The second day was titled *nēsteia* (fasting). The women fasted sitting on the ground, mimicking Demeter's behavior at the loss of her daughter. On the third day, *kalligeneia* (fair birth), the remains of the pigs and seed grain were scattered in the fields.

Only free women of unblemished reputation were permitted to participate in the Thesmophoria.[75] They were chaste for three days in preparation for the festival and continued to abstain during the course of it. Yet they indulged in the foul language and obscenities characteristic of fertility rituals. The women chose their own officials from among themselves.[76] Men were involved only to the extent that, if they were wealthy, they were compelled to bear the expense of the festival as a liturgy or tax in behalf of their wives.[77]

The existence of exclusively women's festivals has been variously explained. One hypothesis is that women's cults were survivals from a matriarchal period when all religion was in the hands of women. Another explanation notes that women in early societies were in charge of gardening, and hence involved in fertility cults. Regardless of the social structure, women's connection with birth and fertility is obvious, and it is not difficult to understand the urge to apply women's influence to the crops.

A comparison between Archaic and Classical Athens gives the impression that women were forced into obscurity in the latter period. Certainly there are no stories of respectable women in the fifth century B.C. to compare with those surrounding the members of Pisistratus' court. It may be suggested, on the basis of comparisons between Archaic and Classical Athens and between Athenian and Spartan or Roman society, that some women—at least those of the upper class—flourished in an aristocratic society, while none fared as well under the democracy. The curbing of the aristocrats by the democracy of the fifth century B.C. entailed the repression of all women, but leaned especially heavily on the aristocrats who had the time and the means to make and enjoy displays of wealth. It may also be suggested that after the class stratification that separated individual men according to such criteria as noble descent and wealth was eliminated, the ensuing ideal of equality among male citizens was intolerable. The will to dominate was such that they then had to separate themselves as a group and claim to be superior to all nonmembers: foreigners, slaves, and women.

V

PRIVATE LIFE IN CLASSICAL ATHENS

SOCRATES' BLUNT dismissal of his wife Xanthippe from his deathbed and his desire to die among his male companions is a dramatic, if exaggerated, indication of the emotional gulf between husband and wife.[1] The distance between husbands and wives extended to other spheres. Athenian men and women lived separate lives, and most of our information is about men's lives. It is almost easier to describe the activities of men and then simply say women did not do most of these things.

The Seclusion of Women

The separation of the sexes was spatially emphasized. While men spent most of their day in public areas such as the marketplace and the gymnasium, respectable women remained at home. In contrast to the admired public buildings, mostly frequented by men, the residential quarters of Classical Athens were dark, squalid, and unsanitary.[2]

Women stayed home not only because their work did not allow them much chance to get out but because of the influence of public opinion. Many families were likely to own at least one female slave,[3] but even a woman with slaves was tied down by the demands of her household, husband, and infants.[4] [Plate 9] Wealthier women were most likely to stay home and send their slaves on errands. But poor

women, lacking slaves, could not be kept in seclusion,[5] and in fact women found pleasure in the company of other women, for they gossiped while fetching water, washing clothes, and borrowing utensils.

Women of all economic classes went out for festivals and funerals. The close association of women and mourning noted for earlier periods (see p. 43) continued in Classical Athens. In an effort to promote democratization, Solonian legislation had curtailed the participation of women in funerals, for mourning by large numbers of women had been a means for ostentatious families to parade their wealth. The *prothesis* (lying-in-state) formerly held in the courtyard was to take place indoors. Only women over sixty years of age or within the degree of children of cousins were permitted to enter the room of the deceased and to accompany the dead when the corpse was carried to the tomb, following the men in the funeral procession.[6] Xanthippe's visit to Socrates on the day he was to die was not warmly received, but Socrates' behavior was unusual. When some men were condemned to death by the notorious Thirty, they summoned their sisters, mothers, wives, or other female relatives to see them in prison.[7]

Whether women attended dramatic performances has been much disputed. It seems likely that they did, but the contrary can be maintained with plausibility.[8] Dramatic festivals evolved from the worship of Dionysus, and all the roles were acted by male actors; but, as Euripides' *Bacchae* demonstrates, women were highly enthusiastic participants in the cult of this god. On the other hand, women who did not have slaves to tend their babies were probably not able to attend a full day's performance, or even to see one play. What is interesting about this controversy is that, numerous though they probably were over the years, the women, absent or present, were not noticed by our ancient authorities.

The separation of the sexes was expressed in private architecture by the provision of separate quarters for men and women.[9] Women usually inhabited the more remote rooms, away from the street and from the public areas of the house. If the house had two stories, the wife along with female slaves lived upstairs. The sexes were separated to restrain the household slaves from breeding without the master's permission.[10]

There are, however, some hints that the usual standards of decorum were broached during the second half of the Peloponnesian War. Andocides describes an infamous *ménage à trois* consisting of Callias and two citizen women, one who was his legitimate wife, and the second his wife's mother who became his concubine and eventually bore a son to him.[11] The second example is that of Hipparete, the wife of Alcibiades, who does appear to have acted with extraordinary independence when she left his house in order to obtain a divorce.

Another well-born woman whose behavior was unusual was Agariste, the wife of Alcmaeonides. She was one of three witnesses who gave evidence that Alcibiades celebrated the Mysteries in the house of Charmides.[12] That she witnessed this celebration at night and publicly identified several participants is remarkable in view of the constraints on women in times of peace.

Free women were usually secluded so that they could not be seen by men who were not close relatives. An orator could maintain that some women were even too modest to be seen by men who were relatives, and for a strange man to intrude upon free women in the house of another man was tantamount to a criminal act.[13] In the first quarter of the fourth century B.C., a husband who murdered his wife's seducer gave a vivid picture of his living arrangements:

> Athenians, when I decided to marry, and brought a wife to my house, for a while I was inclined not to bother her, but neither was she to be too free to do as she wished. I watched her as much as was possible, and took my duty as a husband seriously. But when my son was born, I began to trust her, and put all my possessions in her hands, presuming that this was the greatest proof of intimacy.
>
> In the beginning, Athenians, she was the best of all wives. She was clever, economical, and kept everything neat in the house. But then my mother died; and her death was the cause of all my troubles. For when my wife attended her funeral, she was seen by this man, and, as time passed, he seduced her. He looked out for our slave who goes to market and, making propositions, he corrupted her.
>
> Now first, gentlemen, I must tell you that I have a small two-story house, with the women's quarters upstairs, the men's downstairs, each having equal space.
>
> When our son was born, his mother nursed him; but in order that she might avoid the risk of climbing downstairs each time she had to clean the baby, I used to live upstairs and the women below. And so it became quite customary for my wife to go downstairs often and sleep with the child, so that she could give him the breast and keep him from crying.

This was the situation for a long time, and I never became suspicious, but I was so simple-minded that I believed my own was the chastest wife in the city.

Time passed, gentlemen; I came home unexpectedly from the country, and after dinner my son began crying and fretting. Actually, the slave was annoying him on purpose to make him do this, for the man was in the house—as I found out later.

I told my wife to go and give the baby the breast, to stop his crying. At first she refused, as though glad to see me home again after my long absence. Then I became angry and told her to go.

"Oh, yes," she said, "so that you can have a try at the little slave girl here. You dragged her about before, when you were drunk!"

I laughed. She got up, went out of the room, closed the door, pretending it was a joke, and turned the key in the lock. I, thinking nothing about it, nor having the slightest suspicion, was glad to go to sleep after my journey from the country.

Toward dawn she returned and unlocked the door. I asked her why the doors had been creaking during the night. She said that the lamp beside the baby had gone out and she had gone to get a light at the neighbor's.

I was silent, and thought it really was so. But it did seem to me, gentlemen, that she had put makeup on her face, despite her brother's death less than thirty days before. Even so, I said nothing about what she did. I just left, without a word.[14]

The speaker, Euphiletus, is defending himself against a charge of premeditated homicide, because he and his friends slew Eratosthenes when he caught his wife in bed with him.

The speech raises a number of suspicions about the motives of Euphiletus. After his wife had given birth to a son, the purpose of their marriage was fulfilled. Euphiletus very carefully points out that his wife's indiscretion began after the child was born, and therefore there can be no doubt about the legitimacy of his son. He moved upstairs and probably was cavorting with the slave girl. He says that his wife accused him of this, and we may consider the charge to be true, or wonder why the mother rather than the slave was cleaning the baby in the middle of the night. Euphiletus may have been able to retain his wife's dowry for his son as a penalty for her adultery, although this is not certain. It would seem, however, that if a cuckolded husband had to surrender the dowry, then he would be penalized for not having brought her up properly. Euphiletus was a person of moderate wealth. He admits that his house is small; he has only one female slave and does not employ a wetnurse. Even so, he maintains separate living quarters for husband and wife, although the wife sometimes sleeps in her husband's room. (His claim that he did not bother his wife much at first probably is a euphemism for not making sexual demands on her.)

The clothing of respectable women also served to conceal them from the eyes of strange men. Women's clothing was, by modern standards, simple.[15] The material used in Classical times by respectable women was usually wool or linen, but prostitutes wore saffron-dyed material of gauzelike transparency. The style of dress was either Ionian or Dorian. A *himation,* or shawl, was worn with either style and could be drawn over the head as a hood. Since the Ionic *chiton* was confining, it tended to be the garment worn in public, and a shorter tunic was worn around the house and as a nightdress and petticoat. There was a large variety of sandals and slipprs. Sandals with thongs between the toes were worn, as well as sandals with straps bound around the lower leg as far as the knee. Some women wore shoes with platform soles to increase their height.[16]

Vase paintings show women bathing themselves and attending to various parts of their toilette. They removed their pubic hair by singeing and plucking.[17] Cosmetics were used by housewives as well as by prostitutes. A white complexion was considered attractive, since it proved that a woman was wealthy enough not to go out in the sun. Powder of white lead was commonly used for this, and when women went outdoors they protected themselves from the sun with a parasol. Rouge was used on the cheeks.

Although dress was simple, jewelry and hairdos could be complicated. Women wore their hair loose, surmounted by a coronet or headband, or up in a chignon or net. False curls seem to have been used sometimes. Slaves' hair, however, was usually cropped. Some of the exquisite jewelry can still be admired, since it was preserved along with the bronze mirrors and containers for cosmetics in the graves of the women with whom they were buried.

Some women are portrayed on their tombstones choosing jewelry from a chest proffered by a slave, or adorning themselves with the aid of a mirror. [Plates 10 and 11] In Chapter III we noted the lack of Archaic tombstones commemorating women in Attica,

and ventured to guess that their absence was stimulated by sumptuary laws in force in the sixth century B.C. Since the dress and activities of women are frequently an index to the wealth of their husbands, we are not surprised to find in the burials of women an indication of the family's status and the paraphernalia appropriate to a leisured class.

The Physical Condition of Women

The study of Geometric cemeteries suggested that female deaths increased during the childbearing years (see p. 45). Childbirth was difficult. Medea announced that she would prefer to stand in the front line of battle three times than to give birth to one child.[18] Many women made offerings in gratitude to Eileithyia, goddess of childbirth. The robes of women who died in childbirth were dedicated to Artemis at Brauron,[19] since she was patroness of the life cycle of women—and there are several Classical relief sculptures apparently of women who died in childbirth.[20] Beginning in Classical times and continuing through the Roman period, women outnumber men as donors to Asclepius, the god of health.[21]

Mothers and midwives normally assisted women in childbirth.[22] There were male physicians, but some examples drawn from Hippocrates' *Aphorisms* do not indicate that their ministry was notably beneficial:

> 30. Acute illnesses are fatal to pregnant women.
>
> 31. Miscarriage follows blood-letting in pregnant women, especially if the foetus is large.
>
> 32. If a woman vomits blood, this stops with the onset of menstruation.
>
> 41. To determine whether a woman is pregnant, give her a drink of hydromel on retiring when she has not had supper. If she suffers from colic in the stomach she is pregnant; if not, she is not pregnant.
>
> 42. A pregnant woman has a good complexion if the child is male; a poor complexion if the child is female.
>
> 43. If a pregnant woman has erysipelas of the womb, she will die.
>
> 48. A male foetus leans to the right, a female to the left.
>
> 49. When a drug that produces sneezing is used to expel the afterbirth, stop up the mouth and nose.

Motherhood at an early age, combined with a life spent indoors, was disadvantageous to the health of the Athenian woman. More children were born in the first half of the twenty-year reproductive period than in the second half, making the period from approximately sixteen to twenty-six years old the most hazardous. It is interesting to recall here Plutarch's approbation of the Spartan custom of having girls marry at eighteen, since they are then in a better physical condition to bear children, although he preferred earlier marriages for other reasons. Xenophon, Plato, and Aristotle all believed that Spartan customs concerning women were more wholesome. Xenophon praised the Spartans for nourishing their girls as well as their boys, for it was unusual among the Greeks to do so.[23] This differentiation in nourishment could exist even for suckling newborns. The "mothers' rations" awarded to Ionian women in 489 B.C. in Persepolis were exactly twice as much wine, beer, and grain for women who had given birth to boys as for those who had borne girls.[24]

Xenophon also approved of the Spartan custom of encouraging women to exercise so that they could maintain a good physical condition for motherhood. The well-developed physiques of Spartan women caused comment among the Athenian housewives in the comedy *Lysistrata,*[25] although it may be suggested that performing household chores, especially moving back and forth before the loom, offered an Athenian woman ample opportunity for strenuous exercise.

In the *Republic,* Plato prescribed physical exercise for women and stated that females should become parents for the first time at twenty and males at thirty. Later, in the *Laws,* he reduced the age minimum for females to any time between sixteen and twenty.[26]

Aristotle suggested that pregnant women be forced to exercise by passing a law that they must take a daily walk to worship the divinities presiding over childbirth. He also noted that it was undesirable for the very young to produce offspring, since more of the babies were likely to be female, and the mothers endured a more difficult labor and were more likely to die in childbirth. He suggested that the optimum age for marriage was eighteen for women, thirty-seven for men.[27]

Many women did survive the childbearing years, though the fact that there is less information about menopause than about menarche implies that fewer women underwent this experience. The age

of menopause was typically from forty to fifty.[28] Solon's Funeral Law, permitting women over sixty who were not close relatives to visit corpses, demonstrates that some women attained old age.[29] There were some old men as well, although as a group the elderly formed but a small percentage of the total population.

Sexuality

The sexual behavior of citizen women was regulated by laws—mostly those attributed to Solon, who was himself a homosexual.[30] The guardian of an unmarried woman caught *in flagrante delicto* had the right to sell her into slavery. I do not know of any case where this sale actually occurred, whether because the severity of the penalty was a deterrent, or because the father was reluctant to make the scandal in his family public. Since the aim of marriage between citizens was the production of legitimate children, adultery was a public offense because it could result in the introduction of a child unrelated to the husband—and possibly the offspring of a non-Athenian—into the husband's house and kinship-group cults and onto the rolls of Athenian citizens. Both parties were severely punished, but, despite the penalties, cases of adultery are recorded.

Whether adultery came about through rape or seduction, the male was considered the legally guilty or active party, the woman passive. The husband of a raped or adulterous woman was legally compelled to divorce her. The accused woman had no opportunity to proclaim her innocence, though, with difficulty, her guardian might do so in her behalf. A woman thus condemned was not allowed to participate in public ceremonies, nor to wear jewelry, and the most severe deprivation was probably that she would be a social outcast and never find another husband.

The penalties for the male caught in adultery with a citizen woman are indicative of the Athenian attitude toward their households and their women. The penalty for rape was less than for seduction. Seduction was considered a more heinous crime than rape, for it implies a relationship over a period of time during which the seducer wins the affection of the woman and access to the possessions of her husband's household. In a city where only men and male children belonged to families in any permanent sense, but

where women were easily transferred from their fathers' families to those of successive husbands, men were readily suspicious of the loyalty of women to the families in which they found themselves. Therefore, the aggrieved husband had the right but not the obligation to kill the seducer. The rapist gained the enmity of the woman, and thus posed less of a threat to the husband. The penalty for rape was a monetary fine.

Interestingly, Athenian law governing sexual behavior was not limited to what one must not do, but also concerned itself with what one should do. Thus the husband of an heiress was to consort with her three times a month. While this suggests that the main purpose of their union was to produce an heir, Plutarch adds another dimension to the relationship when he says that any husband ought to show affection to a good wife three times a month because the result will be a reduction in marital tensions.[31]

Intercourse thrice monthly was deemed sufficient sexual attention for "good" citizen wives; many wives surely had fewer opportunities. As we have seen, the social segregation of the sexes in Classical Athens and the legal stipulations regarding connubial relations could make sex between husband and wife an obligatory act—fulfilled by procreation—rather than an intimate emotional encounter. In *Lysistrata*, it is true that husbands are brought to their knees by sheer sexual starvation, but this does not contradict the assertion that connubial intercourse was devoid of any concept of spiritual union. If the husband was not away on a military campaign, or enjoying the company of his fellows in homosexual relations, or consorting with prostitutes, he was likely, if he had fathered the requisite number of children, to sleep in separate quarters or with his female slaves, rather than risk his wife's abortion or infanticide. Thus, we may assume that the sexual experience of the majority of Athenian citizen women was not satisfying.

In view of the severe penalties, adultery was not a comfortable or wise alternative for either men or women, and, taking all factors into consideration, the Athenian atmosphere was not conducive to homoerotic relationships between women. Therefore, masturbation seems to have been viewed as an acceptable outlet for women's sexual appetites. [Plate 12] Some vase paintings depict phallic instruments being used by women for self-stimulation, and references are made to such devices by the respectable wives in *Lysistrata:*

LYSISTRATA: This is something I've been tossing about many sleepless nights.

CALONICE: It must be getting thin if you've been wearing it down.[32]

In this sex-starved climate, resort to onanism among women would be almost expected. Though Plato invented a fable—attributing the story to Aristophanes—in which he purported to explain the natural origin of female homosexuality,[33] we have no solid evidence of lesbian relationships actually occurring among citizen women. However, we should not take arguments *ex silentio* in matters of ancient history as valid; our sources may simply have not been interested in describing sexual activities other than those of men.

We may, however, weigh the likelihood of lesbianism among the respectable women of Athens against the absence of two important factors present in the societies of Sparta and Mytilene in Lesbos, where we know with some certainty that female homosexuality existed. In Athens, unlike the other cities, women did not generally find high esteem in the eyes of other women; and adolescent Athenian women were not educated in the kind of all-female setting common to Sparta and Lesbos. As we have seen, Athenian women were not only cut off at a very early age from contacts with males, including their husbands, but were most often secluded in the home—away from relations with any women other than their mother and sisters, or their female slaves.

We do know, on the other hand, that prostitutes in Athens enjoyed not only a full range of heterosexual diversions, but homosexual relations as well—again, on the basis of vase paintings showing phallic devices designed for simultaneous use by two women. But the gap between respectable women and prostitutes was so wide that we cannot begin to infer from one group to the other; rather, we must consider the latter a case unto themselves.

Prostitutes

Prostitution flourished in Greece as early as the Archaic period. Large cities, especially those on the coast visited by sailors, supported vast numbers of prostitutes. As we mentioned earlier, one of the means for making Athens an attractive city on the mainland was

the establishment of state-owned brothels to be staffed by slave women.[34]

Not only slaves were prostitutes. Like any slave, a prostitute could be granted her freedom by her owner, or could arrange to buy her own freedom by contracting a loan from a benefit club sometimes composed of past clients. She would repay the loan from her earnings as a free prostitute.[35] In this way many freedwomen and free noncitizen women permanently domiciled in Athens practiced the profession. They had to be registered and were subject to a special tax. Those at the top of this social scale were called *hetairai,* or "companions to men." Many of these, in addition to physical beauty, had had intellectual training and possessed artistic talents, attributes that made them more entertaining companions to Athenian men at parties than their legitimate wives. It is no accident that the most famous woman in fifth-century Athens was the foreign-born Aspasia, who started as a *hetaira* and ended as a madam, and in the course of her life lived with Pericles, the political leader of Athens. Aristophanes jokingly claimed that due to her influence Pericles started the Peloponnesian War.[36] Plutarch was much kinder, and added:

> Sources claim that Aspasia was highly valued by Pericles because she was clever and politically astute. After all, Socrates sometimes visited her, bringing along his pupils, and his close friends took their wives to listen to her—although she ran an establishment which was neither orderly nor respectable, seeing that she educated a group of young female companions to become courtesans. Aeschines says that Lysicles the sheep-dealer, a man lowly born and humble of nature, became the most important man of Athens by living with Aspasia after the death of Pericles. Consequently there is a good deal of truth contained in the *Menexenus* of Plato (even if the first part is written with tongue in cheek) when it states that she had the reputation of associating with many Athenians as a teacher of rhetoric. Nevertheless, it appears as if Pericles' affection toward Aspasia was chiefly erotic in its nature. For his legal wife was a close relative of his who had previously been wed to Hipponicus and bore to him Callias, "the Wealthy"; while married to Pericles she bore him Xanthippus and Paralus. Later, as they found living together to be unsatisfactory, with her consent he married her to another man, and he himself took Aspasia and cherished her deeply. The story goes that he would kiss her warmly both when he left for the marketplace and when he returned home each day.

In comedies she is referred to as the new Omphale, and Deianira, and Hera. Cratinus openly called her a whore in the following passage:

"As his Hera, Sodomy bore Aspasia,
A shameless whore."

Moreover, it appears likely that she bore him a bastard son, because Eupolis, in the *Demes,* depicts him as inquiring:

"Does my bastard son live?"

To which Myronides replies:

"Yes, and he would have been a man long ago,
Had he not been afraid of the harlot's evil." [37]

Modern scholarship contradicts some of Plutarch's assertions. It seems likely that the liaison of Pericles and Aspasia began at least five years after he divorced his wife. She bore one son to Pericles and one to Pericles' successor Lysicles.[38]

In Plato's *Menexenus,* to be sure not a serious work, we learn that Aspasia composed the funeral oration referred to above (p. 74). The oration includes recommendations for the strict conduct of citizen women, and in the *Menexenus* Aspasia is shown to make much of women's ability to bear and nurse babies.[39] These opinions seem unsuitable in the mouth of an educated and liberated woman such as Aspasia, but it is necessary to remember that she made the recommendations for the wives of citizens, not for women like herself.

Married Athenian men were allowed to copulate with prostitutes. Of course, female slaves were also available to their masters or their masters' friends for sexual purposes.[40] We hear little about the objections of their wives, although Euphiletus' wife bantered her husband about his intimacy with their slave. However, when Alcibiades flaunted his freedom to consort with prostitutes by bringing them into his house, his wife walked out and attempted to get a divorce. She had a very large dowry (ten talents at marriage and ten at the birth of a son) which Alcibiades would have been forced to return if the divorce had been granted. Therefore, when Hipparete attempted to register her divorce with the archon, Alcibiades picked her up bodily and brought her home through the marketplace, with no one daring to oppose him. She continued to live with him until her death not long after.[41] When Alcibiades himself died in exile and dishonor, a faithful courtesan, Timandra, took care of his funeral.

Men were unlikely to marry before the age of thirty, and unmarried men had no opportunities for heterosexual activity except with prostitutes and slaves. Since there seem to have been fewer women than men in the general population at this time, shared women, or prostitutes, were a solution. Some men lived with concubines in a more or less permanent union. When a man lived with a concubine, she was considered his sexual property in much the same way as a legitimate wife. The rape or seduction of a concubine drew the same penalties as offenses committed against a legitimate wife. The important difference between legitimate marriage and less formal unions was that, after the citizenship law of 451–450 B.C., the children of concubines could not be considered citizens and there were also problems about their ability to inherit.

Prostitutes were notoriously mercenary. They were the only women in Athens who exercised independent control over considerable amounts of money. From the time of Rhodopis, the Egyptian courtesan freed by Sappho's brother, prostitutes were credited with using their money in extraordinary ways. Rhodopis was reputed to have supplied the funds to build a pyramid. Herodotus discounts this story, but describes the expensive dedication that he believed she made at Delphi.[42] This was the first of many Greek stories of lavish prostitutes.

Rhodopis and Aspasia were unusually successful. In the absence of male protectors, the careers of prostitutes were hazardous. Neaira, it is true, managed to raise three children, but it seems likely that prostitutes practiced infanticide to a greater extent than citizen wives. Prostitutes may have preferred daughters to sons so that they might succeed them in the profession. They also bought young slave girls or collected the female newborns exposed by others.[43] They trained the girls in their trade, and kept them in brothels to ensure an income for themselves when they were past their prime.

Though the life of the Athenian woman looks bleak from a modern vantage point, especially in contrast to the opportunities available to the Athenian man, we are in no position to judge whether most women were discontented and unhappy. Citizen women were cared for and protected by law, and they had the satisfaction of knowing that their children would be citizens. Through the institution of the dowry, most women enjoyed economic security throughout their lives, and widows and old women were specifically protected by law.[44] Comedy, although full of

misogyny, also reveals mutual affection in marriage. Women's opinions had some influence, for the prosecutor of Neaira reminds the jury that they will be compelled to answer to their wives, daughters, and mothers if they acquit her.[45] Although there were slaves in the household, when a wife was away from the house she was sorely missed because children and household needed her attention.[46] Funerary reliefs show the sorrow of the entire household—husband, children, and slaves—at the death of a wife. The following is an epitaph of the fourth or third century B.C., from Piraeus, the port of Athens:

> Chaerestrate lies in this tomb. When she was alive
> her husband loved her. When she died he lamented.[47]

Although to a modern woman, the role of neither *hetaira* nor secluded housewife appears attractive, it is tempting for us to idealize the former and to pity the latter.[48] The *hetaira* had access to the intellectual life of Athens, which we nowadays treasure, and a popular courtesan who was not a slave had the freedom to be with whoever pleased her.[49] Admittedly our sources are biased, but the fact that we know of some courtesans who attempted to live as respectable wives, while we know of no citizen wives who wished to be courtesans, should make us reconsider the question of which was the preferable role in Classical Athens—companion or wife.

VI

IMAGES OF WOMEN IN THE LITERATURE OF CLASSICAL ATHENS

Women in Tragedy versus Real Women

IF RESPECTABLE Athenian women were secluded and silent, how are we to account for the forceful heroines of tragedy and comedy? And why does the theme of strife between woman and man pervade Classical drama? Before proceeding to complex explanations which are directly concerned with women, it is necessary to repeat the truism that the dramatists examined multiple aspects of man's relationship to the universe and to society; accordingly, their examination of another basic relationship—that between man and woman—is not extraordinary. It is rather the apparent discrepancy between women in the actual society and the heroines on the stage that demands investigation. Several hypotheses have been formulated in an attempt to explain the conflict between fact and fiction.

Many plots of tragedy are derived from myths of the Bronze Age preserved by epic poets. As we have observed, the royal women of epic were powerful, not merely within their own homes but in an external political sense. To the Athenian audience familiar with the works of Homer, not even an iconoclast like Euripides could have presented a silent and repressed Helen or Clytemnestra. Likewise, the Theban epic cycle showed the mutual fratricide of the sons of Oedipus. The surviving members of the family were known to be Antigone and Ismene. Sophocles could not have presented these sisters as boys. In short, some myths that provided the plots of