life. These were the years of the Peloponnesian War, the fratricidal war between the Greek city-states when, Greek fought against Greek, father against son. The civil war raged for almost thirty years with unprecedented savagery. Revolution was everywhere, the whole mythic order along with the old community, and the kinship structure on which the *polis* was founded was giving way. Against this background of violence and destruction all but two of Euripides dramas, *Rhesus* (not firmly dated) and *Alcestis* were played out. The intra-familial strife and suffering evident in the lives of Medea and Phaedra ; the allotment of Andromache, widow of Hector (at the fall of Troy), to Neoptolemus, son of Achilles ; the tragedy of Hecuba and the women of Troy ; the bereft mothers of the seven against Thebes ; Iphigenia's self-sacrifice for Greece, and many other plots, evince the terrible struggles and dilemmas posed by the war, and its by products. ⁴³

The *Medea* was produced in the Spring of 431, just as the civil war exploded, while the city was poised for disaster ; in 430, the population of Athens was decimated by a deadly plague, in the words of Thucydides : " Such was the grievous calamity which now afflicted the Athenians ; within the walls their people were

dying and without their country was being ravaged." (II. 51-54); and in 429, about two and a half years into the war Pericles, the great leader of the democracy died. (Thucy. II. 65). The *Hippolytus* succeeded in 428, while Athens was recovering from the plague and contending with a revolt by Lesbos which was only subdued with great difficulty. Almost thirty years of war and revolution was to follow with only intermittent peace. The *Andromache* written about 426, was supposedly inspired by a particular Spartan atrocity, the massacre of Plataean prisoners, allies of Athens, in 427 ; the treatment of Andromache is said to have been modelled after the actions of the Spartans toward the Plataeans. *The Suppliant Women* and *The Trojan Women* were presented in 423 and 415 respectively and, it is suggested that they are linked historically : in the case of the former, with the refusal of the Thebans to permit the Athenians, whom they had defeated at the battle of Delium in 424, to bury their dead ; in the case of the latter, with the incident at Melos in 416, during which the Athenians besieged the neutral island city, put all its grown males to death and enslaved the women and children, because Melos had refused to join the Athenian alliance in peacetime. (Thucy. V. 84-116). " The plots of *Iphigenia in Aulis* and *The Bacchae* which center on ritual deaths that grew out of the exigencies of war, and uncontrollable psychological passions, were presented posthumously in 406-405, near the end of the war. They were written in Macedon, where a war weary Euripides was said to have gone into voluntary exile and, where he died in 407-

406. These last two dramas came some four years after the disastrous Athenian naval defeat at Syracuse (Sicily) which preceded, and some say precipitated, the overthrow of the democracy by the so called oligarchic Four Hundred in 411. The short lived dictatorship initiated a four month reign of terror which ended when the democracy was restored and the traitors executed. Euripides had mercifully died before the second overthrow of the democracy in 404 (the year Athens fell) by the Thirty, who also terrorized the city during the eight months of its duration. Both dictatorships had been installed with the connivance of the Spartans. ⁴⁵

The Greeks' predilection for war as a means of settling disputes, and their devotion to their military duties has been well documented by Euripides and his contemporaries. F. Sorokin (1957) studied the frequency of war and revolution in Ancient Greece in relation to periods of transition in culture. His findings show that, of 375 years studied (500 B.C. - 126 B.C.) about 57 % or 213 years were war years. Ancient Greece ranks first for having had the bloodiest revolutions, even higher than Russia. The Greeks' transition to an increasingly sensate culture (see above) became manifest in the the second half of the fifth century, with Euripides and Aristophanes its early expositors in the drama, and peaked in the fourth century. This was the most turbulent period of war and revolution in the history of Ancient Greece. Sorokin hypothesized : if stable

cultures tend to be comparatively peaceful when their value system and social structure are firmly established. then " *the periods of transition from one type of culture to another* must be logically the periods of comparative conflagration of war. "46

We see the accuracy of Euripides images again, when he graphically depicts the Athenians' obsessive drive for *agon* (contest) together with its many faces : the love of *philotimia* (honor); the desire for blood revenge ; the burning concern for *doxa* (reputation) ; the strong feelings of *phthonos* (envy) which took many forms, one of which was the subjection of women to the strictest restraints. 47 We saw above, how the men of Melos were put to death, and their women and children enslaved, because they had flouted the will of the Athenians : and which supposedly inspired the plot of Euripides' *The Trojan Women*. In *The Bacchae* the chorus speaks with irony of the prize the women of Thebes have won in their contest :

Your victory is fair, fair the prize
 this famous prize of grief !
 Glorious the game ! To hold your child
 in your arms, streaming with blood !
 (Eur. LL. 1160-1164).

He chides the men of the army and navy for their lack of self discipline and erosion of military spirit when he criticizes their sexual excesses, " filthy gossip and foul talk. " (*Hec.* LL. 608) ; he points to the futility of revenge when Poseidon

states : " that mortal who sacks fallen cities is a fool his own turn must come. " (*Troj. Wom.* L. 95). Phaedra schemes her own death because she has devulged the guilty secret of her love for Hippolytus, to the Nurse : " It would always be my own choice to have my virtues known and honored. So when I do wrong I could not endure to see a circle of condemning witnesses. " (*Hipp.* LL. 400-405). Spurned by Jason, Medea, upon receiving the news that her vengeful plot to kill Creon, king of Corinth, and his daughter, has succeeded, speaks to the Messenger : " Do not be in a hurray friend, but speak. How did they die ? You will delight me twice as much again if you say they died in agony. " (*Med.* LL. 1135). Poor Hecuba, crazed with grief, responds to Polymestor's betrayal by blinding him and killing his children. She, like Medea, has had her revenge. but in a world gone mad, what does it matter ? She will either be enslaved by Agamemnon, or as is prophesized, will be changed into a dog and then die. (*Hec.* LL. 1265).

The Athenians also set great store by the values of moderation, self control, and rationality which, helped make them the innovative and creative force they were. Such values oppose those referred to above. The ongoing dialectic between such competing and exacting demands must have engendered deep and conflicting emotions leaving the Athenians with a precarious sense of being in control. The added trials and hardships of war coupled with, the weakened blood ties, must have contributed to a

tenuous and explosive situation, which was at once creative (a similar intellectual resurgence and flowering of art and literature occurred in Paris, as a reaction to the German occupation of France in World War II ⁴⁰). Thucydides writes a somber analysis of the " Psychology of Revolution " which prevailed all around him. He talks of the moral collapse of Athenian society due to the class wars which bred every form of wickedness :

The causes of all these evils was the love of power, originating in avarice and ambition, and the party spirit which is engendered by them when men are fairly embarked on a contest.

(III. 62-83)

He goes on to say that that the meaning of words was transmogrified : " moderation was the disguise of unmanly weakness The lover of violence was always trusted." (III. 81-82). To the extent that Euripides' women protagonists, Medea, Phaedra, Hecuba, and others, serve as metaphors for, or personifications of the psychology of revolution, they refer to all Athenians, most especially the men . It is after all, the nurses of Medea and Phaedra who are the spokespersons for the virtues of moderation : " What is moderate sounds best, Also in practice is best for everyone. " (*Med.* LL. 125) ; or " The ways of life that are most fanatical trip us up more, they say than bring us joy So I praise less the extreme than temperance in everything. " (*Hipp.* LL. 260-265). The fact that these wise

utterances come from the mouths of menials speaks for *isotes* (equality) in the democracy and *parrhesia* (free speech). No matter, that the Athenians did not always practice what they preached.

Now for the eternal question, how to render some, in this case sociological, explanation for the central roles and strong active images of women in Euripides' dramas when, the prose texts present compelling evidence to the contrary in everyday life? I had speculated about the possible unifying effects the dominant images of women might have provided for the people of the *demos*, particularly, during such unsettled times. Then I discovered that Max Weber suggests a relationship between erotic feelings for women, and the development of a unified literary language that in turn, served as cement for the masses. Erotic feelings inspired by women "contributed specifically to the formation of a national sentiment", that expressed in lyrics, helped transform national languages into literary languages. "If we pursue Weber's reasoning, in the context of the male ascendant Athenian democracy, where young men were the *acknowledged* love objects, sentimental lyrics dedicated to women would have been considered "sophomoric" ⁸⁰, and the vivid images of women in tragedy must, in part, have substituted as an unsentimental means by which such feelings were vented. Therefore, despite the absence of erotic lyrics ---- such as those written earlier by Sappho to women ---- the contemporary literary language was

democratized, and permanently enriched by the innovative female imagery. This was communicated to the large audiences attending the dramatic festivals (see Mead above) .

Euripides was the first tragic poet to feminize the language of the dramas because : he was so responsive to the changes in his society ; he was the most democratic of all the contemporary poets, a believer in *isonomia* (equal treatment) ; and he was reputed to have had a large library and he knew and respected Sappho's hymns to love (see above) . In addition, Euripides supposedly engaged in dialogues with the mistress of Pericles, the intellectual Aspasia, and according to Weber, such inter-sexual conversation with its components of the erotic, and the *agon* is a creative force. ⁵¹

However, Euripides' images of strong and determined women are not the complete picture, as some experts have suggested. If some of his women characters, in outline, project a sense of empowerment, it is always within the constraints of patriarchy, for they are ultimately found in subordinate positions. Mary R. Lefkowitz (1981) points to the fact that these so called strong women are always helped by men : Medea is first promised asylum by Aegeus before she murders her rival, and sacrifices her sons ; Hecuba, to avenge the murder of her son, blinds Polymestor and kills his children, but only after she has received the consent of Agamemnon. ⁵² Other examples are : Electra conspires to kill

her mother Clytemnestra, but she awaits Orestes' return and he performs the deed ; the case of Phaedra is somewhat more complex, she acts alone to incriminate Hippolytus and then hangs herself, but she does so, in part, out of fear for Theseus' wrath when he learned her secret.

David M. Schaps (1979) *Economic Rights of Women in Ancient Greece* confirms women's dependent position in democratic Athens. He describes in great detail the legal system which virtually reduced all women to legal and economic adolescents for all of their lives. The *kyrios* or male guardian, had the power to transact all of their business including choosing their husbands, and representing them in the courts if it became necessary. A husband had the right to dispose of his wife's dowry even though it was said to belong to the woman. Athenian law kept the property of a woman without brothers in the hands of the father's family, not the husband's ; the law stated that the *epikleros* (daughter left without brothers at her father's death) was to be passed along with any inheritance to the father's next-of-kin. The person claimed the girl along with her estate in the courts ; if he was successful in his claim, he and the girl would marry and the estate would pass to their children when they came of age. There were some women involved in trade, but in a very restricted and minor way that was not generally profitable. These feelings of dependency were perpetuated in yet another way: husbands were often much older than their wives, brides ranged

from 12-18 years, while the grooms were usually over 30. ⁵³

In Euripides' *Hippolytus* the renowned Phaedra, supreme symbol of the devouring mother who lusted after her stepson, the youth Hippolytus, was more than likely a young woman of twenty or less married to Theseus, a man much older than herself. ⁵⁴

The imperatives of patriarchy are evident again in Thucydides' version of Pericles' famous Funeral Oration of 431-430 (in some ways comparable to Lincoln's Gettysburg Address). Pericles, in the first year of the Peloponnesian War, proclaims to the recently widowed women of Athens :

And, if I am to speak of womanly virtues to those of you who henceforth be widows, let me sum them up in one short admonition : To a woman not to show more weakness than is natural to her sex is a great glory, and not to be talked about for good or for evil among men. (ll. 35-54)

These words from the man who wrote the rigid citizenship law of 451, which exclusively permitted pure-blooded Athenians the right to citizenship, and the right to marry only other citizens. Pericles, broke his own law in 445 ---- modern scholars say after he had divorced his legal wife ---- and took a foreign woman into his home and court, the intellectual, Aspasia of Miletus. Aspasia bore Pericles one son, and their liason endured until his death in 429. She is said to have wielded considerable political influence over him. ⁵⁵ Which brings to mind the Cretan aristocrat Phaedra, in Euripides' *Hippolytus* when she spoke of

marriage destroyed because of the poor example set by those of noble birth who advocated restraint but indulged their lust, and caused corruption to spread among the lower classes. And, as she points out, it is women, especially married women, who are made responsible (LL. 405-410). Pericles' key statement seems to embody the Athenian attitude of paternalism toward women. We shall see how this theme recurs throughout Euripides' dramas, even as he exposed the evils of war, and criticized the institutions of democracy ; even as he deplored the sexual double standard, and showed a surprising sensitivity to women ; even as his dramas became more *sensate* (see above) and evolved into his many combinations of tragic-comedy, melodrama-farce, and romantic comedy.

In at least 8 of his 19 extant dramas dating from about 429 to about 405, we find confirmations of the perpetuation of traditional Athenian norms for women such as : being secluded at home ; being silent ; being modest before men, not arguing with them, not speaking with strangers ; and not showing " more weakness than is natural to their sex ." (see Pericles' speech above). Examples are : in the *Heracleidae* c. 429, the earliest of the 8 dramas, the numerous sons and one daughter of Heracles have finally found sanctuary from their persecutors in Euripides' glorious Athens. Macaria, the daughter, apologizes to Demophon, the king of Athens, and Iolus, friend of Heracles for having made a public appearance : " Strangers, before all else I

hope you won't think it brazen of me to come out. I know a woman should be quiet and discreet, and that her place is in the home." (LL. 474-476). The words recall the statement of Pericles. Andromache, (in the *Andromache* c. 426, see above) after having soundly rebuked Menelaus for his ill-treatment of her, his cowardice, his being an impostor, speaks : " You come snorting so importantly, up in arms against a woman already in bondage." (LL. 327) is cautioned by the Chorus : " That's quite enough from a female dealing with men ." (LL. 364). Menelaus is a thoroughly unappealing figure here, and the tone of the play most experts agree, is not tragic at all. In antiquity, it was criticized as being a potpourri of comic ingredients. °° The *Electra* 413, despite its theme of matricide, contains many earthy and farcical elements which at times make it seem a parody of tragedy. Electra is forced to wed a peasant farmer so as to allay Aegisthus' fear that she will bear worthy sons to avenge the murder of her father Agamemnon. Orestes, as the story has it, comes in search of his sister, in this case accompanied by the mute character of Pylades. His identity still unknown to Electra, Orestes stands chatting with her in front of her humble cottage. Electra's husband, the Farmer, approaches, sees the two young men, and speaks : " Hey there ! who are these strangers standing at our gate ? A nice woman should never stand and gossip with young men. " (LL. 344). In Euripides' version of the *Electra* the principal characters are expressions of the bourgeois character of the *polis* ; they are greedy and obsessed

with the " good life " they lost in their ancestral home. Electra's forced marriage to the farmer was sanctioned by Athenian law ; we saw above how the *kyrious* or male guardian was empowered to choose a husband for his daughter or ward. In this case though, it seems to owe more to parody. Men of the lower classes, though they did gain certain privileges in the democracy, rarely married up despite the fact that Athens had no legal injunction against it. ⁵⁷ Euripides on more than one occasion cautions against inappropriate marriage : (*And.* LL. 619-623, 1260-1264) ; or in Electra's words : " it marks the bridegroom who has climbed to a nobler bed ; when no one mentions the husband, everyone knows the wife." (LL.934-940) ; " Even though free, he is a slave of his marriage bed, having sold his body for a dowry. " (frag. Eur. *Phaethon* ⁵⁸). *Heien* was produced in 412, directly after the great Athenian naval defeat at Sicily. The play is described as a romantic comedy and perhaps an expression of Euripides' desire to " escape " from the horrors of war. However, the essential difference of Euripides' version is that Helen is spared the dishonor traditionally attributed to her. Here Helen is not spirited away by Paris to Troy. Instead, she is supernaturally transported to Egypt where Menelaus finds her after having first beseiged and defeated the city of Troy only to find out that Helen was not there, as the Trojans had informed him in the first place. Menelaus contrives their escape from Egypt, but Helen very modestly suggests a cleverer scheme to facilitate their departure : " I know ! Even a

woman can have one clever thought." (LL. 1049) and Menelaus consents to her plan. This is a love story, and Helen lies to save Menelaus' life. The plot also shows signs of a shift in relations between the sexes, and Euripides' adaptation has made even more of a place for women. Professor of sociology, Charles Winick (1969) in a study of the changing patterns of male-female relationships in contemporary America, entitled *The New People* points to the " depolarization " of sex roles in Athens commencing about 450 B.C., and partly as a result of the democratizing influence of the Sophists. He goes on to say, that the last quarter of the fifth century also saw the beginnings of a " move toward equality " by women, motivated in part by their disaffection with the long war. " We approach the end of the democracy here, and the fourth century heralded a better time for women, and for relations between the sexes. It is interesting that Euripides (like the Herodotus version) has had Helen spirited away to Egypt : Sarah E. Pomeroy (1964) *Women in Hellenistic Egypt* compares the social status of the women of Classical Athens with that of the women of Ptolemaic Egypt. She defines the Classical period as 500-323 ; Ptolemy I ascended the throne in 323. Classical Athens was a democracy, Ptolemaic Egypt a monarchy with a Greek ruling class. Pomeroy found that in the three spheres of the social, economic, and political there was less gender distinction in Ptolemaic Egypt than in Classical Athens, and the status of its women was higher. Both Classical Athens and Ptolemaic Egypt have, according to Pomeroy, the widest

range of primary source material from which to determine the social status of their women. ⁴⁰ Of the 8 Euripides' dramas considered here, the remaining 4 are : *The Suppliant Women* (LL. 294, 1040); *The Trojan Women* (L. 903); *Heracles* (L. 420); *Iphigenia in Aulis* (L. 830).

3. Methodology

As shown in the previous section, the subjects for study are the women of Classical Athens. The ways of thinking about women in Classical Athens (along with the question of slavery) has long been a subject of debate among classicists. As we saw above, the images of women derived from the myth-based dramas are, in some important ways, in opposition to the more conventional historical evidence, and that added to the different questions asked of the data have fueled the debate. The fact that statistics are fragmentary, and all the records of the period written by men, are also contributory. In 1975, classical scholar and feminist, Sarah B. Pomeroy, opened up the discussion with her book *Goddesses, Whores, Wives and Slaves*. Since that time there have been various attempts made to construct a more realistic picture of women's lives in Classical Antiquity, one that is less dichotomized. While sociologist Philip E. Slater (1968) has addressed the question of male-female relations and the prominent role of women in Greek drama from a psychoanalytical point of view, in so far as I know, a sociological inquiry into Euripides' dramas has yet to be done. ⁴¹ As a sociologist, I would wish to

make this attempt. For in a universal way it bears on the quality of women's lives, here, now, today. The ancient Athenians may have provided the model for Western democracy, but they are also the basis for some of today's sexist biases. ⁶²

The main sources for this study are as follows :

1) Euripides, the man and the poet, his time in history, his milieu, and more immediately his social and professional context, and the nature of his audience. These are the key factors which shaped Euripides' artistic products.

2) Euripides' dramas, for this will be an attempt to demonstrate that his dramas express major aspects of contemporary Athenian social thought. Where necessary, I will also draw on the comedies of Aristophanes to round out the picture, for he was Euripides' contemporary in spirit and in time.

3) Contemporary historians, philosophers, and men of science. Also, history of art and archeological evidence.

The method used will be a qualitative content analysis. Content analysis is uniquely suited for historical research. As long as historical records exist, content analysts may study past periods of history or make comparisons over time. ⁶³ Berelson (1952) says :

A broad definition of content analysis would include

a large part of work in literary criticism, intellectual and cultural history, political history, political and social philosophy, rhetoric and any field in which the close reading of texts is followed by summary and interpretation. ⁴⁴

Qualitative content analysis is appropriate because it is done on "small or incomplete samples" and the dramas are fragmentary; qualitative analysis utilizes more complex themes, "less formalized categories", contains a "higher ratio of non-content to content statements", and is therefore less likely to flatten the data than quantitative analysis; and qualitative analysis is usually more concerned with content as an embodiment of more profound phenomena. ⁴⁵

The information elicited will be primarily in the nature of values, norms, and social expectations of Athenian society as they relate to women, such as: women and war; women as slaves; women and work; class differences; women and religious life. The information will be inferred from the utterances and behavior of various characters as the plots dictate. To determine the extent to which the information elicited is accurate, I will interrelate my interpretations with the more conventional historical evidence of the period, all the while relying on the thought of Pitrim Sorokin and George Mead. Examples of this procedure were demonstrated above.

This study is intended as a contribution to the better understanding of the diachronic affinities of a society's art, culture, dominant mentality, and structure of social relationships. It is also relevant to changing sex roles, and will be of interest to feminists, and those concerned with how thoughts and attitudes about women have changed over time, and how they vary according to ruling class, ethnicity, and social structure.

NOTES

1. Pitrim Sorokin, 1957, *Social and Cultural Dynamics*, Boston : Porter Sargent Publisher, pp. 223, 436, 457.

2. Mead, 1934, p.209 ; Robert Wilson, ed., 1974, *The Arts in Society*, New Jersey : Prentice-Hall, see: John Dewey's Social Art and the Sociology of Art, pp. 175-169. Mead was much influenced by John Dewey, and Dewey suggests that " art is, in the largest sense, a social phenomenon, and that men should understand it as a manifestation of their *collective* spirit. " (p. 180).

3. George H. Mead, 1934, *Mind, Self & Society*. Vol. 1, ed. Charles W. Morris, 1962, Chicago : University of Chicago Press, pp. xiii, xiv, 6-8, 46-47, 86-87, 90. 133-134, 155-156. 178-180, 191-192, 209-210, 270, 280 ; Herbert Blumer, 1969, *Symbolic Interactionism*, New Jersey : Prentice-Hall, Inc. p. 6 ; Lewis A. Coser, 1971, *Masters of Sociological Thought*, New York : Harcourt, Brace Jovanovitch, Inc. p. 340 ; Kurt H. Wolff, 1974, *Trying Sociology*, New York : John Wiley & Sons, pp. 148, 516, 526, 527.

4. Werner Jaeger, 1939, 1945, *Paideia : The Ideals of Greek Culture*, Vol. 1, New York : Oxford University Press, trans. from the second German edition by Gilbert Highet, p. 246 ; George Thomson, 1972, *Aeschylus and Athens*, A Study of the Social Origins of Drama, New York : Haskell House Publishers, Ltd. p.9 ; Vernant & Naquet, 1981, *Tragedy and Myth in Ancient Greece*, New Jersey : Humanities Press. preface.

5. Thomson, 1972, p.1.

6. Jaeger, 1945, p. 332 ; Victor Ehrenberg, 1962, *The People of Aristophanes, A Sociology of Old Attic Comedy*, New York : Schocken Books, p.12.
7. Erich Segal, 1968, *Euripides*, New Jersey : Prentice Hall, p.9.
8. Aristotle in his *Rhetoric* (1416a 29-35) attests to Euripides' personal experience in the civil law courts.
9. Coser, 1971, pp. 220-221 ; Mead, 1934, p.81.
10. Sorokin, 1957, p. 190.
11. Aristotle. *Rhetoric & Poetics*, New York : The Modern Library, published by Random House, Inc., 1954, trans. W. Rhys Roberts, Ingram Bywater, p.261 ; Jaeger, 1945, p.343 ; Sorokin, 1957, pp. 188-189 ; Ehrenberg, 1962, p. 12 ; ed. Moses Hadas, 1962, *The Complete Plays of Aristophanes*, New York : Bantam Books, p. 9 ; M.I. Finley, 1963, *The Ancient Greeks*, New York : The Viking Press, pp. 86, 125.
12. *Daedalus*. Summer, 1986. see : *Experimental Science and the Rational Artist in Early Modern Europe*, by Alistair C. Crombie, p.63.
13. *Daedalus*, Summer, 1986, see : *Observations on Art and Science*, by Samuel Y. Edgerton, Jr., p.185.
14. *Daedalus*, Summer, 1986, pp.49-50.
15. ed. E.H. Warmington & Philip G. Rouse, 1956, *Great Dialogues of Plato*, New York : Mentor Books, preface ; Alvin W. Gouldner, 1965, *Enter Plato*, New York : Basic Books, p. 6.
16. Aubrey Diller, 1937, *Race Mixture among the Greeks Before Alexander*, Westport CT : reprint, 1971, Greenwood Press Publishers, p.158 ; Gouldner, 1965, p. 39, note: 62.
17. Wilson, 1965, see : *Literature and Society*, p.303.
18. Mead, 1934, p. 257.
19. Arthur Weigall, 1932, *Sappho of Lesbos*. New York : Frederick A. Stokes Co., p. 65.
20. Hadas, 1962, p. 398 ; Ehrenberg, 1962, p.287 ; Jerome Karabel & A. H. Halsey, 1977, *Power and Ideology in Education*, New York : Oxford University Press, p. 465. Note : By books, we mean thin strips of papyrus reed pasted together to form a roll on which the text was written in a series of columns.

21. Ehrenberg, 1962, p. 287 ; Finley, 1963, p. 76 ; Karabel & Halsey, 1977, p. 465.
22. Finley, 1963, p. 76.
23. Max Weber (trans., eds.) (1958) Don Martindale, Johannes Riedel, & Gertrude Neuwirth, *The Rational and Social Foundations of Music*, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, pp. xxi-xxiii. The rationalization of literature, in the West, was also advanced when it began to be based on printing.
24. The Greek writing system was based on a Greek alphabet that originated from the Semitic alphabet.
25. ed. Karabel & Halsey, 1977, see : Goody & Watt, 1963, *The Consequences of Literacy*, pp. 456-475.
26. ed., Helene P. Foley, 1981, *Reflections of Women in Antiquity*, see : Susan G. Cole. *Could Greek Women Read and Write*. pp.219-245, New York : Gordon & Breach Publishers.
27. David M. Schaps, 1979, *Economic Rights of Women in Ancient Greece*, Edinburgh : Edinburgh University Press, pp. 95-96.
28. Ehrenberg, 1962, pp. 286-287, 295.
29. Finley. 1963, p. 75.
30. Gouldner, 1965, pp. 110-115.
31. Sorokin, 1957, pp. 188-190.
32. Joan Rockwell, 1974, *Fact in Fiction : The Use of Literature in the Systematic Study of Society*, London : Routledge & Kegan Paul, p. 4.
33. *Daedalus*, Summer, 1988, see : *Adulthood in American Literature*, by Kenneth S. Lynn, p. 297.
34. Ehrenberg, 1962, pp. 12, 82.
35. Ehrenberg, 1962, pp. 12, 202 ; Arnold Hauser, 1951, *The Social History of Art*, Vol. 1, New York : Vintage Books, p.82 ; I.F. Stone, 1989, pp. 221-224 ; Bernard Rosenberg, seminar in : *Drama as sociology*.
36. Gilbert Norwood, 1954, *Essays on Euripidean Drama*. Berkeley : University of California Press, pp.21-22 ; Ehrenberg, 1962, p. 12 ; Hadas, 1962, pp. 9, 11 ; Segal, 1968, p.9 ; Philip Vellacott, 1975, *Ironic Drama : A Study of Euripides' Method and Meaning*, New York : Cambridge University Press ; Pomeroy, 1975, p. 75 ; Peter Burian, 1985, ed., *Direction in Euripidean*

Criticism, see : Bernard Knox, Durham, N.C. : Duke University Press, p.5 ; *The Chronicle Of Higher Education* , July 31, 1985. see : Angus Paul on William Arrowsmith, pp. 5-6.

37. Sarah B. Pomeroy, 1975, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives & Slaves : Women in Classical Antiquity*, New York, Schocken Books, pp. 103, 107.

38. Foley, 1981, see : Froma I. Zeitlin, *Travesties of Gender and Genre in Aristophanes*, p.211.

39. Sally C. Humphreys, 1983, *The Family, Women & Death*, Boston : Routledge, & Kegan Paul, p. 41.

40. Foley, 1981, see : Helene P. Foley, *The Conception of Women in the Athenian Drama*, p. 128.

41. Mary R. Lefkowitz, 1981, *Heroines and Hysterics*, New York : St. Martins Press, pp. 74, 76.

42. Ehrenberg, 1962. pp. 6, 13, 39.

43. Burian, 1985, see: *The Poet as Prophet* by Bernard Knox, p. 5.

44. ed. David Grene and Richard Lattimore, *Euripides*, Vol. III, 1958, p. 123 ; Vol. V, 1959, p. 226 ; Chicago : University of Chicago Press.

45. Stone, 1989, p.140.

46. Sorokin, 1957, pp. 190, 540, 570, 590.

47. Gouldner, 1965, pp. 55-58 ; Peter Walcot, 1978, *Envy and the Greeks*, A study of Human Behavior, England : Ariès & Phillips Ltd. p. 24 ; R. L. Gordon, 1981, ed. *Myth, Religion and Society*, Great Britain : University Press, Cambridge, p.191.

48. Evelyn Shind, 1982, paper on : *Jean Paul Sartre's The Flies and Euripides' Orestes*.

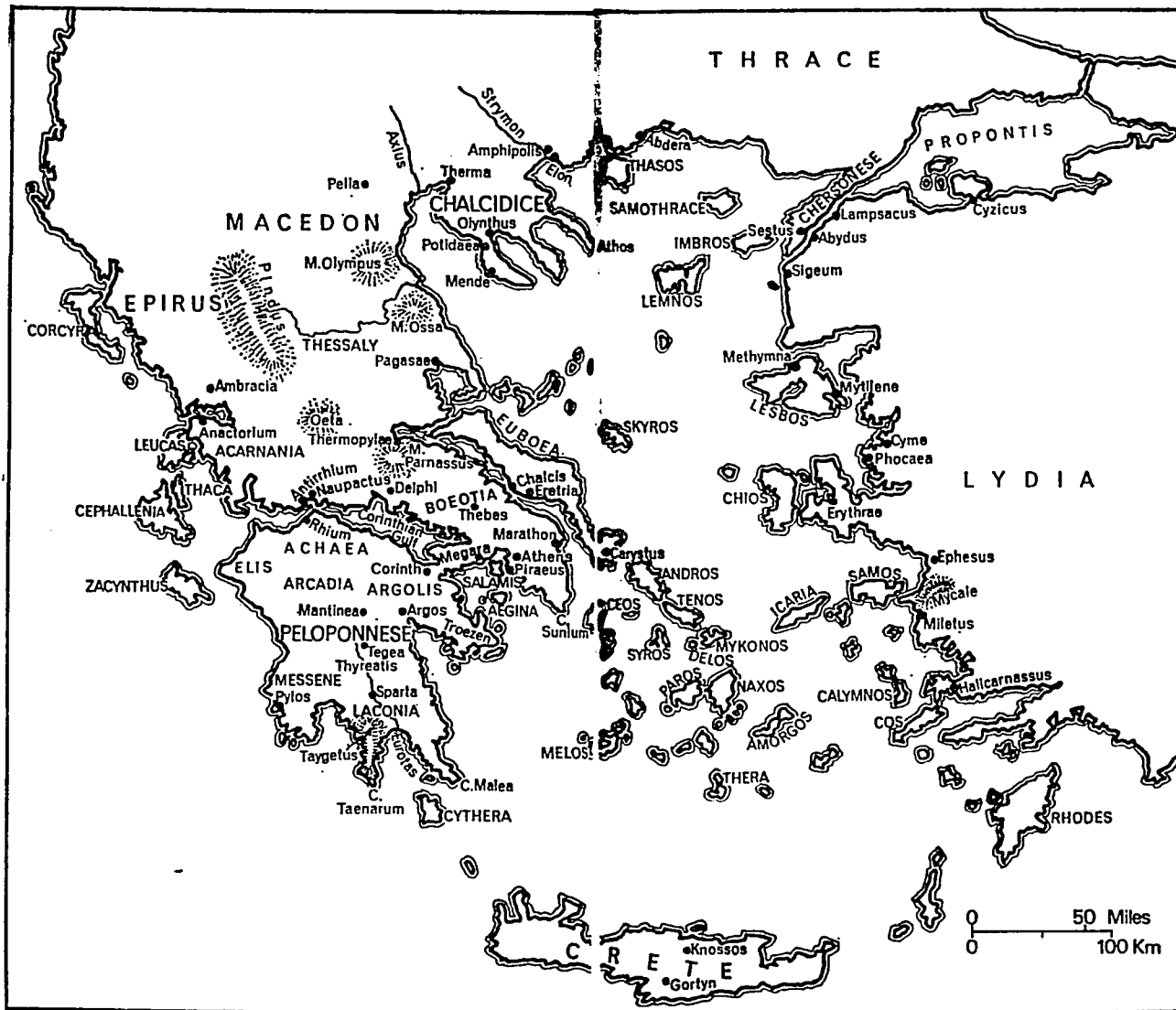
49. Max Weber, 1946, p. 178.

50. Max Weber, 1946, pp. 345-346.

51. Max Weber, 1946, p. 346 ; Norma D. Ireland, 1970, *Index to Women of the World, From Ancient to Modern Times*, Mass : F.W. Faxon Co., pp. xviii-xix.

52. Mary R. Lefkowitz, 1981, *Heroines and Hysterics*, New York : St. Martins Press, p. 48.

53. Gerald R. Leslie, 1976, *The Family in a Social Context*, New York : Oxford University Press, p. 180 ; David M. Schaps, 1979, *Economic Rights of Women in Ancient Greece*, Great Britain : Edinburgh University Press, pp. 25,36,48,75 ; Foley, 1981 p. 129.
54. Philip Velacott, 1975, *Ironic Drama : A Study of Euripides' Method and Meaning*, New York : Cambridge University Press, p.115; Stone, 1989, p. 222.
55. *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 2nd, ed. pp. 131-132 ; Ireland, 1970, pp. xviii-xix ; Pomeroy, 1975, p. 90 ; Cole in Foley, 1981, p. 225.
56. Grene & Lattimore, 1958, *Euripides*, III, p. 73.
57. Schaps, 1979, p. 76.
58. Schaps. 1979, p. 76.
59. Charles Winick, 1969, *The New People. Desexualization in American Life*, New York : Pegasus, pp. 342-345.
60. Sarah B. Pomeroy, 1984. *Women in Hellenistic Egypt*. New York : Schocken Books, pp. xv, xviii, 173.
61. Philip E. Slater (1968) *The Glory of Hera : Greek Mythology and the Greek Family*, Boston : Beacon Press.
62. Slater, 1968, pp. 6,7,29 ; ed. Peradotto & Sullivan, 1984, *Women in the Ancient World : The Arethusa Papers*, Albany: S U N Y Press, pp. 7-58 ; Winick, 1969. p. 342.
63. Kurt H. Wolff, 1974, *Trying Sociology*, New York : John Wiley & Sons, p. 295 ; Earl R. Babbie, 1975, *The Practice of Social Research*, California : Wadsworth Publishing Co., p. 114.
64. Bernard Berelson, 1952, *Content Analysis in Communication Research*, New York : Hafner Press, p. 234.
65. Berelson, 1952, pp. 121, 122, 123, 125, 126.



1. Greece and the Aegean

CHAPTER 11 EURIPIDES AND HIS AGE

This chapter will closely study Euripides the creator, and the context which was the environing frame for the artist, his art, and his audience. As Ian Watts points out in *Literature and Society*, "Taine's formula for the key forces which determine the author's literary product was *race, moment, milieu*". But Watt goes on to emphasize the author's "social milieu" as the single most determining factor¹, and in this he appears to agree with John Dewey, Mead, and the Symbolic Interactionists who view art as essentially an act of communication (see Ch. 1).²

Euripides was born into an age of increasing intellectualism and rationalization of life. Man attained a central position and himself became the object of scientific investigation. Human reason triumphed over divine guidance. According to Max Weber, who will be noted here as much as possible in his own words, such a process causes art to become a cosmos of more consciously grasped independent values which exist in their own right. The sublimation of the religious ethic on the one hand, and the evolution of the inherent logic of art on the other hand, have tended to form an increasingly tense relationship. Art provides a "salvation" from the routine of everyday life and especially from the escalating pressures of theoretical and practical rationalism. With this claim to a redemptory function, art begins to compete with religion (also see Sorokin below).³

Tragedy's mainspring, it would seem, was the age's dualism, for in opposition to the secularization and rationalization processes, the earlier tradition of the myths, which were the underpinnings of the dramas, still stirred the minds and hearts of many Athenians. By the early fourth century however, only Comedy, which all but did away with the myth, survived as a popular form of entertainment and it filled an almost singularly aesthetic function. It was only with the literary criticism of Aristotle that we see a formally and logically arrived at admission, that excellence in literature produces " its own peculiar form of pleasure " (*Poetics* XXII. 16-XXIII.3) and that it is an end in itself. ⁴

1. BIOGRAPHY ⁵

On the authority of a very ancient chronicle called the Parian Marble, which was found on the Greek island of Paros in the seventeenth century and was composed in the year 264 B.C., we can put the birth of Euripides in the year 484 B.C.. ⁶ *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* records Euripides birth as probably in 485 or 480, and other sources place it in the year 480. ⁷ The discrepancy in years is in and of itself not very significant, but the reasons for it as we shall see, are, and tell us much about the period. To write a life of Euripides or for that matter any eminent man in antiquity is in some sense impossible. History was just beginning to be written at all. Herodotus born

in 490 and the so called *pater historae* was Euripides' close contemporary, Thucydides the more "scientific" of the two historians was born some fifteen years after him. Biography as we know it, a year by year chronicle with documents, was not practiced at all in antiquity; but then as now biography commanded a wide interest, irrespective of its worth. The system of chronology was extremely confused, there was no generally accepted period from which to date and the numerical system before the invention of Arabic cyphers was equally confused. In consequence dates of birth and early histories of most of the important persons of antiquity were not well known.

The Greeks devised methods of grouping memorable events together at some fixed but inexact date to help them remember. For example, Murray (1915) relates what he calls a "pleasant fable" : the three tragic poets were grouped together round the battle of Salamis, the decisive naval victory over the Persians in the year 480; Aeschylus was reputed to have fought among the heavy armed infantry; Sophocles supposedly danced in a boy's choir to celebrate the triumph ; and Euripides was born in Salamis on the day of the battle. ¹⁰

As it happens, Euripides' early years were probably dominated by the final battles of the great Persian War. If we accept his date of birth as 484, when he was 4 years old he and his family would have been forced to flee their home and country. He was born in

Phyla, a village in central Attica ; the Athenians evacuated to Salamis, an island off the coast of Attica as the dreaded Persians were coming. ¹¹ In Greek, the word *Persai* (Persians) means " to destroy ". ¹² The Persian army invaded Attica, ravaged the countryside, seized the Acropolis and burnt it to the ground and the smoke rising from the ruins was said to have been seen in Salamis. Herodotus described the reaction of the Greeks to the destruction : When the Greek allied fleet saw this they were so dismayed they nearly broke up. The Athenian commander, Themistocles, by threat or withdrawing the 200 Athenian ships entirely, persuaded the Spartan commander of the allied fleet to stand and fight the Persians at Salamis. (Herod. VIII. 75-86). A decisive Greek naval victory followed and the Persian fleet was destroyed. With the threat of Persian naval aggression ended, final victory was attainable. The campaigns of 479 culminated in victory over the Persian land forces at Plataea, essentially ending the Greek's war of defense and ever since Thucydides (I.89) it came to be regarded as the end of the Persian War. ¹³

Herodotus in his anecdotal account of the aftermath of the battle of Plataea cites the vast differences between Persian and Greek values and seems to imply a moral lesson for the Persian War. In great detail, we read of the Oriental " magnificence " the Greeks encountered when they sacked the Persian camp: splendid gold and silver ornaments; rich colorful tent hangings; tables of precious metals laden with a lavish feast astonished Pausanias, the

Spartan commander. To juxtapose Greek simplicity he ordered a Spartan supper to be served up and laughingly pointed out the two boards to his generals, " O Greeks, to show you the folly of this Median captain (Mardonius) who when he enjoyed such fare as this, must needs come here to rob us of our penury. " (Herod. IX. 82).¹⁴ For the Greeks, the defeat of the Persian invasion symbolized the end of Oriental despotism and the beginning of Greek democracy. The great national struggle against Persia had been regarded by the Greeks as above all a war of liberation. Aeschylus' first tragedy *The Persians*, a drama of a terrifying historical event, with a battle scene in it, is supposed to have embodied the thoughts and feelings that suffused the victorious Athenian nation. Euripides has two descriptions of battle scenes, one in the *Heracleidae* (LL 800-865) and one in the *Suppliant Women* (LL 650-730) but these of course were written during the time of the Peloponnesian War, when Euripides was old enough to have been a participant and had fought in hand to hand combat.¹⁵

It was the beginning of a new epoch. Athens emerged from the war the undisputed mistress of the sea and the Greeks went over to the offensive in a war to liberate the Greeks in Asia. Athens was riding high and this was to bring many great changes with it of which we will speak later. Almost half a century of Athenian supremacy followed during which time Euripides grew to maturity; it was the period between the two wars, the Persian War that had

recently ended and the great fratricidal war between the Greek states which was to follow in 431.

Euripides' *Vita* has developed from a variety of sources but little reliable material has survived. ¹⁶ Lefkowitz (1981) takes the view, although she acknowledges that at times she may have been too skeptical, " that virtually all the material in all the lives (of the important Greek poets) is fiction ", and only limited factual information may have survived. ¹⁷ Murray (1918) regards Philochorus, historian of the late fourth century B.C., writer of the *Attic Chronicles* and treatise, *Ūn Euripides* of which fragments are extant, as the best authority. Lefkowitz is more skeptical, she refers only to anecdotes about Euripides known to Philochorus. Fragments of a very ancient document *Life of Euripides* by one Satyrus, a writer possibly of the Aristotelian school in the third century, were unearthed in Egypt in 1911. A later but complete *Vita Euripides* derived from early sources, notably Satyrus, appears to have undergone a long process of alteration, distortion and condensation by the various people who owned or copied the ancient document. While scholarly inquiry has focused on the earlier fragments, according to Lefkowitz, the later but complete *Vita* gives more insight into the inventions of the biography. ¹⁸

Philochorus, according to Murray, is said to have consulted official documents and verified his statements when compiling the

Chronicles. His main work was to record the history, myths, festivals and customs of Athens. His special treatise, *On Euripides* was derived from the public records of tragic performances edited by Aristotle and his pupils. In this way, Murray continues, he was able to fix the chronology of Euripides' plays. He would have found several public inscriptions engraved in stone which mentioned the poets' name and also a portrait bust of Euripides in old age. Philochorus recorded only external memories of the poet: he wore a long beard and had moles on his face; he lived alone and hated visitors and parties; he hated women; he owned many books; the cave on the island of Salamis in which he used to compose had two openings and a beautiful view on one side to the sea, (and was probably a family property); he could be seen " all day long thinking to himself and writing, for he despised anything that was not great and high ". He lived with a few intimates in his last years, Mnesilochus, probably his wife's father, and his servant or secretary, Cephisophon. ¹⁹

Lefkowitz, however, relates Philochorus' memories of Euripides to Comedy : Euripides had a long beard, is a comment in a costume scene in Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae* (Women Celebrating the Thesmophoria), Euripides says, " I am grey haired and have a long beard " (L 190); Euripides had moles, Dionysus in the *Frogs* talks about the sties on Euripides eyes (Aristophanes, L 1246); Euripides hated women, is simply a condensation of the plot of *Thesmophoriazusae* (as we shall see below). ²⁰

We know from Comedy as well that Euripides was a most

controversial figure and an outspoken critic of Athenian society and its institutions (sociologists of art support the notion of the artist as frequently at odds and simultaneously embedded in his society²¹). He may have deeply offended Cleon and the upholders of tradition; in the Satyrus tradition he was supposedly put on trial for impiety by Cleon (see below). He was alienated from the leaders who advocated war (in this he agreed with Aristophanes) and his commitment to new ideas must have placed him at odds and deeply disturbed many of his contemporaries. Socrates also broke through to a new level of reality, and he was tried and executed for it. (P. Sorokin (1957) generalized that the fifth century shows a significant change in the epistemological mentality of the Greeks, with rationalism "the most powerful current of the period", and the "truth of independent reason dominant".²² At Athens, we would suppose this to have especially been the case.)

The Satyrus fragments, when first transcribed appeared to describe actual events of about the last quarter of the fifth century. Closer scrutiny disclosed that while Satyrus was concerned with literary style, he had little concern for historical fact.²³ *Life* is a popularization, its contents are in the form of a biographical dialogue between three persons, one apparently a woman, another a staunch defender of Euripides. Much of what is written are lengthy quotations and anecdotes. Euripides life and art are discussed: there is a passage

referring to the influence of Anaxagoras on Euripides; Euripides is said to have influenced New Comedy ; he is said to have assisted the unpopular tragic poet Timotheus by writing a prelude to his drama. Particularly interesting is a statement that Euripides " is to be put on trial " for impiety for having shown Heracles going mad in a play in the Dionysia. Turner (1968) says if Euripides' prosecution by Cleon had actually occurred it would have linked the performance of his *Heracles* dated 424-423 B.C., with the events of 428 B.C. and refuted the chronology of Euripides' plays. To explain the anomaly, Turner researched the rhetorical literature of the period and discovered that the syntactical style of the verb " is put on trial " was similar to usage in the exercises given to students in Greek rhetorical schools on which they could declaim, and did not denote an actual occurrence but an imaginary event. It was concluded that the scrap was therefore not historical, but belonged to the history of rhetorical education: it listed subjects for exercise. ²⁴ In any case the students would had to have read Euripides and Thucydides to have done the exercises, so we are told something about the level of literacy and scholarship of the time.

There are many other anecdotes from Satyrus and the related *Vita* that are treated as historical fact and according to Lefkowitz, are derived from the jokes of Comedy. ²⁵ Euripides was so much imitated and such a very popular target for attacks by the comic poets that some scholars maintain, in part, it was a form of

flattery. ²⁶ Lefkowitz, points out that Aristophanes accused Euripides of plagiarizing from his work in the *Thesmophoriazusae* (L 1060); he also suggests that Euripides received help in writing his plays : when Euripides puts Greek drama on a " slenderizing regimen " Dionysus asks, " Cephisophon's confection ? " (Cephisophon was Euripides' servant or secretary, see above) (*Frogs* LL 942-944). In connection with Aristophanes' assertion of plagiarism, Lefkowitz also refers to Cratinus, a contemporary comic poet who coined the verb " Euripidaristophonize ". ²⁷ Segal (1968) on the other hand, does not interpret Cratinus' notion as pejorative but rather as an indicator of how much alike the two poets were. Segal, goes on to say that Aristophanes was " without any doubt the greatest contemporary admirer of Euripides ". ²⁸ Ehrenberg (1962) contends that Euripides, while a primary butt of Aristophanes' derision, was at " the same time a most influential factor in shaping Aristophanes own mind and art ". ²⁹

We see again in the *Thesmophoriazusae* Euripides' influence at work : the women have gathered to observe a private festival and they agree to murder Euripides because they feel maligned and exposed by his very penetrating study of female character. In a series of parodies Euripides attempts to protect his interests and the charges of the women are ultimately proven unjust. The allusion to Euripides penetrating study of women occurs when Agathon the tragic poet speaks:

I choose my dress to suit my poesy
 A poet sir, must needs adapt his ways
 To the high thoughts which animate his soul.
 And when he sings of women, he assumes
 A woman's garb and dons a woman's habits.

Mnesilochus (perhaps Euripides' elderly father-in-law, aside to Euripides) :

When you wrote *Phaedra*, Did you take her habits?
 (Hadas, 1962, p.335)

In the *Frogs* Euripides is defending his plays against the attacks of Aeschylus in one scene, and it is suggested that Euripides' " loose " female protagonists are actually women he has known personally (tradition has it that Euripides was deceived by his wife, see below) :

Aeschylus: This further: loose women I never created - no
 Phaedras, no Stheneboas.

And who can assert that in dramas of mine any lovelorn
 lady appears ?

Euripides: Ah No ! Aphrodite has left you untouched, with
 none of her grace endowed.

Aeschylus: Thank heaven! On you and yours, I am told her
 charms in such volume were showered
 That wreckage and ruin were brought to your house.

Dionysus (to Euripides) : Touche! By
 Jove it is true sir:

The things you have written of other men's wives, your own inflicted on you sir. (Hadas, 1962, p. 402).

In *Satyrus* and the related *Vita* the references to Euripides' misogyny are supported by anecdotes and humor based on Comedy, similar to the above dialogue, or on Euripides' own poetry. Euripides, the anecdotes maintain, had been a deceived husband as was his male character Theseus: he married Choirile, daughter of Mnesilochus, and when he realized she was unfaithful he wrote his *Hippolytus*. In the *Bacchae* the woman-hating Pentheus is torn to pieces by the Maenads who are lead by his mother Agave, in *Satyrus* and the *Vita* Euripides is killed by a pack of hounds (see below). He is also accused of having had two wives like his own character Neoptolemus in the *Andromache* (which does tell us something about the importance of monogamy for the Athenians), Melito is said to have been his first wife, Choirile his second. ³⁰

Another joke which runs through Comedy makes Euripides' mother Cleito the object of derision : she was said to have been a vegetable seller and it is not known why, yet it is recorded as " fact " by *Satyrus* and the *Vita*. Philochorus explicitly denies it and argues that Cleito was of " very high birth " as was his father Mnesarchus or Mnesarchides who was a merchant. Aristotle wrote that Euripides was summoned to the law-courts in a suit for " an exchange of properties " (*Rhetoric* 3.15.1416a 25-35) and

if so he must have been affluent.³¹ Another source says his family must have been respectable as it had an ancestral priesthood of Apollo Zosterios and he was the torchbearer.³² Euripides had three sons, the oldest was Mnesarchides a merchant, the second Mnesilochus an actor, Euripides the youngest, produced some of his dramas.³³

We hear that Euripides was a good athlete, there were records of his victories at Athens and Eleusis; he was also a recognized painter and his pictures were discovered by antiquarians in later times in the town of Megara.³⁴ He was not politically prestigious as was Sophocles, but he supposedly went on an embassy to Syracuse (*Arist. Rh.* 2.6). Euripides was clearly involved in the intellectual movement associated with the Sophists, as we shall see later. Tradition asserts that he was personally acquainted with Anaxagoras and Protagoras and attended lectures by them. According to Diogenes Laertius, Protagoras first read his skeptical work *On the Gods* in Euripides own house (IX. 53.55); and Euripides was the pupil of Anaxgoras (II. 8-10). Murray says that we never find a dialogue between Euripides and Socrates in Plato, but we do hear that Socrates never went to the theater unless Euripides was performing.³⁵ In Plato's *Republic* Socrates says Euripides is the wisest tragedian: " Not for nothing said I, is tragedy in general esteemed wise and Euripides beyond other tragedians. " (VIII. 568 a). In a Satyrus fragment, it appears that Socrates

cooperated with Euripides in some of his works, and a verse of ancient comedy which has come down seems to support the notion, it says : " Socrates piles the faggots for Euripides' fire. " ³⁶

Euripides began to produce dramas in the first year of the eighty first Olympiad, 456 B.C., when he was about 26, and he wrote a total of 92 dramas and won 5 victories. Turner (1968) wrote that Homer was no doubt the most widely read author of antiquity and Euripides followed with some 60 texts. ³⁷ As compared with the 13 fragments of Sophocles who wrote 123 dramas, Euripides has about 40, a proportion which serves as an indicator of the greater popularity of the younger dramatist. ³⁸ Euripides is mentioned or quoted more often in Aristotle's *Poetics* and *Politics*, and Plato's *Dialogues* than any other tragic poet. ³⁹

Tradition says Euripides' lyric poetry was incomparable and he outdid all other lyric poets. He is said to have reasoned perfectly on either side of an argument. He was criticized for writing coarse and verbose dialogue but was " clever in his phrasing " and very skillful at rhetoric and argument. ⁴⁰ In a Satyrus fragment it is written:

....he developed and perfected [tragedy] so as to leave no room for improvement to his successors. Such were the man's artistic qualities. Hence Aristophanes wishes to measure his tongue by which such fine expressions were polished. ⁴¹

We hear that when he was not awarded prizes because of his unpopular attitudes and those of his associates, he went to Macedon and stayed at the court of Archelaus who had invited him on two separate occasions. The Satyrus tradition suggests it was because of his personal aloofness and severity that he avoided society, and he " made no effort to please his audience ".⁴² Other poets were already at Archelaus' court : Agathon, the tragic poet, and Timotheus the poet whom Euripides had helped and once saved from suicide. Euripides lived in Macedonia only some eighteen months before he died.⁴³

There is a story told about Euripides' death which is as follows: There was a village in Macedonia where some Thracians had once settled and it was called the village of the Thracians. One of the king's large Molossian hounds once strayed into the village and the Thracians sacrificed the hound and ate it. Archelaus fined the village one talent. Euripides interceded on behalf of the villagers as they could not possibly pay the debt and the dog-eaters might have suffered an awful fate. Sometime later, when Euripides was sitting alone in a grove outside the city, Archelaus went out on a hunt, and his hungry dogs were set loose and fell upon Euripides and tore him to pieces. The hounds were the descendants of the Molossian, who because of Euripides' interference had died unavenged. According to Murray, the story " if mythical , is very likely faithful in its local color ".⁴⁴ Lefkowitz, explains the story of violent death as a reflection of

the Greeks' ambivalent attitude toward outstanding achievement. Eminent persons were both envied and hated, and once fallen they were revered. She also points to Euripides' *Bacchae* as a source of violent death and to the heroes of Tragedy who died violent deaths in exile. The Theban Oedipus dies violently at Colonus. *Vita Aeschylus* tells us he died in Sicily, when he " was struck on the head by a tortoise dropped by an eagle " ; *Vita Sophocles* relates that he died in Athens suddenly, supposedly having choked on a grape or from respiratory arrest that resulted from reciting his *Antigone*. ⁴⁵

After Euripides died he was loved and respected. He died in February/March of 406, according to Philochorus, when he was over seventy and buried in Macedon. We hear Sophocles, when told Euripides had died, dressed his chorus in mourning at the *Froagon* (preceding parade) of the dramatic competition to commemorate Euripides' death, and the audience wept. We hear he had shrines in two places, a monument in Athens with an inscription on it by Thucydides the historian, or the poet Timotheus:

All Hellas is Euripides' memorial, but the land of Macedonia holds his bones, for it took in the end of his life. His fatherland was the Greece of Greece, Athens. Having brought great pleasure with his poetry he also won many men's praise. ⁴⁶

2. INTELLECTUAL REVOLUTION ⁴⁷

The period following the end of the Persian invasion in about 479, to the beginning of the Peloponnesian War in 431, is referred to as the *Pentekontaetia* "the time of 50 years" (Thucy. I. 89-118). ⁴⁸ It was a period of enormous intellectual ferment and political change in Athens. The revolt of certain Ionian Greek cities against suppression by Persia had forced Ionian intellectuals, philosophers, poets, artists, historians and men of science to find refuge in Greece, especially Athens, its cultural center. Words spoken by Euripides' protagonists (see Ch. I), echoed those voices proclaiming *isonomia* (the equal rights of man) and *parrehesia* (freedom of speech), symbols of Greek democracy. Amidst the ferment Euripides grew to manhood. He found his intellectual milieu among the new generation of philosophers and men of science with their roots in sixth century enlightenment, and with the coming of the Sophistic movement.

The Greek concern to "Know Thyself" (*gnothi seauton*) inscribed on the wall of the temple at Delphi, had long been one of the strands of Greek thought, but it had previously been linked with obedience to Apollo. In the fifth century, as disillusionment with prerational thinking grew, its meaning was secularized to "the knowledge of man by himself". ⁴⁹

Hippocrates born in 460, established a medical school on his native island of Cos as a determined response against prerational

thought. Man himself became the object of investigation and treatment by man. Many medical books appeared. Some of the most important works extant appear to belong to the fifth century and the strictly empirical school at Cos; the most famous document, of course, being the Hippocratic oath (late fifth century or early fourth). Science had its beginnings here. ⁸⁰

Anaxagoras of Clazomenae, was the only philosopher about the middle of the century who was definitely on the side of rational science. He was a speculative scientist who lived in Athens for thirty years and brought to it the legacy of Ionian philosophy. Tradition asserts that he was the teacher of Euripides and was some 15 years his senior. ⁸¹ He seems to have been largely concerned with cosmology, he was the first to discover the moon shines by the sun's light and he quite correctly explained the cause of eclipses. ⁸² Under the influence of Parmenides he distinguished between matter and its moving force. His doctrine stated that the mind, what he called the *nous* was the original creative force, not blind matter. He was adamant on the indestructability of matter. ⁸³ In Plato's *Phaedo* Socrates tells his disciples how delighted he was as a youth when he first encountered Anaxagoras' tenet that the "mind is the arranger and the cause of all things" (97b). But as Socrates dejectedly pointed out, he never moved beyond that axiom, that is, he never explained how mind and nature interpenetrate, his interpretation of nature is wholly mechanistic. (*Phaedo* 72c, 97b ; *Apology*

26c-d).⁵⁴ It was probably Anaxagoras who taught Euripides to call the sacred sun a " golden clod " in a fragment of his *Faethon*, (Diogenes Laertius II. 8-10).⁵⁵ Apart from Anaxagoras' physical science he had a personal relationship and was teacher and advisor to Pericles. (Diogenes Laertius II. 12-14). Tradition asserts that the eloquence of Pericles is to be credited to the teachings of Anaxagoras as was his acceptance of the secularization of the cosmos.⁵⁶ Socrates and Euripides were most likely believers as well, but it is uncertain that the majority of Athenians were. There are a profusion of legends in Diogenes Laertius, stemming in part from Satyrus, that Anaxagoras was attacked, tried for impiety in Athens, and condemned to death. Pericles supposedly intervened on his behalf, and he was said to have gone into voluntary exile (II. 12-14); there is no reference to his prosecution in Thucydides or in Plato for example. The issue of impiety trials in Athens is disputed among the experts (see below).⁵⁷

The desire of the Greeks for *sophia* (wisdom) and *arete* (virtue, perfection) along with their concern for self knowledge had also given rise to the sophistic movement. The Greek word *sophistes* meant both a teacher of wisdom and one skilled in any art or craft. A sophist was primarily a thinker and poet, but could have been a man of science or an artisan. In the fifth century they made teaching at a higher level their profession and they were itinerant, travelling around to impart

their knowledge to the sons of the wealthy for pay.⁵⁸ Though some of the sophists had lived in Athens for many years they were in some ways regarded as socially marginal: they couldn't really be considered citizens of Athens, (after 451 strict citizenship laws would have forbade it); they were professionals of middle class origin, disseminating " radical " knowledge to citizens. upperclass youths and the sons of well-to-do merchants of the rising middle class in democratic cities like Athens : they were viewed by some with disdain for accepting payment, and with hostility on the pages of Plato (according to Socrates' elitist notion, virtue and knowledge could not be taught, it was innate only to a very few, and that would have made them impostors). (*Sophist* 222e-223b, 224e; *Timaeus* 19d-e; *Meno* 91b-100c). Jaeger (1945) says that Socrates and Plato could not have existed without the sophists. Other scholars concur.⁵⁹ Georg Simmel (1950) points to the small town character of Athens. (despite its urbanization) which " set barriers against movement and relations of the the individual to the outside ",⁶⁰ and must have, in part, accounted for the hostility toward the sophists.

The sophists were not a unified school of philosophy, but individuals possessed of different views and standards with one common aim, to further the development of all of man's powers, in particular, *arete politike* (political perfection) or the civic minded individual. To this end they studied and taught, wrote

books about the condition of man's life, and raised questions of enormous breadth and scope. Most frequently they used the method of face-to-face contact when teaching, the emphasis being on the art of rhetoric and persuasion, as well as *logos* (logic), for these were the skills thought most necessary to participate in the democracy. In the democratic states where the whole people assembled for political purposes, and every citizen might speak, the ability to orate was indispensable, especially for the politician. In Athens, the politician was simply referred to as a rhetor, an orator. ⁶¹ The educational mission of the sophists arose both as a response to the needs of the state and as an effort to guide its spirit. Athens had undergone vast and deep structural changes ; from the old static city-state, gone at the end of the Persian War, it had grown to become a dynamic imperial power under Pericles. These men were also largely responsible for widening the gap between the generations, for it was the young with their new education who could fulfill the new roles of a changing society.

Protagoras of Abdera, was the first and greatest of the sophists, who with Anaxagoras brought philosophy to Athens. He is said to have been another of Euripides' teachers (Diogenes Laertius IX. 53-56). He arrived about the middle of the fifth century and thereafter visited Athens frequently and at length, fame soon followed. He is said to have been part of Pericles' circle along with Anaxagoras. The sources for knowledge of Protagoras' life

and thoughts are the usual late biographies such as Diogenes Laertius, two "authentic" quotations, and the lengthy speech by the so called enemy of the sophists, put in the mouth of Protagoras in Plato's *Protagoras*.⁶² The speech is accepted by some as essentially a statement of Protagoras' own views, and by others as owing more to Plato himself.⁶³

The two quotations are the famous *man is the measure* words and the statement about views on the gods :

Man is the measure of all things, of things that are that they are, and of things that are not that they are not. (Diogenes Laertius IX, 49-53).

The sentence is somewhat baffling, but as explained in Plato's *Theaetetus* (152a-d) there is a decided emphasis on subjective truth and relativism. What seems lucid in the quotation is : the man who is the measure is each individual man, not mankind as an entity, and the central position given to him, which is at the heart of the fifth century sophistic movement. Protagoras was the sophists' chief proponent of relativism and skepticism in what was by then a general trend among progressive thinkers.⁶⁴

The second quotation is said to have been the introduction to Protagoras' own book *On the Gods* read in Athens, perhaps in Euripides' house (see above):

As to the gods, I have no means of knowing either that they exist or that they do not exist. For many are the obstacles that impede knowledge, both the obscurity of the

question and the shortness of human life.

(Diogenes Laertius IX. 51-53).

For these words, Protagoras was supposedly expelled by the Athenians and his books burned in the market-place (Diogenes Laertius IX. 51-53) ; he was an agnostic and must have challenged the central beliefs of many Athenians. °°

In his speech in Plato's *Protagoras*, the sophist expounded on the origins of civilization in a myth about Prometheus. In summary, Prometheus' brother Epimetheus having inadvertently bestowed all available protective and aggressive qualities on the animals, leaving none for man, had nothing left to provide them except the innate ability to worship god and the faculty of language. (Protagoras seems very subtly to be explaining the origin of man's belief in the existence of the gods). Prometheus then intervened and stole fire from the gods and taught man the crafts of Hephaestus and Athena. Man now had the wisdom to keep alive and they founded cities, but the citizens lacked the political wisdom to co-exist peacefully, they were in peril of becoming extinct. Zeus commanded that they be granted a share in *dike* (justice) and *aidos* (shame or reverence). Thus the ability to live in a civilized community based on law (*polis*, state) was given to man and man alone (*Protagoras* 320d-322d) °° If we strip away the myth, Protagoras seemed to have prefigured Rousseau's general will, where men by their own consent lived by a social contract or is this really Plato's state ? Ehrenberg

(1966) believes Protagoras' main reason for using the Prometheus myth to explain the origin of organized society was because he must have answered the question of how man first came to believe in the existence of god. '7

As we saw, for the Greeks of the fifth century, the development of all of man's powers was subsumed under the words *arete politike* (political virtue) perfecting one's role as a citizen, in which the ability to orate was given a high priority. Another of Protagoras' contributions to teaching the art or sophistic thought was to begin grammatical study; he classified sentences as optative, interrogative, indicative and imperative. The purpose was not to codify existing usage, but rather to increase the effectiveness of language by making it correspond more closely with reality. " As a profound thinker and skeptic, Protagoras believed it was not enough when orating, to express one's own views, he " was the first to maintain that there are two sides, two *logoi* (arguments) to every question, opposed to each other " (Diogenes Laertius IX. 49-51). The phrase probably belonged to a book called *Antilogai* or (Opposing Arguments), which if true, would have discussed, among other issues the advantages and disadvantages of various political structures. '9

If that was the case, Protagoras may have influenced theoretical discussions in two of Euripides' plays the *Suppliant Women* and

the *Phoenician Women* in which democracy prevails over monarchy. ⁷⁰

Theseus in reply to the Herald from Thebes speaks:

This city is free and ruled by one man.
 The people reign, in annual succession.
 They do not yield the power to the rich;
 The poor man has an equal share in it.

(*Supp.* LL 405-408)

Eteocles, in the struggle for power between his brother Polyneices and himself speaks to the Chorus:

If all men saw the fair and the wise the same
 men would not have debaters' double strife.
 But nothing is like or even among men
 except the name they give ___ which is not the fact.

(*Phoenec.* LL 499-502)

Protagoras' notion of the " two contradictory *logoi* " was also the beginning of the dialectical method of inquiry, but it raised ethical questions not considered by the sophists. Implicit in the phrase is the source of the belief in the relativity of values, which in the hands of less scrupulous men was a double-edged sword for persuading an audience that both sides of an argument were equally valid, all perceptions equally credible. This was to turn out to be the Socratic method, " but it could and did easily deteriorate into mere eristics, serving a rhetorical and logical triumph rather than the truth ". ⁷¹

Eristics were ridiculed with special reference to Protagoras in Plato's *Euthydemus* (286c).

The second great sophist was Gorgias of Leontini, whom Plato wrote about in his dialogue of that name, but there too, it is difficult to assess the extent to which Plato's Gorgias is the historical person.⁷² Gorgias is known above all as a rhetor, trained in the art and technique of speaking and writing, which he brought to Greece from his native Sicily, where he soon encouraged a large following of pupils with his gift for speech. His role in philosophy is that of a nihilist, he repudiated philosophic dogma in favor of rhetoric in his book *On Non-Being*; he seems to have inferred, with some irony, "that speaking is more important than thinking, and thinking more than being", carrying his justification of rhetoric to its extreme.⁷³ Nietzsche was supposed to have called him the "first complete nihilist of Europe".⁷⁴

In E.R. Dodds (1959) study, and in Plato's *Gorgias* we are given a picture of the attitude of the Athenian ruling class, in the latter half of the fifth century, to pure theory and the contemplative life; it consists of a controversy over the choice between two opposing ways of life. "Socrates" (Plato himself) and the Athenian nobleman Callicles are having a dialogue about the value of educating the sons of aristocrats in the methods of disinterested scholarly research, when their intentions are to engage in politics. Callicles, while he believed early intellectual education to be essential, violently opposes the idea of knowledge as an end in itself. He sets a limit beyond

which the study of pure theory must not extend; he believed a life devoted solely to such study spoils men and distracts them from confronting life (484c). Both the upper and middle classes held this rather skeptical view of the intellectual movement that was ensnaring their sons. Callicles shows himself to be a student of the sophists by virtue of his rhetorical skills, but in his subsequent role as statesman he has made his sophistic education subject to his political career. Callicles, to drive home his point, quotes from Euripides, whose plays reflect the problems of the time. The poet in one of his lost, later plays *Antiope*, of which fragments are extant, introduced the two contemporary types being discussed: One Zethrus, a practical man, and his brother and antithesis, Amphion, a contemplative type. Callicles taking his cue from Euripides uses the same tone with Socrates, as does Zethrus with his theoretician brother Amphion. (*Gorgias* 464c-485e).⁷⁵

The polished logical arguments in Euripides' plays are illustrated again by his contrasting characters engaged in verbal duels, with their prototypes in contemporary Athenian forensic debates: for example, in the defense Helen proffers when she is accused by Hecuba in the *Trojan Women* (LL. 914-918). Helen :

Perhaps it will make no difference if I speak well or badly, and your hate will not let you answer me. All I can do is foresee the argument You will use in accusation of me, and set against the force of your charge, charges of my own.

Or in the *Hippolytus* when Phaedra's nurse attempts to convince her that loving a man other than her husband does not make her blameworthy. Nurse : Your case is not so extraordinary, beyond thought or reason. The Goddess in her anger has smitten you, and you are in love. What wonder is this ? (LL 437-440) ⁷⁶

There is perhaps even more forceful evidence of Euripides' involvement with the intellectual movements and knowledge of the literature of the middle and late fifth century. ⁷⁷ He was the first poet to illuminate the irrational side of man and woman on stage, that is to say he created the psychological character. Euripides showed the workings of the pathological mind and without science his poetry could not have existed. He depicted with unwavering, at times even shocking realism, the madness resulting from thwarted human instincts, frustrated sexual desire and prolonged and extreme suffering, as in his *Medea*, *Hippolytus*, *Orestes*, and *Hecuba* for example. It was only with the discovery of the subjective world and the rationalist approach to nature that human emotion and passion were recognized as an integral part of " human nature " as espoused in contemporary Greek medicine and thought. ⁷⁸

We read in Euripides' biography (above) that he is never found conversing with Socrates in Plato's dialogues, and tradition rarely refers to them as intimates. Tradition does indicate (see

above) that Socrates never stirred to go to the theater except when a play of Euripides was being performed; and a verse of ancient comedy alludes to Socrates' having collaborated with Euripides. Whether this be the case or not, Euripides and Socrates were however contemporaries. Socrates was born in the deme of Alopeke in Athens about 470 B.C., some fourteen years after Euripides, to a family of small artisans. He was himself a stone-mason like his father, and he said with self-irony, that he also practiced his mothers' profession "midwifery", as his role was to bring to life the obscure thoughts of men." It is said that he too learnt from Anaxagoras (if not directly, perhaps from Archelaus a pupil of Anaxagoras) the concept of the *nous* (" the ruling mind ", see above). As with all ancient biographies there are few historical facts about Socrates, even the details of his trial are suspect; but he is the least known of the luminaries of the classical period because he left no written word. The task was left for others who had little historical sense none of his four writer created the real Socrates, and it is likely they began after his death.

Though Plato's Socrates was hostile to the sophists (see above), the dialectical method of investigation by discussion begun by them became the Socratic method (see Protagoras). Dialectics, the art of dialogue became the medium by which men thought, until the time of Aristotle when the philosophical treatise succeeded it. °° Socrates departed from the sophistic view of *arete*

(virtue) in that he did not aim at a theory of knowledge ; he believed *arete* was achieved through man's knowledge of himself as well as of good and evil. *Arete* could not be taught, but the way that one might attain it could be taught. By encouraging others to think for themselves, by exhortation and interrogation, one could learn through insight a deeper truth than that derived from merely imparting information. As Socrates professed it, virtue was obtainable only to a very few. His goals were clearly ethical, paving the way to " true " values and he went beyond the sophists in distinguishing between ethics and politics, something the sophists could not attain as their teachings lacked an ethical base. As to the *nomos-physis* (law-nature) antithesis that was so much a part of fifth century thinking and argument, according to Ehrenberg (1965) he may have resolved the debate by creating his ethical standards independent of religious and societal norms. (Xeno. *Memorabilia* iv, 4, 3-7, 4, 13-16; Plato, *Apology* 38d-e).⁸¹ Socrates was supposedly the first to have spoken of the psyche as being in command of the body, the source of true wisdom.⁸²

There are passages in Plato's dialogues which refer to Socrates' search for definitions of abstract concepts. One is in the *Meno* where Socrates rejects the " type of answer that employs terms which are still in question and not yet agreed upon " (79d); a second example is in *Phaedrus* (263b) where Socrates gives illustrations such as " iron " or " silver " as words easily

defined and agreed upon, whereas concepts such as " just " and " good " are equivocal. He looked for definitions in order to clarify argument for himself and his students. Aristotle in his *Metaphysics* credits Socrates with having been the first to raise the question of definitions (1.6.2). The historical sources together reveal that only early steps were taken, so the picture remains hypothetical. ³³ In his search for definitions Socrates discerned more fully than any of his contemporaries the contrast between *episteme* (true knowledge) and *doxa* (mere opinion).

Socrates was indicted by the polis on two counts: one for corrupting the young, and two for *asebeia* (impiety) and condemned to death. With regard to the first offense, we saw in Plato's *Gorgias* the skeptical attitude held by the nobility and the bourgeoisie toward the progressive teachings of the sophists and the fear for the corruption of their sons. Socrates was essentially apolitical and this was usually perceived as hostility toward the state. He openly clashed with the democracy on two occasions, and there were some other occasional criticisms of the state. Two of his disciples Alcibiades and Critias proved to be enemies of the democracy. The second offense, impiety was a charge brought against numerous leaders of progressive thought in the democracy ; however, Ehrenberg (1968) says it was not considered a crime. ³⁴ Dodds (1951) on the other hand, has noted that about 432, " disbelief in the supernatural and the

teaching of astronomy were made indictable offenses ". " In Plato's *Gorgias* again, Socrates makes the claim that Athens is the " one spot in Greece where there is the utmost freedom of speech " (461e) and the Athenians prided themselves on their freedom of speech. But as Professor Dodds has written:

the evidence we have is more than enough to prove that the Great Age of Greek Enlightenment was also like our own time, an Age of Persecution.... banishment of scholars, blinkering of thought, and even (if we can believe the tradition about Protagoras) the burning of books. " "

Socrates could have gone into voluntary exile as did others, such as Anaxagoras. But as a citizen of Athens he chose to remain there and abide by its verdict and he serenely drank the cup of hemlock. (Plato, *Apology* 36d-39e).

The sophistic attempt to teach political *arete* was, as we saw, a direct reflection of the profound change in the structure of the *polis*. It was the insight of the historian, and Athenian, Thucydides that captured the vast transformation Athens underwent as it entered the political arena. Thucydides was the creator of political and military history on a purely human level in the spirit of *man is the measure*, man was the force behind historical events. Like his poet counterpart and contemporary Euripides, he " combined the new spirit of rational and exact inquiry with the methods of the sophists " to apprehend contemporary events. (It

has been suggested, for example, in the *Medea* (LL. 824) that Euripides' description of the " brilliant air " of Athens and its benefits to the " harmonious " Athenian mind, has a pronounced Hippocratic quality that recalls the book *On Airs, Water and Places*, the definitive contemporary source on such speculations.) "7 He also used the new methods of scientific observation as did Euripides, purely for the purpose of gaining deep insight into human psychology and human tragedy. In the same way that Euripides had been the tragic poet of the Peloponnesian War and the profound changes in Athens, Thucydides had been its historian.

Thucydides' primary aims were to set down as accurately and impartially as possible the true picture of the violently partisan political struggle between the Greek states. This was quite an extraordinary task in fifth century Athens as Thucydides had no precedents by which to be guided. In accepting the main principles of empiricism which originated in the Hippocratic school of medicine at Cos, he looked to its medical writers as the best possible models, along with a few philosophers. It was intellectually daring, to apply the methods of inquiry used to investigate nature, the human body and by extension the human psyche and human behavior, to the political arena. Thucydides achievement was a breakthrough to a new level of historical inquiry. It resulted in a critical history with never a reference to mythology or divine force to cloud the issues.

History did not begin with Thucydides. Herodotus of Halicarnassus in Asia Minor, born between 490-480 B.C., had discovered the secret of writing history, but not in a political context, and the differences between the two men were enormous. As a young man Herodotus had travelled widely...in Egypt ; in Africa ; and he is said to have known Athens well and to have given a reading of his *Histories* there in 446. He had studied and recorded on the spot, in the epic style including references to the myths, the customs, manners, and the gods of many nations older than Greece. He provided unity to the great diversity with one central theme, the conflict between Europe and Asia; his history ends with the Persian War. (Herodotus has been called the *pater historiae* by Cicero and others, but he is more accurately described as the rather of anthropology.)

Thucydides in contrast, wrote in a detached and somewhat clinical manner, focusing narrowly and systematically on the war and the political life of the Greek city-states which became so central to Periclean Athens, and to which Thucydides was a true citizen and admirer. Thucydides never mentions Herodotus by name, but he begins his history where Herodotus left off, and this, some experts say, could indicate that he read, and accepted him. On the other hand, it has also been suggested that Thucydides' rejection of mythic references (" a romantic element ") is probably an implied criticism of Herodotus (1.20, 22). "

Thucydides created his own chronology, he began his history with the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War, 431 B.C., and then proceeded to strictly divide the seasons into summer and winter, most probably owing to the fact that he was writing about a war between the Greek states and "warfare was practically impossible in Greece during the winter".⁹⁹

Thucydides writes early in his history, in the first book, about the purpose of his undertaking: his search for historical truth; the problem of historical method; and finally his regard for universal and permanent law. He was like Euripides, a skeptic and a pessimistic man and it seems that this side surfaces (over and against his attempts to be objective) when, for example, he points out that human nature being what it is, men and nations are bound to repeat their past behavior. Or is it perhaps, to be read as a caution?

It will perhaps be found that the absence of mythology in my work makes it unattractive to listen to; but it will suffice if it is judged useful by all who wish to study the plain truth of the events which have happened and will according to human nature recur in much the same way. It was written to be kept forever rather than to be admired for the moment. (I. 22).¹⁰⁰

According to Sorokin (1957) skepticism reached its high point in Greek mentality from 460-380 B.C. ; eruptions of periods of

skepticism, he maintains, usually coincide with periods of great social upheaval, as before and during the Peloponnesian War. ¹¹

In writing his history of the Peloponnesian War, a main device used by Thucydides, are his speeches; but despite his search for historical truth, they caused questions to be raised about his methodological rigor. The speeches, without exception, are written in the language and the style of Thucydides, and they show him to have learnt from the sophists. He used single speeches, the Funeral Oration which he put in the mouth of Pericles, being one well known example; or opposing pairs as in the debate between Cleon and Diodotus over the fate of Mytilene (III. 36-50). ¹² The antithetic speeches especially appear to follow Protagoras' *antilogai*, the method by which he debated two opposing sides of a question. For Thucydides this was clearly a method by which he hoped to discover the truth, this may or may not have been the case with Protagoras. ¹³ Thucydides attempted to justify the use of speeches in the words that follow, but his argument is weakened by the last fifteen words of the statement:

I have found it difficult to remember the precise words used in the speeches which I listened to myself and my various informants have experienced the same difficulty; so my method has been, while keeping as closely as possible to the general sense of the words used, to make the speakers say what, in my opinion, was called for by each situation.

(I. 22).

All ancient historians after Thucydides continued to quote speeches, but not without criticism. "4

Thucydides, son of Olorus, was born into an aristocratic family, probably about 460, and died about the year 400. He probably took part in earlier battles of the Peloponnesian War, in 424 he was appointed general and he sailed with a small fleet of ships to save the important Athenian colony or Amphipolis from the Spartans. Thucydides failed in his efforts and was consequently exiled from Athens. He did not return until some twenty years had elapsed, presumably in 404, when the Athenians had been defeated, and he died in Athens shortly thereafter.

3. ASCENDANCY OF ATHENS

We have seen with the advent of the scientists and sophists that intellectual life at Athens and even at Cos for example, had become very animated. The debate was not merely confined to the intellectual sphere, but was also rooted in the power politics and developing tensions among the rival Greek states which had created such upheaval and strife in Athenian life.

As late as the Persian War there had been an intellectual balance of power among the principal Greek peoples, but the equilibrium was destroyed in the time of Pericles and the preponderance of Athens became more and more obvious. "5 The Athenians had

planned wisely, and with energy and foresight had utilized the inherited sea power gained from the great naval victory at Salamis. Periclean Athens, with its concentration of intellectual vigor, economic prosperity, and political zeal had converted her into a growing imperial power. The Greeks had not failed to recognize Athens' role as the real conquerer of Persia as Herodotus clearly indicates (9. 68, 105,114-120), but they could not continue to tolerate Athens' need for military and political hegemony of the so called Delian league, the confederation of Athens and her allies. Not only the Spartans, but other Greeks as well had begun to express their disapproval of Athenian expansionism. The Corinthians in particular, being the second greatest commercial power in Greece and her chief rival were agitators against Athenian hegemony (Thucy. 1. 68-71,103-104).

Thucydides' excursus, the *Pentekontaetia* (see above) describes that phase of the process which preceded the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War. He focused exclusively on the relations between Athens and Sparta. The Athenians, once their city was free of its foreign occupiers [the Persians], returned to rebuild their houses and city walls, including those of the port of Piraeus. Themistocles, still the leading man at home, had persuaded the Athenians that they should look to the sea for their future, that the Piraeus was very strategic with its natural harbors and would facilitate Athens becoming a maritime

power (I. 89-93). '6 The Spartans though particularly friendly with Athens at this time because of the courage they had shown against the Persians, in reality objected to having a fortified city and harbor just outside the Peloponnese. Sparta's self interest, barely concealed, aroused the antagonism of the Athenians. Athens being the far more vulnerable of the two, (Athens had just recently begun her climb) felt it essential for her position among the Greeks that the city be well fortified. Sparta, on the other hand, as the leading power of the Hellenic world at the time might not like her position challenged by Athens. Some of the Greeks who looked to Sparta for guarantees of a unified peace concurred. Themistocles went to Sparta to negotiate. He very cleverly put the Spartans off with delaying tactics, gaining the Athenians the time necessary to hurriedly build the walls. When the desired height was reached, he proclaimed Athens' independence and freedom from Spartan interference (I.90-93). '7 For the first time Sparta had been obliged to concede to Athens on land. '8

During the *pentekontaetia* the policy of Athens was guided first by the aristocratic Cimon (son of Miltiades, the victor of Marathon) followed by Pericles. Cimon's policy had been to drive back the Persians and to maintain friendly relations with Sparta. The former proved successful, the latter, in the face of Athens' swift rise and the even more threatening transformation of the Delian league into a barely disguised Athenian empire made

Cimon's policy obviously impossible. Pericles, on the other hand, accepted the inevitability of Spartan hostility and strived to make Athens the undisputed leader of Greece.

The Delian league was begun by the Athenians with the good will of the majority of the Greeks, its main purpose being to wage war against Persia and to ravage the king's territory as compensation for losses sustained (Thucy. I. 96). " Aristides the Just " of Athens, was chosen to assess the tributes to be paid by each city to the common treasury which was to be housed on the sacred Ionian island of Delos. " It is said that his integrity is demonstrated by the fact that no assessment he made was ever questioned. Athens' supremacy was immediately established by the bilateral oath she took with each of the allied cities to have the same friends and enemies, while the members of the league were not permitted to form allegiances among themselves. " Athens' increasing monopoly and domination became manifest when : the headquarters of the league was moved in 454 from Delos to Athens, and the treasury housed in the Acropolis ; the members of the league sought judgement in Athens ; the military force of the league was largely made up of Athenian ships and men ; and certain states which had held aloof were compelled to join, while others who had seceded were forced back into the league, Naxos being the first state to do so in 469 or 468. Thucydides writes, that the chief reason for apprehension and revolts among the allies were Athens exacting methods of collecting tributes and

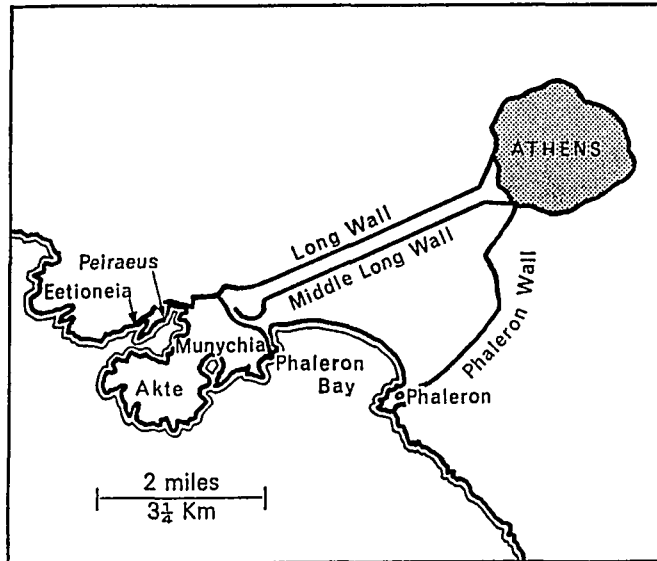
its dominating role among the allies (I. 99). He also offers an explanation for Athens' monopoly of the military forces : the allies were reluctant to do their share of the fighting and in order to avoid military service they paid a monetary tribute which served to finance a strong Athenian navy at their own expense (I. 99).

Sparta did not protest in all this time, though it will have regarded Athenian might with growing apprehension. Sparta's position as the strongest land power and leader of all Hellas was being challenged by Athens, with its navy stronger than all the fleets combined. The other, perhaps more profound differences, which seem to have accounted for the expanding rivalry were the increasingly divergent views of the two states. Athens, was on the threshold of radical democratic reform at home, despite the paradox of its role as political and military hegemon of the league. Sparta, on the other hand, had grown ultra-conservative, more so because its helots threatened to revolt. There were ethnic differences as well, the Athenians were Ionians, while the Spartans were Dorians (Thucy. I. 124). Their rivalry threatened to divide the Greek world.

Athens had not only been transformed politically and militarily, she had at the same time to overcome grave economic problems, also a legacy of the Persian War. Harvests had been lost, much property in the city and country destroyed and a rapidly

increased population, far exceeding the pre-war numbers, would have required a much larger food supply. All the time the Athenians, in accordance with Themistocles' policy, had been building the two " Long Walls " to Phaleron and Piraeus (Thucy. I.107) they had secured the connection between the city and its harbors and at the same time provided protection for its inhabitants in case of invasion. Years later, bound by Themistocles' naval program to provide the city with a better port (Thucy. I.93), Pericles ordered the addition of a third wall, the " Middle Wall " (Plato, *Gorgias*, 455d-e) to strengthen the direct connection with Piraeus, and Athens became even more definitely than before a maritime city and a center of commerce. ¹⁰¹ This would more than likely have strengthened her democratic forces and under Pericles' leadership, the experiment in democratic government and maritime empire was pushed to the extreme. ¹⁰²

Athens had by then become a prosperous and almost feverishly active city, with Piraeus the best harbor in Greece, and the economic center of the Athenian empire. As the chief point of trade in control of the Aegean and beyond, merchandise from all over the world was bought and sold there. Trade had become a main source of public revenue. Timber, iron, copper, flax, luxuries, all kinds of imports from all kinds of places flowed into the port. ¹⁰³ Ehrenberg (1968) writes, the extent to which Athens still relied on her agricultural production must



8. Athens and her Harbours

(see page 81)

have been comparatively small by then, " corn remained important, the cultivation of olive trees and vines flourished ", olive oil and pottery remained the chief articles of export. ¹⁰⁴ Athens had resumed production in her silver mines shortly after the Persian war, so that the sum total of her revenues consisted in silver production, her colonies, her harbor and customs duties, and in good part the tributes it received from the league. The *polis'* ideals of economic autarky were gone, Athens' imperialism was now economic as well as political. Humphreys (1978) points out : " the lack of any conception of cooperation between cities on an equal basis in either political or economic policy meant that attempts to preserve economic autarky led to domination or war." ¹⁰⁵ Despite the fact that Athenian industriousness and ingenuity were at the core of her prosperity, she lived financially on the backs of her empire and the toil of her slaves (slavery will be discussed as part of chapter V).

The sociological effects of Athens' economic development were obvious and inevitable, she had in certain ways converted from a *gemeinschaft* to a *gesellschaft* society. Supposedly, rural Attica had lost much of its importance by then, and urban Athens had become an active maritime society (see above) with trade and manufacturing furthering the sociopolitical strength of the merchant class. Monetary transactions had superseded bartering and become the prevalent link between people (Plato *Greater Hippias* 282c-283c), and in Georg Simmel's *Philosophy of Money*

this " helps promote more rational calculations in human affairs and furthers the rationalization that is characteristic of modern society.".¹⁰⁶ The population had grown rapidly and its composition had changed, making Athens the most cosmopolitan city in Greece (though still a small town by modern standards, see above and Ch. 1). Allowing for the unreliability of ancient demographics, it would seem that by 431 about half the population was comprised of citizens and their families and the other half of non-citizens. The slaves were the far more numerous of the non-citizen class. Their exact numbers are uncertain, but estimates have the figure at from 60,000 to 80,000 and as high as 125,000, and the number of free non-citizens at roughly 30,000. The total number of male citizens of the same period is estimated at from 40,000 to 45,000.¹⁰⁷ Actually, the minority comprised the community proper. The majority included the non-citizens, slaves, and essentially all of the women.¹⁰⁸

Both non-citizens and slaves were needed for labor at home and in the workplace. To refer to non-citizens as foreigners is something of a misnomer, since most of them were Greeks of whom the permanent resident aliens were called "metics" . Many of the non-citizens were laborers, artisans (e.g. potters), in trade, banking, and even in naval service. The free non-citizens barred from owning land, lived chiefly around the port of Piraeus and between the Long Walls, but they concentrated in city *demes* as well. So did many of the slaves.¹⁰⁹ Numerous

non-citizens were wealthy and even a few slaves as well. Those metics who distinguished themselves in business were usually referred to as " nouveaux riches ".¹¹⁰ Aristophanes, using a cereal analogy described only the citizens as the grain (" clean winnowed "), non-citizens (" strangers ") were the chaff, and for the alien residents he reserved the category of the " civic bran ". (*Acharnians* LL 507-8).¹¹¹

We know that the many thinkers, students, and scholars of the period attracted by Athens intellectual achievements were non-citizens, but it seems they were rarely referred to as metics only those non-citizens engaged in industry.¹¹² Non-citizens had virtually no prospects of becoming citizens as the Greek states were more or less xenophobic and averse to naturalization for non-citizens. They believed the nationalism of its citizens would be diminished and the religious institutions defiled by their presence.¹¹³ Redford and Singer (1954) refer to the double standard of morality that prevails during urbanization when each group may be " affronted by the beliefs and practices of the other group ", and the core cultural group has one code for " insiders " and another for " outsiders ".¹¹⁴ On rare occasions, Athens would have conferred citizenship on a particular individual; this was done strictly by invitation of the state not by application of the individual.¹¹⁵ Whatever the rights of non-citizens, they were significantly weaker as compared with the citizens, they were nonetheless fully subject

to the authority of the *polis* in which they resided. In this respect, they were no different from the citizens of Athens. Pericles' citizenship law of 451/0 declared the attainment of citizenship even more exclusive (see above): citizens of Athens were only permitted to marry other citizens, the result was that only those who were born to an Athenian father and an Athenian mother were citizens of Athens, and there were other restrictions as well. According to Diller (1937) the Greeks perceived " the whole problem as sociological rather than biological, they feared the mingling of cultures, not of blood." ¹¹⁶ Interestingly, Euripides, usually a staunch critic of the state appears to support the Greek view here (see more on Euripides' conception of the role of foreigners below) :

He who comes to live in a city from another city, like a bad nail driven in a piece of wood, is a citizen in word, but not in deed. (Eur. fr. 360. 11-13) ¹¹⁷

In light of this, the meaning behind the behavior of Euripides' foreign women protagonists assumes yet another dimension, for example : Medea's hateful actions could, in part, be interpreted as a response to her outsider status as well (see above and Ch. IV). Athens' policy and attitude toward outsiders seems to have been multifaceted and contradictory. She welcomed immigrants from other Greek cities : Aristophanes who called non-citizens the chaff and the bran of the city, also lauds Themistocles " who more for the city has done....who glory undying has won " for he found our city empty and filled it to the brim (*Knights* LL. 811-

815, 885).¹¹⁸ Pericles who wrote the exclusionary citizenship law, proclaimed " our city is open to the world and we have no periodical deportations " in the Funeral Oration put into his mouth by Thucydides (II. 39). At the same time to have been born in Athens, to serve in its army and navy, and behave with courage and loyalty was not enough to become a citizen of Athens for the outsider. Euripides described the outsider as not truly committed to Athens (see above) and one who should therefore not interfere in the politics of the *polis* (*Supp.* LL 893) : it was nevertheless expected that non-citizens comply with city life : " a foreigner must especially adapt himself " (*Med.* LL 222) and not be " spiteful to the city or disputatious " (*Supp.* LL 893 ff) : and fight and even die for Athens if necessary: This volunteer is quite prepared to die

for AthensWhat could we say if Athens
were to court, frightful danger just for us,
and we left all the brunt to them, and wouldn't
help, Ourselves because we couldn't bear the
thought of death. (*The Heracleidae* LL 501-507)

4. PERICLEAN ATHENS

The glory that was Athens at her height was synonymous with the name of Pericles. It was Thucydides' version of Pericles' Funeral Oration (II, 34-46) that contributed so much to the

idealization of Pericles and his time. From his carefully phrased statement it would seem that Periclean democracy rested on two fundamental principles :

[1] Our constitution is a democracy because power is in the hands not of a minority but the whole people. [2]When it is a question of putting one person before another in positions of public responsibility, what counts is not membership of a particular class, but the actual ability which the man possesses. (Thucy. 11.37.1)¹¹⁹

It was the second principle, which entrusted high offices with the power to act for the people to those most fitted, which enabled Pericles to rule almost unopposed by the Assembly from about 461 (some say 443) until his death in the plague of Athens in 429.

Amidst the vast economic, social and intellectual transformation at Athens and the consequent change of values and attitudes, Pericles instituted those policies that gave the democracy, which had evolved from the time of Solon onwards, its greatest expression yet. The work of government was widely shared among several thousand of the citizen-body irrespective of class. This is not to say that equal representation existed. Most of the top leaders and makers of policy came from the propertied and wealthy classes, only rarely did the poor men work themselves up, and then they were often slandered with charges of corruption.¹²⁰ This seemed to have been the case right down to the Peloponnesian

War, even as the state became increasingly democratic. Every citizen was nevertheless regarded as qualified to participate in the experiment in direct democracy. This was reinforced by extensive use of the lot and by the compulsory rotation system to select the 500 members of the Council (*boule*) of the Assembly, the thousands of jurors in the courts, and in most political offices. The principal of selection by lot was not made to extend to the office of *strategos* or general who was elected and could be re-elected without limit, and that office Pericles secured for himself. It was this procedure that caused Thucydides to say that under Pericles, what was in name a democracy, was in fact a process of becoming a rule by one man. (11.65).

Pericles' introduction of payment for public service (Aristotle, *Pol.* 11.ix.3-5), which caused such a furor among the conservative opposition, was in fact minimal: it provided compensation for wages that might have been lost for days worked as a craftsman or laborer, but made it possible for poorer citizens to participate in the selection process.¹²¹ Since such work could not provide a livelihood, it necessarily fell to the professional (full time) politicians, the rentiers who possessed the leisure to devote themselves to managing the complex affairs of the maritime state and its empire, to coordinate the work of the amateurs and temporary participants. Pericles' policy had its share of critics both ancient and

modern. For example, in Plato's *Gorgias* Socrates comments to Callicles: " For I am told that Pericles made the Athenians idle and cowardly and talkative and covetous, because he was the first to establish pay for service among them " (515e). A modern critic, Sally Humphreys (see above) says in her opinion, an important effect of Pericles' policy was to effectively block the development of free labor. By encouraging, with state pay, the participation of poorer citizens in public service, new demands for labor at Athens were met by increases in the slave labor force and by modifying the conditions of slavery. ¹²² Max Weber pointed out, that the competition of slaves at Athens depressed the wages, the living standard, and the buying power of landless free workers and consequently limited the development of the market for consumer goods, for slaves could be kept to a subsistence standard of living. It is said of Pericles, that for political reasons, he purchased consumer goods he personally required from the " outside", that is to say from free artisans, thereby demonstrating that employment opportunities for free laborers were not reduced by slave competition. ¹²³

One of the greatest testaments to the influence of Pericles, and the most expensive, are the buildings on the Acropolis, in the town, at the port of Piraeus, and of course the Parthenon dedicated to Athena. The extensive building program had restored the temples destroyed by the Persians, when Euripides was just a boy, on a scale never seen before. ¹²⁴ Thucydides (11.38)

speaks of a parallel refinement and comfort in the private homes of the Athenians and the lavish consumption of "good things" both foreign and local. His claim probably reflects a general belief that personal wealth was very much greater than in earlier generations at Athens. Actually during all the building activity and the growth of trade, wealth generally had increased at Athens, but for the *demos*, the residential quarters of Athens had remained poor and the streets dirty; life for all but a few was frugal (Thucy. 11.65).¹²⁵ Socrates tells us that the democratic leaders, Themistocles, Cimon and Pericles, "have paid no heed to discipline and justice, but have filled our city with harbors and dockyards and walks and revenues and similar rubbish." (Plato. *Gorgias*, 519a).

The Periclean democracy created a social and political climate at Athens which significantly contributed to its becoming the intellectual and artistic center of Greece. Pericles boasted that it was "the school of Hellas" (Thucy. 11.41). Athens, remember, had attracted the sophists (and others) and the development of their movement can in large part be attributed to the democracy's need for a more educated citizen-body and it is said, to the patronage of Pericles himself. Ancient sources refer to the influence of Anaxagoras and Protagoras on his thought (as with Euripides); they also speak of Pericles' greatness and wisdom. (Diog. Laertius: 11.12-14; 1X.53-55)
(Plato: *Protag.* 329a; *Phaedrus*, 270a; *Meno*, 94a; *Letter*

11.311b).¹²⁶ Pericles is mentioned once in Herodotus, and according to Ehrenberg (1968) though their relationship is the subject of review, he may have been an early admirer : Xanthippus' wife Agarista, " dreamt during her pregnancy that she gave birth to a lion, and a few days later became the mother of Pericles " (Herod. 6.133). In Greek imagery, the lion is often a symbol of awesome greatness, particularly of kingship or tyranny, but also of extreme savagery.¹²⁷

It was the time of Pheidias, a native Athenian, one of the most famous of Greek sculptors, whose career exemplified the new link between art and science, art and architecture. P. Sorokin (1957) states : though Pheidias' subjects were patriotic and religious testaments to heroes and gods, his technique was representative of Visual (Sensate) art, architecturally and anatomically accurate, and empirically valid, for the time ; also highly expressive and *individualistic* ; which, Sorokin maintains, signals a change in the dominant mentality (see above) and a gravitation from " *sacred to profane* " values in the every day forms of social life at Athens ; all characteristics he attributes to the dramas of Euripides (see Ch. 1).¹²⁸ Pheidias was in charge of the project (probably at Pericles commission¹²⁹) which made the Acropolis the greatest religious center and visual symbol of Athenian greatness, with his innovative metopes, friezes, pediments and colossal free standing statues of the gods. The gold and ivory colossus of Athena

erected in the cella of the Parthenon in 438, was one of the most admired statues in antiquity and for Pericles, though known for his lack of piety, the divine symbol of Athens. Along with the many contradictions of the age, sculpture too "in one respect was caught up in the contradictions of anthropomorphism".¹³⁰ With the increasing idealization of the figures of the gods they had become indistinguishable from men, and consequently it was only their great size that had made them divine.¹³¹ The lifelike nude figures which appeared in the middle and late fifth century were even more representative than those of Pheidias. The most famous *Kouros* (youth) statue of the Periclean era was the skillfully articulated figure of the *Doryphoros* (spear bearer) by Polyclitus (c. 450-440) and it was supposedly the embodiment of the mature Classical ideal of human beauty. The *Dying Niobid* (mythological figure) a work of the 440's is the earliest, large, richly three dimensional female nude in Greek art. The artists' primary concern was to exhibit a beautiful female body with the kind of vigor heretofore reserved for the male nude, at the same time that he conveyed the pathos of her suffering.¹³² It is equally significant that Euripides started on his career as a tragedian in this period, though he was unsuccessful for quite a time. In the Spring of 438, he produced his earliest extant play the *Alcestis* a semi-tragedy which already reflected the contemporary concern with the individual which was to increasingly dominate Euripides' plays. A woman moves to center stage in this play about a wife dying voluntarily for her

154. *Doryphorus (Spear Bearer)*. Roman copy after an original of c.450-440 B.C. by Polyclitus. Marble, height 6' 6". National Museum, Naples



below: 160. *Dying Niobid*. c.450-440 B.C. Marble, height 59". Museo delle Terme, Rome



husband, when his mother and father would not (see Ch. 1). Not unlike the sculptor of the *Dying Niobid* Euripides had made a new place for women. Analogous to the visual artists, in the Spring of 431, on the eve of the Peloponnesian War, the *Medea* was produced, and among its various layers it was Euripides the patriot, who had responded to Pericles call to the Athenians (Thucy. II.43) " to fix your eyes every day on the greatness of Athens, as she really is and fall in love with her ".¹³³ In one chorus he sings her praises :

From old the children of Erechtheus [a legendary king of Athens] are Splendid, the sons of blessed Gods. They will dwell in Athens' holy and unconquered land where famous Wisdom feeds them.... (*Medea*, LL.824-827

From the ancient sources it would seem that it was Pericles' role as statesman rather than as thinker or aesthete that best defined him. During all the time he was head of state he showed a passion for governing as he pursued a policy of sheer power politics. In Thucydides' *The Policy of Pericles* 430 (II.55-65) he was prompted to say of him (though it was the whole citizen-body who consistently re-elected him *strategos*) : " It was he who led them [the people] rather than they who lead him " or "...So, in what was nominally a democracy, power was really in the hands of the first citizen " (II.65). M.I. Finley (1964) said, that it seems difficult to conceive of the early success of

the Periclean democracy without the momentum given it from his having secured the empire. ¹³⁴

For a short time, the Athenian Empire comprised and controlled the whole Aegean, the Gulf of Corinth, Boetia, and there were those who had looked forward to the conquest of distant Sicily. As Pericles had not been successful in securing the Greek mainland, he was the more determined that Athens hold sway over the allies. Samos, one of Athens strongest and most loyal allies, seceded. The act was provoked by a border quarrel between Miletus, a democracy, and Samos not, but both had supposedly been autonomous. Athens intervened, Samos refused to accept what probably would have been biased arbitration, and in the Spring of 440, Pericles went to war (Thucy. I.115-7). Ancient tradition has it that Sophocles, the tragic poet was one of the *strategi*, perhaps in recognition of his *Antigone*. He was assigned to special service in view of his lack of military skills. ¹³⁵ The Samians resisted and " after a nine month siege were forced to accept terms of surrender " (Thucy. I.117). Despite the hostility he roused, Pericles continued his imperialist policy : He founded colonies along the Thracian coast, Amphipolis (Thucy. IV.108-1) and Brea ; he flaunted Athenian naval power in the Black Sea to impress foreign kings and their peoples and to fortify the position of the Greek cities there. Heavy penalties were imposed on an allied state when an Athenian was killed in its territory ; all the while tributes

were exacted strictly and with regularity, causing Thucydides to comment on the harshness of the policy (see above). The allies were also financially burdened with the necessity of litigating all major cases in the Athenian courts ; initially they had sought it as an honor, later they were coerced and simultaneously exposed to the partiality of the popular courts. ¹³⁶ The allied states could no longer be called autonomous ; the empire was a *tyrannis* and the Greeks and even the Athenians openly called it so. Finley (1964) approached the view of Athens as a tyrant city by its contemporaries, and repeated by modern historians on the authority of Thucydides as : " far to one-sided a judgment ; it looks only at the question of *polis* autonomy and ignores other, by no means meaningless, desires and values " ; evidence suggests Athens retained friendly relations among many communities in the empire, and Thucydides himself commented on the friendly feelings the majority of the citizens in Thessaly held toward Athens. ¹³⁷

All the while relations with Sparta had grown increasingly difficult, in part a result of Athen's expansionist policies. The semblance of friendly formality of the post Persian War years under Cimon's leadership had deteriorated into open hostility and actual fighting in the 450's. Subsequently the two power blocs returned to a state of uneasy peace which lasted another twenty years until 431, when the civil war between the Greek states erupted (the Peloponnesian War will be discussed in Ch. IV).

IN SUMMARY

By now the reader may have forgotten the title of this chapter. Actually the entire chapter has dealt with the relation between the author, text, and context. The age of Euripides was defined by the vast transformation which shook the intellectual, economic, and political life of Athens after the Persian War. The trend was toward rationalization and secularization of society. Athens became the commercial hub, the cultural center, and the most cosmopolitan city-state, in the Greek world. Drama, art, architecture, and sculpture burgeoned and was shaped by the rationalization of culture. Individualism held sway and carried to an extreme erupted into social chaos. Euripides grew to maturity during Athens' ascendancy and was very much a part of its metamorphosis as is evidenced by the parallel development of his dramas. His social milieu included his fellow poets and many of the best contemporary minds and they clearly helped shape what was transmitted to his audience. Periclean Athens both inspired and provoked the criticism of its people as its democracy flourished, and its hegemony over the Greek states gained momentum. Euripides (not coincidentally) began his career during this period and women, largely out of the picture, came to life in the dramas of Euripides. The Peloponnesian War, the background of all but one of Euripides' extant plays (see Ch. I), was the result of a variety of factors stemming in part, from Pericles' imperialist policies.

NOTES

1. Wilson, 1974, p. 302 ; see also : Cognitive scientist. Howard Gardner in, Freud in Three Frames: A Cognitive-Scientific Approach to Creativity, *Daedalus*, Summer, 1986, pp.110-111, makes the point that the creative individual operates in a social " field ", constrained in significant ways by the degree of development in his her particular domain of expertise. Gardner goes on to says, Einstein, for example, did not " simply devise a theory of relativity free of supporting contexts." ; he learned through interactions with friends and colleagues.
2. Wilson, 1974, see: " John Dewey's Social Art and the Sociology of Art ". by Cesar Grana. pp. 177-189.
3. Gerth and Mills, 1946, From Max Weber. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 341-2.
4. Aristotle, The Poetics. Vol.XXIII, Cambridge: The Loeb Classical Library, 1973, Harvard University Press.
5. I owe much of Ancient Biography to Gilbert Murray. 1916, Euripides and His Age, London: Williams and Norgate. Reprinted 1965. 1979; and to Mary R. Lerkowitz, 1981, The Lives of the Greek Poets, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
6. Located in the central Cyclades west of Naxos.
7. Murray, 1916, p.22; Erich Segal, 1966, Euripides, N.J.: Prentice Hall, p.9; Oxford Classical Dictionary. Second Edition, p.416; Grene & Lattimore, Euripides I, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, p.v..
8. John Garret Winter, 1933, Life and Letters in the Papyri, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, pp. 261-262.
9. A few aristocratic states like Cos recorded the actual birth date of the physician Hippocrates. See also: Mary R. Lerkowitz, 1981, The Lives of the Greek Poets, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
10. Murray. 1918, p.22; Lefkowitz, 1981, pp.94, 163-4. *Vita Sophocles; Vita Aeschylus; Vita Euripides.*
11. Some sources say he was born in Salamis in the 75th Olympiad, the year the Greeks fought the naval battle against the Persians, or that he was born on the same day as the historian Hellanicus, which was the same day that the Greeks won the naval battle at Salamis. (Lefkowitz, 1981, p. 164). The battle of Salamis was supposedly fought in 480 B.C..

12. Murray, 1916, p.36.

13. Murray, 1916, p.37; M.I. Finley, 1963, The Ancient Greeks. New York: The Viking Press, p. 44 ; Ehrenberg, 1968, p.169; George Thomson, 1972, Aeschylus and Athens, New York: Haskell House Publishers, pp.227-8.

14. We have to make mention here that Herodotus' views are generally regarded as essentially non-political, his concern is with people rather than states, and his beliefs strongly religious. His perceptions on the relativity of culture have also earned him the title of the " father of anthropology ", but as an historian it is often difficult to reconstruct his narrative into any systematic account. On his behalf. he undertook to write his history of the Persian Wars almost a generation after it had ended, during the height of Periclean Athens, with scarcely any documentation. Kitto, 1957, p.114; Finley, 1964. p.92; Ehrenberg, 1968, p.137.

15. Murray, 1916, p. 101.

16. Murray, 1916, p.27.

17. Lerkowitz, 1981, p. viii; Murray, 1916, p.27.

18. Murray, 1916, pp.23-25; Lerkowitz. 1981, p.68.

19. Murray, 1916, pp.27-29; Oxford Dict. p.416; Lerkowitz, 1981, p.97.

20. Lerkowitz, 1981, pp. 86-89,104.

21. Wilson, 1974, p. 176 ; see also : the first four essays in this volume, pp. 1-122, which evoke the artist's frequent, and profound sense of estrangement and isolation.

22. Sorokin, 1957, pp. 247, 257.

23. Murray, 1916, p.24; John Garret Winter, 1933, Life and Letters in the Papyri, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, p.222; Eric Gardiner Turner, 1968, Greek Papyri, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, p. 88; Oxford Dictionary, p.418.

24. Turner, 1968, p. 67; Lerkowitz, 1981, p. 110. Other radical thinkers of the period (in some cases from Euripides' own circle) were tried for impiety with more certainty, but even those cases are the subject of debate, as we will show later.

25. Murray, 1916, pp. 24-5; Oxford Dict. p. 418; Lerkowitz, 1981, pp. 88-89.

26. Murray, 1918, p.24; Ehrenberg, 1962, p.12; Segal, 1968, p.11; Hadas, 1976, pp. 9, 328.
27. Lefkowitz, 1981, p. 89.
28. Segal, 1968, pp. 11-12.
29. Ehrenberg, 1962, p.12 .
30. Murray, 1918, p.26 ; Lefkowitz, 1981, p. 90.
31. Aristotle, 1954, *Rhetoric and Poetics*, New York : The Modern Library p. 206 ; *Oxford Class. Dict.* p. 418.
32. *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, p. 418.
33. Murray. 1918, pp. 28,36 ; Oxford Dict. p.418 ; Lefkowitz, 1981, pp. 92,99, 165.
34. Murray, 1918, pp.43-44 ; Lefkowitz, 1981, pp.94.164.
35. Murray, 1918, p.29.
36. Murray. 1919, p. 56 : Lefkowitz. 1981. F. 164.
37. Turner, 1968, p. 97.
38. Winter. 1933, p. 221 ; Lefkowitz. 1981, p. 94.
39. See Indices: Sophocles is mentioned only once in Politics, Aeschylus not at all. In Plato's Dialogues Euripides leads again, Aeschylus has second place, Sophocles third.
40. Lefkowitz, 1981, p.169.
41. Lefkowitz, 1981, p.169, Footnote 14.
42. Murray , 1918, pp. 30-1, 163-166 ; Lefkowitz, 1981, pp.95, 168.
43. Murray, 1918, pp. 167-168, 171 ;
44. Murray, 1981, p. 169-70.
45. Lefkowitz, 1981, pp. 96-7, 165-6.
46. Lefkowitz, 1981, pp. 96, 165-66 ; Murray 1918, p. 170 ; Ehrenberg, 1962, p.64 ; Oxford Classical Dict. p.418.
47. I owe much of Intellectual Revolution to Victor Ehrenberg, 1968. *From Solon to Socrates*. London: Methuen & Co Ltd..

48. The concept originated with Thucydides, but following a later scholiast in antiquity, it is now conventionally called "the time of 50 years". Ehrenberg, 1968, p. 192 ; M.I. Finley, introduction, 1972, in Rex Warner's translation of *Thucydides*, London and New York: Penguin Books, 1954, revised 1972, pp.15-16.

49. Werner Jaeger, 1945, *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture*. N.Y. : Oxford University Press, trans. by Gilbert Highet, p.168 ; Finley, 1963, p.34 ; Ehrenberg, 1968, p.333.

50. H.D.F. Kitto, 1951, *The Greeks*, England: Penguin Books, pp. 188-9 ; Finley, 1963, p.102 ; Ehrenberg, 1968, pp.333-4.

51. See pp. 39, 44.

52. Murray, 1918, p.50-51 ; Finley, 1963, p, 116-117 ; G.B. Kerferd, 1981, *The Sophistic Movement*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.18.

53. Murray, 1918, p.51 ; Ehrenberg, 1968, p.243 ; Kerferd, 1981, p.13 ; Stone, 1989, p.242.

54. Jaeger, 1945, p.295 ; ed. by Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, 1973, *The Collected Dialogues of Plato, Including the Letters*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

55. E. R. Dodds, 1951, *The Greeks and the irrational*, Berkeley: University of California Press. p.182.

56. Kerferd, 1981, p. 18 ; I.F. Stone, 1989, *The Trial of Socrates*. New York: Anchor Books. p.240.

57. E.R. Dodds, 1951, says that about 432 disbelief in the supernatural and the teaching of astronomy were made indictable offenses. The next thirty odd years witnessed a series of heresy trials.... The victims included most of the leaders of progressive thought at Athens: Anaxagoras, Diagoras, Aspasia, Socrates, almost certainly Protagoras, and possibly Euripides. (p.189). The issue is disputed, and some experts conclude that it is largely historical myth. See also : Ehrenberg, 1968, pp. 377-8 ; Kerferd, 1981, pp.20-1 ; I.F. Stone, 1989, 231-247. Stone, 1989, writes " I believe the evidence for all this is belated and dubious; that the witch-hunt fable originated, like some other notorious historical misconceptions, in Athenian comedy _ in a lost play, fragments of which may some day turn up among papyrus finds ". (p.232).

58. Jaeger, 1945, p.290 ; Ehrenberg, 1968, p.338 ; Stone, 1989, p. 41.

59. Jaeger, 1945, pp. 291,319 ; Ehrenberg, 1968, p.362 ; Kerferd, 1981, pp.4, 13-14 ; Stone, 1989, pp. 40-41.
60. Richard Sennett, 1969, see : *The Metropolis and Mental Life in Classical Essays on the Culture of Cities*, New Jersey : Prentice Hall, Inc., p. 54
61. Jaeger, 1945, p.291.
62. Murray, 1918, says " for this sophist even Plato's satire is kindly and reverent ", p.25.
63. Jaeger, 1945, pp. 279,299 ; Ehrenberg, 1968, p.340 ; George Thomson, 1972, *Aeschylus and Athens*, New York: Haskell House Publishers, p.341.
64. The sentence could refer to a question raised ever since the logician Parmenides of Elea : " to what extent reality coincides, on the one hand with the perception of our senses and on the other with ethical standards " ? (Ehrenberg , 1968, p.341) Parmenides discovered the difference and the opposition between " being " and " seeming " *aietheia* (truth) and *doxa* (opinion) thereby giving philosophy it's axiom of logical thought over and against sense perceptions. To some extent Parmenides anticipated Descartes' *cogito* but he failed in his efforts to explain " seeming ". (Ehrenberg, 1968, p.112 ; Jaeger, 1945, pp.175-179 ; Kerferd. 1981, pp.65-6).
65. Murray, 1918, p.27 ; Dodds, 1951, p.189 ; Ehrenberg, 1968, pp.340-1.
66. Ehrenberg, 1968, p. 342 ; Thomson, 1972, pp.341-2.
67. Ehrenberg, 1968, p.342.
68. Murray, 1918, pp. 53-54 ; W.K.C. Guthrie, 1971, *The Sophists* London: Cambridge University Press, pp.219-20.
69. Ehrenberg, 1968, p.343 ; Guthrie, 1971, p.24 ; Kerferd, 1981, pp.64-5.
70. Ehrenberg, 1968, p.343, note: 18a p.474. Most experts agree that Euripides was clearly involved in the intellectual movement of the sophists; whether or not he was personally acquainted with any of them as tradition asserts, is open to discussion. *Oxford Dict.* p.418 ; Murray, 1918, pp.53-58 ; Winter, 1933, pp.261-262 ; Jaeger, 1945, p.332 ; Dodds, 1951, p. 189 ; Turner, 1968, p.106.
71. Ehrenberg, 1968, P.344 ; Guthrie, 1971, pp.187-188 ; Kerferd, 1981, p. 88 .

72. Jaeger, 1945, p.319 ; Dodds, 1951, p.209 ; E.R.Dodds, 1959, *Plato Gorgias*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.33 ; Ehrenberg, 1968, p.345.
73. Ehrenber, 1968, p.344 ; Guthrie,1971, pp.270-1.
74. Ehrenberg, 1968, P.474, note 20 ; Kerferd, 1981, p.119.
75. Dodds. 1959 ; Fragments of *Antiope* show it to have been " a romantic piece with a happy ending; its main subject was the liberation of Antiope by her sons Zethrus and Amphion, who had been brought up as foundlings by a shepherd. " Dodds, 1959, p.275.
76. Jaeger, 1945. p. 347.
77. Jaeger, 1945, credits Euripides with an even larger role: he says it would not be correct to derive Euripides' ideas from the use of sophistic " sources ", even though he knew the literature of the time. He is of such tremendous importance for the history of his time because he shows how those sophistic ideas grew out of real life and how they changed it. (p.332; p.479, note: 4).
78. Jaeger. 1945, pp.343,353 ; Finley, 1964, concludes that what emerges is that it was Euripides ___ not Socrates ___ the Euripides of the *Bacchae* ___ who captured the actual psychology and values of his contemporaries. The Greeks did not see a choice between reason and passion, but the necessity of living with both, with all the resulting ambivalence and doubt. (p.125).
79. Ehrenberg, 1968. p.381.
80. Ehrenberg, 1968, p.381.
81. Ehrenberg, 1968, p.382 ; Kerferd, 1981, p.130.
82. Ehrenberg, 1968,pp.382-3.
83. Ehrenberg, 1968, p.374 ; Stone, 1989, p.68.
84. Ehrenberg, 1968, pp.377-8.
85. Dodds, 1951, p.189.
86. Dodds, 1951, p.189.
87. Jaeger, 1945, P. 481, note: 49 ; Ehrenberg, 1968, p.303.
88. Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War* , London: Penguin Books, translated by Rex Warner, 1954, see introduction by M.I.Finley, 1972,pp. 15-16. He only bridged the gap between

the Persian and Peloponnesian wars with his brief digression, referred to as the *Pentekontaetia* (the fifty years).

89. Ehrenberg, 1968, p.364.

90. Jaeger, 1945, p.389.

91. Sorokin, 1957, p. 248.

92. Mytilene, a state not subject to Athens, had revolted against it in 427. Athens in its anger decided to punish the Mytilenians by executing the entire male population and enslaving its women and children. It ultimately reconsidered.

93. Ehrenberg, 1968, p. 368.

94. Introduction in *Thucydides*: Finley, 1972, p.28.

95. Jaeger, 1945, p. 332 ; Kitto, 1957, p. 117 ; Ehrenberg, 1968, p. 233.

96. Previously, the main Athenian harbor had been at Phalerum. it was only in Themostocles time that the advantages of Piraeus were recognized.

97. Parts of the walls in which all sorts of architectural and sculptural pieces were inserted can be seen today (Ehrenberg, 1968, p. 436, note: 4).

98. During the Persian War the Athenians had waived their claims in the interest of national survival when it was proposed that they command the fleet and the allies objected (Herodotus 8.1).

99. Kitto, 1957, p. 118 ; Ehrenberg, 1968, p. 195.

100. Ehrenberg, 1968, p. 196.

101. Diller, 1937, pp.116-7 ; Ehrenberg, 1968, p.246 ;

102. Diller, 1937, p.117 ; Finley, 1964, p.45 ; Ehrenberg, 1968, p.203 ; Gerhard Lenski, 1970, *Human Societies*, New York: McGraw-Hill: Athens was probably typical of a maritime society in that it was very small (only 1000 square miles at its height) and a democracy. " Maritime societies stand out for their republicanism. The explanation for the republican tendency in maritime societies seems to be the commerce rather than warfare and the exploitation of the peasant masses was the chief concern of the governing class." (pp.302-3).

103. Ehrenberg, 1968, p.246.
104. Ehrenberg, 1968, p.246 ; Aubrey Diller, 1937, *Race Mixture Among The Greeks Before Alexander*, CT: Greenwood Press Publishers, reprinted, 1971, points out that evidence of manufacturing industries at Athens first began with the manufacture of pottery, perhaps as early as the seventh century; by the middle of the sixth century, Attic fabrics were being exported to distant lands (pp.115-116); S.C. Humphreys, 1978. *Anthropology and the Greeks*, London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, P.148.
105. Ehrenberg. 1968, pp.246-7 ; S.C. Humphreys. 1978. pp.138-9.
106. Ehrenberg, 1968, pp. 25, 234, 246. 314; Coser, 1971, p. 193; Wolff. 1974, p. 34.
107. Diller. 1937, pp. 119. 156 ; Kitto, 1957, p.132 ; Finley, 1964, p.54 ; Ehrenberg, 1968, p.248.
108. Finley, 1964, p.41.
109. Diller, p.125 ; Finley, 1964, p.52.
110. Diller, 1937, p.121 ; Finley, 1964, p.52 ; Ehrenberg, 1968, p.248 ; A.H.M. Jones, 1969, *Athenian Democracy*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell: Metics had full civil rights, but no political rights. Because they were barred from owning land their greatest contribution was to industry, banking, and commerce. (pp.11-12); Yvon Garlan, 1988, *Slavery in Ancient Greece*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, trans. Janet Lloyd, p.65.
111. Diller, 1937, p.121.
112. Diller, 1937, p.121.
113. Diller, 1937, p. 93.
114. Sennett, 1969, see : *The Cultural Role of Cities*, p.229.
115. Diller, 1937, p.101 ; Finley, 1964, p.40.
116. Diller, 1937, p.32.
117. Diller, 1937, p.100.
118. Diller, p. 116.
119. A. H. M. Jones, 1969, *Athenian Democracy*, Oxford: Basil, Blackwell. Jones tells us that, "Pericles' Funeral Speech as recorded by Thucydides: its peculiarities of diction and its

general tone, which is in conflict with Thucydides' own outlook, suggest that it is a faithful reproduction of what Pericles really said". (p. 42). Ehrenberg, 1968, seems to take a similar view. (pp. 237, 244).

120. Finley, 1964, p. 59.

121. Finley, 1964, p. 59.

122. Humphreys, 1978, p. 147.

123. Max Weber, 1976, pp. 202-203.

124. H.W. Janson, 1969, *History Of Art*, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., N.Y.: Harry N. Abrams, Inc. Professor Janson tells us: " It was the most ambitious enterprise in the history of Greek architecture as well as its artistic climax. (Thucydides openly reproached him for adorning the city " like a harlot with precious stones, statues and temples costing a thousand talents) ".

125. Ehrenberg, 1968, p. 248 ; Kerferd, 1981, p. 15.

126. Murray, 1913, pp. 51, 57 ; Ehrenberg, 1968, p. 242 ; Kerferd, 1981, p. 18.

127. Ehrenberg, 1968, p. 239.

128. Sorokin, 1957, pp. 94, 101-102, 106.

129. Ehrenberg, 1968, tells us Pheidias was on friendly terms with Pericles. (p. 242).

130. Finley, 1964, p. 142.

131. Finley, 1964, p. 142.

132. Finley, 1964, p. 140 ; Janson, 1969, pp. 103-106.

133. Murray, 1913, p. 89.

134. Finley, 1964, p. 62.

135. Jaeger, 1945, p. 356 ; Murphy, Guinagh & Oates, 1947, *Greek and Roman Classics in Translation*, N.Y.: Longmans, Green & Co., p. 207 ; Ehrenberg, 1968, p. 240.

136. Ehrenberg, 1968, p. 241.

137. Kitto, 1957, p. 136 ; Finley, 1964, p. 49 ; Ehrenberg, 1968, p. 241.

CHAPTER III TRAGIC DRAMA

In the previous chapter we defined a period of vast transformation in Athens's intellectual, political, economic, and cultural spheres which was reflected in a parallel development in Euripidean tragedy, and in tragic drama generally.

In this chapter we will inquire into the nature of tragedy, at the same time, considering, where practical, the extent to which the tragic poet's *immediate social "field"*, his institutional context as a poet (the state of development of his art ; how far he and his fellow poets interacted as a separate " professional " group ; the nature of his audience and his relation to it) influenced his art. ' For art, as set forth by Mead and the Symbolic Interactionists, is essentially a form of communication (see Ch. I, II).

It is however, beyond the scope of this study to give a complete and comprehensive account and questions, for example, relating to the development of dramatic structure or the mythic ritualistic prehistory of tragedy, though they may arise incidentally, or insofar as they have been briefly touched upon in the Introduction and Chapter II, are not intrinsically relevant to this inquiry. The questions we propose to deal with, and which were alluded to above, will relate loosely to : 1) The unity of tragedy 2) The poet and his audience 3) Reality in tragedy.

1. The Unity of Tragedy

The period of tragic drama appears to have been a coherent period in Athen's life and history. Tragedy began with the birth of Athenian democracy in the early fifth century B.C., and with Aeschylus who was the chief poet of the new state (see Ch.1) ; it can also be said that tragedy had its beginnings about the time the Greeks entered history. Its end came with the death of the democracy toward the end of the fifth century. It was the Athenians of the fifth century who, along with their various other social institutions, invented the idea of theater ---- of plays ---- players ---- and playwrights. ² Playwrights who with courage and originality transformed what had been an essentially ritual form into a public platform for such significant issues as : the meaning of life ; human destiny in the world ; the prevailing moral forces in society ; patterns of societal norms and values. Apparently, the ferment at Classical Athens (see Ch. II) had provided the necessary climate in which the tragic theater could thrive, for Athens became its center, as Plato attests (*Laches* 183a-b).

Indeed, the dualism, the tension between traditional and democratic values, which marked the period is mirrored in the dramatic structure which the tragic theater adopted : tragedy's organic unity, derived from its origins in the ancient, aristocratic, Homeric myths which shaped both its formative elements and its plots, was at the same time, the basis for

questions, and innovations, related to the relevance of traditional values to contemporary forms of social life (see below). Seemingly, tragedy's organic unity had, in one sense, served to reveal social change to the Athenian audience and hence, enlarge its view (see G. Mead, Ch. I). ³

When Aristotle, somewhat later, defined the principles of the dramatic structure of Attic Tragedy in the *Poetics* he lent credence to the notion of its organic unity. His precise requirements for the necessary constituent parts of the tragic plot ---- the movement from good fortune to misfortune ---- or its sudden reversal (peripety) being fundamental ---- were more or less fulfilled by its three main authors Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, (1450 a35, 1450 b, 1452 a - 1452 b, 1453 a - 1454 a) who also brought to the traditional form their own improvisations. The type, and extent, of these improvisations point, in part, to certain lines of demarcation, or turning points in the tragic style, which relate to changes in the society, and in its mental processes (see Sorokin, Ch. I). The outlines of tragic drama however, remained constant until its demise, albeit often strained to the bursting point in its final stages, in the plays of Euripides. ⁴

When Aeschylus was chief poet of the new state ---- he was born near Athens in 525 B.C. and died in Sicily in 456/5 B.C. ---- the aristocracy still retained considerable political and

intellectual influence, and noblemen were still the leaders of the early democracy until the death of Pericles. Aeschylus, actually conscious of his relation to society, ⁵ was still guided by the lingering aristocratic culture ---- he was himself a member of the aristocracy ---- at the same time that he was inspired by, the new found sense of freedom the early democracy experienced as a result of its stunning victory over the Persians. On the one hand, he strove for a grandiloquent style and stressed the heroic - martial grandeur and dignity of his characters (Aeschylus himself is said to have fought the Persians at Marathon in 490 B.C. and perhaps fought them again in the decisive battle Athens won at Salamis in 480/479 B.C.). On the other hand, he also sought to unite the classes separated by differences in birth and culture. He showed the protagonist could be born into the new atmosphere of freedom which stirred the democracy, and which if we pursue the logic, foreshadowed the great philosophical debates which arose later in the century during which time man's centrality was pronounced by Protagoras, and education, not class, was advanced as the foundation of the ideal citizen. In Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound* for example, (the myth of Prometheus is not mentioned in the poetry of Homer, it was not, according to Thomson (1972) the kind of story that would have appealed to the aristocracy ⁶) the hero Prometheus had been punished by Zeus for having stolen fire from the Olympians and *consciously* given it to all of humankind to improve their lot. The flame signifies knowledge, intelligence

and *tecne* (technology) : The chorus says to Prometheus, who has acted in defiance of the gods, " Upon your lips sits liberty, But a terror chills my heart, fearing you are too free ". ' The chorus which represents communal ties, has favored Prometheus' act of free will against the established order, and in the democratic tradition, but at the same time, has expressed the Greek aversion to hubris. Aristotle describes the characters of early tragedy (Prometheus, for example) as having spoken politically as did statesmen, and not rhetorically as did the protagonists in later tragedy. The " moderns " as Aristotle referred to the later tragic poets (*Poetics* 6.140 b7), would, in particular, have alluded to Euripides who was so much influenced by Sophistic ideas and often had his characters speak rhetorically (see Ch. II).

In the dramas of Aeschylus, as in those of his successors, the *polis* was not simply " a chance detail in the background " of the dramas " but the spiritual stage " on which the dramas were enacted. " But then it can be said, that in the strict sense, the state was the sponsor of the tragic theater. The state even designated the times during which the dramatic performances were to be held, and the archons assigned protagonists to the dramatists by lot. ' In fact, Sorokin (1957) gives evidence that rather than decrease, state control of Athens' institutions increased, and became secular, as Greek culture became progressively more Sensate (see Ch. I) late in the fifth

century and after ; such factors as militarism and economic insecurity, brought about by the Peloponnesian War and the periods of the Thirty and the Ten Tyrants also contributed. ¹⁰

Increased state totalitarianism, and socio-cultural change, would have partially determined the institutional context of Sophocles and Euripides (and that of the comic poet Aristophanes). However, Aeschylus had died by then and the criticism levelled at him by the later poets, if tradition is to be believed, supports the notion of a progressive sensatization of culture (in the Sorokin sense) : Euripides is said to have accused Aeschylus of using " boastful language " and " terrifying " his audience with characters in martial costume ; Aristophanes supposedly made fun of him in his comedies because of the excessive dignity of his characters " ; so that both later poets were, in effect, criticizing the by then increasingly anachronistic, " heroic " traits of Aeschylus' protagonists, which brings us to Sophocles.

Sophocles is usually portrayed as the connecting link between Aeschylus and Euripides, he stands midway between his predecessor and his successor : for example, he possesses the religious vision of the earlier poet, and at the same time, some of the power of psychological insight of the latter. Tragedy reached its climax in the classical harmony of his dramas. He was an older contemporary (ca. 496 -406 B.C.) of Euripides, and was already old, when Euripides was in maturity, at the outbreak of the

Peloponnesian War in 431 B.C.. Like Euripides, Sophocles is said to have been the son of an ordinary citizen. In his attitude toward the myths, Sophocles was less agitated by current trends than either Aeschylus or Euripides. His dramas are the embodiment of the classical ideals of Periclean Athens in much the same way the sculptures of Pheidias were expressions of cultural ideals rather than individuals as such (see Ch. 11) ¹² ; but it was the victory, not the older aristocratic culture, which supported those ideals. ¹³ The glory that was Athens in the aftermath of the Persian War was short lived, but its essence was distilled in the behavior of Sophocles' characters. In the Weberian sense, his characters were ideal types, formed in accordance with society's strictest, and most representative cultural objectives; however, Sophocles continued to view Athens from on high, even while Euripides saw, and acknowledged, the social unrest which followed Pericles' death. We know that Sophocles himself, described his own characters as " men as they ought to be ", in contrast to Euripides' realism, or his depiction of " men as they are " (see Ch. 1). Tradition asserts that Sophocles looked to Homer for his vocabulary and his delineation of character, and that a certain Ionian for that reason said, that he alone (of the three tragic poets) was the pupil of Homer. ¹⁴ Sophocles abandoned the trilogy which had been Aeschylus' regular dramatic form. It was replaced by single dramas, centered on one principal actor. For example, in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* the action centers on King Oedipus, and his noble, if uncompromising,

quest to know himself, and in which process, true to the tragic form of *peripety* (see above), he brought about his own destruction. Bernard M.W. Knox (1957) sees in Oedipus' quest, and downfall, an image of Athens' own rise and fall ¹⁶ which, if we admit the metaphor, serves, in part, to counter the notion that Sophocles turned away from the war, and dealt only with the universal aspects of human nature.

Human nature and human destiny, along with the other concerns of the Greek poets, gradually became the province of philosophy. That is to say, the fall of Attic tragedy also came about with the advent of philosophy, and Attic philosophy was created. ¹⁶ It was Euripides, as we saw in Ch. 11, who proved to be most promising when he left the realm of poetry, and invaded the new domain of philosophy ; and it was Euripides therefore who most subverted the myth, and was the greatest contributor to tragedy's dissolution.

2. The Poet and his Audience

Social scientist Robert N. Wilson (1964) informs us that certain literary and aesthetic scholars have hypothesized that, at some period in prehistory, all men were artists, each capable as skilled members of society to assume one, or another, creative roles. ¹⁷ Vestiges, in the earliest stages of history, of general participation by the community in a variety of creative roles, would seem to bear this out. At Athens, in about the

first half of the fifth century B.C., there was no true professional class of artists or poets. In theory, at least, all *male* citizens ---- native Athenian women, as we saw in Ch. I, were not considered legal members of the citizen body ---- were in some sense performers in the democracy, speaking publicly in the *agora*, the law courts, the assembly, or assuming the role of poet, actor, producer, or member of the chorus, at the dramatic festivals. The ritual dramatic presentations at the Great Dionysia, were the products of the collective effort of many of the male members of the *demos*. The tragic poets Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides were not so much members of a distinct literary class, (according to Sorokin (1957) some changes occurred after the second half of the fifth century, see below) as citizens, who having distinguished themselves in the performance of one, or a number of civic and patriotic roles open to the public, had become leaders and servants of the community (Plato, *Rep.* 8. 568c). ¹⁸ Ehrenberg (1962) points to the dominance of collective values in the polis when he says, " no citizen can be said to have been a private person ", and this was most notably the case with the dramatic poet. ¹⁹

Georg Simmel (1950) in *The Metropolis and Mental Life* makes a similar point : " a jealousy of the whole against the individual " at Athens, was such, as to cause his " particular life " to be suppressed, and to which he responded by acting as a despot in his own home. The vivid, yet small town, character of

the Athenian *polis* (see Ch. 1) coupled with, its highly individualized personalities living at a time of great turmoil and excitement, produced a spirit of agon or, an extreme sense of contest, among its residents. Added to this, was the constant threat from enemies near and afar, which led to strict coherence in the military and political spheres, and increased state supervision (see above). All of these factors led to close supervision of citizen by citizen. ²⁰ The relations between poet and audience, which is our concern here, would have been inescapably fraught with similar tensions.

The poet who intended to produce his drama had first to be awarded a chorus if he was judged worthy by public opinion. Morsimus, and Melanthius, who were considered worthless tragic poets could not gain a chorus (Aristoph. *The Peace* LL. 801ff). The states chief archon of the Dionysia assigned the chorus for tragic performances. The expenses for a tragic production, throughout the century, were shared by the state and the affluent citizenry. P. Sorokin (1957) makes the point that, after the second half of the fifth century, there was a growth of individualism, and among the literati, a tendency toward " professionalization ", affectation, increased influence, and improvement in their socio-economic position. ²¹ It is however, doubtful, that their " professionalization ", relieved the poets, in any way, from supervision by the state, and its citizenry. In fact, the contrary may have been the case, judging by

Aristophanes' gibes at certain poets for " loving money " (see below).

The poets who participated in the dramatic contests were paid with state funds (Plato, *Rep.* 8. 568c)²² ; the amount they received is not known, but was probably commensurate with the poets successes or failures in the contests (Weber, 1958).²³ Aristophanes makes some such reference in connection with the comic poets : " the public speaker who once lampooned in our Bacchic feasts would, with heart malign, keep nibbling away the Comedians' pay ; " (*Frogs*, LL. 367-368). Since public opinion generally determined a poets' stature, those who were popular were likely to have earned a good living. Aristophanes, jokingly suggests this was so, in an unflattering comparison he made between Sophocles who, some biographers allege, " was guilty of loving money " and the poet Simonides (6th or 5th century B.C.) who, we are told, was the first poet " who wrote for hire ", and was reputed to have been a " miser ".²⁴ : Sophocles, is accused in *The Peace* of having metamorphosed into Simonides, " He's now Simonides, not Sophocles He's grown so old and sordid, He'd put to sea upon a sieve for money. " (LL. 698-699). As far as is known of the social position of the three great tragic poets, only Aeschylus, the earliest poet, is consistently said to have been a member of the aristocracy (see above), the evidence is less clear with the two later poets. Sophocles, is said, for example, to have behaved like " any other Athenian aristocrat "

by a contemporary, Ion of Chios, and his *Vita* discounts claims that his father was an artisan, on the other hand, biographers concluded that he was not of the nobility.²⁸ Euripides, alone, was derided in comedy for his low origins, but Philochorus, the fourth century B.C. historian, tells us, for example, that his parents were "well born" (see Ch. 11).

The poets were not the only participants in the dramatic festivals paid with state funds, the actors were as well. However, all other production costs which included, stage sets, salaries and costumes for the chorus, and a festive meal following the performance were the responsibility of the *choregus*, a wealthy citizen, not necessarily schooled in the art of dramaturgy. For a time, the *choregus* considered the fulfillment of his role a moral obligation, and an honor ; a chorus who won first prize was a source of great pride, particularly as the chorus held supreme importance in the earlier stages of tragedy.

The citizens who made up the chorus rehearsed for a whole year to perfect their roles and were personally instructed by the poet, its teacher and trainer, or *chorodidaskalos* as he was known, and who prepared them for the great day. Several groups of performers, each coached by a poet, vied with each other for primacy at the festivals. The relationship that existed between a poet and the performers he coached was cause for comment by some

contemporaries : in two separate instances Xenophon's Socrates speaks of how well-disciplined Athenians are, and he cites the navy, and the strict adherence of the chorus to the instructions of the *chorodidaskalos* as examples (*Mem.* 3.5.10-18) ; Aristophanes, on the other hand, points to strains that arose between chorus and trainer as in, *The Knights* (L. 400) when, the chorus speaks with open hostility of a minor tragic poet, Morsimus by name ; Plato (*Charmides* 162d) also, alludes to tensions that arose between poets and the actor " who spoiled his poems in reciting them " .

We hear that upwards of 2,000 citizens took part in one given festival which extended over a period of five days. The first and second days were given over to a ceremonial procession (*proagon*) and assorted preliminary contests, followed by, three full days of competition in tragedy, one day, assigned to each of the three dramatists who had written plays for the occasion. The poets, in addition to all their other duties, were sometimes their own chief actors : Aristotle tells us that the early tragedians " acted their tragedies themselves " (*Rhet.* 3.1403b) ; and the poet Agathon, in Aristophanes' *Thesmophoria* says : " I choose my dress to suit my poesy. A poet sir, must need adapt his ways, To the high thoughts which animate his soul. " (LL. 145-149, 100ff, 265ff). Aeschylus is said to have himself arranged the dances for his choruses, and trained them in their routines.²⁴ In Aristophanes' *Wasps* poets are lampooned for being

bad dancers as well, as bad poets (LL. 1475-1480, 1496-1500). The versatility of the poet, his being teacher-trainer of the chorus, composer, actor, choreographer, and producer-director, must have given him, despite close citizen and state supervision, considerable power to influence many (see below), in addition to the chorus.

Gradually, the importance of the chorus declined until, in the plays of Euripides, they became little more than musical interludes, incidental to the plot. The poet's priorities had shifted in a society grown rampant with individualism (see Ch. I & II). The diminution of the chorus was a telling sign of the disintegration of the dramatic form which had provided the Athenian *polis* with strength, and social cohesion, in its ascendancy. It was the chorus that had been the chief expression of the voice of the community, and of the link between the tragic drama, and the state. Production costs were greatly reduced by the shrinking chorus, giving welcome relief to the *choregi* from, what was by then, generally, perceived as a burden. But the financial input of the rich had also served as a source of income for the poor citizens who performed, and this fund was now dried up. ²⁷

Seated in the rising tiers of the open air theater which held about 14,000 spectators was the Athenian people (including, some experts argue, the women and children, and also a few hundred

foreigners, metics, allies, and ambassadors, see Ch.1.), among them presumably, a large number of " ex-performers ", citizens who had at some time been producers, trained as members of a chorus, performed as actors, just as they had taken part in the assembly or the law courts. ²⁰ The Athenians then, were not simply a passive audience, the tragic performances were the concern of the entire people, part of their shared experience, their common beliefs. Indeed, Plato wrote of the strong reciprocal influence of poet and audience : he however, speaks of it as a primarily negative phenomenon resulting, he maintained, from the people's " base tastes, which in an atmosphere of contest corrupted the poet who in turn became the corrupter of the audience. (*Laws*, 2.659a-c) ; yet, in his *Lysis* Plato also conceives of the poets as fathers and guides in matters of wisdom (214a-b). In his copious criticism of the poets, Plato. also attributed to them, the power to influence their audiences politically (*Rep.* 8.568b) : tragic poets " collecting crowds and hiring fine, loud, persuasive voices, they draw the politics toward tyrannies or democracies ". Plato's negativism was, in part, an expression of his own, and Socrates' elitist views.

The relationship between poet and audience was maintained in yet another way : the Attic tragedians could probe with astonishing latitude and freedom of speech into the people's traditional myths and beliefs, into state and political concerns, into an

array of societal problems which arose, and with which all the audience could constantly identify.

3. Reality in Tragedy

Precisely because the tragic poets probed, with virtual impunity, into the important issues of the day, and into people's traditional myths and beliefs, reality in tragedy was continually reinforced. Tragedy was founded on what Sorokin (1957) calls, mainly Ideational literature, that is to say, a poet such as Homer was, in large part, the spokesman for the superempirical and transcendental world ; and the Homeric myths, which are integral to tragedy during the fifth century, served a largely religious, moral, and educational function, rather than artistic, for the Greeks. As the fifth century evolved, tragedy was gradually replaced by a " naturalistic realism ", peopled with characters who were scientifically valid, and at times even bordered on the comic. But it never totally gave up its reliance on the myth with its heroic image of man, vestiges of which still held sway in traditional belief. ²⁹

Emile Durkheim (1915) understood the mythology of the group, continuously renewed through the ceremony of ritual, to be :
" the system of beliefs common to the group. The tradition whose memory it perpetuates express the way in which society represents men to the world ". ³⁰ The Cambridge School of Anthropologists

(Cornford, Harrison, Murray & others) have demonstrated that Greek tragedy with its roots in myth and ritual is, in a general way, both a reflection of and a " mode of understanding " of the total culture of the time. ³¹ Aristotle, in *The Poetics* understood tragedy as a " mode of imitation " (1447a 15) primarily, an " imitation of action ", and that it immitates " personal agents for the sake of action " (1450b). Plato, who in general, unfairly criticized the poets, argued, in this instance with some justification, that they were once removed and, therefore, immitators of the appearance of reality, not of reality itself (*Rep.* 10. 601c). But Aristotle was Plato's student and wrote later, and after a careful study of the tragic form. Fergusson (1949) says, Sophocles' purpose, in the realist tradition, was " to mirror human life and action ", for it was in the tradition of the Greeks and their realist dramaturgy, to assume as natural " the social and moral order " and " the continuity with the common sense of the community ". ³² The sociologist Joan Rockwell, *Fact in Fiction* (1974) makes a general observation : " the patterned connection between society and fiction is so discernable and so reliable that literature ought to be added to the regular tools of social investigation." ³³ ; and tragedy's patterned connection to Athenian society would surely have been reinforced by the structure of poet-audience relations.

The various levels of reality in the plays can only be recognized when related to the background of the plays, that is to say, to the conditions of life that existed off stage (see Ch. 1). The unusual degree of reciprocity between the Athenian people and their tragic poets (see above), combined with the tragedians' strict reliance on mythological themes, provided the reference point, the springboard from which fifth century life could be reflected back to the audience. For, at the same time that it reinforced the notion of the poet as one of the people, the shared beliefs, that were intrinsic to the mythological themes, provided the common basis for understanding the theatrical settings, the *dramatis personae*, and the plot and language of the dramas. To put it in sociological terms, the shared beliefs served to sustain the definition of the situation³⁴ when the cognitive dissonance which would have resulted from juxtaposing mythological reality and fifth century reality --- and which was the mechanism by which the changing mentality was communicated to the *demos* --- might otherwise have intruded on the flow of the action.

IN SUMMARY

Because tragedy spanned a period of 100 years of radical change in the democracy, and was socially motivated, the poets, if they were to be successful, had to respond to the changing conditions of life, the changing views of the modern writers, and the changing needs of the audience ; thereby rooting the dramas, though united by a common form, in vastly different realities at different points in the period. Behind character and convention, stands not only the creativity of the particular tragic poet, but also a moment in an age, a place, and a people, as we shall see in the following chapters that examine ways of thinking about the women who lived in Athens during the Peloponnesian War.

NOTES

1. Wilson, 1974, p. 302 ; Rockwell, 1974, pp. 5-6 ; see Gardner, pp. 110-111 in *Daedalus*, Summer, 1986.
2. Fergusson, 1949, p.2 ; Finley, 1964, p. 81.
3. Sennett, 1969, see : *The Cultural Role of Cities*, pp. 231-233.
4. Sorokin, 1957, pp. 188-191 : Finley, 1964, p. 86.
5. Thomson. 1972, p. 365.
6. George Thomson, 1972, p. 319.
7. Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*, 1957, New York : Mentor Books, published by the New American Library, pp. 24, 27.
8. Jaeger, 1946, p. 239.
9. Lefkowitz, 1981, p. 79.

10. Sorokin, 1957, pp. 507-513 ; Finley, 1964, p. 80.
11. Lefkowitz, 1981, pp. 70, 158.
12. Sorokin, 1957, pp. 107, 123, 169.
13. Jaeger, 1945, p.240
14. Lefkowitz, 1981, p. 163.
15. Bernard M.W. Knox, 1957, *Oedipus at Thebes* New Haven : Yale University Press, pp. 67,106.
16. Ehrenberg, 1962, p. 18.
17. Wilson, 1964, p. 8.
18. Sorokin, 1957, pp. 93, 94, 107, 168, 169, 180 ; Ehrenberg 1962, p. 26 ; Wilson, 1964, pp. 303-304 ; Lefkowitz, 1981 : Satyrus, in Euripides' *Vita* describes, how he incited " the youths to valor and courage ", p. 92 ; Stone, 1988, p. 265, note: 28.
19. Ehrenberg, 1962, p. 2.
20. Sennett, 1969, see : Georg Simmel,1950, *The Metropolis and Mental Life*, p. 55.
21. Sorokin, 1957, pp. 189, 221.
22. Ehrenberg, 1962, p.21 ; Loeb ed. 1924, *Aristophanes, The Frogs*, p. 331, footnote: d.
23. Weber, 1958, pp. xi-xii.
24. Loeb ed., 1924, *Aristophanes, Vol. II, The Peace*, pp. 64-65, footnote: a ; Lefkowitz, 1981, pp. 52, 83.
25. Ehrenberg, 1962, p. 21 ; Lefkowitz, 1981, pp. 68, 75, 76, 99.
26. Ehrenberg, 1962, p. 24.
27. Ehrenberg, 1962, p. 23.
28. Ehrenberg, 1962, p.27 ; Finley. 1964, pp. 82-82 ; Stone, 1988, p.265, note: 28.
29. Sorokin, 1957, pp. 188-190 ; Ehrenberg, 1962, p. 271.
30. Emile Durkheim, 1915, *The Elementary Form of the Religious Life*, New York : The Free Press, trans. from the French by J. Swain, pp. 419-420.

31. Fergusson, 1949, p. 9.

32. Fergusson pp. 2-4.

33. Rockwell, 1974, pp. 3-4.

34. Erving Goffman, 1959, *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life*, New York : Doubleday & Co., pp. 238-239.

CHAPTER IV DRAMA AND THE FREE WOMEN OF ATHENS DURING THE
PELOPONNESIAN WAR

This study attempts to uncover the mentality of an age as reflected in the drama ¹, and especially as it concerns women. In that pursuit, we will venture to tease meaning from the texts of the dramas by relating them to the surrounding spheres of relevance, passing, in the process, from text to context and back again (see Ch. I). We will begin by examining aspects of the Peloponnesian War : a war which not only served as the background to most of Euripides' extant plays (making them an important source of information for the war as well as for the women), and to the everyday lives of the women being investigated ; but a war which accelerated political and social structural changes that, eventually altered the balance of power in relations between the sexes at Athens. As Professor Charles Winick (1969) has shown, " depolarization " between the sexes that began around the middle of the fifth century B.C. (see Ch. I) had by the Hellenistic period permitted women, who prior to that time had been, largely, excluded, to " become much more active in community life " and to eventually wield political power. ²

1. The Peloponnesian War

It was Thucydides, the contemporary historian, with his cool and dispassionate empirical attitude and his literary form, who grasped all that he had seen and heard and shaped it into what is

considered to be easily, the most important source of the war between Athens and Sparta. Thucydides saw " that it was going to be a great war and more worth writing than any of those which had taken place in the past " (1.1). It was his insight into the underlying cause of the war, which distinguished it from the triggering incidents or immediate cause : " What made the war inevitable was the growth of Athens' power and the fear which this caused in Sparta " (1.23.5) and among her allies. Thucydides perceived the moral collapse of society and the transvaluation of all social standards in Hellas due to the revolutions which erupted in city after city :

As a result of these revolutions, there was a general deterioration of character throughout the Greek world.

The simplest way of looking at things, which is so much the mark of a noble nature, was regarded as a ridiculous quality and soon ceased to exist. (111.63).

There are some other significant ancient sources for the history of the war (such as the historian Xenophon, who continued the work of Thucydides which ended in 411, but which we cannot undertake to encompass here) and among them are Comedy and Tragedy. ³ Of the Attic tragedians, it was Thucydides' contemporary in time as well as in spirit, Euripides, conscious of his relation to society, who gave such an insightful and vivid picture of the long war and its corrosive effects on the minds and hearts of the Greeks (see Ch. 1). ⁴ Euripides' patriotic

fervor could sometimes almost equal that of the *Funeral Oration* Thucydides put into Pericles' mouth : he portrays Theseus as the ideal representative of democracy : " People of small resources and the rich Both have the same recourse to justice....And if the little man is right, he wins Against the great ". (*Supp.* LL.431-436). Sophocles, with scarcely a reference to the war and *seemingly* removed from the events of the day (see Ch. III) : clung to tradition ; and trusted in the eternal " Laws of range sublime " (*Oed.The King*, LL. 365) that is to say, divine law or divine prophesy ; argued against man's self reliance as taught by the sophists and accepted by many ; and continued to dwell on the universal problems of human character and the human struggle with the course of fate. There is one description in Sophocles' *Oedipus The King* of a terrible plague (LL.6), similar to that described by Thucydides (ll. 47-54), which might suggest the plague at Athens. There is no tradition of a date for the drama, but if the description refers to that plague, it would probably point to shortly after 429 which was also the year of Pericles' death. ⁵ Aeschylus had died almost a quarter of a century before the outbreak of the war, he had rather been the chief poet of the new democracy (see Ch. III) and the last years of the Persian War as portrayed in the *Persians*. Undoubtedly he had influenced Euripides, as he too had been cognizant of his relation to society, and his poetry is essentially political in character (see Ch. III) ⁶ ; for this very reason Euripides' work is fundamentally different because society had changed.

There is an agon between Aeschylus and Euripides in Aristophanes' *Frogs* (L. 1062ff ; see also below) in which the divergent perspectives of the two tragic poets emerge : Euripides is told, for example, that he has " spoilt and degraded " tragedy.

Aristophanes (c.447-338 B.C.) was only about 16 when the war began ; he produced his first comedy in 427, his last in 386. He thus lived through one of the most critical periods of Athenian history, the years of the Peloponnesian War and the break-up of the Athenian Empire. He was the contemporary of his elder, Euripides, and looked back to him for his " comic spirit " (see Ch. 1). His works provide for the period a cache of information which is often amazing if somewhat biased. He ridiculed popular leaders, generals and the *demos* itself to express his detestation of war and the delights of peace such as in the *Acharnians* and the *Peace* where he laid the responsibility for the war not on Sparta, but on Pericles and the Megarian decree (the Megarians were allies of Sparta (see below) :

For then, in wrath, the Olympian Pericles Thundered and lightened, and confounded Hellas, Enacting laws which ran like drinking songs, *That the Megarians presently depart From earth and sea, the mainland and the mart.* Then the Megarians slowly famishing, Besought their Spartans friends to get the Law.... (*Acharn.* LL. 515ff) and (*Peace*, LL. 608ff).

or

And that every field may its harvest yield, and our garners
shine with the corn and wine, while our figs in plenty and
peace we eat,....And the fiery steel---be it known no more.
(*Peace*, LL. 975ff).

The end of the Peloponnesian War also saw the end of this kind of comedy ; what followed was milder in tone and on the whole less involved in political and social satire, as were the later comedies of Aristophanes.

The Greek world was divided ; the war lasted with some interruption for twenty-seven years and ended with the capture of Athens and the destruction of her power. On one side was the Athenian Empire which represented the democratic and progressive force in Greece ; on the other Sparta and the Peloponnesian League (Sparta and its allies) and a number of states (notably Boetia) that sympathized with Sparta and represented the conservative force.

There were three major incidents which Thucydides cites as having been the immediate causes of the war : Athenian involvement with two colonies in Corinth's sphere of influence (Corinth remember had been Athens' greatest rival in commerce) : Corcyra (Corfu) and Potidaea ; and the Megarian decree. Corcyra had for many years because of differing interests maintained uneasy relations with Corinth, but when the two openly clashed, mainly over dominion of the north-west trade area, Corcyra sought an alliance

with the Athenians and they intervened on its behalf. (Thucy. 1.45). Potidaea, it seems, had a double allegiance, it was a Corinthian colony and at the same time paid tribute as an ally of Athens. When in 432, despite Athens' warnings, Potidaea and her neighbors with the instigation of Macedon revolted, she intervened and Corinth sent troops in support of Potidaea. Athenian and Peloponnesian troops clashed but war had not as yet broken out as Corinth had acted alone. Corinth's hatred of Athens had by then escalated precariously and it agitated for Sparta's declaration of war.

Pericles saw that war with the Peloponnesians was at hand and fearful that revolts might spread if Athens showed herself weak, enforced the Megarian decree (Thucy. 1. 67.4). In 433-432, Athens had excluded the Megarians (members of the Peloponnesian alliance) from the Athenian market and the harbors of her empire following some minor actions. What was really at issue, it seems, was Megara's strategic importance as a base in central Greece for any Peloponnesian threat against Athens. ' The consequences of the decree were disastrous. It was vital that freedom of the sea and international trade be maintained if peace and prosperity were to survive. The war started somewhat surprisingly in the spring of 431 when Thebes an ally of Sparta, attacked Plataea, (Thucy. 11.2) a small Boeotian town near the Attic border allied with Athens since the Persian War. Plataea was the one Boeotian town hostile to Theban influence " and they

were anxious to get control of Plataea " (11.2) and a massacre followed.

Euripides' *Medea* was first performed in the spring of 431, on the eve of the war, and was set in hostile Corinth : Medea, betrayed and rejected by Jason was descended upon by Creon and his soldiers to remove her instantly from the territory of Corinth. Bereft of a homeland she is given sanctuary by the city of Athens in the person of Aegeus. The chorus while praising Athens (LL. 824ff) questions : How then canthe city rind you a home, You who will kill your children....? (LL. 846).⁶ Considering the timing of the play, the words of the chorus might allude to Euripides' own doubts (David Riesman (1961) points to the poet's intense " inner-directedness " : the poet's compulsion to define his peculiar experience of reality⁷, at the same time that his artistic product is thoroughly social and communicative (see Ch. 1, III) about a war pitting Greek against Greek, father against son or, perhaps suggest Athens' ambivalence at embarking upon a *fratricidal* war.

In Plato's *Menexenus* Socrates notes the underlying envy and rivalry that had always marked relations between the Athenians and Peloponnesians. Socrates to Menexenus :

Had the orator to praise Athenians among the Peloponnesians, or the Peloponnesians among Athenians, he must be a good rhetorician who could succeed and gain credit. But there is

no difficulty in a man's winning applause when he is contending for fame among the persons whom he is praising.

(235d).

At the Lenaia of 405, one year before the end of the war, Aristophanes produced the *Frogs* a highly political comedy written under the pressure of the knowledge that the state and society of Athens were on the verge of crumbling. Euripides had died by then, and the agon of the play is between Aeschylus and Euripides who are arguing the merits of a return to the simpler life and the moral standards of the Marathon fighters, or the acceptance of the sophistic and sophisticated views of the modern mind. For example:

Euripides : By choosing themes that were concerned with every day reality, I taught them how to criticize a play with rationality.... (Hadas, 1962, p. 399)

Aeschylus : Consider the audience I had bequeathed him : cowardly loafers and laggards?No! Fine six-footers with courage so sturdy that nothing could ever o'erwhelm it, Each breathing the spirit of spear, of lance, of the pure white plume of the helmet.... (p.401)

The agon considers both sides of the case, and both sides are represented as having good and bad points, but in the end (whether justified or not) Aeschylus is the winner because of the period he represents. Aristophanes knows Athens will fall. Simultaneously, as we shall see, came the final collapse of a

power structure that had relegated women to the legal status of children.

2. Free Women

The "Women of Classical Athens" is an elusive population. The circumstances of their lives are difficult to recapture obscured as they are by the passage of time, and, by a host of biases, distortions, contradictions, inaccuracies and omissions. The task is made even more slippery by our having to view them through the eyes of contemporary writers who were almost exclusively men, and some of whom saw fit to, largely, ignore women. ¹⁰

The women we are concerned with went about their everyday lives chiefly during the period 431-404 B.C., a time, as we saw above and in Chapter 1, preceded and dominated by extreme democratic experimentation, commercial imperialism, and power politics which led inexorably to a virulent civil war, all traditionally the province of men. The literature of the period, was primarily political and portrays a society chiefly by and for men. Thucydides, the dominant historian of the period, reacting to the war, the change in Athen's social structure, and the new empirical thinking, wrote a narrowly focused political history which was based, for the first time, on purely human experience and had by its very nature chronicled the actions of men and only tangentially touched upon those of women. From Thucydides

however, we learn the details of a particular war, and war generally, the facts of which did not simply serve as a background, but shaped, with all its subsequent ramifications, how the women of Athens went about their everyday lives (see above).

Plato is a more substantive source for our inquiry : in Plato's *Dialogues* the opponents are always men, but new ideas about women's capabilities began to appear in the debates. ¹¹ Xenophon's Socratic discourse, the *Oikonomikos* a treatise on household management written at the beginning of the fourth century (Xenophon knew and admired Socrates) is another source for understanding the conception of women and the economic underpinnings of the *oikos* from a traditional male perspective. The dialogues examine the roles of all the members of the household from master to slaves, gender relations, the sexual division of labor, and intergenerational relations.

The tragic poet, Euripides, responding to the changing context, wrote in large part about the tragedy of war and its impact on life in general and the politics of the household specifically, but within the conventions of the tragic genre. His concern with the domestic milieu illuminates gender relations, master and mistress-slave relations, the relationship of the *oikos* to the state, and for the first time ever considers the woman's point of view. He challenged conventional social norms, especially those

between the sexes, and alluded to contemporary events. He introduced contemporary historical types, commonplace characters, psychological types, and plots not in accord with established standards. It was after all about Euripides that it was said, unlike Sophocles, he "portrayed people as they are" not "as they ought to be". (Aristotle, *Poetics*, 4.111) The comic poet Aristophanes, in some ways Euripides' successor, invented topsy-turvy plots about the social and political life of the *demos* in wartime with allusions to contemporary persons of both sexes often behaving according to familiar norms. Though Aristophanes considers some of the same issues as Plato and Euripides, his generally more conservative view is evident in the way he characterizes women.

The growing interest in women that is evident in Euripides (and others) can also be traced in the scientific writings of Hippocrates and the Hippocratics during the late fifth and fourth centuries ; a large segment of their medical discourses are devoted to female reproduction, obstetrics, and gynecology. However, as scientific study was limited to " observable phenomena and deduction by analogy " --- human dissection and clinical study came later --- female anatomy remained a mystery, and traditional norms of male superiority continued to influence medical attitudes. ¹² For a whole host of unrelated illnesses, the remedy recommended for women closely reflected the contemporary sexual division of labor : marriage ; heterosexual

intercourse ; and childbearing. For example, in Hippocrates' treatise *On Virgins* he states because : "... the nature of women is less courageous and weaker " than men they are more likely to experience visions :

And virgins who do not take a husband at the appropriate time for marriage experience these visions more frequently, especially at the time of their first monthly period. ¹³

The subordinate roles and conspicuous absence of women in much of the contemporary literature, in counterpoint to their often heroic, or strong, active image in tragedy (and carried over into comedy) is cause for much discussion among the experts (see Ch. I). It is partly explained by the aristocratic origins of tragedy, with its heroic world view, that developed out of an agrarian economy and peasant culture, ruled by a landed aristocracy intellectually steeped in Homeric epics, and dominated by a corresponding hierarchy of gods (see Ch. I). Both tragedy and comedy also provide quite a lot of evidence of women's disenfranchisement. We suggested, in the introduction to this paper, that women's salient presence in both genres might also, in part, be explained by Weber's notion, that because women as such stimulated men to write poetry they thereby made an important contribution to the genesis of a unified literary language which in turn served as a cement for society (see Ch. I). Feminine influence on the language of tragedy, which, in

turn, was communicated to a vast audience via the dramatic performances, would have sensitized the public (see G. Mead, Ch. I) at the same time it promoted societal cohesiveness. In a male ascendant, and rapidly changing society such as Athens that had otherwise obscured their women, this would have provided some balance. At yet another level, women's prominence in poetry has been explained by the notion that women in Greece were permitted more freedom of expression than were the men as masculine psychology was oriented toward rationality, self control, and non-expressiveness, while women were viewed as " psychologically unfree " and powerless to control themselves. This would supposedly have dictated the social, political, and legal subordination of women and would also explain why women are portrayed as dangerous in myth and tragedy. '4

Actually, Euripidean drama contributed to a more enlightened, more balanced view of human psychology with its insightful portrayal of the " irrational " as intrinsic to both sexes, as in the *Orestes* for example. Thucydides in a similar vein, suggests a picture of an Athenian male image which is less rational and self controlled than is intimated above. Utilizing the form of a speech by a Corinthian opposing Athenian imperialism in the *Debates at Sparta* in 432, this is what was said:

An Athenian is always an innovator, quick to form a resolution and quick at carrying it out....they

are always abroad, for they think that the farther they go the more they will get....Of them alone it may be said that they possess a thing almost as soon as they begin to desire it....In a word, they are by nature incapable of either living a quiet life themselves or of allowing anyone else to do so. (1.68-70)

Thucydides has the Athenian reply:

We have done nothing....contrary to human nature in accepting an empire when it was offered to us.... It has always been a rule that the weak should be subject to the strong.... (1.76)

Ruth Padel (1983) suggests that it is the above attributes that made the Athenian male " extremely dangerous to other people " and, if applied to man-woman relations, could explain the need to control others or else risk being " perceived as weaker and less controlling than their women ". ¹⁵ Below, we will see the same male attributes suggested by Thucydides, at work in the interactions between the Greek victors and the Trojan women captives in Euripides' *The Trojan Women*.

Euripides in what is probably his most powerful and passionate anti-war play, *The Trojan Women*, alluded, most scholars agree to the escalating violence of the war generally, (Athens was in the midst of preparations for the great Sicilian expedition) but

more specifically, to the unprovoked Athenian siege and massacre of the little neutral island of Melos in 416-415 B.C. (see Ch.1). In the play he argues, that violence begets violence, war is for fools (L 95ff) and imperialism condemnable. ¹⁶ An event of little military or political consequence, Melos nevertheless touched the mind and heart of the poet and others of like mind. Thucydides in the *Melian Dialogue* (V. 84-116) as it is called, devoted a long and sometimes ironic debate to the incident, perhaps not wholly based on fact, in which he reflects on the moral problems of war, power, and empire. We can understand the reference to Euripides' political arguments as at times being " quite Thucydidean in quality ", when for example, Thucydides writes so persuasively of how war inevitably leads men to " violent fanaticism " (III. 62). ¹⁷ The impassioned quality of Euripides' hatred of war strikes us as distinct from that of other outspoken critics of the war, Aristophanes, for example (see below), in that it appears deep felt, rather than politically expedient. Ehrenberg (1962) believes Euripides to have been a pacifist. ¹⁸ The comic poet and conservative Aristophanes, on the one hand decries war, and on the other hand expresses nostalgia for the martial spirit of the Marathon fighters. He mocks Euripides' concern for the benefits derived from logical argument and enlightened thought (*Frogs*, L 975ff, 1025ff) which, suggest the tragic poet's preference for peaceful and progressive pursuits.

In the earlier years of the war Euripides did indeed write a number of "patriotic" plays (such as *The Heracleidae* and *The Suppliant Women*) and he may have shared the contemporary predilection for blood-revenge: Medea, when betrayed by Jason, plots to commit murder, and, justifies her plan with the following: one is best remembered, by being: "One who can hurt my enemies and help my friends", not, by having been thought of as "feeble-spirited" or "a stay-at-home". (*Medea* LL. 807-810); but it is also possible that Euripides was merely reflecting contemporary attitudes as was often the case, and which he usually opposed. ' His disenchantment with war and empire stands out in his later plays, where he praises peace and repeatedly argues that it alone can be defended by reason, as war brings mounting deprivation, moral decay and slaughter:

And yet we men all know which of two words is better, and can weigh the good and bad they bring: how much better is peace than war....She delights in healthy children, and she glories in wealth. But evilly we throw all this away to start our wars and make the losers slaves -- Man binding man and city chaining city. (*The Suppliant Women*, L 486ff)

or

O wretches, why do you slaughter each other with spears? Leave off those struggles; let towns take shelter in gentleness. Life is a short affair;

We should try to make it smooth and free from strife.

(*Supp.* LL 949-954)

The warrior ethic (albeit by the time of Euripides, the heroic warrior type, as defined by the glorious, and inspired, Marathon fighters (see above) had, largely, given way to the image of the bourgeois soldier motivated by civic duty. ²⁰) was, as late as the latter half of the fifth century, still a primary defining value for the Greek *polis* and its male citizens. In the time of Homer (*Illiad* VI. 490-493) Hector had said to Andromache : " Nay, go thou to the house and busy thyself with thine own tasks, the loom and the distaff....but war shall be for men...." and in Euripides' time, together with his cry for peace, he wrote (perhaps with irony) :

No sooner shall you get your beards than march
A mighty force of bronze-clad Danaids
Against the Thebans....Your coming will bring them
sorrow -- lion cubs you are. True-bred sackers of
cities ! (*Supp.* LL 1219-1223)

It was expected that young men " when they are sturdy " be groomed as warriors, said Plato ²¹ (*Republic* 5.466e-467a), while their female counterparts on the other hand, were soley prepared for the duties of marriage, home and family : " Why bring up girls as gentlewomen fit for marriage, if tyrants take them for their joy -- " says Theseus in contest with the Herald. (Euripides, *Supp.* L 486).

In Plato's *Laws* (7.804e-805e) three elderly men meet while walking in Crete. The Athenian expounding to Megillus a Spartan and Clinias a Cretan says:

.... at the present day there are untold thousands.... of women living around the Black Sea....on whom not horsemanship but familiarity with bows and other weapons is enjoined no less that it is on their husbands....it is pure folly that men and women do not unite to follow the same pursuits with all their energies....You know what are own customs in this matter are. We ' pack ' all our belongings, as the phrase goes, ' into one ' house, and make over to our women the control of the store closet and the superintendence of the spinning and woolwork at large.

The strict sexual division of labor is apparent also in *The Trojan Women*. The grim setting of the play is Ancient Troy after its capture. The city is divided, all Trojan men have been killed or have fled just as in Melos, only the women and children remain. Astyanax, the small son of Andromache and Hector, has at the urging of Odysseus been " hurled from the battlements of Troy " (L 725) as a " hero's son could not be allowed to live " (L 723). Andromache cries out: " I lived never thinking the baby I had was born for butchery by the Greeks, but for lordship over all Asia's pride of earth " (L 746). The women and

children are held captive, destined for slavery. The majority of slaves were acquired through conquest and in the *Andromache* the chorus laments :

And mothers, scores on scores, in the markets
of Greece Made stones re-echo shrill with
lament for a son, Wives were torn from old
homes to serve a strange husband. (LL 1038-1040)

In the *Lysistrata* Aristophanes' anti-war comedy about a fantastic female sex strike (the success of which, according to certain classicists, seems improbable, given Greek bi-sexuality ²², and ready availability of prostitutes) gender roles are drawn again. The husband in his unwillingness to discuss the war with his wife conveys the attitude that war is not a woman's business.

Magistrate: Why do women come prying and meddling in matters
of state touching wartime and peace?

Lysistrata: All the long years when the hopeless war dragged
along, we unassuming, forgotten in quiet. Endured
without question, endured in our loneliness and
your incessant child's antics and riot....Then I
would say to him, *O my dear husband, why still do
they rush on destruction the faster ?* At which he
would look at me sideways exclaiming, *Keep for
your web and your shuttle your care,....leave this
alone, war is man's sole affair.*

(Hadas, pp.304-305)

The words of Pericles in the funeral oration he gave in honor of the war dead only one year after its beginning re-echo (see Intro.). To the bereaved women he said: " and the greatest glory of a woman, is to be least talked about by men whether they are praising you or criticizing you " (Thucy. II. 46). ²³ Addressing the married women Pericles exhorted: "those of you who are of the right age must bear up and take comfort in the thought of having more children ", who will, "prevent you from brooding....and they will be a help to the city " (Thucy. II. 44). In Euripides' *Suppliant Women* the bereaved mothers no longer of child bearing age lament the death of their sons in battle and the chorus speaks:

Blest no more with children, blest no more with
sons, I have no share in happiness Among the boy-
bearing women of Argos. And Artemis, watches over
birth, Would have no word for childless women.
(L 955ff).

Pomeroy (1975) speculating on demography, tells us that the large ratio of men to women in Athens during peacetime had been dependent on a variety of factors, one being that " females predeceased males by an average of five to ten years ", and that based on studies of skeletal remains, adult longevity in Classical Greece on the average was 45.0 years for males, 36.2 for females, or possibly even lower for both sexes but with the same five to ten year shorter life span for females. ²⁴ However,

the continuing war had resulted in a severe and ongoing shortage of men which was exacerbated by the somewhat frantic departure in 415, of a force of at least 4,000 soldiers, for what Thucydides called the "Athenian resolve to conquer it [Sicily]" (VI.1) and had added to the ratio of women in Athens. Examples of the evidence cited to support the shortage of men were, the arming of slaves, and the rare deployment of knights (young noblemen) at the naval battle near the Arginusae islands in 406.²⁵

Lysistrata protested the needless death of sons in the war: "What of us, who ever in vain for our children must weep borne but to perish afar and in vain" (Aristophanes, *Lysistrata*, Hadas, p.307; L 589). Some experts suggest that Lysistrata's words are a reference to the large expeditionary force sent to Sicily which ended in disaster for the Athenians; the play was presented early in 411, after the battle.²⁶ Lysistrata also reflects on the loneliness and hardships of women and the disruption to their lives caused by the departure of the men:

Then while we should be companioned still merrily,
happy as brides may, the livelong night, Kissing
youth by, we are forced to be single....But leave
for a moment our pitiful plight. It hurts even more
to behold the poor maidens helplessly wrinkling in
staler virginity. (Hadas, p.307)

Pomeroy (1984) in a study of soldiers' wives, maintains that in contrast to the wars of the fourth century which regularly

required Greek soldiers to campaign in more distant lands for years at a time, all during the fifth century, family life was not radically disrupted by husbands and fathers going off to war, as they usually campaigned at not to great distances and returned after about a season in the field. ²⁷ Thucydides' (II.2) chronology of the war indicates that battles were fought seasonally, usually in the summer (fighting during Greek winters was extremely difficult ²⁸). However, as he later points out, during the Spartan occupation of Deceleia in Attica, in 413, the Athenians were obliged to wage war summer and winter and this caused tremendous hardships for them (Thucy. VII. 27-28) and their families as well. The destruction of the Sicilian expedition far from home, and the simultaneous Spartan presence only thirteen or fourteen miles from Athens (the fort itself was visible from Athens (Thucy. VII.19]) make the melancholy expressions of the women in the *Lysistrata* credible:

Lysistrata - Do ye not miss the fathers of your babes,

Always on service ? well I wot ye all

Have got a husband absent at the wars.

Myrrhina - Ay, mine, worse luck, has five months

away....

Calonice - And mines's been stationed seven whole months

at Pylus. (LL 99-104)

Not only were the soldiers' wives deprived of their husbands, the " poor maidens " of Athens " helplessly wrinkling in staler

virginity", that Lysistrata sympathized with above, had fewer potential husbands to choose from due to the continuous deployment and the very high mortality rate of men. Fewer marriages would also have meant a reduction in the birth rate (remember Pericles' exhortation to the women) at a time when Athens had been at war for two decades, and male citizen children were vital to the state. This is attested to by Diogenes Laertius:

For they say that the Athenians were short of men and wishing to increase the population, passed a decree permitting a citizen to marry one Athenian woman and have children by another; and that Socrates accordingly did so. (2.25-27).

Euripides had two wives as well, his first wife was Melito and his second wife Choirile (see Ch. 11). Bigamy was not as a rule practiced by the Athenians, but at certain times and under certain conditions they were permitted more than one legal wife; in this instance it appears to have been primarily a response to the imbalances in the wartime democracy.²⁹ According to David Schaps (1979) " to permit a woman to grow old unmarried was to the Athenians one of the foulest things that could be done to her " : As a matter of fact, one of the crimes the Thirty Tyrants were accused of late in the war, was causing women to remain unmarried by contributing to the depletion of the male citizen presence in Athens by a variety of means.³⁰

The life of an impoverished war widow presents yet another picture : a soldiers's widow in Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae* presented in 411, only five months after the *Lysistrata*, earns her's and her children's livlihood by weaving wreaths for the gods:

My husband died in Cyprus, leaving me
Five little chicks to work and labor for
I've done my best, and bad's the best, but
still I've fed them, weaving chaplets for
Gods. (L 446ff)

In a speech from Demosthenes, it is attested to that the hard times which resulted from the Peloponnesian war caused many citizen women to become " wet nurses, workers in wool or laborers in vineyards ".³¹

While war widows received no financial assistance from the *polis* (see below), Pericles had in fact, provided for the future of the " orphans " of the war dead (boys referred to themselves as orphans because a dead father signified they had lost the important parent: " I having lost my unhappy father, will dwell An orphan in a house of loss.... " (Eur. *Suppliants*, LL 1132-1135), and it was part of a long tradition among the Greeks.³²

In his funeral oration 431/0 Pericles proclaimed :

The future of their children will be supported at
public expense by the city until they become of age.
This is the crown and the prize which she offers both

to the dead and their children for the ordeals which they have faced. (Thucy. II. 46 ; Aristophanes, *Birds* L. 395ff).

Aristophanes' poor war widow who was obliged to support both herself and her children apparently could not rely on the depleted public treasury at Athens which as early in the war as 428/27 (about one year after the death of Pericles of the plague at Athens in 429) prompted Thucydides to write that the Athenians in order to quell a revolt by the Mytilenians " had for the first time raised from their own citizens a contribution of 200 talents " . (Thucy. III.19).

In 431, at the outbreak of the war, Thucydides' survey of Athen's financial resources substantiates Pericles' confidence, (II. 13) (it may have been the first time that a Greek state had a permanent treasury of its own to draw on with the consent of the *demos* in times of peace and war. ³³) but since it had been a long tradition among the Greeks to " ignore widows " ³⁴, the policy apparently continued : In 431/0, Pericles comforted the parents of the dead soldiers, and remembered their children, but to the widows, (see Ch. I) he only urged that they maintain a low profile. Widowhood in the fifth century was an anomalous state : unmarried women as heads of households were viewed as masculine figures and consequently threatening ³⁵ ; if a widow was young and not impoverished she could remarry, (Athenian women usually married for the first time between the ages of 16

and 20, men between 30 and 35 (Plato, *Laws* 6. 785 b-c) above we mentioned how negatively the Greeks reacted to their women growing old unmarried, although the responsibility was not as pressing as with virgins ³⁶ ; husbands on their death beds ---- " even one divorcing his wife, if the divorce was amicable " ---- would be likely to arrange immediate marriages to others so that the woman would not remain unmarried. ³⁷ Lacey (1968) makes the point that women, especially widows, became more independent as they grew older. ³⁸

Aristotle, born in the early part of the fourth century (384 B.C.) made provision in his will not only for the marriage of his daughter to Nicanor, but also for a successor, Theophrastus in the event that Nicanor should die " before there are children ", (Diog. Laertius, V. 12). Unlike orphans, a widow did not inherit from her husband unless a special bequest was made in his will ³⁹ , as in the case of Aristotle for example : To Herpyllis, his wife who " has borne a steady affection for me ", he bequeathed " a talent of silver out of the estate " along with what she had already received , as well as three handmaids, a man servant and a choice between two homes. If she desired to remarry it was to be arranged that " she be given to one not unworthy " . (Diog. Laertius V. 12). A widow without a specific bequest would probably have had to live on her dowry, and if she became impoverished she was no longer an attractive bride. In peaceful or stable periods (when the ratio of men to

women was not severely reduced), a widow could also have returned to her family of birth or former household and they would have found a husband for her ; it also often happened that widows remarried and brought up two families in the *dikos* of the second husband. ⁴⁰

Euripides did not ignore widows ----in his anti-war play the *Suppliant Women* he shows a sympathetic interest in the plight of a woman whose husband has fallen in the war. Evadne, widow of Capaneus who was killed in the Theban adventure, succumbs to love and grief and chooses suicide. Evadne's actions, on the one hand, appear to have been in direct opposition to the exhortations of Pericles who, when he addressed the widows of the war dead, urged that women be " self-controlled " ⁴¹, she acts out of fanatic loyalty to her husband ; on the other hand, the conventions of the fifth century also encouraged widows to exhibit extreme grief, while men were expected to mourn in a controlled manner. ⁴² In what appears, to some, to be an instance of Euripidean gender role reversal Admetus, in the *Alcestis*, a pre-war play, ordered " public mourning " for his dead wife " with shaving of the head and with black robes " and even the horses were to " have their manes cut short with steel " and no sound of flutes and lyres were to be heard in the city for " twelve moons " (LL 426-431). ⁴³ Admetus' profuse display of grief, his " mourning like a woman " could also be seen as Euripides' more realistic and more balanced view of human

psychology. In Plato's *Symposium* (179b-180b) we see another instance of such a trend : Socrates' lauds Alcestis for the bravery she displayed in sacrificing her life for her husband ; such behavior, Socrates points out, is characteristic of the male sex, and he goes on to liken her heroism to that of Achilles when he died to avenge the death of his lover Patroclus. ⁴⁴ Both examples also bring to mind, Professor Winick's (1969) thesis (see above), of a gradual " depolarization " of sex roles beginning with the latter half of the fifth century. ⁴⁵

To return to Evadne's extreme display of grief : Euripides in applying new critical standards and psychological insights to old attitudes portrays a protagonist whose emotions are in conflict with her intellect and whose passions rule when confronted with a grievous loss. It is a more subtle and complex view of a grieving, contemporary war widow, which raises many questions about the conflicting images of Athenian women generally. Evadne's father, Iphis of Argos, speaks of " former days when she was watched at home ", but troubled times had forced him to dismiss the guards and she had run off. (LL 1040-1045). Iphis finds Evadne standing beside her husband's tomb and pyre near Athens, and queries her as to why she has left home and for what purpose:

Evadne - You would be angry if I told you my plans....

Iphis - What ? Is it not right that your father should
know ?....

Evadne - I come to celebrate a victory....over all women
on whom the sun looks down.

Iphis - In Athena's skills, or in the ways of prudence ?

Evadne - I rush to the pyre of Capaneus.... In valor :
I shall be with my husband in death....

Iphis - I shall not suffer you to do this thing.

Evadne - My body falls ! a flight not dear to you
But to me and the husband who will burn
with me. (LL 1050-1071)

In classical mythology death by suicide was regarded as rather craven and unmanly (see below) ** : it was the women protagonists such as, Evadne, Alcestis, and Phaedra who took their own lives. For women however, the issue was not so simple; the motivations for death by suicide rested not only on their inability to confront a given reality, but on a complex set of social norms which upheld acts of self-sacrifice and martyrdom (see Plato below) for women to achieve *doxa* (good reputation) and *kleos* (fame) among the traditionally minded. (Aristotle, Athens, 4th cent. B.C., believed in the subjection of women : "between male and female the former is by nature superior and ruler, the latter inferior and subject." (*Politics* l.v. 1254b2) There is in fact, a tension between the disgrace of suicide on the one hand, and the accepted way for women to behave which, Euripides has captured in some of his dramas. Hecuba, in *The Trojan Women* expects Helen's suicide (Menelaus is thought to

have fallen in the war) as standard behavior when she chides her : " But when were you ever caught in the strangling noose, caught sharpening a dagger ? Which any noble wife would do, desperate with longing for her lord's return " (LL 1012-1014). Helen, in the play of the same name, like Evadne, planned suicide in the event Menelaus died in the war: " if this tale of my lord's death that has come to me is true....then I will bind my throat fast in the hanging noose of death " (*Helen*, LL 350-353). Polyxena, in Euripides' *Hecuba* (435ff) is willingly sacrificed to the ghost of Achilles, to assuage him. Phaedra, to protect her reputation, dies at her own hand and instigates the death of Hippolytus. In *the Heracleidae*, the Chorus says, " A girl who gives her own life to save these [her brothers]....; no acts of flesh and blood rank higher than her own " (LL-535-538). Alcestis, chooses to die for love; she lays down her own life in order that her husband Admetus might live. Her sacrifice supposedly " made the life of all women a thing of better repute than it was " (LL 624-625) by perpetuating the traditional values of the *oikos* (see Plato below). " Another way of viewing the acts of Evadne, Alcestis, Phaedra, and others, is by way of Georg Simmel (1950) who points to the difficulties inherent in asserting one's personalty within the confines of the metropolis (Simmel cites the ancient *polis*, and Athens specifically, as examples) : extravagances in behavior are often the only means by which certain characters can save " some modicum of self esteem " and make themselves, and others, aware

of their having filled a position. " Euripides' female protagonists (perhaps even his male) seem to bear this out, if we consider the immoderation in their behavior as defining, in the Simmel sense. However, Pheres, the father of Admetus, was not persuaded by such excesses, he suggests to his son that Alcestis was foolish and naive in having sacrificed her life for love : " She was not shameless you found; she was only innocent " (L 720); and Iphis the father of Evadne, opposes her intended act of suttee, and the chorus of women express their amazement : Woman ! Terrible the deed you brought to pass " (L 1072). Euripides, like his contemporaries, may have accepted as reasonable, the conflicting expectations of women ; but what is more likely, is that he is demonstrating the futility of living up to them.

Plato appears to have touched upon similar concerns and contradictions : In Book Nine of his *Laws* (873 d-c) " self-slaughter " is described as an act of " unmanly cowardice " and the graves of those who died by their own hand were to be solitary and unmarked. In contrast, in Plato's *Symposium* (see above) the dialogues, all of which are discourses on the theme of love in its many forms, Socrates (it will never be known for certain where Socrates ends and Plato begins) recognized the " magnanimity " of Alcestis' suicide : " nothing but Love will make a man offer his life for another's' -and not only man, but woman, of which we Greeks can ask no better witness than

Alcestis ". Socrates then goes on to turn the argument around by introducing the teachings of Diotima (a woman versed in many fields of knowledge who was supposed to have personally instructed Socrates) on love. Diotima was of the opinion that the suicide of Alcestis, for example, was based less on feelings of love and altruism and more on the desire for fame and glory, the passion for immortality :

Do you think, [Diotima] went on, Alcestis would have laid down her life to save Admetus [for love] ? No, Socrates no. Every one of us, no matter what he does, is longing for the endless fame, the incomparable glory that is theirs....
(*Sym.* 208 d-e)

Ultimately, suicide, even when motivated by lofty concern for others, appears suspect in Plato, much as it does in Euripides. Tradition asserts (see Ch.1) that Socrates collaborated with Euripides in some of his writings. If the assertion is not merely fictive, it might, in part, explain the similarity of some of their views, and also help to clarify the grieving Evadne's responses to her father Iphis. (see above, *Supp.* LL 1050-1071).

Which brings us back to the widows, of which we assume there were many in Athens during the Peloponnesian war. Evadne's act of suttee was not simply a fiction of tragedy, suttee played a part in the culture of antiquity. It is described by Herodotus as having been practiced both among the Scythians and the Thracians

who were non-Greeks (4. 71, 5. 3), but who resided in Athens as *metics* and slaves at least from the time of the Empire down through the Peloponnesian war, and according to some estimates were almost equal in number to those of native citizens in 431. ⁴⁹ (A variation of the custom was supposedly practiced by the Greeks, who during the time of Homer (*Iliad*, XXIII.166) buried the dead with their slaves (see above, Polyxena was given to the dead Achilles), along with horses, food and drink, for their needs ⁵⁰). Thracians were particularly numerous, and according to Herodotus (5. 3) they practiced polygamy and when a husband died the wives competed for the honor of being entombed with the husband ; those wives who were not chosen grieved accordingly at their disgrace. Euripides in the *Andromache* refers to the Thracians, " where the custom is one husband in rotation " with many women (LL 215-217). Athenians were said to be fathers or sons by courtesans and in three instances the mothers were Thracians. ⁵¹ Despite the negative attitude toward intermarriage with foreigners, according to Thucydides (II. 29) Procne, the daughter of Pandion from Athens, married Tereus a Thracian (" the possibilities of mutual aid " may have been one of the reasons); and later Iphicrates the Athenian general, married the daughter of Cotys, king of Thrace and their sons may have been legitimate citizens of Athens. ⁵² In this light, Evadne's act of self-sacrifice can also be viewed sociologically, as having resulted from the very rapid pace of cultural transformation at Athens ; attributable, in large

measure, to the large influx of other peoples which began following the Persian War, and thereafter. Redfield and Singer (1954) speak of the possible effects on the core culture of a " too rapid and intense " encounter with other peoples and civilizations : " de-urbanization or being variously mixed with other civilizations " (see below).⁶³ This is another factor to be considered, in the already complex situation which confronted Athens' widows.

Roman widows of the late Republic and early Empire, were also the subjects of conflicting attitudes, although not entirely similar to those that appear evident in Euripides, Plato, and Pericles' funeral oration. Widows were on the one hand encouraged to remarry, and at the same time idealized for remaining loyal to one husband, the notion of which was further extended to include a woman's suicide if her husband had predeceased her.⁶⁴ Thus a Roman aristocrat, Arria, encouraged her husband, who had been invited to commit suicide by Claudius, with the words " Paetus, it does not hurt ", as she plunged the sword into her breast.⁶⁵

The social experience of Athenian widows (and all women) in the democracy, especially during the time of the Peloponnesian war, when traditional standards had become less rigorous, and the new scientific and sophistic thinking had proclaimed the centrality of man, was as a result, more worthy of attention by Euripides and others. But the opportunities open to Roman widows of

the second century B.C. , who could, to some extent, lead more varied and interesting lives if they did not remarry, (according to Plutarch, Tiberius Gracchus, the elder, when he died, left twelve children behind borne to him by his wife Cornelia, who then took full responsibility for the care of the household and the education of her children, two of whom became foremost in their time. Cornelia had many friends and entertained many guests in her home, among them numerous Greeks and intellectuals, she was herself educated and her letters were published. She refused remarriage when it was offered to her by Ptolemy. ⁶⁶) had not as yet been opened to them. Comparatively speaking, Evadne's and even Alcestis' suicide becomes more comprehensible.

The use of sacrificial imagery and symbolism involving women that is common to thirteen (twelve beginning with 431 B.C.) in Euripides' corpus of nineteen dramas (sacrificial death is either pivotal to the action or an important element in the *Alcestis*, 438, *Medea*, 431, *Heracleidae*, *Hippolytus*, *Heracles*, *Iphigenia in Tauris*, *Hecuba*, *Andromache*, *Suppliants*, *Iphigenia in Aulis*, *Electra*, *Phoenissae*, *Bacchae* and in several fragmentary plays) alludes to the subject of women in wartime in yet another way. In Helene P. Foley's *Ritual Irony, Poetry and Sacrifice in Euripides* (1985) the sacrificial metaphor serves to define the larger social, political and religious crisis which marked the context of wartime Athens, and other scholars concur. ⁶⁷ The plays, structured so as to jar and create dissonance evoke the

sense of uncertainty, betrayal and social unrest of the period in which Euripides lived, and according to Bernard Knox (1985), " it might be said of him what the Corinthians in Thucydides say of the Athenians " ° : " They are by nature incapable of either living a quiet life themselves or allowing anyone else to do so. " (Thucy. I. 70).

Several of Euripides' sacrificial victims are young female virgins ° who voluntarily accept ritual death in a time of war ; ostensibly for the greater good of the community. Foley (1985) informs us, that human sacrifice is reported to have actually occurred at exceptional times in Greek history when social crisis was imminent. However, she goes on to say, in the context of tragedy, voluntary sacrifice should be interpreted as essentially fictional, a symbol by which the protagonist expresses the ideal of *arete*. ° (In Athens during the time of Euripides, *arete* as heralded by the Sophists, and by whom he was influenced, see Ch. I, was a form of *civic-mindedness*.) Interestingly, Durkheim's analysis of the social function of ritual sacrifice emphasizes the power it had of reaffirming collective representations : (as much as possible in his own words) Men in times of great external crisis and loss of hope, in order that the relationship to their sacred beings who live only in *human consciousness* be strengthened, sacrificed food or their own blood at the altars of the gods. In having thus (and most significant for Durkheim) communicated their *thoughts*, their need for sacred assistance,

the reciprocal ties between men and men, men and their sacred beings, were renewed ; man's confidence in himself restored, and the efficacy of sacred help reconfirmed. According to Foley, Euripides' understanding of the social function of ritual sacrifice " seems to approach the views expressed by the early sociologists of religion such as Durkheim. " ⁶¹

The compliant young women who sacrificed (or offered to sacrifice) their lives as an act of heroism in what was a futile war, and who in consequence won *dubious* acclaim from Euripides are : Iphigenia, (*Iphigenia in Aulis* LL. 1393-1394) who willingly went to the sacrificial altar to advance the cause of the discouraged Greek military, " Rather in war is it far better that many women go to their death, if this keeps one man only facing the light and alive " ; Polyxena, (see above) daughter of Hecuba in the play of that name, captured by the Greeks during the fall of Troy, cries out as she is led to her ritual death to placate the ghost of the great warrior Achilles:

Wait you Greeks who sacked my city !
Of my own free will I die, Let no
man touch me. I offer my throat
willingly to the sword. I will
not flinch... (*Hec.* LL. 545-549)

In the *Heracleidae*, Macaria, a refugee in Athens with her supernumary brothers, like Alcestis, offers up her own life for her family, in this case, in exchange for those of her many

brothers. As a stranger to Athens, her ritual sacrifice would also have been a contribution to the protection of the polis which is threatened by attack :

Come lead me to the place where I'm to die...
 And go win the fight. I hereby put Myself on
 record that of my free will I volunteer to die
 for these and for Myself. The brave have found
 no finer prize Than leaving life the way it
 should be done. (LL. 528-534)

The use of the sacrificial metaphor therefore, not only serves to define a period of social, political, and religious instability, but focuses on what can also be viewed as a passive form of female resistance (women in this instance, volunteered to die chiefly for the protection of the state, but were not permitted to actively fight for its protection) which allows Euripides to raise questions similar to those posed by Plato (see above) : for example, how did the democracy's conception of the worth and capability of women compare with that of men ; what about women's own feelings of self worth ?

In this connection, Max Weber in his *Sociology of Religion* (as much as possible in his own words) makes the point that mystical religions, such as the Greeks *2 , (the women of Athens played a very prominent role in its mystical religious life, see below) during a time of rationalization of economics, depersonalized relationships. and the consequent foundering of brotherly love

(which precisely characterizes fifth century Athens, and chiefly during the latter half) took the path which led to the expansion of love for one's fellow man which often led to unselective generosity and absolute self-surrender. He goes on to say, that this form of mystical flight from the world was non-specific, done not for the sake of loving self-surrender for the man (or cause) but rather for the sake of self-surrender itself, what Weber refers to as the " the sacred prostitution of the soul ". (see above : Diotima's notion of love and self-surrender as attributed to her by Socrates.) ⁶³

Sacrificial acts committed by women in Euripides may also have served to express an " abnormal and extreme form of social protest " to structural oppression, the Dionysiac fervor of the Maenads in *The Bacchae* being a particularly good example. ⁶⁴ In *The Bacchae* Euripides portrays Agave, mother of the ritually slain Pentheus, as in an hallucinatory state when she and the Bacchantes fled to the mountains in a frenzy : Agave, after the sacrifice, proudly carrying the impaled head of her son, addresses Cadmus, the grief stricken grandfather of Pentheus, " there upon the beam, nail the head of this wild lion I have killed as a trophy of my hunt. " (LL 1213ff); and the Messenger brings the word, " Sir, I have seen the holy Maenads, the women who ran crazy from the city " (LL 665 ff). In two of his *Dialogues*, *Ion* (534a) and *Phaedrus* (253a), Plato also describes the orgiastic state of the Bacchantes, and others

who followed suit in the worship of their chosen god, as being " possessed ". Lefkowitz (1981) tells us that modern anthropological thought would compare the " temporary insanity " of Agave and the followers of Dionysus with the " sudden ecstatic experience that bring oppressed groups a sense (albeit transient) of political power ".⁶⁸ In Max Weber we find that: " practically all orgiastic and mystagogic religious propagandizing, including that of the cult of Dionysus, called for at least temporary and relative emancipation of women...." ⁶⁹

Being part of a society that had traditionally allowed women religious expression, but had denied them self-assertive expression (it was an aggressive-masculine norm), Medea and Phaedra's frenzied responses to their powerlessness might also have been an outgrowth of orgiastic religious fervor. The contemporary concern with orgiastic and mystagogic religions must have held special sway over them : in addition to the constraints of being women, they were also foreigners (as were many of Athen's women during the years of the Peloponnesian war, see above) : Medea was a native of Colchis and Phaedra was Cretan, leaving them structurally isolated from their families in a society which was shaken by depersonalizing relationships, and denied foreigners the right to citizenship (see Ch. 11) :

You have a country. Your family home is here.

You enjoy life and the company of your friends.

I am deserted , a refugee, thought nothing of

By my husband --- something he won in a foreign
land. (*Medea*, LL. 253-256)

The instability and civic unrest which shook the Greek world, is attested to in Thucydides' chronicles of the war, but he says little about women specifically :

There was death in every shape and form
And as usually happens in such a situation
people went to every extreme and beyond it.
There were fathers who killed their sons;
men who were dragged from the temples or
butchered on the very altars (III. 81)

" With the ordinary conventions of life thrown into confusion ", (Thucy. III, 84) and the men away at war, (even for relatively short periods) women, no matter how limited by tradition to the private concerns of the *oikos* could not have been entirely insulated from the instability of the public sphere. In fact, that amidst the disruption, many Athenian women were forced to leave the seclusion of the household to perform tasks normally allocated to men is suggested by Pomeroy (1975).⁴⁷ That women, as well as men, behaved in unprecedented ways is substantiated by Andocides, a contemporary Athenian orator, who minutely described the attempts of Hipparete, wife of Alcibiades, to divorce him. Hipparete charged that after receiving the largest dowry ever in Greece, her husband brought prostitutes into the house while she

was at home, forcing her a "modest woman" to resort to the courts and legally obtain a divorce. Normally, a wife, once having decided to leave her husband's house would have been able to look to her family for protection; but in this instance, the politically powerful Alcibiades, with the aid of a gang of cronies, forcibly seized Hipparete in the *agora*, defying the courts, the law, and the *demos*.⁶⁸ In this connection, the reasons behind Alcibiades' notoriety bear telling: Andocides, had been the main informer against him when in 415, the Athenian fleet departed on its great expedition to Sicily, (not long after the performance of Euripides' *The Trojan Women*) and Thucydides (VI. 27ff) writes that Alcibiades was named as one of the participants in a sacrilegious conspiracy which involved private sacrilegious acts: the profanation of the Eleusian mysteries; and the mutilation in Athens, of the *hermae* (the many figures of the Hermes standing on the porches of houses and in the temples). At the critical moment of the sailing, these were regarded as threatening signs of a growing religious skepticism, an ill omen for the expedition, and perhaps even evidence of an oligarchic plot against the democracy. Alcibiades denied the charges and the two acts were not linked conclusively.⁶⁹ Alcibiades had been a man of many talents: a young, brilliant and aristocratic disciple of Socrates, he excelled both in political and philosophical discourse as well as having been an influential *strategos* (general); he supposedly possessed good looks, charm, and was sought after by men and

women alike in the bi-sexual ambiance of Athens. He was on the one hand, esteemed by the *demos* and on the other hand, not really considered trustworthy ; in Xenophon's words " he became the most dissolute and arrogant of all democrats " and along with Critias (leader of the Thirty, see Ch. 1) " who had also belonged to Socrates' circle, did more harm to their country than any other persons " (*Memorabilia* 1.2.8, 1.2.19). Alcibiades was ultimately accused of plotting against the state and sentenced to death *in absentia*. Andocides may himself have been guilty. ⁷⁰ In view of her husband's purported popularity and influence, it appears, by ancient standards, that Hipparete acted with considerable daring. ⁷¹

Andocides tells of another upper class Athenian woman Agariste, wife of Alcmaeonides (member of a powerful family). Agariste was one of three informants who testified against Alcibiades, and she appears to have behaved exceptionally because : 1) to have witnessed the profanation of the Eleusian mysteries would have required that she be out at night; 2) she gave public testimony; both unheard of for women in times of peace. ⁷² Another unusual occurrence documented by Andocides, was the union of Callias simultaneously with two women in the same house, his legitimate wife, and her mother, who became the concubine of Callias and later bore him a child. The daughter was so filled with shame she tried to hang herself. ⁷³ Aristophanes alludes to Callias' debauchery in *The Birds* (L. 286) " and the females flock around

him, plucking out his feathers too "; and in *The Frogs* (L. 430)
 " And Callias, I'm told, Has become a sailor bold, And casts a
 lion's hide o'er his members feminine. ".

In Kathleen Freeman's (1946) compilation of trials from the Athenian law courts of the fifth century, there is one case of a wife charged with the murder of her husband. The speech for the prosecution written by the orator Antiphon, sometime between 450 and 411 B.C. (the exact date is unknown), accuses the woman, second wife of the murdered man, of having been instrumental in the slaying of her husband by causing a fatal dose of poison to be given to him by a third party (her husband's friend's concubine-slave). The defense argued that the accused woman believed the poison to have been a love potion ; she had been wrongly treated by her husband and she sought to win him back in this manner. There is no conclusive evidence of intent to kill on the part of the wife, however the verdict is unknown and according to Freeman, impossible to surmise. She goes on to say, that the people of Athens would have been extremely horrified if the wife had in fact attempted to poison her husband. The concubine-slave was condemned to a cruel death : She was first racked and then publicly executed by *apotympanism* believed to have been a form of garroting that was introduced as a legal penalty toward the end of the fifth century. ⁷⁴ Euripides alludes to the predilection of women for dispensing drugs to gain their ends in : *The Medea* (L 783ff) where Medea contrives to

murder the princess, her rival in love, with a deadly poison ; the *Andromache* (LL 157, 205-207) where Hermione accuses her contender, Andromache : " Your drugs have made me unlovely to my husband, Withered my womb and left it good for nothing. " ; also in Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae* (L 561, see below). Apparently, the administration of drugs -- to do harm -- was sufficiently serious and widespread at the time, for Plato to have made the distinction between the practice of using drugs that fosters in the agent's and the victim's mind the belief of the power to bewitch, and the use of drugs which did not involve supernatural intervention, and acted on the body in " normal ways ". He prescribed the death penalty in either case, given certain conditions. (*Laws* XI. 932e-933e). The execution of Socrates by the state with a dose of hemlock, according to Plato's distinction, is an example of the normal. It is the " abnormal " practice which was often associated with women.

Herodotus in his *Histories of the Persian War* relates two incidents, which Dewald (1981) says, suggest the extent to which men and women tend to reflect one set of societal values. ⁷⁵ Here, the violence of war appears to have succeeded in corrupting not only the men of Athens but its women as well:

1) After the sole Athenian survivor of a disastrous raid on Aegina returned home, the wives of the other men " in grief and anger that he alone should have escaped " stabbed him to death, each woman asking as she struck, where her husband was. (5. 87)

2) When Lycidas, a member of the Athenian council in Salamis urged that the Athenians submit to Persia, he was stoned to death by his fellow council members. At this, the Athenian women rushed to the home of Lycidas and stoned to death his wife and children. (9. 5).

Aristophanes makes frequent sarcastic references to the immoral and murderous behavior of women in his later plays. We must however, take into account the exaggerations and distortions of comedy (Aristotle, *Poetics*, Ch. 2,4,5), the misogynist attitude traditional among Greek writers, and Aristophanes' criticism and abuse directed at all levels of society. We hear in the *Thesmophoriazusae* of women drinking to excess :

What have we here? a flask, and not a baby....

O ever thirsty ever tippling women.

O ever ready with fresh schemes for drink....

(LL 631-654, 720-723).

Wives who surreptitiously exchanged or smuggled in babies :

....when late your servant bore a child as well
as you, You took her boy, and in his stead, your
puling girl you gave her. (LL 339, 407, 504-527,
564-583).

(This practice would in part be explained by the high value placed on a fertile wife.⁷⁶ In the context of a thirty year war, an enormous death toll, and Pericles' call to women of child-bearing age (see above) to help replenish Athens' depleted

population, the pressure on women would have been even greater.)

Adulterous wives :

We'd been but three days married : I'm abed
 Husband asleep beside me ; when my lover
 (I'd been familiar with him from a child)
 Came softly scratching at the outer door.
 (LL 478-504).

(This particular instance of adultery might be explained by the Athenian law that required a woman to marry the man chosen, not by her, but by her *kyrious*).

Murderous wives :

Nor how with deadly ax a wife, her lord and
 master slew,
 Another drove her husband mad with poisonous
 drugs fallacious. (LL 548-563).

Euripides' adulterous and murderous women protagonists (and men) are well known to us : Clytemnestra, who committed both offenses ; Phaedra, who includes a condemnation of all high born women for being the first to commit adultery (see Intro.) ; Helen ; Hermione, who has been accused by Andromache of being as lustful as men. (*Andromache*, L 220f); Medea ; Hecuba and Agave. The difference in Euripides' critical approach, is that his consciousness of the traditional social structural bias against women is made sufficiently explicit (more so than other poets ") so that it too becomes a significant element in

explaining women's attitudes and behavior. For example : Phaedra knows that as a woman she is an " object of hate " if she " strains her loyalty to her husband's bed by dalliance with strangers. " (*Hipp.* LL 406-410) whereas men have many liberties.

or when Medea speaks :

A man, when he's tired of the company in his home
Goes out of the house and puts an end to boredom
And turns to a friend or companion of his own age.
But we are forced to keep our eyes on one alone.
What they say of us is that we have a peaceful time
Living at home, while they do the fighting in war.
How wrong they are ! I would very much rather stand
Three times in the front of battle than bear one
child. (*Medea* LL 244-251)

or

As in the case of Helen, the woman adulterer of mythic fame, whom Euripides absolves, in his *Helen*, of any guilt attached to her name.

It was the question of legitimacy of children and the inheritance of property which made adultery such a serious offense for the Athenians and the men, and which, in part, caused them to so jealously guard the chasity of their women. Under Athenian law, the punishment prescribed for the male adulterer caught committing the act with a woman under the *kyrieia* (protection)

of another citizen was death (such a case was documented in a speech written by Lysias for the defendant in an Athenian law court trial c.400-380 B.C.; the defendant, Euphiletus, had exercised his legal right to kill the adulterer caught with his wife. ⁷⁸), the penalties in other instances were less severe. For the female citizen suprisingly -- the traditional Athenian attitude, as we saw above, regarded adultery as the offense of the female -- it was compulsory divorce. ⁷⁹ The severity of the punishment prescribed for male adulterers however, puts into question the traditional notion of absolute female culpability.⁸⁰ This may, in part, reflect a recognition, or a change in attitude promoted by critics, of the prevailing double standard which granted, sexual liberty to men while denying it to women :

.....when our husbands choose to despise the bed they have, a woman is quite willing to imitate her man and find another friend. But when the dirty gossip puts us in the spotlight ; the guilty ones, the men, are never blamed at all. (Eur. *Elec.* LL 1036-1040 ;*Hipp.* LL 405-410 ;Xenophon's *Memorabilia* 11.1.6)

In reality, adulterers, even those caught in the act, were not always made to suffer the extreme penalty. According to Schaps (1979) " precedent had no legal standing " in the courts of Athens, leaving any loophole in the written law open to argument and hence subject to various interpretations. Given this latitude, jurors it appears, did not always apply the law to the " letter ", but rather as they saw fit. In some cases, there were

those who practiced adultery with impunity ; also, if a husband divorced his wife, he would legally have had to forfeit her dowry, since that was not always convenient, it seems likely that adultery was underreported. ⁸¹ Aristophanes tells of a husband bribed by the adulterer to accept a minor punishment of depilation (*Plutus* L 166) ; or a young fop who had his hair shorn adulterer style, with a razor (*Acharnians* LL 850-852) ; or other minor punishments for adultery (*Clouds* LL 1077ff). In Euripides' *Electra*, Clytemnestra laments : "... he [Agamemnon] came home to me with a mad, god-filled girl [Cassandra] and introduced her to our bed. So there we were two brides being stabled in a single stall." (LL 1032-1034 ff), which further illustrates that the laws against adultery were often times flouted by men. Adultery, when committed by the husband, was, in itself, sufficient reason for a wife to have left him if she chose to, but it appears to have occurred only rarely, as in the case of Hipparete (see above). ⁸²

Euripides challenged the prevailing sexual attitudes which marked late fifth century Athens and his views approach those of another critic, Plato (see below). Euripides did not simply criticize the sexual double standard, rather, his exhortations call for moderation in sexual behavior for both sexes (with the emphasis on women), and he portrays marriage and monogamy as the accepted standards for men and women alike. The *Alcestis*, *Hippolytus* (LL 407ff, 839ff), *Andromache* (LL 220ff), *Iphigenia in Aulis* (LL

1158-1159) all attest to this ; Medea, Phaedra, and Clytemnestra are certainly powerful spokespersons for marital fidelity. In Plato's *Laws* men and women are by nature, expected to remain virgin until the age of procreation, and after marriage to practice strict monogamy. Plato's wish was to label all sexual intercourse out of wedlock, adulterous, and in so doing, impose equally severe standards for men and women to redress the sexual double standard. Realizing that the vast majority of men, Greeks and non-Greeks, did not, and would not, conform, he proposed a compromise adultery law in which he stipulated that : " no freeborn citizen should dare touch any [that is to say any citizen or free woman] but his own wedded wife " ; sodomy was forbidden ; and men who engaged in sexual relations with unfree women were to do so in strict secrecy, or risk disenfranchisement (VIII. 836e-841e). Plato's pronouncement, by challenging the prevailing attitudes which permitted men the sexual liberties denied to women, at the very least, would have made suspect any remaining notions of adultery as *exclusively* the offense of the female. ⁸⁵ In effect, that too, is one of the notions discredited in Euripides' conception of women when he proclaims Helen innocent of the charge of adultery, and generally imputes contemporary sexual attitudes (see above).

Athens at war, and evolving sexual and other social attitudes, as we have seen, were continually intertwined. Ongoing war and revolution, combined with rampant individualism had eventually

brought about Athen's total collapse, but something else had occurred simultaneously : Robert Park (1928) and Georg Simmel (1950) both acknowledge that from the chaos and transition, the clash and mixture of cultures, the struggle for individuation, within the confines of the Athenian *polis* a freer, more enlightened social order emerged. Thought was emancipated. and " public opinion set itself up as an authority over and against tradition and custom. " (see also Ch. I and II) " . A reappraisal of attitudes toward women and women's roles in society followed (see above and Ch.I). Euripides always a barometer of his times, captured the change in mood and thought, as did others. In consequence, more positively drawn images of women and family relations emerged. For example. in *The Suppliants* Iphis, father of Evadne, speaks lovingly of his dead daughter :

What a delight that was when I had this child....
 To an old father, nothing is more sweet than a
 daughter. Boys are more spirited, but their ways
 Are not so tender. (Eur. LL 1099-1104)

or

Menelaus, when he is reunited with Helen after having waged a long war to recover his wife, says appreciatively : " O sweetest face, there is nothing left to wish for " (Eur. *Helen* L 636). Compare this also with Isomachus' tribute to his wife's sweetness, when as a young bride of fifteen, he sets out to educate her in the ways of household management ; he also

acknowledges her " highmindedness " and her desire to please him.
 (Xenophon (c. 400 B.C.) *Dikonomikos* VII. 5,6 ; X. 1)

or

In Aristarchus' tale, of the many sisters, nieces, and female cousins he gave refuge to in his household during the reign of terror of " The Thirty " and the subsequent counterrevolution to oust them in 404-403 : Aristarchus, in straitened conditions because his farm and all his properties are in the hands of the opposition laments the impossibility of feeding fourteen free people under his guardianship. At this, Socrates (who reminded him of the profitability of slave labor, and argued that " free people " are better than slaves) advised Aristarchus to encourage the womenfolk to work at profitable household tasks, (wool-working, baking, making barley into pearl barley) rather than remain idle and dependent. Being free women, and members of the leisure class unaccustomed to work, (though by tradition, trained in household management) they nevertheless, complied with energy, cooperation, and good humor, relieved at being self-sustaining. It had not occurred to them to offer their services, nor had Aristarchus suggested it because of women's traditional dependence on men. Socrates had however, introduced a new note of flexibility during a social crisis, all parties had responded favorably and family affection and solidarity prevailed.
 (Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 2.7.1-2 ; *Dik.* 7.10^{ab}).

or

In the epitaphs in praise of women on fifth and fourth century Athenian and Greek tombstones. "

It is however, in Euripides' *Helen* (as was mentioned in other connections) that the reappraisal of attitudes toward women becomes most discernable. In the standard version as told by Homer, a woman Helen, the Spartan queen, was seduced by Paris and overcome with passion was stolen away to Troy, where she was recovered, after a long war, by her husband and the Greeks. Herodotus' version, told to him by the priests at Memphis, Egypt, preceded Euripides' play by about a decade, and has it that Paris, while on his way from Sparta with his stolen queen, encountered foul weather, which diverted his ship toward Egypt, where Helen supposedly " passed some time in the court of Proteus " (II. 111-115). Euripides' play presented in 412, is a variant of the Herodotean legend, as he too has Helen transported to Egypt (albeit supernaturally), not Troy. What is also significant about the later version is that in clearing Helen of the charge of adultery, the futility of an utterly unnecessary war with Troy surfaces. Euripides has Helen state this openly :

Wretched men of Troy and all you Achaeans who
 day after day, went on dying for me....
 you thought Paris had Helen, when he never did.
 Now I have kept the duty of destiny, stayed out
 the time I had to stay, go back into the sky,

my father. All for nothing Tyndareus' daughter
 heard evil things said of her who did nothing
 wrong. (*Helen* LL 609-615)

Even the more conservative Aristophanes turned to the resourcefulness and creativity of women, when he suggested an unorthodox (but unlikely, see above) method for putting an end to the war, where more conventional ones had failed. In the *Lysistrata* produced about one year after Euripides' *Helen* the women are portrayed as dominating events, by organizing a sex strike to protest the continuation of the war. In the *Ecclesiasuzae* exhibited in 392 (Euripides had died by then) when Athens was defeated and impoverished, Aristophanes is believed to have parodied the appearance, while he was working on the play, of a large part (what now constitutes Books II-V) of Plato's *Republic* ⁶⁷ : led by Praxgora, who believes the women to be more stable and competent than the men (LL. 53,110-114,210ff), Aristophanes' assembly of women, espousing radical-communist ideals, is installed to replace an imprudent and ineffective democratic government by men which has failed. In setting down his communist-utopian ideal, Plato outlined a much larger role for women, but nothing like the hyperbole in the Aristophanic version, which does however contain many similarities of thought and expression. For example, in Plato's version :

Socrates : That all these women shall all be common to all

these men, and that none shall cohabit with any privately, and that all children shall be common, and that no parent shall know its own offspring nor any child its parent. (Plato, *Rep.* V. 457d)

In the Aristophanic version :

Praxagora : O no

All women and men will be common and free.

No marriages or other restraint will there be.

(*Ar. Ecc.* LL 604-620)

Blepyrus : But how, may I ask, will the children be known :

And how can a father distinguish his own :

Praxagora : They will never be known : it can never be told ;

All youths will in common be sons of the old.

(*Ar. Ecc.* LL 621-637)

Aristophanes' comic fantasies of politically active women are, surely, in part, designed to target the more radical approach to women's rights espoused by Euripides and Plato ; but could, at the same time, support George Mead's claim that mind itself is social (see Ch. 1). The pro-political activism stance of Praxagora and *Lysistrata* is an interesting twist in Aristophanes' cast of characters, for when the *Acharnians* was shown in 425 (about six years into the war) he revived, perhaps in jest, the older notion, debunked by Euripides in his *Helen*, of a woman (or women) as the cause of war : Dicaeopolis tells a well known story, that it was due to the urging of Aspasia (the mistress of Pericles), naturally in sympathy with the Milesians (being

Milesian herself), that the Samian (see Ch. II) and Peloponnesian conflicts are said to have erupted (LL. 526-534).⁸⁸ Jest or no (Aristophanes targeted everyone, including Socrates, with his wit), its implications are clear, Aspasia wielded political influence in the court of Pericles, and Socrates even attributed to her that she wrote Pericles' noted funeral oration. (Plato *Menexenus* 235e, 236b, 249d ⁸⁹). As told by Plutarch (who acknowledges combining historical fact with legend), another woman, the upper class Elpinice, daughter of the general Miltiades, and half-sister of Pericle's predecessor Cimon, confronted Pericles on his return from the Samian War and protested the deaths of Athenian citizens in a war against an allied city, not as in Cimon's time, against the Persians. On other occasions, she had challenged Pericles' aggressive military-imperialist position and counselled against the fratricidal war, and for Panhellenism. ⁹⁰ Lacey (1968) also points to some actual political participation on the part of ordinary women : somehow, women in both rural and urban Attica had sufficient awareness of other women in their *deme* to enable them to elect a president for the Thesmophoria, whether through direct interaction with other women or through dialogue with their husbands. ⁹¹ Such phenomena might also be viewed as indicators of what Redfield and Singer (1954) call secondary urbanization of a folk society, such as Athens, that results from rapid technical development, and frequent interaction of indigenous peoples with members of diverse cultures, and produces

new and more cosmopolitan social types in both urban and rural areas. '2

The reevaluation of women's roles as expressed in the poetry, philosophy and visual arts of the late fifth century, while it reflected a change in the mind-set of certain groups of Athenians, and some first steps toward women's emancipation, does not necessarily point to any significant improvement in the social experience of women as a whole. That did not occur until later --- in the fourth century, when vast social structural changes resulting from Athen's loss of Empire and political sovereignty had altered the balance of social relations. making them more favorable for women. '3

To close this chapter entitled *The Free Women of Athens during the Peloponnesian War* without some added mention (see above) about the women of the Classical period, who some sources acknowledge did, unlike the women of Athens, participate in military battle, would be to mischaracterize the extent to which the democracy had segregated it's women. Some scholars say women are known to have fought in some of the major battles of the Persian War, " though not necessarily as all women's units " '4. The naval battle waged at Salamis in 480, is purported to have been one of them : as related by Herodotus, (VIII. 86-91) whose evidence is usually a blend of historical fact and legend and who hailed from Halicarnassus, a city in Asia Minor who was an ally

of Persia in the war with Greece : Artemisia, a Persian sea-captain, took part in the naval battle at Salamis and is said to have sunk an Athenian ship and to have been lauded by Xerxes for her bravery : " My men have turned into women, my women into men ". On the other hand, the evidence given by the tragic poet Aeschylus, who fought as part of the Athenian army at Marathon, as his epitaph attested, and probably took part in the naval battle at Salamis, which is described in detail by a messenger in his drama the *Persae* 472 B.C. (LL. 417-867, Greek LL. 249-547)⁵, makes no reference to the participation of women. It is the sole surviving eye-witness account of the historical battle (though not a strict historical document, it is nevertheless, considered invaluable evidence)⁶, which according to Thucydides (1. 74), established Athen's power and her future claim to become hegemon over the whole Greek nation. Another legend of women's bravery, told later by the historian Pausanias, (*Book II Corinth*, Ch. 20. 9-10) describes how Telesilla, the fifth century Argive poet, led the battle of Argive women against the Spartans :

She took the slaves and the males who were too old or too young to bear arms and mounted all of them on a wall. Then she gathered all the weapons and armed all the women who were in the prime of life "

The women fought valiantly, Pausanias goes on to say, and the Spartans, rather than slaughter them, renounced victory. Plutarch

recounts a similar legend⁷⁷, and Herodotus (VI. 77-83) recorded a rather obscure oracle in connection with the same battle which does not, however, mention Telesilla by name : " But when the female subdues the male and drives him out ; And wins thereby great glory among the Argives ". Some scholars also maintain, that one of the little known functions of the *hetaera*, throughout antiquity, was to accompany her comrade to the battlefield to serve as, " cook, nurse, and sometimes companion-in-arms. " ; it is further said that Aspasia went to the front with Pericles⁷⁸, but this may have been a privilege of rank. Pomeroy (1984) states that excavations of the burial sites of some Sarmation women (who according to Herodotus (VII. 110-117) descended from a union of Amazons with Scythian men) from the sixth to the second centuries B.C. revealed various types of weaponry and a suit of armor along with the more customary jewelry and mirrors. ⁷⁹ Thucydides made a brief reference to some spontaneous resistance on the part of Plataean women and slaves to their Theban invaders during the siege of Plataea in 429 B.C. (Plataea was an ally of Athens during the Peloponnesian War) : the women " hurled down stones and tiles " from the rooftops (II. 4) ; and after the evacuation of Plataea he writes of the 110 women left behind to cook for the garrison of 400 Plataeans and 80 Athenians who remained to defend the city (II. 78). With the exception of one reference in his *Heracleidae* which turns out to be an allusion to sacrificial death at the altar : Macaria vows that she is prepared to die

" if Athens were to court frightful danger " (LL. 500-508) ; Euripides, as we have seen, did not raise the question of women as actual or even potential warriors, he depicted them solely as victims of war. Aristophanes reflected the contemporary attitude that war was the exclusive concern of men. It appears it was Plato alone, of his contemporaries, who in the *Republic* allowed that women who showed a propensity could serve as warriors (see above), but then in the *Laws* (VII. 814b) narrowed the field to times of extreme peril, and then for women who had completed childbearing.

If, as is said, the battlefields during the Peloponnesian War were almost entirely the domain of men, it has also been shown, that the operations of war and conquest provided a major source for the acquisition of female slaves --- but that can best be discussed in the context of the following chapter on *Slave Women*.

IN SUMMARY

The Peloponnesian War, which raged on and off for almost thirty years (431-404 B.C.), served as the background to all but one of Euripides' extant plays, and to the everyday lives of the women being investigated. The war between the Greek states accelerated political and social structural change which gradually altered the balance of power between the sexes at

Athens beginning with the latter half of the fifth century. Paradoxically, democratic Athens was at one and the same time a patriarchal society (and a slave-holding society, see Ch. V) : the sexual division of labor was firmly established, and the free women of Athens chiefly relegated to the domestic sphere with no legal rights of their own. Their absence from much of the fifth century literature is ample testimony to their subordinate position. Euripides demonstrated a growing interest in women by placing them center stage in his plays. Though he raised many questions about the sexual double standard (as did Plato, and even Aristophanes), and often allowed for a feminine point of view, which was innovative for his time and rooted in depolarizing relations between the sexes (which were intertwined with the war), contradictory thoughts and attitudes about women persisted, and traditional female values and norms continued to circumscribe the lives of women on stage and off. Participation in mystical and orgiastic religions, which had a revival in the late fifth century, appears to have provided women with some opportunity for self expression, if not always positive. Significant improvement in male-female relations did not occur until the fourth century when Athens' loss of empire and political clout had shifted the equilibrium in favor of women.

NOTES

1. Sorokin, 1957, pp. 20-21 ; Robert Darnton, 1984, *The Great Cat Massacre*, New York : Basic Book Publishers, pp. 3-7.
2. Winick, 1969, p. 344.
3. Ehrenberg, 1968, p. 259.
4. Rex Warner, *Men of Athens*, says Euripides wrote history through his poetry (p. 189). Vernant & Naquet, 1981, *Tragedy & Myth in Ancient Greece*, N.J.: Humanities Press, note especially that " an admirable book has been written retracing the history of Athens through the work of Euripides by R. Goossens, *Euripide et Athens*, Brussels, 1960 ". (p. viii)
5. Bernard M.W. Knox, 1957, *Oedipus At Thebes*. New Haven : Yale University Press, p. 63 ; Ehrenberg, 1968, p. 277, p.461, note: 38.
6. Jaeger, 1945, p. 252 ; Thomson, 1972, p.365.
7. Ehrenberg, 1968, p.264.
8. Murray, 1913, pp. 79-80 ; Ehrenberg, 1968, pp. 265-266.
9. David Riesman, 1961, *The Lonely Crowd*, New Haven : Yale University Press, pp. 14ff ; Wilson, 1964, p. 3.
10. Pomeroy, 1975; Schaps, 1979, Foley, 1981.
11. Plato lived c. 428-348 B.C.. He began writing his memories sometime after 386 B.C., some thirteen years after Socrates' death and some twenty years after Euripides.
12. Lefkowitz and Fant, 1982, p. 81, 82-97 ; Pomeroy, 1984, p.80.
13. Lefkowitz & Fant, 1982, p. 95, no. 100.
14. S.C. Humphreys, 1983, *The Family, Women and Death*, London, Boston : Routledge & Kegan Paul, p. 36 ; Cameron and Kuhrt, 1983, see Ruth Padel, *Women: Model for Possession by Greek Daemons*, pp. 4-5.
15. Cameron and Kuhrt, 1983, pp.4-5.
16. Jean Paul Sartre did an adaptation of Euripides' *The Trojan Women* (*The Trojan Women*, 1967, New York: A. Knopf, English version by Ronald Duncan) which he considered " was an explicit condemnation of war in general and of imperial expeditions in particular. " (p.xii).

17. Murray, 1913, p.127 ; *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, p.420.
18. Ehrenberg, 1962, p.312.
19. Murray, 1913, pp. 14,90,95,96 ; Ehrenberg, 1962, p.312.
20. Ehrenberg, 1962, maintains that the ideal of the " warrior type " had lost much of its old significance by the time of Euripides. Its idea he believes, lived on in the state and in the tragic tradition through Sophocles, but on the level of the individual man the notion had a " much more civic and even bourgeois character " (pp.302-3, 316); Pomeroy, 1984, p.99. Max Weber, 1922, *The Sociology of Religion*, Boston: Beacon Press, p.85, says the educated Greek always remained a warrior, at least in theory.
21. Ehrenberg, 1962, makes the point that Plato seems to treat war as a normal event of political life rather than as an evil to be abolished (p. 311 n. 4).
22. Pomeroy, 1975, p.113.
23. W. K. Lacey, 1968, interprets the words put into Pericles' mouth by Thucydides to mean only that widows should be self-controlled (p.270, n. 178).
24. Pomeroy, 1975, p.66.
25. Ehrenberg, 1968, pp. 299, 327 ; Pomeroy, 1975, pp.55, 66, 119.
26. Ehrenberg, 1962, p. 311 ; Hadas, 1962, p. 267.
27. Pomeroy, 1984, p.99. See also Ehrenberg, 1962, p.304 ; 1968, p.364.
28. Ehrenberg, 1968, p.364.
29. Lacey, 1968, p.143 ; Pomeroy, 1975, p.66 .
30. Schaps, 1979, p.41.
31. Schaps, 1979, p.18 ; Pomeroy, 1984, p.155.
32. Cameron and Kuhrt, 1983, p.216.
33. Ehrenberg. 1968, p.247.
34. Cameron and Kuhrt, 1983, p. 216.
35. Humphreys, 1983, p.47.

36. Schaps, 1979, p.81.
37. Schaps, 1979, p. 41.
38. Lacey, 1967, p.175.
39. Cameron and Kuhrt, 1983, p.217.
40. Schaps, 1979, pp. 5,81,82; Cameron and Kuhrt, 1983, p. 217; Humphreys, 1983, p.7.
41. Lacey, 1968, p.270,n.178, attempted to disprove the view that Pericles in his address to the widows, said women should never be spoken of by men; he believes Pericles meant only that widows should be self-controlled.
42. Humphreys, 1983. p. 66.
43. Humphreys, 1983, p.42.
44. Humphreys, 1983, p.42.
45. Winick, 1969, pp. 342-344.
46. Pomeroy, 1975. p. 101.
47. A.P. Burnett, 1971, *Catastrophe Survived*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, p.345; Pomeroy, 1975, p.109; Humphreys, 1983, p.62.
48. Sennett, 1969, see : Simmel, pp. 57-58.
49. Diller, 1937, p.156. In the fifth century, Thracians seem to have been especially numerous in Athens. They introduced the worship of their goddess Bendis before the Peloponnesian war, and Miltiades a Thracian ruler who fled to Athens after the Ionian revolt against the Persians in 493, was ultimately elected one of the *strategi* (generals) in the early years of the democracy. (pp. 119,126). Thracians also appear in Athenian mythology, in Aeschylus, Sophocles and fragments of Euripides' *Erectheus* (p.153), and in his *Alcestis* (LL 675-6).
50. Fustel De Coulanges,1956, (first English edition, 1873), *The Ancient City*, New York : Doubleday & Co., Inc., p. 17.
51. Diller, 1937, pp.55, 102.
52. Diller, 1937, pp.24, 103-105.
53. Sennett, 1969, see: Redfield & Singer, pp. 216-217.
54. Pomeroy 1975, p.161.

55. Pomeroy, 1975, p.161 ; Mary B. Lefkowitz, 1981, *Heroines and Hysterics*. New York: St. Martin's Press, p. 54 ; Mary R. Lefkowitz and Maureen B. Fant, 1982, *Women's Life In Greece And Rome*, Baltimore : Jon Hopkins University Press, pp. 142-143.
56. Pomeroy, 1975, pp. 149-150,161 ; Lefkowitz and Fant, 1983, pp.138-139 (no.146, quotation from Plutarch) ; Jane McIntosh Snyder, 1989, *The Woman and the Lyre*, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, pp. 123-125,151.
57. Lefkowitz, 1981, p. 10 ; Helene P. Foley, 1985, *RITUAL IRONY - Poetry and Sacrifice in Euripides*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, p.22 ; ed. Burian, 1985, see Knox, p.2.
58. Knox, 1985, p.2.
59. Menoeceus, son of Creon in Euripides' *Phoenissae* (LL 930ff) is the one young male virgin in his corpus of plays who dies ritually to save his city in crisis ; Menoeceus' sacrifice can be identified with those of the three female protagonists who voluntarily go to their death : Iphigenia, Polyxena and Macaria.
60. Foley, 1985, p. 65, n. 1.
61. Emile Durkheim, 1915, *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, New York: The Free Press, pp.387-88. Foley, 1985, p. 23.
62. Max Weber, 1964, *The Sociology of Religion*, Boston: Beacon Press, (first published in Germany in 1922). Weber stated: that " The Greeks, despite the misgivings of the urban patriciate in regard to the Dionysiac cult of intoxication, set a positive value upon ecstasy. " (p. 180).
63. Max Weber, 1964, pp. 217, 221-222.
64. Lefkowitz, 1981, p.55.
65. Lefkowitz, 1981, p.55.
66. Max Weber, 1964, p.239.
67. Pomeroy, 1975, pp. 81,119.
68. Lacey, 1968, p.172 ; Pomeroy, 1975, pp.65,81,90,195 ; Schaps, 1979, p. 77.
69. Ehrenberg, 1968, pp. 300, 466: note 74.
70. Ehrenberg, 1968, pp. 302, 466: note 76; Schaps, 1979, p.30.

71. Ehrenberg, 1962, p.195; Pomeroy, 1975, p.81.
In a fragment from Menander, Athens, 4th cent.B.C. : A husband, angered by his wife Crobyle (whom he married for her money) for having thrown his favorite servant girl out of the house, complains of her tyrannical nature and her face which he says resembles a " jackass among ape ". (Lefkowitz and Fant, 1982, p.19). Crobyle did not however, like Hipparete, seek a divorce.
72. Pomeroy, 1975, p.81.
73. Ehrenberg, 1962, p. 195; Lacey, 1968, p. 153; Pomeroy, 1975, p.81.
74. Kathleen Freeman, 1946, *The Murder of Herodes*, London: McDonald and Co., Ltd., pp. 86,94.
75. Helene F. Foley, 1981, *Reflections of Women in Antiquity*, New York: Gordon Breach Science Publishers, see: Carolyn Dewald, pp. 91,98,99.
76. Lacey, 1968, p. 169.
77. A fragment of Sophocles' *Tereus* (fr. 565) also makes evident the fate of women in mid-fifth century Athens : Procne's husband Tereus, has seduced her sister, and in revenge she plots to murder their son.
But now outside my fathers's house, I am nothing, yes often I have looked on women's nature in this regard, that we are nothing. Young women, in my opinion, have the sweetest existence known to mortals in their father's homes, for their innocence always keeps children safe and happy. But when we reach puberty and can understand, we are thrust out and sold away from ancestral gods and from our parents. Some go to strange men's homes, others to foreigners ', some to joyless houses, some to hostile. And all this once the first night has yoked us to our husband, we are forced to praise and to say that all is well. (Lefkowitz and Fant, 1982, pp. 16-17)
Procne's utterances become even more meaningful when recalling Thucydides' (11.29) words mentioned in another connection: Procne is described by him, as having been the daughter of Pandion, from Athens, and likely that her marriage to Tereus, a Thracian, was arranged by her father to promote " mutual aid ". That Procne bears certain resemblance (both in Sophocles and Thucydides) to Euripides' protagonists Medea and Phaedra, is noteworthy.
78. See: On The Killing of Eratosthenes The Seducer in *THE MURDER OF HERODES and Other Trials From The Athenian Law Courts*, by Katherine Freeman, 1946, pp.43-53.

79. Freeman, 1946, p.23; Ehrenberg, 1962, p.196 ; Lacey, 1968, p.113.
80. Lacey, 1968, p.114.
81. Lacey, 1968, p.114 ; Schaps, 1979, pp. 61, 63.
82. Freeman, 1946, p. 23 ; Ehrenberg, 1962, p.195.
83. Lacey, 1968, p.114.
84. Sennett, 1969, see: Simmel, pp. 54-55 ; see: Robert Park, Human Migration and the Marginal Man, pp. 136-139.
85. Lacey, 1968. pp. 170-1.
86. Lefkowitz and Fant, 1962, pp. 11-12.
87. *Aristophanes*, Vol. III, The Loeb Classical Library. 1924, Mass : Cambridge University Press, tran. B.E. Rodgers, p. 246.
88. Beard, 1931, reprinted 1968, *On Understanding Women*. New York : Greenwood Press, p. 114 ; Ehrenberg, 1968, p. 458 ; N.O. Ireland, 1970, *Index to Women of the World From Ancient to Modern Times*, Westwood, Mass.: F.W. Faxon Co., pp. xviii-xix ; Pomeroy, 1975, p. 69 ; Humphreys, 1983, p.24.
89. Socrates' crediting Aspasia with having written Pericles' funeral oration appears to conflict with her reputation as a liberated woman, for in it, Pericles imposes restraints on women. Also in the *Menexenus* Aspasia gives much importance to women's role as childbearer and caretaker (137e-239b).
90. Beard, 1968, p.90 ; Ehrenberg, 1968, p.241 ; ed., B.A. Carroll, 1976, *Liberating Women's History*, see : A Classical Scholars Perspective On Matriarchy, by S. Pomeroy, Chicago : University of Chicago Press, p. 220.
91. Lacey, 1968, p. 173.
92. Sennett, 1969, see: Redfield & Singer, pp. 216-218.
93. Ehrenberg. 1962, p.206 ; Winick, 1969, p. 344 ; Pomeroy, 1975, pp. 119-20.
94. Elise Boulding, 1976, *The Underside of History*, Boulder, Colorado : Westview Press, p. 250 ; Beard, 1968, p. 114.
95. Aeschylus : *Persians*, general editor William Arrowsmith, 1981, *The Greek Tragedy in New Translations*, New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, trans. Janet Lembke and C.J. Herington.

96. Jaeger, 1945, p.338 ; Murphy,Guinagh and Oates, 1947, p.180 ; Ehrenberg, 1968, p.163 ; Arrowsmith, 1981, pp.1-12.

97. Lefkowitz & Fant, 1982, p.21.

98. Beard, 1968, p. 114 ; Boulding, 1970, p.263 : Pomeroy, 1984, PP. 99-101.

99. Pomeroy, 1984, p. 7.

CHAPTER V DRAMA AND THE SLAVE WOMEN OF ATHENS DURING THE
PELOPONNESIAN WAR

In the previous chapter, we attempted to discover the mentality of an age, as reflected in the drama, and as it concerned the free women of Athens. In this chapter, we will similarly undertake to uncover thoughts and attitudes during the same period, however, the focus will be on Athens' slave women. We will begin the study, by first inquiring into the wider institution of slavery at fifth century Athens.

1. The Institution of Slavery

Paradoxically, democratic Athens in the fifth century was at one and the same time a slave holding society. The growth of the economy at Athens had led both to the progress of democracy and the advancement of slavery. I cannot here undertake to do a comprehensive study of the very complex institution of slavery at Athens, but must content myself with giving some pointers about its pivotal role. The existence of slavery was generally taken for granted in the Greek world, especially in a developed economy such as Athens (where it is considered by some to have been the dominant mode of production¹). The institution rested on a fundamental premise of human inequality, right of might, but the chief factor in its development was the demand for labor. The statistics on the size of the slave population, the gender ratio, and the degree to which the Athenian economy relied upon slave

labor are notly disputed issues among ancient historians and others.

Karl Marx (1952) wrote in *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations* of settled communities :

Where man himself is captured as an organic accessory of the land and together with it, he is captured as one of the conditions of production, and this is the origins of slavery and serfdom, which soon debase and and modify the original forms of all communities, and themselves become their foundation. ²

Conquest was essential to the functioning of the ancient community, comprised of landed properties. ³

Max Weber (1896) in *The Social Basis of the Decline of Ancient Civilization* attributed a central role to slavery in shaping the development of ancient society :

Ancient civilization was a *slave civilization* (*Slavenkultur*) As in the Middle Ages, the antagonism between both forms of cooperative human labor also existed in antiquity. Progress depends on *progressive* division of labor. With free labor that is more or less identical with progressive expansion of the market With unfree labor that is achieved by progressive amassing of men ; the more slaves or *coloni*,

the greater the specialization of unfree occupations that is possible. But whereas in the Middle Ages *free labor* and the exchange of goods were increasingly victorious, the development in antiquity was the *reverse*.⁴

M. I. Finley, in his studies of ancient slavery, often compared it with slavery in the American South in the nineteenth century. He says a conservative estimate of 60,000 slaves in Athens at the end of the fifth century made up about 30% of the population which is precisely in the same range as the slave population in the American South in 1860, which was 33%.⁵ He concluded :

that is more than sufficient, especially since indications are that slave owners came from much lower in the socio-economic scale and this proportion of slaves endured over a long period of time in antiquity.⁶

Finley, however, makes the point that the overwhelming majority of Athenian workers, whether they owned one or two slaves apiece or not, struggled to earn a livelihood which rarely reached above the minimum standard.⁷

Ehrenberg (1962) believes slavery was supplementary, not part of the foundation of the economic life of Attica ; many free laborers frequently worked harder than many a slave. Nevertheless, he goes on to say, the social life in Attica was unthinkable without slaves and he cites Aristophanes' utopian

communist society led by women, where the thought of lives without slaves was preposterous, they were expected to labor on the farms (*Ecclesia*. LL 651) (see below).⁹ Diller (1937) said the importance of slavery in Athens came with the development of Athens first industry, the manufacture of pottery which occurred in the early sixth century. From that time on large numbers of slaves were put to work in the various industries such as mining, manufacturing and even agriculture. The essential character of slavery in Athens remained the same throughout its history, only its numbers increased as the economy prospered. With the exception of the mines, Diller thought slavery not basic to Athens' economy.⁹ Kitto (1957) tells us that slavery was certainly not the basis of economic life at Attica, but rather added to the amenities of life. Like Diller, the one exception he noted is that of the slaves who worked in the silver mines.¹⁰ (Production in the silver mines, in the district of Laurium, was an important source of revenue for Athens. They were worked by the *mettaleis* (mine slaves) whose numbers, some experts agree, often ran into the five figures in the Classical period, and who were known to have been ill-treated ; their iron fetters have been found in the galleries of Laurium. ¹¹)

The anthropologist and historian Sally Humphreys (1978) points to an important Periclean policy which reinforced the institution of slavery (and in some ways her views coincide with those of

Max Weber, also Finley's). His strategy of abandoning the land of Attica and moving the peasantry to the city threatened the independence of the individual as well as the *polis*. To deal with the political crisis or identity created by the loss of association with the land, he substituted state paid employment such as jury work, political offices in Athens, and for the majority, military duty at home or in other cities of the empire. Humphreys says, this answer precluded the development of free wage labor in Athens just at the time when the city's population was expanding and the economy at its peak. The demand for free labor which had arisen was met by "modifying the conditions of slavery instead of recruiting free men".¹² Slave ownership and slave status was enhanced by Pericles' policy. Interestingly, one result was that slavery had important effects on the flow of money in the Athenian economy. One such effect was that poor citizens, caught in a vicious circle, intensified political involvement and more avidly sought state funded work to assert the status distinction between themselves and slaves. In that way money from the state revenue moved from the rich (e.g. from tax revenue) to the poor.¹³

Historian Yvon Garlan (1988) attempts to examine slavery in ancient Athens (and Greece) -- which he believes was the " very " base " of the community "¹⁴ -- phenomenologically, rather than as an institution to be understood in light of modern moral or economic standards. He states, that for the Greeks slavery was

strictly relevant to the economic sphere, to the management of the *oikos*. It quite simply lay outside the area of concern of the cosmologically-minded pre-socratics for example, and beyond the reflections of the post-socratics preoccupied with individual virtue (he does not mention the important contemporary *man is the measure* notion of the sophist philosopher Protagoras, or the preoccupation of the medical men). It was even less a subject for discussion at the funeral speeches for the dead warriors, which were supremely patriotic moments for the Athenians, and outsiders were not considered part of the ceremony. Moreover, while slaves were considered indispensable to the supervision of the *oikos* in the literature of the *oikonomikos* (" household and estate management " ¹⁵) which developed in the mid-fifth century, exploitation of slaves (the extent to which they contributed to the leisure of their owners) was treated secondarily, and the absorption of slaves as dependents akin to other members of the family was treated extensively. Garland believes that slavery was not central, and sometimes altogether ignored in such dialogue, not because its authors were " misinformed or even deliberately misleading on the subject. Rather [he thinks] we should ask ourselves why the situation could not have been otherwise ". ¹⁶ As to the subject of slaves in Tragedy (Comedy as well), he tells us they are not altogether representative of real life : Euripides, who he points out, depicts more slaves than either Aeschylus or Sophocles [which is realistic], occasionally gives them central roles,

and they are usually women who retain a certain nobility, for example, Hecuba and Andromache [some women captured were of the upper classes and most slaves were acquired through conquest]. He goes on to say, that slaves in Euripides also tend to mimic contemporary philosophical views on slavery, which leaves uncertain what the slaves themselves thought. Garlan seems to turn the argument around, when he notes that ordinary slaves appear in minor roles and merely serve to complement the main character : " indispensable yet insignificant on stage just as in real life." ¹⁷

Ehrenberg (1968) tells us that theoretical reflection had not nearly opened the way so that slaves could be seen to be " as human as free people ". although a minority always shared that view. ¹⁸ It appears, that Euripides must have shared the minority view (see below) : at times, he represents slaves as worthy of giving counsel to their mistresses and masters, hence human. For example, in (LL. 89-90ff) of the *Hippolytus* the Servant risks advising the arrogant Hippolytus, as do the Nurses when Medea and Phaedra are troubled (see Ch. I, IV).

The social hierarchy of slaves was roughly divided into three groups, based on the relation of the slave to the household of the owner. Slaves with the lowest status did not serve in the *oikos* and were segregated in special quarters to be exploited as unskilled workers when the demand was for the cheapest kind of

labor. This type of slave served for financial investment and could be called upon to serve his owner or to be rented and sold to other owners as servile laborers. Nicias the general, owned 1000 such slaves which he rented per diem to Sosias the Thracian for labor in the silver mines at Laurium. ¹⁹

The second category were those slaves who became part of the *oikos* (such as the Nurses of Medea and Phaedra) and were known as *oiketai*. In Athens the *oikos* was a clearly defined institution and membership carried religious and legal standing. Newcomers were ritually received, they shared the religion of their owners and lived with the family (Aristophanes, *Knights*, LL 2 ; *Plutus*, LL 768f). ²⁰ Since there was no clear separation between service in the household or service outside, it is probable at Athens that large numbers of *oiketai* assisted their owners in *egasteria* (small shops). Many of the industries were not operated on a large scale, but rather in small shops where about a dozen men were employed, slaves working side by side with free laborers who comprised a large part of the artisan class. Large sections of the building records of the final stages of the construction of the Erechtheum on the Acropolis in 409-404 B.C., have been preserved and among other facts, they indicate that Phalakros, a citizen of Athens, and his three slaves, all stone-masons were employed by the state to do some of the most intricate stone work. As Finley (1964) points out, while the owner and his slaves were being paid by the state to do this work

they were in this instance equals in the eyes of the state, but in no other way. ²¹

The third category included those slaves who fell somewhere between *oiketai* and free persons, a tributary status, in particular those slaves employed in banking. ²² Frequently slaves were allowed to leave their owners because they had excelled or for reasons of expediency, and establish households of their own and manage their own affairs. They could have a family, acquire wealth, and had some limited legal rights, but they were still required to pay their owners a fixed tribute (*apophora*) from their earnings. Their military service obligations were the same as metics but here their " freedom " was curtailed as they were required by law to register their owners as patrons. ²³

Some slaves, (probably small numbers) were emancipated under certain conditions (see below), most frequently if they were able to pay for their freedom from their earnings. They were rarely if ever, allowed to become citizens. The *polis* of Athens granted manumission to a small number of slaves for outstanding service, for example, if they gave evidence of crimes or treachery (generally with permission of the owner). ²⁴

Pseudo-Xenophon, or the Old Oligarch as he is often referred to, an anonymous pamphleteer of the fifth century, gives a vivid

account of the " great impudence " of slaves and metics at Athens during the Peloponnesian War and he attributes this peculiar type of slavery to Athens' maritime character. He objects that it is not allowed to strike them, nor do they step aside, and he explains why this is so : Athenians wear no better clothes and have no better appearance than the slaves or metics, and might therefore be confused as one and the same and would be at risk of being struck themselves. He also claims that slaves enjoyed *isegoria* (full freedom of speech). The consensus among the experts is that his is a one-sided and highly questionable view of a detractor of the democracy, made more suspect by his confusing the status of slaves with that of metics which in the fifth century was defined. ²⁵ It would seem that differences in social status among the slaves were discernable, and often from the clothing worn. ²⁶ In Xenophon's *Oeconomicus* (13.10) Isomachos provides incentives for his rural slaves by rewarding the more productive with better clothes and shoes, and the less deserving with inferior garments.

In real life many of the slaves, perhaps the majority were non-Greeks. ²⁷ Euripides speaks of non-Greeks as typical slaves, " Some Lydian slave, some Phrygian you bought ? " (*Alcestis*, LL 675-676); or " Slaves? Is that all she has? I'm not afraid of any Trojan slaves." (*Orestes*, LL 1111ff). Judging by Aristophanes' comedies, this seems to be the case as well. ²⁸ Some experts believe women slaves outnumbered male slaves ;

others, relying on similar sources, suggest a contradictory interpretation (see below). Women were largely domestics, servants who assisted the mistress of the house, in part, sexually exploited by the male members of the household. Prostitution was yet another aspect of their service. The diverse roles of women as slaves will be discussed below.

2. Slave Women

Many slaves were recruited in warfare and women were much more likely to be taken alive by their captors, the majority condemned to live out their lives in servitude to the victors as part of the prize of war, and this also occurred during the Peloponnesian War. ²⁹ Ehrenberg (1962) in his sociology of Old Attic Comedy, *The People of Aristophanes* says Comedy is " true to life " in representing the female slave population of Athens as larger than the male. ³⁰ Garland (1968) on the other hand, states that the three or more domestic slaves, on an average, owned by the large majority of free Athenians were " probably mainly of the male sex ", and the evidence he cites is a table, from another source, of the numbers of male and female slaves in Aristophanes' comedies. ³¹ Slave numbers during the period, as a whole, as compared with the citizen body and other free population, with regard to gender, and to task allocation, are widely disputed among scholars (see table of slave estimates below).

COMPARATIVE SLAVE ESTIMATES

Population at Athens peaked in 431 B.C. at outbreak of Peloponnesian War.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Citizens</i>	<i>Metics</i>	<i>Slaves</i>	<i>Total</i>
431	120,000	30,000	80,000	230,000 ¹
431			60,000 - 80,000	250,000 - 275,000 ²
431			125,000*	310,000* ³

* *Estimates for Attica (slave breakdown by task allocation :
Domestics - 65,000 (most scholars agree that largest number of
slaves were domestics) ; Industry - 50,000 ; Mines - 10,000).*

(see page 208)

¹ Diller (1937), p.156.

² Finley (1963), pp.38, 52 (according to Finley, 60,000 - 80,000 slaves is a conservative estimate).

³ Kitto (1951), p.132.

Athenian slaves, while they were regarded as *anthropos* a human being, by the free members of the society, at the same time, never quite attained the human status (see above). First and foremost, the slave was a possession, a chattel (*andrapoda*, " human footed stock " was one of the various terms used interchangeably to connote the slave)³² : he or she could be moved, or sold for a price at will, regardless of the slaves own wish. We see this supported in Euripides : In *The Trojan Women*, only the women and children remain captive and Hecuba speaks, " And I, whose wretched slave shall I be ? Where in grey age a faint drone, Shall I stand and keep guard at their doors, shall I nurse their children ? " (LL. 190-195) ; the female chorus of Trojan captives in the *Hecuba* speak. " We left the tent.... where the lot assigned us ---- Slaves, torn from home " when Troy was burnt and sacked by the conquering Greeks (LL. 99-104) ; Andromache, (widow of Hector at the fall of Troy) in the play of the same name, has been allotted to the son of Achilles as his slave and sorrowfully says, " I was clapped in servitude, shipped to Greece as booty for Neoptolemus.... " (*And.* LL. 190-195), and Hermione, wife of Andromache's captor, rails at her, " You ! You common slave ! You soldier's winnings ! (*And.* L. 155) (Euripides is also true to life in portraying Andromache as the victim of her mistress's verbal abuse and jealous rage - see below) ; in the *Rhesus* Greek prisoners of war are forced into rural slavery, " And the

survivors can be caught and tied and learn to work the wheat fields in our land.... " (LL. 74-75, 176-77).

Slaves were also imported by Athens from slave traders who supplied them for profit. Aristophanes, though he did not condemn the institution of slavery, portrayed the Thessalian slave traders who supplied Athens, derisively : " Some merchant from Thessaly coming, belike, where most of the kidnappers dwell. Who still for the sake of the gain he will make, with the slaves that we want will provide us. " (*Plutus* LL. 520-521). Slaves were acquired by kidnapping on land and through piracy at sea. ³³ Aristophanes in the *Birds* alludes to the piracy which flourished during the war : " No, but to dodge the pirates, I'll then come flying homeward with the cranes.... " (LL. 1427ff). Though slaves as a rule were bought and paid for, it is conceivable that slaves were also given as gifts or as a tribute to the gods ³⁴ : The foundling Ion, in Euripides' play of that name, is a slave in the temple of Apollo at Delphi and his words, and those of his as yet unrecognized mother Creusa, suggest it was so, Ion : " I am what I am called, Apollo's slave. " ; Creusa : " A city's votive gift or sold by someone ? " (LL.310).

The *Ion* suggests another, if variable source of slavery for the Athenians --- the exposure of infants --- who were foremost females. ³⁵ According to Pomeroy (1975, 1983, 1984) among the Ancient Greeks (in contrast to the Ancient Hebrews and Egyptians)

there was a long tradition of exposing unwanted infants, and it was practiced to some extent in peacetime fifth century Athens.³⁶ It appears to have served as a form of population control and family planning ; and a great number of the exposed infants were the offspring of unmarried women, slave girls, *hetærae*, and prostitutes of all classes ; and in Attic law abandoned infants were presumed to be slaves. ³⁷ Tragedy bears this out : in Euripides' *Ion* Creusa, while still a girl, was seduced by Apollo and gave birth to a son, Ion. Fearing her parents wrath, she exposed him. But unknown to Creusa, who supposed the child dead, Apollo had sent Hermes to take the infant to the temple at Delphi. There he was discovered and reared by a Pythian priestess and eventually became a slave in the temple. Another instance in Greek tragedy, is of course, the Oedipus legend : The story rests on the exposure of the infant Oedipus, who at birth, had been destined --- metaphorically --- to be held slave by an ominous prophesy. Both Plato (*Republic* 459d-460c) and Aristotle (*Politics* VII. 16. 1335b) unequivocally counselled the exposure of "defective" children.

In Aristophanes' the *Frogs* we hear of a new born child that was exposed : " No sooner born, than they exposed the babe (And that in winter), in an earthen crock. " (LL. 1189-1189). In the *Thesmophoriazusae* in four separate instances, (LL. 339, 407, 504-527, 564-583, mentioned in another connection in Ch. IV) we hear of supposititious children : The infants born to slave

women, prostitutes, or those exposed by citizen households, and stolen in by wives who perhaps, were infertile or had aborted, or whose infants had died, or being sickly were exchanged for a healthy child. ³⁸ Both these plays, remember, were presented during the Peloponnesian war, suggesting that the exposure of infants took place then, as well as in peacetime ; it may also be that the supposititious children had eluded slavery because of warring Athens', by then, greatly depleted population.

One other, also inconstant source of slave labor, was the birth of slave children in Athenian households. ³⁹ Xenophon in his *Oikonomikos* (9.5) alluded to the children of slaves when he suggested the method by which unwanted slave pregnancies were averted : he showed his new wife the bolted door which separated the women's quarters from the men's quarters (in Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusaë* LL. 414ff, the women protest the bolts, seals and fierce Molossian dogs used to guard their quarters) : " so that servants may not produce offspring without our knowledge ". He did however, sanction sexual intercourse to beget children as an incentive for good slaves. We hear of slave children born in Athenian households in Comedy (see above). ⁴⁰ Slave children are important to the plot of two of Euripides' plays : in the *Andromache*, Andromache speaks of the child born to her in slavery and sired by her captor Neoptolemus, " Within that house I've given birth to a boy, bred to that same Achilles' son, my master. " (LL. 24f) and Hermione envious of her husband

Neoptolemus' slave, consoles herself with the knowledge that the children born to Andromache would be "illegitimate", "half slave" children, while her own would be legitimate. (L. 942. see also LL. 199f, 634ff). Euripides is accurate in his portrayal in that slave masters did at times father slave children, and at Athens the child of a free man and a slave would acquire the status of the mother. ⁴¹ In the *Ion* the play's chief protagonist, the slave Ion, knowing nothing of the circumstances of his birth, ponders the identity of his long lost mother, " If by some chance my mother were a slave, To find her would be worse than ignorance. " (L.1362f).

The *Ion* also gives us insights into Euripides' own concept of slavery (see above), which was strongly influenced by Sophistic thought and therefore reflected the contemporary concern with *arete* (virtue) and the *physis* (nature) *nomos* (law) debate which developed during the middle and late fifth century (see Chapter II) : The Old Man says, " A slave bears only this Disgrace: the name. In every other way An honest slave is equal to the free. " (LL. 854-856). Though Euripides apparently deplored the institution of slavery ⁴², it would seem the time for serious reflection on its abolition was still well in the future. Sophistic relativists had taken some hesitant first steps in that direction when they argued that natural law was superior to state law, and to support their view, pointed to the arbitrary nature of laws passed by political regimes. Logic

therefore compelled them to oppose the long held majority view that slaves were by nature inferior, Greeks distinct from barbarians, and to uphold some limited theory of the natural equality of humankind. Hippocratic empiricism with its intent focus on the study of man's biological nature would, to some extent, have validated the sophistic view.⁴³ Plato, though he attempted to talk around it : " Why slaves have often enough by now shown themselves far better men in every way than brothers or sons.... " (*Laws* VI. 776e) was an opponent in that throughout his writings (for example, 776b-776a) is a presupposition of natural slavery.⁴⁴ Later, Aristotle, with some minor deviations, also maintained the natural inferiority of slaves :

The use of slaves hardly differs at all from that of tame animals : they both help with their bodies to supply our essential needs. It is then, nature's purpose to make the bodies of free men to differ from those of slaves....
(*Politics* 1254 b16).

According to Diogenes Laertius : Aristotle in his will noted fourteen domestic slaves among his possessions, several of whom, under certain conditions, he requested be given their freedom (V. 12-16) ; and Plato's will shows him to have owned five domestic slaves with a provision to enfranchise one (III.41-44) and he is said to have threatened one of his slaves with a flogging. (III. 36-39).

Which brings us to the subject of domestic slaves or the typical duties of female slaves : The division of labor between the sexes appears to have extended to slaves as well : The vast majority of female slaves were *oiketai* (domestics), slaves who performed a variety of household tasks regarded as both natural and essential to the smooth functioning of the *oikos* and everyday life. ⁴⁰ Aristotle in the *Politics* considers that " a complete household is made up namely, [of] the free and the slaves " (1253 b1). The typical duties of female slaves as described by Euripides consisted of grinding corn, kneading and baking bread, sprinkling and scrubbing the floors, cleaning house, wool-working, and receiving callers at the door : Polyxena, daughter of Hecuba, queries Odysseus, " Sister of Hector, sister of princes, doing the work of a drudge, kneading the bread and scrubbing the floors, compelled to drag out endless weary days ? " (*Hec.* LL. 362-364) ; the aged Hecuba is expected to answer the door, " I must work the bolt that bars their doorway.... or bake their bread. " (*Tro. Wom.* LL. 511-514) ; Hermione orders her slave Andromache, " Sweep out the house, my house, your fingers sprinkling Brook-water from the pails...." (*And.* L. 166) ; the male slave Ion will also ".... cleanse the floor with Sprinklings of water.... (*Ion* LL. 105-106).

The evidence of Comedy generally supports the passages in Euripides : In Aristophanes' the *Frogs* the slave Xanthias is called upon by his master to open the door, " Boy ! Boy ! I say

there, Boy ! Who banged the door ? " (L. 34f ; *Wasps* L. 768f).
 Slaves of both sexes habitually went shopping in the markets. ⁴⁶
 Slave women are frequently referred to in Comedy as basket
 bearers, aides and housemaids, for example, " Thratta has
 scorched the pots " (*Wasps* L. 820f) (the frequent use of the
 ethnic name Thratta among servant women is regarded as evidence
 of the abundant number of Thracian nationals held at Athens
 (*Acharnians* L. 246ff ; *Peace* L. 1135 ; *Thesmo.* LL. 279-280). ⁴⁷
 A female public servant from Scythia is mentioned in the
Lysistrata (L. 184 ; *Thesmo.* L. 1001ff) (Scythian archers
 were slaves who served as police in Athens). Female slaves
 performed the burdensome task of filling their *hydriai* (water
 jars) at the springs and wells :

Trouble it was, forsooth, before my jug
 I could fill, All in the dusk of the morn,
 at the spring by the side of the hill,
 What with the clatter of pitchers,
 the noise and the press of the throng
 Jostling with knaves and slaves
 Till at last I snatched it along
 Abundance of water supplying....
 (*Lys.* LL. 327-333).

Water was used not only for cooking (only occasionally were male
 slaves cooks ⁴⁸) and cleaning, but for baths as well (*Lys.* LL.
 338, 372-376) and required that generous supplies of water be

transported. From the archeological evidence, it appears that some fifth century Athenian houses --- probably of the well-to-do --- had their own wells in the courtyard for drawing water ; and in one country house in Attica, water was supplied by a conduit.⁴⁹ In the *Hippolytus* Phaedra's servants fill their water pitchers at the springs, wash their clothes in the streams, and at the same time gossip (Eur. LL. 124-126). As attested by inscriptions : a society of launderers, who washed clothes on the banks of the Ilissos river in fourth century Athens, set up a tablet which included the names of two washerwomen, Leuce and Myrrhine. ⁵⁰ Other professions of freedwomen, according to inscriptions recording the attainment of manumission in fourth century Athens, consist mainly of wool-workers, nurses, retailers, an aulos player, and one horse tender. ⁵¹

The vast majority of female slaves lived in households estimated at holding at least three slaves (some households owned a single slave or none, others twelve and more). ⁵² Their condition as domestics who had been ritually received into the household --- unlike public slaves --- allowed them a small degree of security and in some instances the affection of their owners : ⁵³ In Euripides' *Electra* Clytemnestra, in all her bourgeois grandeur, arrives at the lowly farmhouse of her daughter in a chariot attended by two Trojan slave girls, and somewhat embarrassed says, "these girls, the best in Troy, I chose to ornament my own house and replace the child I lost, my loved daughter. " but

then adds " The compensation is small ". (LL. 1001-1003 ; see also *Supp. L. 869ff ; Ion, L. 854ff ; Helen L. 728ff*). Those positive feelings expressed by the master toward his slaves arose, in part, from a prevailing view fostered by the sophists which, undermined the traditional acceptance of natural slavery and emphasized the notion that good individual character superceded ascribed status (see above). Euripides appears to have emphasized the role of the " good " slave in his plays --- at times he comes close to suggesting that a slaves' good character would necessarily insure equitable treatment from the master : In the *Alcestis* a slave speaks poignantly of how Alcestis was loved by all the servants :

....I could not say goodbye, stretch my hand
out to her in my grief for a mistress who was
like a mother to all the house and me. She
gentled her husband's rages, saved us all from
trouble after trouble. (L. 769-770)

(what Euripides' realism could not ignore, and which Comedy supports, is the utterly dependent position of domestic slaves which, when their master was beset by troubles or in ill humor, made them most vulnerable to his arbitrary treatment ⁵⁴) (Ar. *Plutus* LL. 1-8, 25-27). Nurses in particular, seemed to have aroused feelings of loyalty and affection in their masters and mistresses and also in the master's children they played with and administered to, as attested by inscriptions. ⁵⁵ Plato in his *Protagoras* (325 c-d) mentions the nurse's important role in

the family, " As soon as a child can understand what is said to him, nurse, mother, tutor, and the father himself vie with each other to make him as good as possible...." . In Euripides' *Hippolytus* the part of the Nurse is central to the action, and she is motivated by her genuine concern for her mistress ; and in the *Medea* the Nurse too is aggrieved by the plight of her mistress :

If one is a good servant, its a terrible thing
When one's master's luck is out ; it goes to ones
heart. So I myself have got into such a state of
grief. (LL. 54-56).

The intimacy that often arose between women and their female slaves was also a result of women having directed and performed similar household tasks alongside their slaves for extended periods of time.⁸⁶ This is supported by the conversations of Medea and Phaedra with their nurses (see Ch. IV) ; and the talk between Helen and the chorus of female slaves in Euripides' *Helen*, Chorus : " It is right for women to stand by a woman's cause " (L. 329 ; Eur. *Phoen.* L. 200). The relative security of Athens' female domestic slaves as opposed to the alienation of its public slaves, suggests a relationship to the Feminist-Marxist analysis of the dual role the black slave woman in the American South (M. I. Finley has made frequent comparisons between slavery in the Ancient world and that of the American South (see above) : she engaged in both the public and the

private spheres, the former being the " world of productive labor, which was alienated ", and the latter, being meaningful and " relatively unalienated labor ". Angela Davis in " Reflections on the Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves " (1971) urges that " Domestic labor was the only meaningful labor for the slave community " ; unlike productive labor in the public sphere, it was the " *only* labor of the slave community which could not be directly and immediately claimed by the oppressor....".⁶⁷

Frequently, domestic slave women were also a source of friction between husband and legitimate wife, for they habitually served as concubines of the master. Moreover, they were routinely called upon to provide sexual favors to all other male members of the household, including male friends who happened to be visiting. They were nevertheless, generally tolerated in the household.⁶⁸

In a well known Athenian court case *The Murder of Erasothenes* (see Ch. IV) a wife accused by her husband of having committed adultery, accused her husband in turn of having caroused with the one slave girl they held : " To leave you alone with the maid up here ! (the house was two storey) You mauled her about before when you were drunk. " ⁶⁹

In Aristophanes' *Peace* a family man flirts with the maid Thratta when his wife is " out of sight " (L. 1135 ; *Acharn.* L. 271ff.). In Euripides' *Andromache* Hermione, legitimate wife to the master of the slave-concubine Andromache, jealously denounces her husband's dalliance with the

slave woman : " He's sleeping with Hector's wife, that battle trophy. " (L. 908) ; and both accuses and derides Andromache : " You plan to usurp this house evicting me ! Your drugs have made me unlovely to my husband.... (L. 157).... Eat humble pie and grovel at my knee." (L. 165). On the other hand, Hermione reasons, better a husband who strays, than no husband at all :

Oh why, oh why Did I spy on my husband, having
all I wanted ? Money more than enough. Control
of the household. The children I'd have had fully
legitimate, Hers illegitimate, half slave to mine.
(LL. 939-941).

Clytemnestra, tragically wronged by Agamemnon in the past ⁶⁰, was openly hostile to her rival, the concubine-slave Cassandra, prophet, and sister of Hector ; and it appears Cassandra's presence, when added to Clytemnestra's previous grievances, had finally incited her to kill her husband : " he came home to me with a mad, god-filled girl and introduced her to our bed. So there we were, two brides being stabled in a single stall. " (*Elec.* LL. 1030-1034). Judging by what is known of Athens' slave system, Euripides' portrayal of female captives held as slave-mistresses by the returning victors does not seem unreasonable and may have in fact occurred on occasion. ⁶¹

Enlightenment liberal feminist Sarah Grimke in her *Letters on Equality* (1838) makes vivid the, often similar, plight of the black slave woman on the plantation in the American South : she

was frequently used as property, as " brood mares " serving the sexual needs of the planter and his friends. Should she attempt to uphold her " virtue " she was " either bribed or whipped into compliance ", or where she repulsed the assault, she was " often killed ". Grimke contends that the practice hurt white women as well since, it was their husbands and sons who participated in the " rape ". In this respect (and others), the radical feminist analysis developed by Enlightenment theorists was applicable to black slave women and white women alike, in that they both had no civil and political rights, and proper behavior required that they be " dependent, submissive, domestic, pious, and feeble ". subject to the men who exploited them for their own interests. In Grimke's words, " the very being of a women, like that of a slave is absorbed in her master " ⁶² This applied equally to the slave women and the free women of Athens.

Quite another matter from the female domestics who frequently served as objects of sexual pleasure for male members of the family and their friends, (Xen. *Oik.* 10.12) were the professional prostitutes also drawn chiefly from the slave population. They too had an essential, if circumscribed role in the sexual lives of the Athenians. They ranged hierarchically from the readily available *pornai* (a term signifying sale), inmates of the brothels who worked the areas of the Piraeus and who catered to all classes in the port : slaves, sailors, foreigners and even permeated the upper classes. At another

level were the higher type courtesans who worked outside the brothels, often from their own homes (extravagantly decorated for the entertainment of their lovers). At the top of the social ladder were the *hetaerae* reputed to have been, in addition to possessing physical beauty, intellectually and artistically superior to vast numbers of Athenian women, one well known example being Nearcha (4th cent. B.C.) who penetrated the Athenian upper classes. She had collected an *erance* (a loan obtained by contributions of friends for a special purpose) from her former lovers in order to secure her freedom. When freed she ultimately became the legitimate wife of Stephanus, an Athenian citizen, and resided there along with the three children who had been born to her in slavery, one of whom was passed off as a citizen by her husband. At about the age of sixty the legality of Nearcha's marriage to Stephanus was challenged in the law courts on the grounds that she herself was an alien, not an Athenian citizen, and it was further alleged that she was formerly a slave who had turned to prostitution. The charges were said to have been primarily politically motivated, and Stephanus the real object of the attack (he could have lost his citizenship). The verdict is unknown. ⁶³ Echoes of Nearcha's struggle for freedom and respectability, appear in Enlightenment Liberal Feminism's (nineteenth century) analysis of the efforts of black slave-women in the American South: after having been socialized to actively participate in strenuous "masculine" labor, occupations thought to be debasing and degrading for

leisure class white women ; and to administer to the sexual needs of a hierarchy of white men (see above) ; after emancipation, and through reconstruction, they " sought to change their negative images, particularly that of sexual promiscuity -- by stressing behavior that emulated the white " lady ". They had, despite their marginal status, internalized the values of white American women, " the ideology of the cult of true womanhood " which held essentially, that women be godly and subservient (see above).⁴⁴

Aristophanes attests to the role prostitutes had in the lives of male Athenians when Praxagora, spokesperson for his fantasy communist state headed by women, outlines one of her intended reforms : " And next I'll make a thorough sweep of all the flaunting harlots....Those servile hussies shall no longer poach Upon the true-love manners of the free. " (*Ecc. LL.* 718-721). The evidence of tragedy does not throw light on the whole of the problem of slavery chiefly because domestic slaves, rather than public slaves, are those most frequently shown in the familial setting of the *oikos*. Comedy also makes many more references to private slaves than public slaves ; but because of its strong emphasis on sexuality it is a somewhat richer source for information on the world of prostitution which relied heavily on the services of female slaves.⁴⁵

The prostitutes depicted in Comedy are generally the *pornai* the more widely available type. Musicians (pipe and lyre players) and dancers made up a significant portion of the prostitute population. The flute-girls and dancers along with the courtesans appear to have been a normal part of Athenian life in the comedies of Aristophanes : for example, in the *Frogs* which was produced in 405, several months after Euripides' death, and has as its theme a literary agon between Euripides and the by then, long deceased poet Aeschylus, flute-girls and dancing-girls abound (L. 514ff ; *Thesm.* L. 1175ff) ; in the *Wasps* a play concerned with the quarrel between two Athenian citizens Philocleon (Cleon-lover) and his son Bdelycleon (Cleon-hater), the generation gap in this instance being an allusion to the permanent tension that existed between the democratic forces and their conservative opposition, wenches and flute-girls are repeatedly mentioned. ⁶⁶ Other prostitutes possessing no special talents, went from lover to lover looking to them for their protection (*Ecc.* LL. 721, 1164-1165) concerned only with their appearance and comforts : " Have had my head with unguents rich and rare Perfumed and bathed ; but far surpassing all Are those sweet flagons of Thasian wine (*Ecc.* LL. 1116-1117). If denied the protection of their lovers the women would have risked having to dress : "...in slave fashion, snipped and trimmed to match " as was usual for " servile hussies " (*Ecc.* LL. 717-724 ; *Lys.* LL. 1151 ; *Birds* LL. 806, 911). ⁶⁷ Some of these women also had sexual relations with other slaves : "let them

[the servile hussies] herd with slaves and lie with slaves...." (*Ecc.* L. 722). Many prostitutes relied on pimps (of both sexes) to procure for them, probably those who were not attached to brothels. (*Thesmo.* LL. 344, 1174-1191 ; *Lys.* LL. 956-957). Cyrene, a well known courtesan of the day is mentioned by name in Aristophanes (*Frogs* L. 1328 ; *Thesmo.* L. 97). Of the many prostitutes living in brothels, some were pubescent girls : " Young budding virgins, freshly tired and trimmed...." (*Peace* L. 846ff ; *Frogs* L. 514) and in addition to these services, the brothel owners also provided food and lodgings to lure their clients :

Maid : My lady, when they told her, set to work,
 Baked mighty loaves, boiled two or three
 tureens Of lentil soup, roasted a prime ox
 whole, Made rolls and honey cakes. So come
 along. (*Frogs* LL. 504-506) " "

Slave-girls who were musicians and dancers were frequently hired to entertain at the *symposia* (banquets and drinking parties) of the Athenians. " In Xenophon's *Symposium* (1.5-9.7) considered to be an important source for knowledge of Greek *symposia* (and more representative than Plato's *Symposium*) a regular feature of upper class Athenian life, (Aristophanes bears this out, *Wasps* LL. 1208-1252) the extended period of drinking which is entailed was routinely preceded by a dinner and religious libations. The drinking session, would on occasion

deteriorate into a drunken brawl, especially if prostitutes were provided by the host (the slave-girls were sometimes so maltreated that if directed at a citizen-woman might have " cost a man his life " ⁷⁰). There are in fact many representations of group sex which took place at *symposia* depicted on wine cups which began to be produced around 530 B.C. ⁷¹ The flute players and dancers might have been the property of a pimp, who earned his livelihood by severely exploiting the women (and men). ⁷² The courtesans attending who lived alone, and the owners of brothels who furnished the entertainers, because of low public opinion, were required to register and pay a special tax. ⁷³

Socrates, who is one of the guests in Xenophon's *Symposium*, when queried in turn by the others present, was asked, " What are you proud of ? " and responded " My skill as a pimp " ; the laughter this provoked prompted Socrates to add, " You can laugh, but I know that I could make a great deal of money if I chose to follow the profession. " (3. 10). Although the suppliers of sex had public opinion against them, sexual relations with prostitutes were regarded as natural for men and it appears, morally condoned : Plato in his *Laws* provided a series of enactments with which to contain the sexual and drinking excesses of the Athenians " and win men's affection of their wedded wives " (839a-839d), but had to concede the unreality of outlawing extra-marital sexual relations with slaves and free prostitutes and instead urged strict discretion as second best for male

citizens (841c-842a). Thus it was that female slaves had an important role in the sexual life of the Athenians (Xenophon, *Dikonomikos* 10.12).⁷⁴

Female slaves, along with the peasant women who helped in the fields, must have played some part (the numbers are unknown) in the agricultural economy of Attica during the late fifth century despite the policy of urbanization that Pericles' had instituted during the war (by concentrating the population of Attica inside the walls connecting Athens to the port of Piraeus, Pericles had provided refuge from invasion and access to food supplies from overseas, but in the process had abandoned the Attic countryside to Spartan invasion disrupting rural life for much of the last quarter of the fifth century). It seems, ample opportunity remained for market gardeners, small farmers, and some gentlemen farmers of large estates who required the labor of slaves. Praxagora in Aristophanes' *Ecclesiazusae* found utopian life unthinkable without farm slaves : " All labor and toil to your slaves you will leave ", she replied to her husband's question " But who will attend to the work of the farm ? " (LL. 592-593, 651-652) ; and the appearance in the late fifth century of Xenophon's *Dikonomikos* (see above) written for the affluent farmer also presumes the use of slaves to work the land. Plato in his *Laws* (6. 761a) (well after Pericles' time) when advising the " rural commissioners and captains of the watch " on duty in the countryside to protect the territory of Attica

from Spartan invasion by the " erection of fortifications " takes rural slaves for granted :

For these purposes they may employ draft animals and household servants of the various districts, who shall act as the instruments and be under their orders, though they do their best to avoid requisitioning them in their own busy season.

Female domestics were chiefly employed in the house as in the " urban " *oikos*, but where small numbers of slaves were held working alongside the master, it is likely that women domestics assisted in the fields as well during the harvest : Syra, a female slave from Syria is instructed by her master to : " Call Manes off the fields, it's impossible to prune the vine or align the ridges, for the ground is too wet today. " (*Ar. Peace* LL 1146-1149). Euripides' depiction of the small farmer (*autourgos*) doing all his own work while Electra, his wife, attended to all the household tasks is, according to Ehrenberg, (1962) stretching Euripides' realism for purposes of plot, (*El. L.* 71ff, 78ff, 304ff ; *Orestes* LL. 719-920) as even the large number of small scale, often subsistence, farmers would likely have owned at least one domestic slave of either sex to be generally useful in the house and fields, and there is some agreement that the servantless Athenian farmer was in the minority. ⁷⁸ Euripides' *Rhesus* shows the fate of prisoners-of-war to have been servitude as agricultural laborers (LL. 74-

75, 176-177). Praxagora's redressing the problem of one man's " owning a whole army of slaves, while another has not a single attendant " points to realistic imbalances that existed in Athenian society, but refers to the poor urban dweller rather than the small farmer. During the hard times of the Peloponnesian War, women had to work at tasks normally reserved for men ; and free women together with female slaves, pruned olive trees, for example, or worked in the fields and vineyards, and harvested fruit. ⁷⁶ Euripides' *Electra*, like many another small farmer's wife would have performed both domestic and agricultural tasks, especially if her husband had been deployed, and so would any female slave she might have owned. Feminist analysis points out, that under slavery in the American South, black women were not as confined to the domestic sphere as white women, nor were they barred from heavy " masculine " physical labor. In this respect their situation differed from white women as " the alleged benefits of the ideology of femininity " did not accrue to them : black slave woman were not protected from " the desperate struggle for existence outside the " home " and they toiled in the fields alongside the men from dawn to dusk."⁷⁷ At Attica too, slave-women and many poor women, even citizens were often obliged to labor in the public sphere (many pursued occupations that were domestic in nature) and on the farms, while upper class, citizen women, under the guise of being sheltered and protected, were more consistently confined to the domestic sphere. The exception, being during the Peloponnesian war, when

women were supposedly thrust out of seclusion and required to perform tasks normally considered " masculine ", because the men were away (see Ch. IV).

On the fewer large estates holding numerous slaves, such as that of Isomachus in Xenophon's *Oikonomikos*, the division of labor was more clearly defined. Here a number (perhaps several dozen ⁷⁰) of slaves worked full time under one or more stewards especially trained in the art of farming by the master, who personally inspected the estate daily, gave orders to the stewards, and encouraged the productivity of the field hands by his presence. Women, according to Isomachus, were naturally suited to " indoor work " while men by nature were inclined to " outdoor work " (VII. 23) ; therefore, in addressing his young wife he said " O woman, as we know what has been ordered to each of us by god we must separately, do what is appropriate to each " (VII. 30) : Accordingly, the wife was responsible for the supervision of all the indoor slaves who performed such tasks as baking bread from the crop, cooking, cleaning, wool-working, and making clothes ; and the head housekeeper slave, was carefully chosen for her special qualities of not eating, drinking, nor indulging in sexual activity to excess (IX. 11). The wife was further expected to diligently inspect the household daily, " to preserve order ", guard the household implements, herself participate in certain household tasks alongside her slaves, (X. 10) instill (in part by example) loyalty and

excellence in the slaves by rewarding the productive workers with good food and drink and better quality clothing and shoes, (XII. 10) thus identifying the less proficient. In Aristophanes' the *Wasps* the master provides different clothing for different slaves : " the fur-coats and the jackets and the caps he bought for them ; in winter he watched that their feet should not get frozen " (LL. 444-5).⁷⁷ It was against the large property owning masters such as Xenophon's Isomachus that utopian communist Praxagora railed when she proclaimed : "...no longer shall we see one man harvesting vast tracts of land while another had not ground enough to be buried in ". (Ar. *Ecc.* L. 592ff)

The question also arises whether female slaves, in any numbers, were employed in the crafts, manufacturing, and the largest slave intensive industry of Attica, mining. Comedy gives evidence of the hundreds or perhaps thousands of slaves employed in the mines that were bought or leased by wealthy Athenians (see above) (Ar. *Knights* L. 364).⁸⁰ Tragedy does not appear to shed any light on that aspect of slavery, and other types of evidence are sparse. Garlan (1988) in researching the working conditions that existed in Attica's silver mines, quotes from Diodorus' description of working conditions in the mines of Ptolemaic (Hellenistic) Egypt, which he believes to have been similar to those of Classical Greece : " No leniency or respite of any kind is given to any man who is sick or maimed, or aged or in the case of a woman for her weakness....".⁸¹ Based on Garlan's

assumption, it is reasonable to suppose that women were included in the labor force at Attica's silver mines, and, if so, were largely, if not entirely, slave women. With regard to the crafts industries : a woman potter appears on a vase (the manufacture of pottery was Athen's first industry (see Ch. 11)); an Athenian woman, Artemis, the gilder wife of Dionysus the helmet maker, presumably worked in her husband's shop decorating the helmets ; one or two women were engaged in adorning idols in the Erechtheum at Athens; we also hear of one woman vase painter ; there were many women weavers. ⁸² If poor women were employed in selected industries, slave women would have worked alongside them (see above).

On the question of the treatment of female slaves, it is not easily discernable whether the standards varied when applied to gender, one would suspect not (see above, women who worked the mines of Hellenistic Egypt were not granted any leniency). A slave's person was quite simply the property of the master : " A man's body, such is fate, belongs not to himself, but whoe'er has bought it. So much for that. " (Ar. *Plutus* LL. 6-8). This is also attested by Tragedy : the slave Andromache (Eur. *And.*) when accused by Hermione (the legitimate wife of Neoptolemus) of having plied her with potions to make her barren says to Menelaus :

I am ready and willing to submit to trial
(without invoking sanctuary as now) before

your assembled kindred.... (LL.357-359)

So look I am leaving the shrine, I'm in your
hands to mangle, murder, bind, hang by the neck.

(LL. 411-412).

Andromache's having invoked sanctuary was in fact the only course open to slaves to avoid torture or a harsh sentence : " Beasts have rocks for refuge ; Slaves the altars of the gods. " (Eur. *Supp.* LL. 268-269 ; *Hec.* LL. 289-290 ; Ar. *Knights* L. 1313, note: 9 ; *Thesmo.* LL. 222-223). Slaves were not permitted to plead legitimate self defense ; instead they frequently sought temporary asylum in the Athenian shrines of the Eumenides or particularly at the Theseion where they hoped to be resold if the priests could be persuaded. ⁸³ Slaves might thus escape punishment if according to Plato, they had not murdered a free person. In the event that they had, they were condemned to death as specified in his *Laws* (9. 872b-c) :

If a slave, cause the death of a free man with intent, either as the actual homicide or the plotter of it, the common executioner shall conduct him toward the burial place of the victim and to a spot from which the tomb is visible, when he shall be scourged with as many stripes as the prosecutor shall enjoin, and if he survives the infliction, be put to death.

We saw in Ch. IV, in a trial from the Athenian law courts, that a slave-concubine accused for her part in allegedly having caused the death of her master's friend by poisoning, at the behest of the friend's wife, was cruelly tortured and executed. The defense for the wife argued that she believed the poison to have been a love potion to win back the affection of her husband, so that she as a citizen woman (with her limited legal rights), at least, had the right to plead legitimate self defense. The verdict is unknown. In another Athenian court case *Quarrel Over a Slave Girl* (the speech for the defense written by Lysias 400-380 B.C.): two men allegedly contributed to the purchase of a slave girl and each fought the other for her possession. It was the slave girl who was threatened with torture to determine the truth of what had actually occurred and which of the two men she preferred. In this instance the prosecutor refused to allow the slave girl to be tortured and eventually set her free, perhaps out of affection for her which, as has been pointed out, was apparently not the rule ; the slave being chattel was more often protected against injury, or death from torture to preserve the owner's investment. It is unknown which of the litigants won the verdict. *4 Comedy supports this view when the torture of Dionysus is being considered, Aeacus : " If I strike too hard and maim the boy, I'll make you compensation." Xanthias : " I shan't require it. Take him out and flog him ." (Ar. *Frogs* LL. 622-625).

In Aristophanes' *Frogs* (LL. 613-621) and *Peace* (L. 745ff) we find evidence of the well known practice of *basanos* (torture) administered either by the master to his own slaves, or by the *basanistai* (expert) to prove the master's innocence in the courts. A parody of the torture suggests piling bricks on the offender, " stuff his nose with acid : Flay, rack him. hoist him ; flog him with a scourge Of prickly bristles....", which is supported by Andromaches' more sober words to Menelaus above. Testimony extracted from slaves at the moment of suffering was regarded by many as particularly reliable, and by others as invalid. Euripides, being a realist wrote : " a slave was unable to say the truth unless it suited his master " (Frag. 313). "

The treatment of slaves was somewhat improved after the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War, in some instances for philosophical reasons (see above), but chiefly because it was expedient : some slaves were freed if they were willing to fight in the war ; others received better treatment because Athenian citizens feared their slaves would try to escape during the crisis. We see some evidence of better treatment accorded slaves (treatment of slaves also varied with the master) in Euripides' *Andromache* written in the early years of the Peloponnesian War (c.430-424 B.C.) : Peleus (father of Achilles, and grandfather of Andromache's master Neoptolemus who is husband to Hermione), though deeply resented for it by Hermione : "Peleus, with

his reverence for riffraff " (L. 914), intercedes on behalf of Andromache and her child when they are threatened by the ill will and murderous intentions of Menelaus and his daughter Hermione, who are Spartans. (L. 545ff, 747ff) ; and Thetis, wife of Peleus, predicts that Andromache and her son will be allowed to pursue a future in Molossia (L. 1242ff). Peleus' humanity is, in part, inspired by Euripides' own philosophy, his anti-Spartan feelings, and also by his penchant for presenting the many prevailing, often conflicting, views of the day.

Thucydides chronicled the escape of a large number of slaves in 413 B.C., after the Spartan occupation of Decelea (a town in Attica about fourteen mile from Athens) : Twenty thousand slaves, largely skilled workers, deserted amidst the chaos and destruction of repeated invasions. (VII. 27). If recaptured the slaves would have faced severe punishment : Euripides speaks of the children of Heracles as fugitive slaves, "° when the Herald demands the return of : " These Argive nationals who've run away, though legally condemned to death at home. " (*Heracleidae* LL. 140-41 , 250ff) ; and Aristophanes gives evidence of the severe punishment and branding meted out to fugitive slaves if caught. (*Achar.* L.1187ff ; *Peace* LL. 451-2 ; *Birds* LL. 163-164 ; *Knights* L. 129). In his *Laws* Plato supports the uncompromising attitude toward toward fugitive slaves :

Any man provided he be sane shall be at liberty

to lay hands on his own slave for such purposes as he may please in the way of lawful business, and at liberty likewise to lay hands on the fugitive slave of any kinsman or friend, with a view to his safekeeping. (XI. 914e)

Plato also stated that slaves had some limited " legal " rights though, as we have seen, they were treated with contempt by many, and frequently flogged and beaten at the slightest provocation as is amply attested by *Comedy* (*Ar. Lys.* LL. 376-377, 463-464 ; *Ecc.* L. 721ff ; *Frogs* LL. 541-542, 746 ; *Knights* LL. 5, 66-67 ; *Wasps* LL. 450, 1292-1296 ; *Peace* L. 744 ; *Plutus* LL. 19, 276-277, 1144). In the instance of a capital crime against a slave who was blameless, Plato designated in his *Laws* : " If a man slays a slave who has committed no crime....he shall stand his trial for homicide of such slave precisely as though the slain had been a citizen. " (IX. 872.c). Euripides appears to be alluding to such a law in the *Hecuba* when the slave Hecuba implores Odysseus : " Read them your law of murder. Tell them how it applies to slave and free without distinction. " (L. 291ff). Ehrenberg (1962) believes that murdering " one's own slave " was not strictly a legal crime in Athens, but rather " involved religious pollution. " *

Because the free women of Athens played an essential role in the religious life of Athens, this in part permitted female slaves a limited freedom to attend certain religious cults and festivals

under the supervision of their mistresses and masters ; Garland (1988) believes the slaves attending were hardly more than spectators. ** In Euripides' *Ion* a chorus of young slave women who accompany their mistress Creusa to the temple of Apollo ask " May we with naked feet pass into the sanctuary ? " (LL. 220-221) ; Ion directs them only as far as the altar steps to question the oracle, but does not permit them to enter the inner shrine which necessitated the sacrifice of a sheep (L. 226ff) ; the chorus leader makes clear : " Our masters have allowed us to look over this sanctuary of Apollo. " (LL. 232-233). Women servants revere Artemis and Aphrodite in the *Hippolytus* (Eur. LL. 165-166, 522-523) ; and Alcestis' maid was present when she prayed at the altar before going to her death (Eur. *Alcestis* LL. 170-172). In Euripides' *Bacchae* all the women of Thebes " rich and poor alike " (L. 37) ran frenzied from their homes to the Bacchic orgies in the mountains "...driven from shuttle and loom possessed by Dionysus. " (LL. 116-118). Slaves participated in a subordinate way : in certain rites which pertained to the popular orgies of the *Dionysia* (Ar. *Acharn.* LL 245-250) ; in religious ceremonies in the *oikos* ; and worshipped the goddess Aphrodite. **

While female slaves were not permitted to attend the speeches --- the speaker's stand was considered a sacred place --- it seems they did take part in the processions and sacrifices of the Thesmophoria (see below), an important agrarian festival

attended exclusively by women with flawless character. If slaves were Greek speaking they were eligible to become initiates in the Eleusian Mysteries (see Ch. IV).⁹⁰ In Aristophanes's *Thesmophoria* the female slave Thratta followed her mistress to the temple carrying the " sacred cake " for the goddesses. (L. 279ff - *Th.* LL. 537,609,728).

As for Thratta's own food intake, Euripides shows the diet of slaves to have been a meager one : Apollo's penance for defying Zeus was to serve a mortal man, Admetus, in whose house, god though he was, " he had patience to accept the table of the serfs " (*Alcestis* LL. 1-2 ; Ar. *Lys.* LL. 1204-1205) which consisted chiefly of bread or corn : " Loaves, a quart a piece...." (*Lys.* L. 1208) and some figs carefully " weighed out " (Ar. *Peace* L. 1248 ; *Wasps* LL. 896-897).⁹¹ In the *Plutus* of Aristophanes (LL. 190-193) he archly portrays Cario the slave's phantasy to be more " loaves....sweets....cheesecakesdried figs....barley-meal....and pea soup " as compared with his well fed master Chremylus, who contemplates the benefits of more literature....honour....manliness....ambition.... and command ". One of the criteria Xenophon employed for selecting a housekeeper was that she eat and drink sparingly (see above) (*Oik.* IX. 11).

Finally, we saw above that slaves were infrequently manumitted, and then under very special conditions, which according to

Ehrenberg (1962) is probably why it was seldom mentioned in Tragedy or Comedy. ⁷² There is a reference in Euripides' *Heracleidae* to a slave who has been promised his freedom because he has brought news of a great victory (LL. 788-789) however, the impression given is that emancipation rarely occurred : Attendant, " Please don't forget what you first said, when I began, that you would set me free ; since I should think, it's best to keep faith in these things. " (LL. 889-890). Masters frequently offered slaves the inducement of eventual manumission but were in fact free to rescind their offer at any time. ⁷³ Slaves received the promise of enfranchisement in a public declaration at a religious festival, performance of a play, or at court proceedings as a form of insurance. Nevertheless, promises were frequently revoked (in 403 for example, Thrasybulus, leader of the democrats against the revolt of the Thirty, promised free men and slaves alike citizenship if they supported the democrats in the Piraeus and the promise went unfulfilled). ⁷⁴ One source cites that among enfranchised slaves the number of women appears to have been very marginally higher than that of men, which downplays the notion of advantage gained by female slaves through sexual intimacy with their masters ⁷⁵ ; which is what Freeman (1946) suggested in her excerpts from the Athenian law courts (see above). Even on those rare occasions when slaves were manumitted, an onerous period of homage to the master usually followed : Plato in his *Laws* (XI. 915a-c) carefully laid out conditions under which male or female slaves who had

finally attained their freedom could avoid forfeiting their new status :

There shall be the like right of seizure of a freedman who pays no homage or insufficient homage to the authors of his freedom. Homage shall be deemed to mean that the freedman repair thrice in the month to the hearth of his emancipator and make proffer of all such services as are right and possible, and likewise that in the matter of marriage he act only with the approval of his former owner. It shall be illegal for the freedman to possess more wealth than the emancipator, and any surplus shall belong to the master....Any person brought before the courts for noncompliance and convicted shall receive the sentence of death and his goods shall be forfeit to the state.

The more abundant evidence from the fourth century on indicates that manumission was practiced increasingly following the end of the Peloponnesian War, largely as a result of ensuing economic changes. Attic literature and inscriptions of the fourth century and later inscriptions (the largest group found at Delphi), as compared with the Classical period, give this impression. *6 Aristotle, who wrote in the fourth century, regarded the offer of manumission as an incentive (as did Xenophon *7) and in his will manumitted certain of his own slaves (see Ch. IV).

IN SUMMARY

The notion that Athens' economy was essentially based on slave-labor is disputed by some experts who believe, that with the exception of the miners, the importance of slaves in classical Athens was smaller than is generally thought. However, others, such as M.I. Finley, Max Weber, and Karl Marx urged that slavery was pivotal in the ancient world. Slaves were chiefly recruited in wartime, others were imported from slave traders, and still others obtained from more variable sources, such as child exposure. Women slaves played a significant role in the slave culture -- some experts say they outnumbered male slaves -- primarily as domestics and as sexual objects for the male members of the household. Slave women in the public sphere were frequently engaged in prostitution, others pursued work that was an extension of the domestic sphere, some were farm workers, and probably, smaller numbers worked in industry. Female domestic slaves were ritually received into the *oikos*, and appear to have been relatively more secure than public slaves. Athens was no slaves' paradise as slaves had no legal rights : miners were brutalized ; treatment varied from master to master, and a slaves' body was considered the property of the master to do with as he or she wished ; torture was institutionalized to obtain testimony in the courts, but murder of an innocent slave by the master was treated as a capital crime. Slaves were rarely manumitted, and then under very special conditions which required

them to pay lengthy homage to their former masters. Manumission was practiced increasingly after the Peloponnesian war.

NOTES

1. Karl Marx, *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations*, New York : International Publishers, ed. E. J. Hobsbawm (1965), trans. Jack Cohen, pp. 89, 91-94 ; Garland, 1988, *Slavery in Ancient Greece*, Ithaca : Cornell University Press, trans. Janet Lloyd, p. 6 ; (also, see below, endnote : 4).
2. Karl Marx, 1952, p.89.
3. Marx, 1952, p. 91 ; Garland, 1988, p. 6.
4. Max Weber, 1976, *The Agrarian Sociology of Ancient Civilization*, London : N L B, see: *The Social Basis of the Decline of Ancient Civilization*, pp. 392-393 ; M.I. Finley, 1980, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology*, New York : The Viking Press, p. 44.
5. Kitto, 1957, estimates slave population in the same period as 125,000, p.132 ; Garland, 1988, has the figure at about 100,000, p.60.
6. Finley, 1980, p.80 ; Garland 1988, says, in Athens, slavery was more widely diffused since in the Old South 3/4 of the free did not own slaves. (p. 60).
7. Finley, 1964, p.54 ; Garland, 1988, says Athenians owned 3 or 4 slaves on average. (p. 60).
8. Victor Ehrenberg, 1962, *The People of Aristophanes*, New York: Schocken Books, p.165.
9. Diller, 1937, pp. 139, 145.
10. Kitto, 1957, records population statistics for just before the Peloponnesian War: something over 100,00 Athenians, 125,000 slaves, of whom 65,000 were in domestic employment, 50,000 in industry, and 10,000 in the mines. (p. 132).
11. Kitto, 1937, p.132 ; Ehrenberg, 1962, p.186 ; Ehrenberg, 1968, p.148 ; Finley, 1980, p.80 ; Garland, 1988, p.66.
12. Humphreys, 1978, p. 147.

13. Humphreys, 1978, pp. 142, 147.
14. Garland, 1988, p. 6.
15. Leo Strauss, 1970, *Xenophon's Socratic Discourse. An Interpretation of the Oeconomicus*, with a literal trans. of the *Oeconomicus* by Carnes Lord, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press. *Oeconomicus* p.3, Interpretation of the *Oeconomicus*, " the art of the manager of the household " (p.87).
16. Garland, 1988, p. 15.
17. Garland, 1988, pp. 15, 18.
18. Ehrenberg, 1968, p. 249.
19. Diller, 1937, p.144 ; Finley, 1964, p.54 ; Garland, 1988, p.66.
20. Diller, p.144 ; Ehrenberg, 1962, p. 169 ; Garland, 1988, p.41.
21. Finley, 1964, p.126 . Kitto, 1957, p. 133 ; Ehrenberg, 1962, p.181 ; Weber, 1976, pp.203-4.
22. Garland, 1988, p. 46.
23. Diller, 1937, p.147 ; Garland, 1988, pp.81-82.
24. Diller, 1937, p.142 ; Garland, 1988, pp. 82-83.
25. Diller, 1937, pp.143-147 ; Ehrenberg, 1962, pp. 184-185 ; Garland, 1988, pp. 81-82, 147.
26. Ehrenberg, 1962, pp.184-5 ; Garland, 1988, F. 147.
27. Diller, 1937, p. 142 ; Ehrenberg, 1962, p. 171 ; Garland, 1988, p. 46.
28. edited by Moses Hadas, *The Complete Plays of Aristophanes*, New York: Bantam Books, 1971, *Peace*, p. 221; *Wasps*, pp.155-6 ; *Birds*, p. 247.
29. Diller, 1937, p. 141 ; Ehrenberg, 1962, p.169 ; M.I. Finley, 1980, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology*, New York: Viking Press, pp. 128-130 ; Pomeroy, 1984, p.131 ; Yvon Garland, 1988, *Slavery in Ancient Greece*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, trans. from the French by Janet Lloyd, pp.32-35.
30. Ehrenberg, 1962, p. 173.
31. Garland, 1988, p. 61.

32. Ehrenberg, 1962, p. 165 ; Finley, 1980, p. 99; Garland, 1988, pp. 20,24.
33. Diller, 1937, pp. 141,142 ; Ehrenberg, 1962, p. 169 ; Finley, 1980, pp. 128-130 ; Garland, 1988, p. 48.
34. Ehrenberg, 1962, p. 169.
35. Ehrenberg, 1962, p.199 ; Lacey, 1968, pp.104-105.
36. Pomeroy, 1975, pp. 69-70 ; 1983, see : Infanticide in Hellenistic Greece, in Cameron and Kuhrt, 1983, p. 207 ; 1984, pp. 135-136. Also according to Pomeroy, 1975, in modern Greece, if only in a symbolic sense, the tradition continues : if questioned how many children he has, the peasant having three sons and two daughters is likely to answer " three ". (p. 70).
37. Diller, 1937, p.140 ; Lacey, 1968, pp. 166-167 ; Pomeroy, 1984, pp.135-136 ; Garland, 1988, p.45.
38. Lacey, 1968, p. 170.
39. Diller, 1937, goes so far as to say that, most slave children were purchased abroad, because the breeding of slaves to increase the supply was uncharacteristic of the Greek slave system. p.149.
40. Ehrenberg, 1962, p. 169.
41. Garland, 1988, p. 52.
42. Murray, 1913, p. 135 ; Finley, 1980, p.120.
43. *Hippocrates, Vol. I, Epidemics, I and III*, Loeb Classical Library, W.H.S. Jones and E.T. Withington (4 Vols.), Mass: Harvard University Press, London: Willian Heinemann Ltd. Ehrenberg, 1968, p. 349 ; Finley, 1980, p. 120 ; Garland, 1988, pp. 123-124, Garland also mentions that Hippocrates in the text of his oath and his treatises of the *Epidemics* suggests slaves were treated by free doctors (p. 150).
44. Finley, 1980, p. 120 ; Garland, 1988, p. 124.
45. Ehrenberg, 1962, p.169 ; Lacey, 1968, p.137 ; Garland, 1988, p.143 ; Aristotle *Politics* (1253 b1-1255 b16).
46. Ehrenberg, 1962, Aristophanes' fragments (299, 503), p.176.
47. Diller, 1937, p. p.143 ; Ehrenberg, 1962, p.172.
48. Garland p. 1988, p.62.

49. Cameron and Kuhrt, 1983, see : Women and Housing in Classical Greece, by Susan Walker, pp. 81-91.
50. Lefkowitz and Fant, 1982, p.26.
51. Lacey, 1968, p.172 .
52. Ehrenberg, 1962, p. 168 ; Finley, 1963, p. 54 ; Lacey, 1968, p. 137 ; Pomeroy, 1975, p. 77 ; Garland, 1988, p. 61. Note: The evidence does not permit genuine quantification as the statistics on Athen's slave population have long been a matter of heated controversy among classicists and historians.
53. Ehrenberg, 1962, pp. 177, 186 ; Schaps, 1979, p. 8 ; Garland, 1988, p. 146.
54. Garland, 1988, p. 146.
55. Lacey, 1968, p. 172 ; Garland, 1988, p.146.
56. Pomeroy, 1975, p. 71.
57. Josephine Donovan, 1985, *Feminist Theory*, The Intellectual Traditions of American Feminism, New York : Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., p. 77.
58. Ehrenberg, 1962, pp. 173, 177, 181 ; Lacey, 1968, pp. 166-167 ; Finley, 1980, p. 96 ; Garland, 1988, pp. 61, 186.
59. Freeman, 1946, pp. 43-53. -- Diller, 1937, p.131 note: 94 ; Pomeroy, 1975, pp. 81-82.
60. Agamemnon, in order to obtain Clytemnestra for his wife, had murdered her first husband and their child. He also permitted the ritual sacrifice of Iphigenia, sister to Electra and the second daughter of Clytemnestra and himself.
61. Ehrenberg, 1962, says " there may have been occasional parallels to the many mythical stories in which a conquering hero takes an enslaved captive girl as his mistress. " (p. 178).
62. Donovan, 1985, pp. 13, 15, 22-23.
63. Freeman, 1946, see An Illegal Union: Against Neaira, from a speech attributed to Demosthenes, PP. 191-226.
Note: Aspasia of Miletus, the most famous women in Periclean Athens, started as a *hetaera* and later became a madam. She however was a free women.
64. Donovan, 1985, p.23.

65. Solon is said to have instituted state-owned brothels in Athens staffed by female slaves to enhance Athen's attractions. Diller, 1937, p.150 ; Pomeroy, 1975, p. 89.
66. Ehrenberg, 1962, p. 178 ; Hadas, 1962, pp. 165,177,179,180,182.
67. Pomeroy, 1975, p.91.
68. Ehrenberg, 1962, p. 179.
69. Diller, 1937, p.150 ; Ehrenberg, 1962, p. 176 ; Garland 1988, p. 146.
70. Peradotto and Sullivan ed., 1984, see K.J. Dover in *WOMEN IN THE ANCIENT WORLD, The Arethusa Papers*, Albany : State University of New York Press, p. 147.
71. Pomeroy, 1975, p. 143.
72. Ehrenberg, 1962, p.172.
73. Ehrenberg, 1962, pp. 179-180 ; Lacey, 1968, p. 172 ; Pomeroy, 1975, p. 89.
74. Ehrenberg, 1962, p.180 ; Finley, 1980, pp. 95-96.
75. Ehrenberg, 1962, pp. 167-182 ; Finley, 1964, p.53 ; Finley, 1980, pp. 81-82 ; Garland, 1988, pp. 60-61,64.
76. Pomeroy, 1975, pp. 66,71, 119 ; Pomeroy, 1984, p.155 ; Garland, 1988, p. 143.
77. Donovan, 1985, pp. 22-23.
78. Garland, 1988, p. 63.
79. Murphy, Guinagh & Oates, 1947, pp. 623-624.
80. Schaps, 1979, (p. 5) in his study of the economic life of ancient Greek women states, that as far as is known, no woman ever leased a mine at Laureion, but does not indicate whether female slaves or poor free women had at any time been employed in the mines.
81. Garland, 1988, p. 145 ; bearing in mind that Pomeroy, 1984, maintains the traditional division of labor in Classical Greece extended to slaves ; and that gender allocation of jobs in Ptolemaic Egypt was less rigid than in earlier times. (p. 141).
82. Lacey, 1968, p. 171 ; Schaps, 1979, pp. 20, 61, 62, 63 ; Garland, 1988, p. 143.

83. Ehrenberg, 1962, p. 109 ; Garland, 1988, p. 45.
84. Freeman, 1946, pp. 107-113 ; Pomeroy, 1984 cites an instance of a master (in Hellenistic Egypt) who showed some mercy to a female slave who most probably had been a concubine ; she was not freed by testament as this would have lowered the value of his estate, but he did allow Myrsine to keep her child when he bequeathed them to Esthaladas. (p. 112) ; Garland, 1988, pp. 42, 74-75.
85. Ehrenberg, 1962, p. 187 ; Garland, 1988. pp. 42-43.
86. Ehrenberg, 1962, p.185, note: 9.
87. Ehrenberg, 1962, p.186.
88. Ehrenberg, 1962, pp. 189-90 ; Pomeroy, 1975, pp. 77-78 ; Garland, 1988, pp. 198-199.
89. Ehrenberg, 1962, p. 173 ; Garland, 1988, p. 199.
90. Fustel De Coulanges, *The Ancient City*, New York : Doubleday & Co. Inc., this edition first translated in 1873, p.163 ; Ehrenberg, 1962, pp. 189-190 ; Pomeroy, 1975, pp. 77-78 ; Garland, 1988, pp. 196-199.
91. Ehrenberg, 1962, p. 185.
92. Ehrenberg, 1962, p. 189 ; Finley, 1980, writes that the word for freedman *apeleutheros* or *exeleutheros* rarely appears in Greek literature. (p. 97)
93. Finley, 1980, p. 74.
94. Diller, 1937, pp. 110, 147-148 ; Finley, 1980, p. 74 ; Garland, 1980, p. 73.
95. Garland, 1988, pp. 74-75.
96. Diller, 1937, p.148 ; Pomeroy, 1975, p. 130 ; Schaps, 1979, p. 7 ; Garland, 1988, pp. 74-75.
97. Garland, 1988, p.74.

CHAPTER VI CONCLUSION

We propose to review Euripides' tragic dramas one by one, and to summarize in broad outline what they have taught us about the mentality of the Athenians of that period, particularly, how they conceptualized women, their attitudes toward them, and to add some final conclusions concerning the social and political factors that defined femininity at Athens during the latter half of the fifth century B.C.. Thus it is not our task to tell the story of each play scene by scene, but rather to grasp the essence of social thought reflected in the plot. In treating each tragic drama as an entity, something may emerge which was not uncovered in our tapestry of quotations.

1. The Dramas

The dramas have been arranged in roughly chronological and developmental sequence. All but two (*Rhesus* and *Alcestis*) of Euripides' nineteen surviving dramas encompass the last twenty-five years of the fifth century B. C., a period of enormous social turbulence and civil war which ultimately led to the decline of the Athenian Empire in 404. Reflecting the upheaval at home and abroad, each of the dramas is a compound of very incongruous elements : the old heroic sagas are peopled with characters of heroic proportions who, at one and the same time, undermine their own loftiness by acting out the personal

struggles of real, everyday, contemporary types confronting a rapidly changing reality ; in Athens' resolutely patriarchal society, for the first time, more women are the chief protagonists in Euripides' dramas and the action presented from their point of view ; and with most of his choruses female, women outnumber the men (which, intentionally, or otherwise, happens to be statistically realistic for the period as many of the men had been deployed or killed in the war). Notwithstanding, Euripides' many deviations from the traditional myth -- which ultimately led to the dissolution of tragedy -- the whole which emerges is one of unity with tragedy.

Euripides' earliest extant play *Rhesus* is neither securely dated, nor even universally accepted as the work of Euripides despite firm ancient evidence to the contrary. It is known that Euripides wrote a *Rhesus* and further, Crates, a comic poet who gained his first victories on stage in 450 B.C. when Euripides was learning his craft, attests that it is an early work of the tragic poet. There is also much in the play that bears the mark of Euripides. The doubts arose when some ancient critics considered the play atypical of the poet. Some modern critics share their skepticism, one chief reason being that the play has as its subject matter heroes and stories of the Trojan War straight out of the *Illiad* when the regular practice of the tragic poets was to most frequently choose episodes that followed the close of the *Illiad*.¹ If we accept the arguments of the modern scholars who

believe Euripides wrote the play, they are in agreement that it is an early work, probably written well before 440 B.C. when Euripides was a young man. The background against which the *Rhesus* is thought to have been written (late fifties to early forties) was one of cultural flowering in the arts and philosophy. Simultaneously, the political climate in the Athenian empire became unstable. Peace with the Persians had removed that threat, but in its wake, Athens' allies felt they no longer needed her protection and began a series of revolts (Thucy. I. 112-115). In consequence, Athens adopted a policy which was to grow increasingly self-centered and harsh. The story of *Rhesus*, briefly, is one of " war, adventure and spies, a young man's play " ; but the manner in which the Muse (Rhesus' mother) extolls Athens (L. 941), and the final scene in which soldiers stand uncomfortably by as she mourns her dead son (LL. 885-980) thereby exposing the bitterness, rather than the glory of war, are all indicative of the more mature Euripides. ² Moreover, the allusion to the fate of prisoners-of-war (L.176) raises questions about the institution of slavery at Athens (There is much debate among the experts over the actual number of slaves held at Athens -- although most would agree it was considerable -- and the extent of their influence on its economy : some, such as, A.W. Gomme and Victor Ehrenberg, argue that the economic importance of slave-labor was limited, the one exception being in the mining industry, where it was significant ; others, including Max Weber and M.I. Finley, believe that Athens' economy was

founded on slave labor, see Ch. I, II, V) a theme which pervades Euripides' plays. In the *Rhesus* the reference is to agricultural slaves in particular, a subject about which there is also much conjecture among modern critics. Michael Jameson (1977) writing on the assumption that Classical Greece was still primarily an agricultural society suggests, that even in a maritime society like Athens, the importance of slavery was inseparable from agriculture. He goes on to say, that every Athenian slave was an actual or potential farm worker. But most significant for this study (see Ch. IV. V), it is pointed out that women and women slaves should not be thought of as having worked exclusively in the house, they too would have been called upon to do farm work when needed, and to the extent they were " physically capable ". (see *Electra*, as the poor farmer's wife, in the *Electra* below).

Alcestis, a tragicomedy, (the story ends happily) was presented in spring 438 B.C., against a background of Pericles' growing imperialist policies, and conflict between traditional and new modes of thought. The basic outline of the plot, like the myth, is one of a wife's self-sacrifice : Alcestis voluntarily dies for her husband Admetus, when his parents would not. Admetus learns late, but not too late, that living unhappily is not always preferable to death, and Heracles at the behest of Apollo intervenes to reunite Alcestis with her husband via *deus ex machina*. Euripides wrote increasingly from the perspectives of

philosophy and science, themes such as "man is the measure", and studies in human psychology are important elements in this play along with myth and religion (Alcestis, like contemporary Athenian women, worshipped the goddess Artemis as her protector on her wedding night (L. 177) and at other female rites of passage such as menstruation, childbirth, and death⁴ (see also *Hippolytus* LL. 161-169). Alcestis dominates the play, her act of self renunciation and her courage and magnanimity, as compared with her husband Admetus' weakness and egotism, takes Euripides in a new direction: he both humanizes and feminizes the drama, and infuses tragedy with elements of satire. Alcestis, portrays a woman, on the one hand, loftily sacrificing herself for the greater good of the family -- contemporary Athenian values regarded the father as the more significant parent -- and on the other hand, Euripides undercuts the traditional view by subtly exposing the naivete of Alcestis' act (see L. 727).

The Athenian audience saw the first performance of *Medea* in 431 B.C., on the eve of the Peloponnesian war. The theme of intrafamilial violence is surely, in part, a metaphor for the volatile atmosphere at Athens who was just then embarking on a thirty year fratricidal war (see Ch. I). The foreign woman Medea, when cast aside by her husband Jason to take a new wife, the princess Glauce, daughter of Creon, King of Corinth, in despair and jealous rage murders their two children with her own hands and kills the princess by means of a poisoned robe, but not

before she has secured her escape with the help of a man, King Aegeus of Athens (LL. 710ff ; " strong women " in the dramas enlisted the aid of men prior to acting, see Ch. 1, 11). *Medea* also : 1) highlights the marginal status of foreign women at Athens (LL. 220, 253-257, 1121-1123) : under Pericles' law of 450/451 they were unable to attain citizenship and consequently unable to marry an Athenian (Pericles, and his foreign mistress Apasia of Miletus were unable to marry, see Ch. 1, 11) ; 2) demonstrates the close bonds that often existed between women and their servants (L. 166) as does *Alceste* (L. 770) and the *Hippolytus* (LL. 176 ff) among others ; 3) gives some clue to the extent of literacy among women (L. 1089). though the sum total of all the evidence in poetry and prose is inconclusive (see see Ch. 1). Another salient theme (which reappears in other plays in which women, lacking power, act in a self-destructive manner) shows that Euripides, while he does not condone Medea's acts of revenge, nevertheless, presents the female point of view and insights into feminine psychology in light of the prevailing climate of war and sexual double standard (LL. 231-251), and in the end, permits her, via supernatural means, to flee Corinth for safe haven in Athens.

The Heracleidae (The Children of Heracles), date unknown, but thought to have been written and presented about 430-429 B.C., deals with the summary execution of an unarmed prisoner, Eurystheus, king of Argos. It supposedly reflects an event which

occurred around 430 B.C. in which five Peloponnesian envoys were treacherously seized by allies of the Athenians in Thrace, brought to Athens and executed the same day without hearing or trial. ⁵ The incident is documented by Thucydides (II.67) and Herodotus (VII. 137.3). Both this play and Euripides' *Suppliant Women* (c. 424-415) also illuminate Athens' relations with Argos, but even more salient is Euripides' focus on the horrors and sufferings of war. ⁶ The main outline of the plot of *The Heracleidae*, like the legend, tells of the persecuted family of Heracles who finally found sanctuary in Euripides' glorious Athens. Although no other state in Greece had dared to defend the rights of the refugees against the powerful king of Argos, Athens fights to protect them. Notwithstanding, the staunchly pro-Athenian tone of the play, we also see, in the repulsion felt toward the summary execution (LL. 961-966), early signs of Euripides' growing disillusionment with his beloved Athens. Another idea is that of woman's self-sacrifice for the greater good of the state, in this instance, young Macaria, the refugee daughter of Heracles, willingly offers her life in place of her brothers to speed the Athenians in battle (LL. 547-551). This is a recurring theme for Euripides, (see *Alcestis* above) and a precursor to his many other plays in which, almost saintlike in her willingness, a young female virgin is ritually sacrificed to assuage the passions and superstitions of men and gods, in times of social unrest and war. Though Demophon, king of Athens and the Athenians generally are shown to be men of some democratic

principles, it is ultimately the love and courage of the young woman, Macaria that elevates the play above the traditional conflict between right and might⁷; or perhaps, Euripides had something else in mind, that women are more expendable than men. Though he presents women in a generally more favorable light, Euripides also gives evidence, and perhaps supports, traditional norms of behavior for women: Macaria's modest, but resolute apology for her appearance in public (LL. 474-476) recalls Pericles' famous exhortation to women in 431-430, to be discreet and quiet in the presence of men.

The *Hippolytus* which followed about a year later in 426 B.C., has, like *Medea*, a theme of intrafamilial violence, betrayal in love, and revenge. Athens, at the time, was beset from within and without, its population had been decimated by the plague in 429 -- which also claimed the life of its leader Pericles -- and its struggle with the Peloponnesian League continued. The story of *Hippolytus* is one of tragic love. Languishing from her secret passion for her stepson, Phaedra (Phaedra is a young woman of nineteen or twenty; women usually married in adolescence to much older men, see Ch. I, IV) against her better judgment, is persuaded by her devoted nurse, who acts as go-between, to divulge her guilty secret to him. Hippolytus haughtily rejects her. Phaedra, fearing her husband will learn the truth, and her reputation suffer, in despair, hangs herself, but not before she writes a note (LL. 856-865) (see *Medea* above concerning

literacy among women) falsely accusing Hippolytus of having raped her. (Helen King (1985) makes the point that Phaedra's suicide, though a negative act, is also positive insofar as she had " inserted herself into an established tradition " of women who threatened or chose this " bloodless mode of suicide " when they feared rape and thus reinforced her false claim against Hippolytus. ") Ironically, the young Phaedra's only " crime " was to have loved in thought only, she goes to her death without having uttered a word to Hippolytus. Euripides' *Hippolytus* tells us much about family values in contemporary Athens, its strict norms for female rectitude, how highly prized were reputation and appearances, and the gross inequities of a sexual double standard. Moreover, Euripides was the first to recognize and allow for passion, he introduced into drama the highly developed individual, the " psychology of erotic passions " and the aberrations of love, and he showed both sides of the story. '

The Cyclops is the only complete example of a fifth century satyr-play, and is undated. The satyr-play, a short, farcical piece, originated in Dionysiac fertility ritual, and traditionally topped a series of three tragedies presented at the dramatic festivals. *The Cyclops'* exact association to the three tragedies that preceded it is uncertain, because it is undated. It has been suggested that it be assigned to the group of which *Hecuba* (425-424 B.C.) (see below) is one, because of close affinities in plot : both plays grapple with the problem of

" civilized brutality " in its fifth century incarnation ¹⁰. Others suggest that it is earlier than the *Alcestis* 438B.C..¹¹ In Euripides' retelling of the Homeric legend, he adheres closely to the original : Odysseus and the Greeks are in the Cyclops' cave. In his effort to escape the monster and to revenge his cannibalism (the Cyclops had devoured two of Odysseus' crew), Odysseus very shrewdly and brutally blinds the monsters' one eye. However, Euripides' Odysseus is not Homeric, but a contemporary figure, and both he and the savage Polyphemus (the Cyclops) manifest late fifth century forms of corruption. Odysseus' glib and specious talk is pure sophistry, while Polyphemus advances the totalitarian Greek notion of might is right, rendering both characters equally unsympathetic. ¹² The reference to " foul Helen " (L. 280) -- whose sexual misconduct had been the rationale for the Trojan war -- in this earlier work reflects traditional attitudes toward women ; but we also see a sign which portends change (see below) when the Cyclops holds the Greeks responsible for waging war because of one woman (L. 284); Odysseus' disclaimer: " A god was responsible ; don't blame men ". (L. 285) is a piece of Euripidean irony.

Any scholarly attempts to date *Heracles* have been only partially successful. The play suggests dates around : 424-423, Euripides having served forty years in the military had by then reached the age of sixty, which exempted him from military service, and the play deals systematically with old age in connection with

military service ; and 418-416, during this period Alcibiades' active, and aggressive policies had provoked a renewal of conflict between Athens and Sparta at a time when hopes for an lasting peace were high, and in the play *Heracles* returns to Thebes in time to save his wife and children from certain death at the hands of his enemy, and subsequently murders them by his own hand, in a fit of madness ¹³. In the Euripidean model, the Homeric *Heracles*, renowned for great physical courage and nobility, is metamorphosed into the fifth century humanistic *Heracles*, whose madness has resulted from pathological human psychology. According to sociologist Alvin W. Gouldner (1965), in Euripides the underside of the self surfaces and the chorus and the gods represent other sides of the self ¹⁴, and in this play Hera is the name given to *Heracles*' demons. Another idea, stemming from sophistic thought, is that " man is the measure ", man must rely on man : in time of great need it is *Heracles* and *Theseus* who come to each others aid. *Megara*, *Heracles*' wife is a very sketchy character, almost an abstraction of nobility, for despite all she endures at the hands of her tormentors, unlike *Hecuba* (see below), she is not brutalized by her trials, instead she maintains her nobility, and that is what sets the standard for *Heracles* when he despairs.

Andromache, presented between 430-424 B.C., though it reflects the atmosphere of war, is unheroic in nature and even contains comic elements. It is also highly patriotic, and a vehicle for

political propaganda. Written in the early years of the Peloponnesian war, it is strongly anti-Spartan in tone as Euripides has Athens responding to certain Spartan incursions and atrocities. Moreover, the play's atmosphere of moral chaos may be attributed to the plague which the Athenians had recently lived through (430-429 B.C.) and the background of philosophical flux and rampant individualism which followed. Thucydides' disturbing analysis of Athens and its prevailing mentality under siege from within and without (see Ch. I & II) echoes Euripides' own sentiments and psychological insights into human character. Another key idea relates to the evils of slave-holding (the battlefield was a ready source of slave recruits) and also the threat to marital stability inherent in its practice. Andromache, daughter-in-law of Hecuba, and widow of Hector, has been allotted to Neoptolemus as a trophy of war. Hermione, his legitimate wife, is deeply resentful (as was Clytemnestra when Agamemnon brought Cassandra, Hecuba's daughter, to share their bed. Clytemnestra murdered Agamemnon and Cassandra, but in the lighter tone of this play Hermione eventually decides to count her blessings (LL. 920ff). However, poor Andromache, even more powerless than Hermione, is both subject to the perils of slave status and the target of Hermione's wrath. The events of the play may arouse pity, but its archness, scathing assaults, and caricature, at times, suggest Aristophanes. In true Euripidean fashion, the play is also a platform for sophistic skepticism, and a variety of contemporary debates reflecting the fragmentation and upheaval of

the period : for example, Andromache admonishes Menelaus in an extremely contemptuous manner for being weak and a bully (LL. 319- 363), which suggests less polarization of sex roles (see Winick (1969) Ch. 1. p.30), or even role reversals ; at the same time, the chorus of women chide Andromache for having exceeded the limits of traditional female behavior in the presence of men (LL. 364-365) ; also Orestes' comment to Hermione : " What else goes wrong for a woman except her marriage ? " (LL. 904-905) raises questions about women's one dimensional role.

Hecuba, a true tragedy, presented in 425-424 B.C., vividly depicts the horror and brutality of war and its effect on both the victors and the vanquished, who become brutalized in its wake. The theme of the play is therefore, less a discussion of the rights and wrongs of the dispute and more a commentary on the suffering war brings to people -- in particular women -- and its effect on human character. In the opening of the *Hecuba* we find the aged Queen of Troy prostrate and grief stricken. Her husband and sons have been killed in the war, and now, after having been torn from her homeland and enslaved by the victorious Greeks, is being informed by a chorus of captive Trojan women that yet another tragedy will befall her. Her young daughter Polyxena, is about to be ritually sacrificed by the Greeks to assuage the ghost of Achilles. With each blow Hecuba gradually relinquishes her values, her self respect, her trust and faith, in short all

hope. The extent of Hecuba's psychological transformation is made evident when she manifests the characteristics of her tormentors and in an act of hideous revenge against the one enemy she can trap, kills his sons and blinds Polymestor (Polymestor is guilty of having murdered Polydorus, Hecuba's young son and his ward). Polymestor has the temerity to request that Agamemnon punish Hecuba for her act of vengeance, but Agamemnon chooses to let Hecuba off. However, her success is brief, for Polymestor protests his having been defeated by a subordinate, a woman, and a slave (LL. 1231-1234) and predicts that Hecuba will be changed into a hated dog (L. 1235). In a manner which evokes Thucydides' (V. 54-116) *Melian Dialogue*. 416-415 (see Ch.11 & *Trojan Women* below), Euripides shows the powerful and powerless joined in common tragedy. ¹⁵ The Greeks, callous and corrupted by their blind adherence to what they believe to be political necessity have resisted all of Hecuba's reasonable entreaties, and Hecuba, unable to tolerate the repeated denials of justice has finally lost hold on all that is human and civilized in herself. What is particularly striking here, is the lack of awareness on the part of Hecuba's tormentors that their actions are motivated by fear, superstition, and greed rather than political necessity. For example, the plan to sacrifice Polyxena arouses a debate : two supposedly enlightened Athenians (sons of the democratic King Theseus of Athens) participate, and they too uphold Polyxena's murder (LL. 123-129) ; the soldiers of the Greek army cheer Polyxena's courage, yet insist on her death (L.

578) ¹⁶ ; even Agamemnon, Hecuba's supposed champion (LL. 120-121) -- he has taken Hecuba's daughter Cassandra, an avowed virgin, as his mistress and professes to love her -- maintains that political necessity dictates Polyxena's sacrifice, when his own weakness and corrupt nature are the underlying reasons for his inaction (LL. 849-861); and Polymestor's deed was motivated by greed, he killed Polydorus for his gold (L. 776).

The Suppliant Women presented in 420-415 B.C., like the *Hecuba* above and *The Trojan Women* (see below), is best understood as a plea against inhumanity especially in wartime, and its thrust is essentially ethical and political. The play recalling an aspect of the Oedipus legend, deals with the aftermath of a war initiated by Oedipus' exiled son Polyneices against his brother Eteocles, to unseat him from the Theban throne he inherited from their father. The suppliants of the title are the mothers of the seven warriors who fell in the attempt on Thebes, and whose bodies the Thebans refuse to release for burial (Euripides deals with other aspects of the story of the rival brothers in his *Phonessian Women*). The play is set at the temple of Demeter near Athens, where the suppliants hope to enlist the aid of the democratic ruler, King Theseus of Athens. Aethra, mother of the king, supports the pleas of the women and persuades him to take up their cause and, if necessary, to fight for the release of the bodies. Euripides is speaking out for justice, and against man's moral failure in the face of war. Moreover, in making Theseus a

model of sophistic *arete* (civic virtue) -- Theseus is an enthusiastic supporter of the art of persuasion and democratic principles, who even allows the opinions of the opposition to be heard (LL. 427ff) -- the play reflects the secularization of the *polis*. Individual feelings play a secondary role, but here too Euripides demonstrates the effects of stress on various psyches. Aethra and Theseus are examples of virtue and moderation, while Evadne, wife of Capaneus, one of the fallen warriors, in an act of fanatic loyalty plunges to her death in his funeral pyre, rather than face life without him. Euripides, does not condone Evadne's action, her father and the chorus of women are horrified by her act (LL. 1066, 1072), he nevertheless gives us insights into the social constraints (for example (L. 1040) and demographic changes which governed the lives of women, and widows (especially those who lost husbands in the war (see Ch. IV). Finally, it is once again (see above) the nobility of a woman, Aethra, who sets the standards by which men are guided.

The Trojan Women is thought to be Euripides most emotionally forceful anti-war play. In the winter of 415-416, the Athenians put all the grown males to death and enslaved the women and children of the neutral island city of Melos (see Ch. I). *The Trojan Women* was performed several months later, in the Spring of 415, as Athens was preparing to launch its great expedition to conquer Sicily, which was, like that against Melos, unprovoked, and further attests to the Athenian obsession with large scale

conquest and domination. The central portion of the play is in the spirit of the tragedy at Melos and the *Melian Dialogue* (see the *Hecuba* above). Tragic Hecuba, surrounded by a chorus of Trojan women and children captives -- all Trojan men have been killed -- entreat their captors for clemency, and again, as in the *Hecuba* (see above) the logic of political necessity, as opposed to morality and justice, prevails, and all the prisoners are enslaved (see above & Ch. V, about the institution of slavery at Athens) with the exception of Hector's little boy Astyanax, who must die as he remains a potential rallying point for any fugitive Trojans or their allies (similar logic, on an individual scale, prevails, when Aegisthus in Euripides' *Electra* prevents Electra's bearing a son who could potentially avenge Agamemnon's death, see below). The norm of strict adherence to sex roles is perpetuated as the men, who are the warriors, and a threat, have all been killed, while the women and children are utilized as slave labor. While the drama refers to a particular contemporary event, it is also a broad denunciation of war and imperialism (see Ch. I) for by then, Euripides had lost much of his early patriotic fervor for the Periclean cause. Having lived through repeated atrocities perpetrated against prisoners by both sides in the dispute, he had reason to believe they were equally responsible, at least as it pertained to the treatment of prisoners (see *Hecuba* above). Euripides' weariness and disillusionment with the lengthy internecine war is evidenced in the different tone of the following two plays.

The *Iphigenia in Tauris* usually dated between 414-410 B.C., in its structure and plot, is a romantic comedy in the mold of *Helen* 412 B.C.. In both plays, a woman is spirited away by supernatural means to a far-off land (Scythia, Egypt) and benignly held captive, persuaded, on the slightest evidence, that the man most beloved to her (brother, husband) and her only potential rescuer is dead. Directly, however, she encounters this very man, and after some misunderstanding, is joyfully reunited with him in a recognition scene. She then, with all Periclean modesty (*Helen* L. 1049), contrives a plan for their escape which, with the aid of divine intervention, proves successful, and they face a bright future. Euripides, in portraying women as capable and clever, puts them on an eye level with men. However, he might also have had something less flattering in mind, that women are more scheming than men, the plans for escape involved beguiling the captors (*Iphigenia in Tauris* L. 1300; *Helen* L. 811ff). The romantic tone of both plays, and the more favorable image of women (although Iphigenia, unlike Phaedra, is shown not to have written, the words of a letter she composed were written for her by someone else (LL. 582-585)) is a significant sign that the traditional form had grown less relevant to a society in flux. This is especially the case in Euripides' portrayal of the long beleaguered Helen as innocent of the charge of sexual misconduct which was to have caused the Trojan War (L. 582ff), making men more accountable for their own waywardness and warring nature, during a period when sex roles had demonstrably become less

polarized (see above & Ch.I & IV). In a different spirit, the *Iphigenia in Tauris* has another piece of Euripidean anachronizing : Clytemnestra's murder is only briefly alluded to in this play (LL. 924-927) however, Thoas, king of the Taurians (L. 1174) condemns the matricide by saying, "...what barbarian would do the thing these Greeks have done ! ". The murder was done in a context of civil justice (the theme is more fully developed in the *Orestes* below).

Many scholars believe *Electra* was produced in 413 B.C. because the Dioscuri are rushing to Sicilian waters to rescue the fleet, (L. 1347) an allusion to the great Sicilian expedition which had sailed from Athens in 415 B.C. and was destroyed later, in 413. In its dramatic tone the play, though it contains tragic elements (the murder of Clytemnestra), is a mixture, which include pathos, melodrama, and farce bordering on mythological parody. As in the *Andromache* (430-424) before it, and the *Orestes* (408) which followed, many of the characters show signs of psychological pathology resulting from the war. Despite Euripides' many unorthodoxies, the character of the heroine retains important mythic qualities such as, her morbid attachment to her dead father, and her powerful jealousy of Clytemnestra. However, in the Euripidean version, the myth takes on an earthiness, the degree of which had not been seen before. Here the heroine is forced, because of Aegisthus' (her stepfather) fear that she will bear a royal child potentially able to avenge

her father's murder, to marry a poor peasant farmer. But it is Orestes, at Electra's urging, who murders Clytemnestra and Aegisthus, and in the Euripidean version, they are portrayed as selfish, and misguided in their motives. As a comment on the bourgeois, and democratic character of the state : Clytemnestra is represented as an anxious, middle class, grandmother ; the peasant farmer a man of noble character ; and Electra, unwashed and unattractive, has become a drudge, a hardworking farmer's wife (L. 75). Euripides has blurred the distinction between the classes to reflect social change.

The *Ion* is usually dated about 412-410 B.C.. These were the uncertain years of the Deceleian war, waged on Attic soil, just fourteen miles from Athens. The fate of the Athenians hung in the balance in a war that would turn in Sparta's favor. The *Ion* however, makes only some vague allusions to the contemporary political climate of Athens (L. 585ff). The *Ion*, like *Helen* and the *Iphigenia in Tauris* written during the same period, is more romantic melodrama than tragedy, but the play does contain moments of tragic tension. The myth has it that Creusa, daughter of a king of Athens, when a girl, was seduced by her divine lover, Apollo, and gave birth to a son, whom she then exposed because she feared the wrath of her parents. But, unknown to Creusa, Apollo sent Hermes to take the child to the temple at Delphi. There, Ion was found by a priestess and reared as a temple slave (unwanted infants, usually female, once abandoned,

acquired slave status, see Ch. IV ; 100 (some say 1,000) child temple slaves are mentioned in fifth century Greece '7), unaware of the circumstances of his birth. The play opens years later, when Creusa, now married to Xuthus, a foreigner, who was awarded her for his services to Athens, (this is realistic, Thucydides documents such transactions, see Ch. IV) come to the temple at Delphi because they are childless. There, after many intricacies of plot, comes a recognition scene (Euripides uses this device in other plays, see above), and Creusa and Ion are united. One important theme running through the play is the autochthony of the Athenians. Ion, trying to discover his mother's identity " prays " that she will be Athenian so that through her he will have the right of citizenship (L. 671). Actually, Creusa was the daughter of Erectheus, the autochthonous king of Athens, so that Ion should have his prayer granted. Euripides has humanized the myth. For Creusa, despite her royal status, is a perfect example of feminine misery : she was shamelessly seduced in her youth by the god Apollo, and forced to expose her infant son to protect her reputation ; later she is awarded to a foreigner (in contemporary Athens, the *kyrios* (male guardian) chose the husband, see Ch. IV)) ; and then *she* suffered the added humiliation of being childless in a context where children, and consequently a fertile wife, were much valued.

The plot of the *Phoenician Women* first produced during one of the years of 411-409 B.C., basically constitutes more stages of the

Oedipus legend. Two rival brothers, Eteocles and Polyneices, sons of Oedipus, are unable to settle their differences in dividing their heritage. Their contest ends in a duel to the death. At that, their mother Jocasta, made desolate by their loss, takes her own life. Antigone, whose desire it was to accompany her blinded father Oedipus into exile, is now left with the duty of burying her mother and brothers in defiance of King Creon and the state. In the opinion of some experts, incorporated in the play are some additions made by fourth century producers which borrowed from both of Sophocles' versions of the Oedipus myth, one of which was presented after Euripides' death, *Oedipus in Colonus*.¹⁶ The women in Euripides' play, Jocasta and Antigone, show strength and speak for the forces of conciliation and mediation, while the men are shown to be rigid, warlike, and weak: the brothers have unbendingly pursued a policy of aggression (according to some experts their rivalry alludes, in general, to contemporary political problems¹⁷); and King Creon in the face of Antigone's pleas has remained unmoved. The *Phoenician Women* is one of a group of Euripides' sacrifice plays, (see above; Ch. IV) here, however, the victim is a young male virgin, Menoeceus who is ritually sacrificed to prevent an all out battle between the Thebans and the Argives.

The *Orestes* is dated 408 B.C., about one year before Euripides, by then old, embittered, war weary, and disenchanted with his beloved Athens, was supposed to have withdrawn in voluntary exile

to Macedon (some critics argue that his exile to Macedon is a piece of fiction, see Ch. 1). The substance of the play is an imaginative rendering of the events which follow the murder of Clytemnestra by her children. The *Orestes* is another deliberate effort of Euripides to anachronize the mythic material so as to reveal contemporary values and norms. Here Orestes, once a hero and heir to a great house, and his sister Electra, are gradually exposed, along with others, including the gods, as corrupt, murderous, and even mad. Since they are contemporaneously acting in a system where justice and civil law, rather than blood feud, prevail, their actions take on a totally different meaning. Orestes and Electra have recourse to the courts and the matricide cannot be justified, and they are charged with murder. We are told, that the charge brought before the Argive assembly, (L. 871ff) and the assembly itself, filled with political intrigue, is an accurate portrayal of the Athenian system of justice. ²⁰

The *Iphigenia in Aulis* along with the *Bacchae* were produced posthumously in March, 405 B.C., shortly after Euripides' death in Macedon in 406 B.C.. It is widely thought that the plays were brought back to Athens and produced by his son, who may have also completed portions of the script left unfinished at Euripides' death. ²¹ The play, full of dramatic devices and peripataea, is regarded more as a melodrama than a classical tragedy. Here, more than elsewhere, Euripides has played such havoc with the legendary material that he has all but departed from the

traditional form. The myth briefly, has Iphigenia, daughter of the much beleaguered Clytemnestra, ritually sacrificed by her father, Agamemnon, to the goddess Artemis, in order to speed the Greek ships on their way to vanquish Troy. However, strongly influenced by the sophists, in Euripides' hands, the heroes of old become merely human, ambitious, self-serving, and wavering in moral character, reflecting the moral decline of the democracy. Tradition represents Iphigenia as an unwilling victim until the moment of her death, and Aeschylus retains this image in his *Agamemnon*. Euripides' Iphigenia, in stark contrast, eventually gives her life willingly for the greater good of Greece. Helen, and Clytemnestra are the two other important women in the play, and though Helen never appears, she is continually condemned by Euripides for the anguish her selfish act has caused Greece (in his *Helen* (see above) she was cleared of any wrong doing, here he has reverted to the archaic view), and Clytemnestra will come to murder Agamemnon, so that, by comparison, Iphigenia's selfless act has become one of exceptional virtue. Nevertheless, if we consider Euripides' other plays, along with this one, it is clearly the injustices done to his women characters and not Agamemnon's deed that he ultimately sympathizes with. As this play is numbered among Euripides' other wartime sacrifice plays, it actually attests to the tragic contemporary events : Athens will soon fall (404 B.C.), and coincidental with it, came the end of Attic tragedy.

The *Bacchae*, Euripides' last extant play, is generally regarded as his masterpiece, and perhaps his most complex and disturbing play. In form and style it is very different from *Iphigenia in Aulis*, almost reverting to the archaic model, and once again attesting to the enigma of Euripides' mind. Perhaps, as some say, writing in the new context of Macedon influenced the change in direction (see Ch. 11). The subject matter of the play is based on a long history of Dionysiac religion and ritual which includes glimpses of the fifth century incarnation : Euripides consciously anachronizes, by permitting Teiresias (LL. 286ff) to describe Dionysian worship as contemporary Athens knew it : cleansed of human sacrifice, tamed by its union with Olympian worship, and state controlled. ²² Remember, orgiastic and ecstatic cults (according to Max Weber and others, see Ch. 11) had been reintroduced in Athens at that time, and held a special attraction for women, citizens and foreigners alike (and probably slave-women), one reason being that its frenzied states brought a sense of extreme liberation to its followers (L. 280ff ; also see Ch. IV). In this play, women of all classes are lured from their homes by Dionysus, (LL. 34-36) " driven from shuttle and loom " (L. 118) and in a crazed and frenzied state, go up to the mountains to participate in an orgiastic rite, which culminates in Pentheus' death (the extreme savagery of the Bacchantes here probably refers back to Dionysian worship as practiced in prehistory). Euripides' depiction of women who revel in their hunting prowess only when demented

speaks, among other things (see above), to the rigidity of the sexual division of labor. The heart of the play however, is the contest between the tyrannical god of popular religion, Dionysus and the arrogant, sophist educated, fiercely anti-traditional mortal Pentheus (see Gouldner (1965) ²³, and Ch. 1. pp. 20-21, on the Greek obsession with contest ; also *Bacchae* LL. 1160-1164). What is typical of Euripides, is his presentation of both sides of the argument, which he then reveals as equally unsympathetic (for example, see the *Cyclops* above). Young Pentheus' *hubris*, like that of the youth Hippolytus, brings about his undoing, and Dionysus is a callow god, willfull, scheming, corrupt and cruel in the extreme. At the end of Euripides' quest to understand human problems, it appears that human " reason " and the irrational as symbolized by Pentheus and Dionysus failed to provide the answer. Attic tragedy, except for a few minor poets, ended here.

2. Final Conclusions

Having made this brief sojourn into fifth century Athenian culture, can we draw any final conclusions about the mentality of the period ? If, as George Mead, and the Symbolic Interactionists have proposed, identity is a product of social communication (see Ch. 1), hence, at Classical Athens, femininity a social construction of its men and their medium, then the fragmentation, atomism, and struggle for individuation which was the hallmark of the period (especially the latter half

of the fifth century), and that so much shaped and conditioned the minds of the Athenians (see Ch. I, II, III), is attested to in the contrasting, and contradictory, conceptions of women as reflected in the contemporary prose, and poetry. Rapid urbanization had introduced new social types at Athens : marginal, and cosmopolitan men and women appeared, and an " intelligentsia " (Redfield, 1954)²⁴, who joined with citizens already clamoring to assert their " particularity and incomparability " in the most " extravagant " ways, in the small town confines of the *polis*, which had become even more restrictive politically and military, because of the civil war being fought near and far (Simmel, 1950).²⁵ We would therefore, suggest, that at least in sociological terms, the paradoxical attitudes toward women, which are so much the focus of scholarly attention, are less problematic than is generally supposed.²⁶ Outside the Greek context, for example, in early Christianity, attitudes toward women were equally inconsistent. On the one hand, " men and women were conceived of as equal in the sight of God, both being possessed of divine souls ", and on the other hand, the notion of woman's inferiority was heralded. Women were viewed as temptresses, sexually and diversely, and women were the embodiment of evil.²⁷ According to Pitrim Sorokin (1957) the emergence of Christianity coincided with great transformations in " culture mentality "²⁸, which were similar in scope and nature to those which occurred in Classical Athens.

And it was Euripides, of all the tragic poets, who most fully integrated changes in culture mentality into his work. As a result, his women were more frequently revealed as human, although often times stereotypical as well, giving us a quite accurate perception of, in the words of sociologist Joan Rockwell (1974), " the social bonds which included women, and the social barriers which excluded them." ²⁹

NOTES

1. Grene and Lattimore, *Euripides, Vol. IV*, pp. 2-3.
2. Murray, 1913, pp. 69-70 ; Grene & Lattimore, 1958, *Euripides IV*, pp. 2-3 ; Ehrenberg, 1968, p. 226.
3. Michael H. Jameson, 1977, *The Classical Journal, Vol. 73, No. 2, Dec./ Jan. 1977/78* : Agriculture and Slavery in Classical Athens, pp. 135-138.
4. Cameron and Kuhrt, 1983, see *Bound to Bleed : Artemis and Greek Women*, pp. 120-121.
5. Grene & Lattimore, 1955, *Euripides, Vol. I*, p.111.
6. Ehrenberg, 1973, pp. 285-286.
7. Ehrenberg, 1973, pp. 285-286.
8. Cameron and Kuhrt, 1985, see: *Bound to Bleed: Artemis and Greek Women*, p. 119.
9. Gouldner, 1965, pp. 110-115 ; Ehrenberg, 1973, pp. 253, 286, 296.
10. ed. Grene & Lattimore, 1969, *Euripides II*, pp. 2 note: 1, 5.
11. Murray, 1913, p. 69.
12. Murray, 1913, p. 69 ; Grene & Lattimore, 1956, *Euripides Vol. II*, pp. 6-8.

13. Grene and Lattimore, 1956, *Euripides II*, p. 58 ; Ehrenberg, 1973, p. 295.
14. Gouldner, 1965, pp. 110-115.
15. Grene & Lattimore, 1958, *Euripides III*, p. 4 ; Ehrenberg, 1973, p. 296.
16. Murray, 1913, pp. 87-88 ; Grene & Lattimore, 1958, *Euripides, Vol. III*, p. 5.
17. Lacey, 1968, p. 308, n. 89.
18. Grene & Lattimore, 1959, *Euripides, Vol. V*, p. 68 ; Ehrenberg, 1973, p. 312.
19. Ehrenberg, 1973, p. 312.
20. Grene & Lattimore, 1958, *Euripides, IV*, p. 109 ; Ehrenberg, 1973, p. 324.
21. Grene & Lattimore, 1958, *Euripides, Vol. IV*, p. 210 ; Ehrenberg, 1973, p. 360.
22. Grene & Lattimore, 1959, *Euripides, Vol. V*, p. 144 ; Ehrenberg, 1973, pp. 361-362.
23. Gouldner, 1965, pp. 55-56.
24. Sennett, 1969, see : Robert Redfield, 1939, *The Cultural Role of Cities*, p. 217.
25. Sorokin. 1957, pp. 164-165, 188-189, 422-423, 541 ; Sennett, 1969, see : Georg Simmel, 1950, *The Metropolis and Mental Life* pp. 54-56.
26. Cameron and Kuhrt, 1983, see " Bound to Bleed : Artemis and Greek Women ", pp. 109-111 : Classicist, Helen King (1983) acknowledges that concepts of women outside the Greek context have also been ambiguous. She suggests that the " problem " of Greek women, as previously outlined (complex problems of the sources), is overstated by some of her colleagues. She prefers to explain the different representations of women -- " strong " vs. submissive -- in Greek poetry and prose as related to the " positive values " which accrued to the married woman, as reproducer (*gyne*) and the " negative values " which " shifted to the unmarried girl " in Greek thought.
27. Leslie, 1976, p. 194 ; Cameron and Kuhrt, 1983, pp. 160-161.
28. Sorokin, 1957, pp. 45, 118, 194.

29. Rockwell, 1974, pp. 9, 123.

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