



Living Unpublicly in Classical Athens

Women in Antiquity | Meeting #7

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Upcoming Dates

- Monday, October 27
Proposal Due
- Monday, December 8
Position Paper Due
- Sunday, October 26
Responses for Week 7 Due

2

Five things today

- Private Athens
- Seduction, adultery, and rape
- Prostitution and hetaerae
- *The Bacchae*
- *The Women at the Adonis Festival*

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Quiz #4: Living Unpublicly in Athens

1. In *The Bacchae*, Pentheus is attacked and torn to pieces by
 - a. the goddess Athena
 - b. the women of Thebes**
 - c. wild animals
 - d. the vengeful Furies
2. All of the following were true of the hetairai EXCEPT:
 - a. They were elite courtesans, registered and taxed like all prostitutes in Athens
 - b. Many possessed not only physical beauty but intellectual training and artistic talents
 - c. They were required to be above average in height and let their hair grow to their knees**
 - d. The most famous woman in fifth-century Athens was a hetaira
3. Seduction of women in Athens involved
 - a. No access being permitted to any space outside the home to any woman of any class
 - b. Sex clothing for women as a kind of compensation for their incontinability
 - c. Any man seeing a naked woman having to undergo a cleansing ritual in front of his kitharoi
 - d. Separate quarters for men and women in wealthy homes if possible**
4. In Classical Athens, all of the following were true about seduction EXCEPT:
 - a. Seduction was considered more serious crime than rape, because it implied longer control
 - b. Adultery via seduction was allowed on one day a year, on the Festival of Eros**
 - c. The aggrieved husband had the right, but not the obligation to kill the seducer
 - d. As with rape, the male was presumed to be the guilty party, not the female
5. According to Plutarch, the authors Xenophon, Plato, and Aristotle all believed that Spartan customs regarding women were more wholesome than those of Athens because:
 - a. Athenian women married young, making childbirth more dangerous at an early age
 - b. Spartan women were kept as well fed as the men; this was less consistently true for Athenian women
 - c. Physical exercise for women was common in Sparta, but not in Athens
 - d. All of the above**

Extra Credit

EC. If you were a woman in Athens, would you rather be (a) a hetaira or (b) a married woman in a noble family? Why?

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Responses

6

Questions about whatever



7



Historiography and ancient Athens

- Early Greeks melded history, legend, and myth
- Athenians develop history as a form of philosophy

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Secondary Source Reading

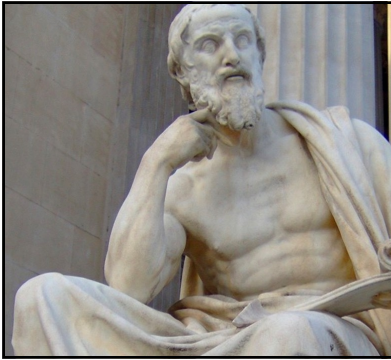
Marilyn A. Katz

"Ideology and the 'Status of Women' in Ancient Greece"

- History has focused on the deeds of men
 - Women's studies as a reaction to that - disinterring the unheard female voice
 - Does it mean anything to talk about the status of women divorced from...
 - (a) the way in which women relate to society, and
 - (b) the way social bonds function across genders and within genders?
- More useful approach might be to talk about history of gender
- Talk about historical situations in terms of the relationships between and within genders



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The art of history

- Using stories of the past to make assertions about human identities
- Authenticity of evidence strengthens the case being made

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Primary Source Reading

Herodotus
from *The Histories*

- The Amazons
 - gender expectations are culturally conditioned
- Artemisia of Halicarnassus
 - Wise and successful Persian admiral
 - “My men have become women, and my women men”
- Gorgo of Sparta
 - Discovered the wax tablet trick
- Candaules of Sardis
 - Exposes wife to Gyges
 - She recruits him to kill Candaules
- The brooches of Athens
 - Used to slay sole survivor of disastrous battle



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Secondary Source Reading

Carolyn Dewald
“Women and Culture in Herodotus’s *Histories*”

- Herodotus is one of the fathers of history
 - Narrating the Persian wars
 - Sociological – motivations of cultures – how things are done
 - What customs say about human experience
- For Herodotus, the central story of humanity is human connection
 - Bonds between individuals
 - Parity of the marital bond
 - Similar to ideas discussed in Homer



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Private life in Athens

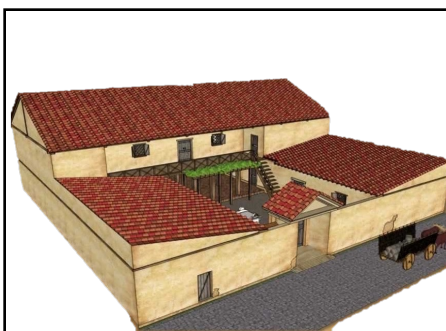
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Private life in Athens

- We have more info about private life in Greece than for other societies
- Constantly bear in mind the limitations of our sources
 - Most of our info has to do with the upper class
 - Can be very far from pertinent to what it's like to be a peasant woman living 20 miles from Athens
 - Focus on Athens, so much less is known about what it's like in Thebes, Corinth, Naxos, etc.
 - Primary literary – fictionalized, dramatized, not narrations of ordinary life

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Housing

- Housing situation varies for every family
- We don't have the second stories archaeologically
- Public areas for guests (men)
- If there is an upstairs, women's quarters will be there

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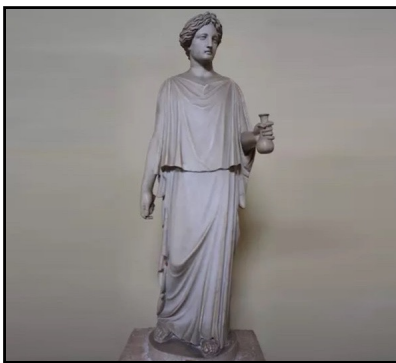
Secondary Source Reading

Joan Burton
"Women's Commensality in the Ancient Greek World"

- Dinner parties, dancing parties all male – just not true
- Participation of women expected
 - Married woman present is a demonstration of her respectability
 - You would not find a non-respectable woman at a dinner party
- Complexities of women's involvement in private gatherings
 - Any concern about a woman being susceptible to a man not of the family
 - A woman would not be left alone with a guest in the home



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Clothing

- Different traditions for clothing
 - Ionian
 - Dorian
- Female counterparts to what men are wearing
 - Not to obscure or to highlight
 - Practical household garb – knowledge is limited
- Still expected to conform to a certain standard and wear practical or dignified clothing

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Peplū



Chiton



Himation



Strophion



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Secondary Source Reading

Lin Foxhall

"Women's Ritual and Men's Work in Ancient Athens"

- There are contributions that women make through festivals and rituals
 - Part of the way people contribute to their communities in general
- Women are doing it, men are doing it
 - Separately as genders and together as a community
- Festivals that involve women
 - Not just about women finding community among themselves
 - Part of the organic way in which all members of community contribute to health and strength of the community



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Exercise

- Some situations call for a different kind of dress
- We know a lot about Spartan female physical training
- Generally what we see in Sparta in the extreme is present in the rest of Hellas at a more subtle level
 - Athenian women expected to treat themselves with respect to perform duties to family and community
 - Physically healthy to produce physically healthy children

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Health and folklore

- Texts on health and medicine
- Medicine as it develops
 - Hippocrates, Galen
 - Application of reason and system to collective wisdom of the masses
 - Folk tales tested
- Medical tradition reaches back among women as well as men
 - Folk medicine for female health issues
 - Both find their way into the origins of medicine as it develops in Greece

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Secondary Source Reading

Marjorie Susan Venit

"Women in Their Cups"

- Illustrated in article
- Large drinking vessel used to further a stock stereotype of women as pursuing of indulgence
- Wine equated with the pursuit of wanton sexual encounters
- Exaggerated stereotype used largely for effect, mostly in comedy



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**Sexuality**

- Sexuality is psychoanalyzed in retrospect
 - The means by which a society collectively preserves itself
 - Very much associated with the marital bond
- We find out about social expectations of sexuality through deviation from the norm

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**Adultery and rape**

- Adultery
 - Responsibility of man? Woman? Both?
- Rape – extreme form of this
 - Tends to show up in literature as storytelling device (mythology, plays, poetry)
 - Larger than life events and crises brought forward to exaggerate the normal human response
 - Info about rape is less reliable because it tends to be more dramatized
 - Adultery more mild and attitudes toward it can be taken a little more at face value

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Prostitution

- Alternative path to social norm
- Not at bottom of society but at the side of society
 - Has freedoms and abilities that a maiden or a matron does not have (outside = allure)
 - Cannot enjoy the benefits of a secure social bond like daughters/wives/mothers (outside = insecurity)
 - Not part of cultural transmission/creating the future (isolated and alone)
- Stigma is of not being part of the advancement of community – not part of the community's story

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Secondary Source Reading

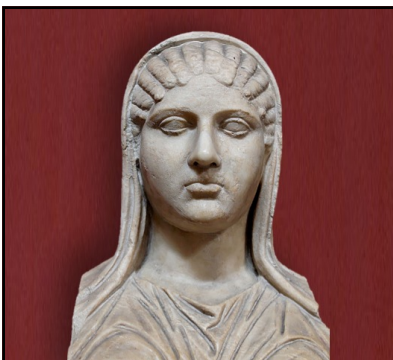
K. J. Dover

"Classical Greek Attitudes to Sexual Behavior"

- Sexual behavior is more complex than we think
 - Varies across class and situation
- Not one of suppression, but firm ideas about appropriateness
- Athens is changing so rapidly that some of these things are coming into question
 - Erotes of social norms through sexual transgression
 - Concerns those people concerned about norms that things are being undermined
 - Backsliding for a lot of literature, especially comedies
- *Bacchae* – a god comes to Thebes and people are like we don't really need you, we're responsible for our own community and justice
 - Gods respond to human failings – things that impact negatively on the community



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Hetaerae

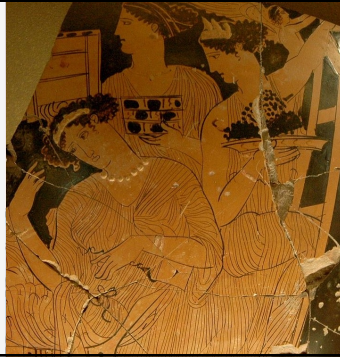
- Paid companions in Athens
- Educated and expected to converse on social and cultural topics
- Outside the social structure of marriage and families
- Better or worse off than Athenian wives?

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Primary Source Reading

Theocritus
 “The Women at the
 Adonis Festival”,
 from *Idylls*

- Idealized male and ordinary women
- Highlights the sexual component to religion and mythology



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Primary Source Reading

Euripides
 from *The Bacchae*

- Men and women are both transformed
- Both genders become other
 - Women become deranged hunters, and men become the hunted
- Both men and women suffer
 - Cadmus and Agave are both cursed
 - Pentheus is dead – because Dionysus tricks him, not because of the frenzy
- Don't just go looking for women — look for the relations between men and women
 - Father / daughter, mother / son, sister / sister



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Dionysus

- His first speech – protector of grapes and what they have to offer
- Wine = liberation of the mind
- The liberation that comes from breaking free of rules and conventions temporarily
- Intoxication is a necessary element of a structured society; otherwise things become hidebound and stuck in the past

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Dionysus's vindication

- Pentheus turned his back on him
 - Defending structure and order at all costs is to forsake the progress that comes from unbound expression
- New knowledge is crucial
 - Comes from methodological reason and science and thinking the unexpected (inspiration, epiphany, genius)
- Capacity for insight,
 - Catalyzed by rational and by irrational
 - What sets humans apart from animals, and Greeks from barbarians

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Secondary Source Reading

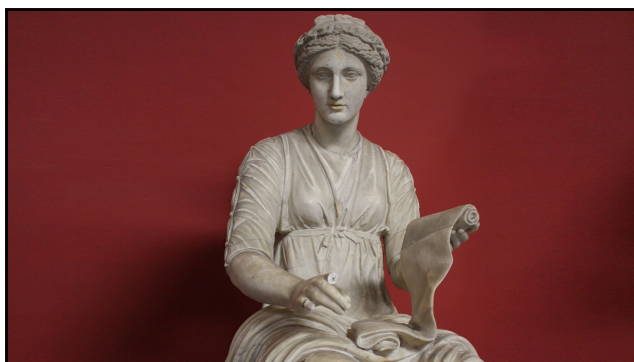
Charles Segal

"The Menace of Dionysus: Sex Roles and Reversals in Euripides' *The Bacchae*"

- City that Dionysus enters falls short of responsibilities
 - Failed in a basic function – to realize the full potential of its citizens
- City not just where people live
 - The whole point of the exercise is to push toward something greater
- How the hunt is involved in the frenzy



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