# THE WOMEN OF GREECE IN WARTIME

DAVID SCHAPS

WAR is not healthy for women. "We suffer it in more than double share," says Lysistrata, "first of all, bearing children and then sending them out as soldiers." ("Quiet," says the Probulus, "don't bring up painful memories.") "And then, when we should have been merry and enjoying our youth, we sleep alone because our husbands are away on campaigns. But leave our troubles aside; I'm distressed for the young girls, growing old in their chambers. . . ."[1] Lysistrata was still speaking in a city whose walls and constitution were intact. Had she known what was in store for Athens, or had she listened more attentively to the *Troades* four years earlier, she could have painted a much more harrowing picture.

Lysistrata had been something of a peacenik from the beginning, but hardly an influential one. "During the first war we put up, modestly and discreetly, with what you men did, since you wouldn't let us grumble. Still, we weren't happy with you. But we could tell very well what you were up to, and often, when we were indoors, we would hear that you had made a bad decision on some great issue. Then, sad on the inside, we would ask again with a laugh, 'What did you decide in the assembly today about adding a clause onto the treaty-stone?' 'What's that to you?' my husband would say. 'Won't you be quiet?' And I would be quiet." Other women may have been less agreeable—"But *I* would never have been quiet," calls one woman from the chorus—but not, one imagines, more successful: "And you would have been good and sorry, if you hadn't been quiet," replies the Probulus.[2]

All this has the ring of truth. War is surely a calamity for all involved, and it is easy to believe that women, removed from the persuasive oratory of the ecclesia and the excitable atmosphere of the crowd, saw that fact more clearly than men. But history cannot be decided by a ring of truth. It is my intention in this paper to investigate the question of what, exactly, were the attitudes of Greek women toward the wars that sometimes divided, sometimes united, but seem so often to have occupied the men of Greece, what their experiences of those wars were, and what they tell us about the relationship of Greek women to their male relatives and to the state.

1. Ar. *Lys.* 589–93. All translations are my own.
2. Ar. *Lys.* 507–16.


0009-837X/82/7703-0001$1.00

## WOMEN'S ATTITUDE

One cannot begin to discuss a group's attitude toward a war until it has been established where that group's sympathies lie. This is not to suggest that the women were ever a fifth column, actively hoping for the enemy to defeat their own husbands; but one may ask whether they identified with the war effort, considering the army's victory their victory, or whether they felt themselves more apart, innocent bystanders who had to put up with the ingrained folly of the men. The most striking indication comes at the beginning of Book 9 of Herodotus, when Mardonius, in control of Athens in 479, sent a proposal of peace to the Athenian *boule* in Salamis. One man, Lycides, spoke in favor of the proposal; the Athenians stoned him to death. "And when there had been an uproar in Salamis over Lycides, the wives of the Athenians learned what had happened; and with the women encouraging each other and taking up the cry, they attacked Lycides' house on their own initiative, and stoned both his wife to death and his children to death."[3] In the wake of Salamis and on the eve of Plataea, the Athenian women, at any rate, were no appeasers.

When the Carthaginian army, after destroying Acragas, laid siege in the spring of 405 to Gela, the Geloans—warned, perhaps, by the sight of the Acragantine refugees, who had arrived destitute in Gela after a difficult march when Acragas could no longer be defended—voted to evacuate their women and children to Syracuse. But if the sight of the refugees had made the men cautious, it had steeled the resolve of the women: they fled to the altars in the marketplace, "begging to share the same fate as the men." As long as the siege lasted, they remained in the city, helping with the repair of the walls where they were broken. In the end, they were indeed evacuated, but not until the men, too, abandoned the city.[4]

Sparta had no walls to repair; its men were its wall. But Pyrrhus, king of Epirus, attacked suddenly while the king of Sparta was in Crete with the army. Here, too, plans were made to evacuate the women; here, too, the women objected. Archidamia, a woman of the royal house,[5] appearing in the *gerousia* with a sword, took the men to task for having thought it proper that the women of Sparta should live once the city was destroyed. The women stayed and worked with a will. When an anti-elephant trench had to be dug at night, the women relieved from work those men who would have to fight. When morning came, they brought the men their armor, and throughout the battle they provided ammunition, food, and drink, and cared for the wounded. But as soon as the royal army returned, the women went back to their homes, "thinking it no longer decent to meddle in military affairs."[6]

3. Hdt. 9. 5. 3.
4. Diod. Sic. 13. 89, 13. 108–11.
5. Polyaen. 8. 49. For her subsequent part in Spartan history, see Plut. *Agis* 4, 7, 20.
6. Plut. *Pyrrh.* 27. 2–5, 29. 4, 29. 6; Polyaen. 8. 49. Cf. Polyaen. 8. 70 for the similar, though less successful, battlefield help of the women of Cyrene.

In most of Greek warfare, of course, the women were neither asked their opinion nor did they come forward to volunteer. But when the war came close to home, they did not always hide in the closets. When a small Theban force tried to seize Plataea at the outset of the Peloponnesian War, the Plataean men organized a counterattack, while the women and the slaves[7] added screams and war cries from the houses and pelted the Thebans with stones and roof tiles.[8] In one of the battles of the Corcyraean civil war, "the women assisted [the men] courageously, pelting [the oligarchs] with tiling from the houses and standing up to the tumult against their nature."[9] It was the promise of Philip V of Macedon, when besieging Chios, to give those slaves who would desert to him freedom and marriage with the women who owned them; the reaction of the Chian women—and the slaves, says Plutarch—was to mount the walls bringing stones and missiles, urging the defenders on and standing by them until Philip's army was repulsed.[10] Even when the enemy was not yet at the walls, a particular emergency might bring out the women for noncombatant participation, as did the fortification of Argos in 417;[11] and Plutarch tells a few tales of women smuggling weapons in for otherwise unarmed men to use in a surprise attack.[12] When the Carthaginians attacked the walls of Selinus in 409/408, women and children brought food and ammunition to the defenders, "setting no value on the modesty and shame they had in peacetime"; later, when the Carthaginians were inside the walls, these women, too, threw stones and tiles from the rooftops, but to no avail.[13]

The military value of tile-throwing women cannot have been great.[14] They could add to the discomfort of a hard-pressed enemy, as Thucydides says they did at Plataea and at Corcyra, or they could perhaps manage a fortunate and fateful hit, as did the Argive woman who laid Pyrrhus low.[15] But nobody ever lured an enemy into a city to expose him to the women on the rooftops; and the "screams and war cries" that encouraged the Plataean defenders might, in less advantageous circumstances, have had the opposite effect. Aristotle complains that when Sparta was first

7. On the role of slaves in Greek warfare, see K.-W. Welwei, *Unfreie in antiken Kriegsdienst*, 2 vols. (Wiesbaden, 1974–77).

8. Thuc. 2. 4. 2.

9. Thuc. 3. 74. 1.

10. Plut. *Mor.* 245B–C.

11. Thuc. 5. 82. 6. The statement in 1. 90. 3 that the women and children helped rebuild the walls of Athens after the Persian Wars is apparently a gloss on παν δημεί (see schol. ad loc.).

12. Plut. *Mor.* 246D–247A, 248E–249B (the latter of Iberian, not Greek, women).

13. Diod. Sic. 13. 55. 4–5, 13. 56. 7; cf. 13. 57 for their fate.

14. Polyaen. 8. 69 tells of an occasion when the women of Acarnania, hurling stones and tiles from the rooftops, succeeded in turning their flagging men back to the battle; but when the men were finally vanquished, the battle was lost.

15. Plut. *Pyrrh.* 34; Paus. 1. 13. 8; Polyaen. 8. 68. Diod. Sic. 15. 83. 3 says that Agesilaus stationed old men and boys to fight from the rooftops against Epaminondas' surprise raid on Sparta; but this was a counsel of desperation, and Epaminondas was not turned back until the main force of the Spartan army arrived. The women of Sinope whose form was suited to the task were dressed with dummy armor and led around the walls in the sight of Datames' army (about 370) in order to make the town's scant defenders seem more numerous; but they were not intended to fight at all and were in fact under orders not to throw anything, "for a woman can be recognized from afar by the way she throws" (Aen. Tact. 40. 4–5). Most original of all, if the story is true, were the women of Thasos, who cut off their hair to make cords for the siege engines defending the town (Polyaen. 8. 67).

invaded by the Thebans in 370 the women, for all their gymnastic training, "were good for nothing, just as in other cities; but they caused more confusion than the enemy."[16]

If the women might on occasion take part in defending the city, it is hardly surprising that they joined in the rejoicing over victory and the mourning over defeat;[17] and one who observes the mass behavior of women gets the clear impression that they sided—at least when the war got near to home—very firmly with their men and behaved as if the city's salvation were their own. They had, as we shall see, very good reason for thinking so.

This is not to say that Greek women were uniformly patriotic; after all, Greek men surely were not. Herodotus tells a story in the name of "the Parians" according to which their city was betrayed—though unsuccessfully—to Miltiades by a Parian woman whom he had captured in the siege;[18] a woman of Plataea, while her sisters were pelting the Thebans from the rooftops, gave a few of the invaders an axe with which they opened one of the city gates and escaped.[19] But the stories of mass opposition of women to men seem to belong entirely to legend: the Amazons, the Lemnian women who killed their husbands,[20] the Danaids who did the same. Herodotus tells us that the Ionian custom by which women ate separately from their husbands and did not call them by name was due to an oath of vengeance, passed on from mother to daughter, against the men who had (at the founding of the cities) taken the women by violence and slain their parents.[21] The story is interesting, not least for the biological fiction underlying it.[22] It is the sort of story—historical aetiology of a singular custom—that Herodotus finds much more plausible than does modern anthropology. I do not believe it is true, but it is the closest we come to an organized historical opposition of Greek women to men.[23]

## MEN'S ATTITUDE TOWARD WOMEN

If the women seem to have identified with their men, there can be no doubt at all that the men saw themselves as fighting for the sake of the women. It was a commonplace to urge soldiers to fight to protect their

16. Arist. *Pol.* 1269b. Xen. *Hell.* 6. 5. 28 says that they could not even endure the sight of smoke as the Thebans plundered and burned the outlying districts.

17. Hdt. 1. 82. 7, 5. 87. 2; Xen. *Hell.* 6. 4. 16 (on all these see below, pp. 209–10), 7. 2. 9.

18. Hdt. 6. 134.

19. Thuc. 2. 4. 4. The Thebans had entered in the first place through treachery (Thuc. 2. 2. 2).

20. Hdt. 6. 138. 4; Apollod. 1. 9. 17.

21. Hdt. 1. 146. 3.

22. That sons are their fathers' children, daughters their mothers': without this fiction one cannot explain why the women should have taught their daughters to put their sons in Coventry in order to be revenged against their husbands. But this fiction is often demonstrably a psychological and social reality and is of itself no reason for rejecting the tale.

23. The fact that there were a number of legends of women's murderous hostility to men has often been remarked and is only the more noteworthy for being so thoroughly contradicted by the historical record. Its explanation, however, goes into the roots of mythology, a matter beyond the limits of this study and of its author's competence.

wives[24] and to arouse hatred for the enemy by accusing him of planning to abuse the women;[25] these things were said, as Thucydides noted,[26] because people thought they would make an impression in dire circumstances. They would not have been effective had the men's concern for their women been a veil of hypocrisy.[27] Men surely went to war to defend their women: when a company of Chians, fleeing from the defeat at Lade that broke the Ionian Revolt, landed at Ephesus at night during a women's festival, the Ephesians came out in force (*πανδημεί*) and killed them, "thinking that they were bandits and were attacking the women."[28] The king of Macedon, who otherwise followed a very circumspect policy with regard to the Persians, got himself and his kingdom into serious trouble by slaughtering the Great King's ambassadors when they became too free with the women.[29] The Athenians advanced—or rather Herodotus thought they should have advanced—their women's presence in Salamis as a reason for choosing the battleground;[30] and the Plataeans told the Spartans that they could not come to terms without the agreement of the Athenians, "since their children and wives were with [the Athenians]."[31] Herodotus, indeed, explained much of history in terms of the avenging of insults to women,[32] and if we do not see it that way, it was nevertheless an idea that a Greek could understand: Greek history begins with a war undertaken to avenge an abduction.

The men not only saw themselves as fighting to defend the women, they could even be swayed, at times, by the women's feelings. Hector did not heed Andromache, and Lysistrata's husband told her that "war is men's business";[33] but when the young men of Corinth who favored peace in 392 took refuge on the slopes of the Acrocorinth from the massacre of their comrades, it was their friends, mothers, and sisters who convinced them to return home rather than go into exile.[34] Aristotimus, the third-century tyrant of Elis, tried to make a similar use of the wives of men who had fled him; the women refused, even in the face of threats.[35]

24. Thuc. 7. 69. 2.

25. Thuc. 7. 68. 2, 8. 74. 3; Polyb. 9. 39. 3; Diod. Sic. 14. 66. 5, inter alia.

26. Thuc. 7. 69. 2.

27. Exiles might accept the clemency of a hated enemy to rejoin their wives and children (Diod. Sic. 14. 9. 7). The attitude of a mercenary force, on the other hand, might be very different, as Psammetichus is said to have discovered (Hdt. 2. 30. 4). Mercenary armies were more likely to have concubines in the camp (Xen. *Anab.* 4. 3. 19) than wives at home. The armies that could be exhorted to save their wives were, of course, citizen armies.

28. Hdt. 6. 16. 2.

29. Hdt. 5. 18–21.

30. Hdt. 8. 60*β*.

31. Thuc. 2. 72. A cynic or a Marxist could explain all of these occurrences as defense of the women because they were the men's property, but even the Greeks, who were remarkably straightforward about the importance they attached to wealth, do not seem to have been moved by threats to their wealth as they were by threats to their women, and the emotive terms they used for the two were very different. In the case of Macedonia, although Alexander had to spend a good deal of money to extricate himself from the situation, he seems to have parted with the money, and even with his sister in marriage, more willingly than he exposed the women to abuse.

32. Hdt. 1. 1–5, 1. 7–12, 1. 61, 3. 3 (a story he does not believe), 3. 50, 5. 92; cf. also Thuc. 6. 56. For what a woman could do to avenge her son, see Hdt. 4. 162–67, 4. 200–205.

33. Ar. *Lys.* 520.

34. Xen. *Hell.* 4. 4. 5.

35. Plut. *Mor.* 252A–E.

Indeed, stories seem generally to have told of women encouraging their men to be more warlike, not less so: Plutarch tells us of one group of settlers—Chians around the year 600[36]—who were forced to evacuate their land under a truce allowing them each one cloak and one *himation*. It was the women who objected to their leaving their arms behind; and when the men said that they had sworn, the women told them to take their arms and to tell their conquerors that a spear is the cloak, and a shield the tunic, of a man of spirit. The Chians took their arms, and the enemy did nothing.[37] Herodotus depicts Atossa, the wife of Darius, urging him to undertake a grand expedition "so that the Persians will learn that they are ruled by a man";[38] the son of Croesus urges his father to allow him to be exposed to danger so that he can win the respect of his bride.[39] Both of these barbarian speeches are fictitious, but the attitude is real and Greek.[40] This is not to say that Greek men routinely consulted with their wives on such matters, for they did not;[41] but they were not entirely deaf.

The wives, moreover, may have been able to affect mass action without themselves participating. When sedition was already brewing in Alexandria against Agathocles, the regent of Ptolemy Epiphanes, his mother was impolitic enough to curse a group of women whose loyalty she suspected. "It had already been decided by the men to make changes," says Polybius, "and when the anger of the women, too, was added in each household, the hatred burned twice as hot."[42] Neither Polybius nor his source made a tour of the households of Alexandria that night; they were simply describing what seemed likely to a Greek to happen in such a case.[43] Women's influence in Greece was not always, and probably not chiefly, a matter publicly visible.

When the battle came close to home, care was usually taken, if there was time, to evacuate the women and the other noncombatants. The most famous example was the evacuation of the women of Attica to Salamis, Aegina, and Troezen in the Persian Wars,[44] an operation for which the entire Greek fleet was brought to a rendezvous at Salamis after Artemision.[45] There are many other examples: the citizens of Delphi had

36. Cf. Hdt. 1. 18.

37. Plut. *Mor.* 244F–245B.

38. Hdt. 3. 134. 2.

39. Hdt. 1. 37. 3.

40. Cf. Xen. *Hell.* 7. 1. 30 πανσώμεθα αἰσχυνόμενοι καὶ παῖδας καὶ γυναῖκας κτλ. The Greeks, of course, were not the only people whose men felt that way.

41. The most extreme example, if fictitious, is Xenophon's Critobulus, who said that there was nobody to whom he turned over more affairs of importance than his wife—and not many to whom he talked less (Xen. *Oec.* 3. 12). [Dem.] 59. 110–11, however, would caution us against taking this too literally.

42. Polyb. 15. 30. 1: the date is about autumn 203 (F. W. Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius*, vol. 2 [Oxford, 1967], p. 490). The women also took part in the ensuing riots and killed one accomplice and his family (Polyb. 15. 30. 9, 15. 33. 11–12).

43. Cf. [Dem.] 59. 110–11, where a speaker plays on the judges' apprehension of facing their wives after acquitting a foreign woman of low reputation.

44. Hdt. 8. 41. 1.

45. Though it would appear from Herodotus that only the Athenian ships (which were, of course, the bulk of the combined fleet) took part in the evacuation.

evacuated their women at the same time,[46] and in the Peloponnesian War the Plataeans evacuated their women to Athens,[47] the citizens of Scione and Mende to Olynthus.[48] After the fall of Acragas, when it seemed that the Carthaginians might conquer all of Sicily, many Sicilian Greeks removed their wives and possessions to Syracuse or to Italy.[49] These operations seem to have been a matter, not of collecting all the noncombatants and removing them, but of putting ships (or armed escort) at the disposal of those who wished to evacuate their families.[50] Some might be left behind: although Brasidas had evacuated the women of Scione, there were apparently some left to be enslaved by the Athenians when the city was retaken.[51] Sometimes, indeed, a group of women was left behind to prepare food for the defenders.[52] These women were likely, of course, to suffer the usual fate of women in a sacked city. One wonders whether they volunteered and, if not, how they were chosen; but we have no evidence.

Sometimes defeat was inevitable, and the men would leave with the women. This might be done by the orders of a greater power, as happened to the Aeginetans when the Athenians expelled them;[53] under truce, as happened at Ithome after the helot revolt,[54] at Potidaea at the beginning of the Peloponnesian War,[55] and at Samos at its end;[56] or by stealth, as the Phocaeans and Teians chose after the Persian conquest,[57] and the Himerans, Acragantines, Geloans, and Camarinans under Carthaginian attack.[58] At Himera, indeed, there was insufficient transport, and it might seem from Diodorus—if we can press his phrasing, which we probably cannot—that there was no policy of "women and children first."[59] At Potidaea the men were allowed one cloak, the women two, a concession either to feminine modesty or frailty; at Samos, Xenophon mentions only one cloak, with no distinction of sex. The impression one gets from this

46. Hdt. 8. 36. 2.
47. Thuc. 2. 6. 4.
48. Thuc. 4. 123. 4.
49. Diod. Sic. 13. 91.
50. Hdt. 8. 41. 1 *κήρυγμα ἐποιήσαντο, Ἀθηναίων τῇ τις δύναται σώζειν τέκνα τε καὶ τοὺς οἰκέτας.* The Themistocles decree also seems to make the evacuation an individual responsibility, if properly restored: *Ἀθηναίου[ς δ' ἅπ]α[ντας καὶ τοὺς ξένο]υς τοὺς οἰκοῦντας Ἀθήνησι [τὰ τέκ]ν[α καὶ τὰς γυναῖκ]ας ε[ἰς] Τροιζῆνα καταθέσθαι* (text from R. Meiggs and D. Lewis, *A Selection of Greek Historical Inscriptions* [Oxford, 1969], no. 23, lines 6–8).
51. Thuc. 5. 32. 1.
52. Thuc. 2. 78. 3.
53. Thuc. 2. 27. 1.
54. Thuc. 1. 103.
55. Thuc. 2. 70.
56. Xen. *Hell.* 2. 3. 6.
57. Hdt. 1. 164, 1. 168.
58. Diod. Sic. 13. 61. 4–6, 13. 88. 6–89. 3, 13. 111. 1, 13. 111. 3.
59. He says that the triremes were loaded *ἀναμὶξ γυναικῶν τε καὶ παίδων, ἔτι δὲ τῶν ἄλλων σωμάτων,* which seems to suggest that the principal passengers, and perhaps the only (for the *ἄλλα σώματα* may be the ships' crews) were women and children. But even if we take this phrase at face value, the rest of the chapter does not support the inference. The decision was simply to evacuate *τοὺς ἡμίσεις,* half the city, and there were women left who were taken by their husbands with the evacuating Syracusan allies and others who were distributed to the soldiers when the city was taken. So Diodorus would seem to indicate that women were not given preference, but the truth is more likely that he did not know.

(but it is only an impression, for the evidence does not really warrant a firm conclusion) is that, while there was special care taken for the safety of the women as long as the men thought they could take care of themselves, once the situation became *sauve qui peut*, there were no clear rules. Women might sometimes be given special care, sometimes not; and this care would as likely be a matter of their husbands' consideration as of the general's orders.

There were times when even flight was out of the question. It was proverbial in Greece to speak of "Phocian desperation": sometime before Xerxes' invasion of 480, faced with an apparently hopeless battle against the Thessalians, the men of Phocis gathered their women, children, possessions, and idols into one spot and built a large pyre on which all were to be cremated in case of defeat.[60] Almost as great was the desperation of the Acarnanians in 211/210 when they voted to evacuate their territory and swore an oath not to return unless they returned as victors; any who would survive a defeat were execrated and outlawed. The Acarnanians, however, included in their oath only the fighting men; women, children, and men over sixty were sent to safety in Epirus.[61] Neither the Phocians nor the Acarnanians carried out their fearful plans: the Phocians were victorious, and the Acarnanians were saved by the approach of Philip V of Macedon with his army. But for the people of Abydus, when the same Philip was besieging their city ten years later, there was no salvation. They sent messengers offering to abandon the city under a safe conduct for their allies and their free population; Philip told them to surrender unconditionally or to fight nobly. At this response the Abydenes voted to free all their slaves and to gather the women into a temple, the children and their nurses into the gymnasium, the silver and gold into the marketplace, and the valuable clothing onto two ships; fifty old and trustworthy men were chosen to see to it that the children and women were slaughtered, the ships burnt, and the gold and silver cast into the sea if Philip should breach the wall. As for the men, they swore to defeat their enemies or to die fighting for their country. They fought desperately, forcing Philip to withdraw for the night even after the wall had been breached; but a few of the old men, hoping to save the women and children, sent out the priests and priestesses to turn the town over to Philip. The gold and silver fell into his hands; but the citizens stood by their resolve, "slaughtering, burning, hanging, throwing into wells and off the rooftops themselves and their children and their wives." Philip, horrified by the carnage, could not stop it.[62]

We have no direct way of knowing what the women thought of such plans. Plutarch says that the Phocian women held a women's assembly to approve their own suicide; but Plutarch is writing an essay glorifying women's bravery, and he does not add to his credibility by telling us that

60. Polyb. 16. 32. 1–2; Paus. 10. 1. 6–10; Plut. *Mor.* 244A–D.
61. Polyb. 9. 40. 4–6, 16. 32. 1–5; Livy 26. 25. 9–17.
62. Polyb. 16. 30–34; cf. Livy 31. 16–18.

"they say" that the children, too, held an assembly and supported the plan.[63] Pausanias, our other source for the "Phocian desperation," says nothing about the women's approval, nor does Polybius say anything about the feelings of the Abydene women about the plans for their slaughter. It was, of course, always the Greek men who made the state's policies for their women; it was only the extent of the sacrifice demanded that made one Phocian, according to Plutarch, suggest that the women should consider the matter themselves. Even if they did not consider it publicly, we need not presume that the women were less willing than the men to perform the ultimate sacrifice for their city: the kind of extremity that could drive the men to make such a decision might well have driven the women to approve of it. They were not expected to carry it out themselves: the ruthlessness needed to apply sword or noose or flame to one's own body was not expected of women.[64] But in the one place where the plan became reality, they do not seem to have resisted: in Abydus, when the men appointed to kill the women turned the city over to Philip instead, the rest of the men, maintaining their original determination, slaughtered their families and themselves. Philip's soldiers were inside the city, and it would seem that the women could have fled to them, but they seem to have preferred to be killed by their husbands rather than taken alive by their enemies.

The destruction of a city's men, women, children, and wealth to keep them from the hands of an enemy was an act of heroism; Polybius says of the men who tried to surrender the women and children of Abydus that they "threw away what was noble and remarkable in the citizens' choice because of their private hopes."[65] Barbarians, too, were capable of suicidal heroism: the men of Xanthus, according to Herodotus, burned their women and died fighting when surrounded by Cyrus' general Harpagus,[66] and later authors tell us, if they are to be believed, that the spectacle was repeated twice more in the history of Xanthus.[67] Boges, the Persian governor of Eion, refused a safe conduct offered him by Cimon. Later, when starved out by siege, he lit a large pyre, slaughtered his children, wife, concubines, and slaves, threw them into the fire, scattered the city's gold and silver into the Strymon, and then threw himself into

63. The δόγματα παλαιά that Plutarch cited as witnessing "the story of the Phocian women" (τὸ τῶν Φωκίδων) need not have included this ostensible women's decree (as P. A. Stadter, *Plutarch's Historical Methods* [Cambridge, Mass., 1965], pp. 38–39, suggested), and even if they did, they were hardly contemporary, and probably partial or complete patriotic invention (cf. Stadter, *Plutarch's Historical Methods*, p. 39, n. 30).

64. Note the words "against their nature" in Thuc. 5. 82. 6. There were nevertheless women who killed themselves rather than fall into the hands of a conquering army, as did the wife and daughters of Nicocles of Paphos (Diod. Sic. 20. 21–22; Polyaen. 8. 48). Two epitaphs preserved in the *Anthologia Palatina* (7. 492–93; my thanks to Prof. M. Lefkowitz for this reference) celebrate, respectively, three maidens of Miletus who killed themselves rather than fall into the hands of the Galatians (ca. 277) and a mother and daughter who took the same course—again, not every woman could do the act herself: it was the mother who killed both—when the Romans sacked Corinth in 146. Not all women, of course, behaved this way; it would appear that very few did.

65. Polyb. 16. 33. 4.

66. Hdt. 1. 176; but cf. P. Demargne and H. Metzger, s.v. "Xanthos in Lykien," *RE* 18 (1967): 1381.

67. App. *BC* 4. 80; Plut. *Brut.* 31.

the flames. No Greek served a master that way; to the Greeks it was the state's calamity, not the master's, that called forth such extremes. But to Xerxes, and to Herodotus as well, Boges was a hero.[68]

In all these stories there is much to be said about the nature of Greek patriotism but little, in the end, about the relationship of Greek men and women. It is noteworthy, but not surprising, that the decision to destroy the city and slaughter its population was taken by the men for the women; it is noteworthy, but not surprising, that the women do not seem to have resisted. What was "noble and remarkable" to Polybius was the thoroughness of the Abydenes' resolution: whether it was just the men, or the women as well, who shared this determination was of minor import. But their behavior was remarkable only if carried to the end: to have capitulated before the final massacre, no matter how heroic the defense up to that point, would have made Abydus like any other town whose spirit was eventually crushed.[69] Nothing in this tells us how the Abydenes felt about their wives at this moment: when they destroyed themselves, their children, their wives, and their possessions, the sources do not tell us which was the hardest for them.[70] But the least that one can say is that in Abydus the men died along with the women; no Greek city ever decided, as Herodotus says the Babylonians did, to slaughter their women in preparation for a revolt, so that there would be fewer mouths to feed.[71]

## THE HARDSHIPS OF DEFEAT

The moment of truth came when the city was under siege or sack: this was when the women fought, or fled, or chose death rather than defeat. These were extreme reactions, and rare; for many women defeat came in the end, and they had to suffer its consequences.

They did not, in general, have to fear death; ancient warfare, unlike modern, did not consist of the indiscriminate bombardment of noncombatants. Diodorus speaks of the barbarity of the Carthaginians in slaughtering the people of Selinus without distinction of sex, in spite of the fact that, as he has just recorded, the women had been participating in the battle.[72] His words reflect either the strength of feeling against the killing of women or how negligible their contribution must have been.

68. Hdt. 7. 107. His sons—those who did not die with him—were honored by Xerxes, and he was "the only one of the expelled [commanders] whom Xerxes thought a good man." Herodotus explicitly concurs. For a similar story of Sardanapalus, cf. Diod. Sic. 2. 27. 2.

69. The suicide alone would not have been heroic. When Diaeus, at the fall of Corinth, fled to Megalopolis and there killed himself and his wife, Pausanias sneers at the δειλία of his death (Paus. 7. 16. 6).

70. Though Polybius may indicate his own order of priorities when he speaks of the Abydenes' killing "themselves and their children and their wives" (16. 34. 9). In describing the decree he mentioned the women first, then the children, then the possessions (16. 31. 2–3).

71. Hdt. 3. 150. 2. They kept their mothers and one woman from each household to prepare the food. I have no sympathy for the Babylonians, but I do not believe the story.

72. Diod. Sic. 13. 56–57.

Rape was another matter. More than one campaign was undertaken exclusively for that purpose: not only the Romans, but the Ionians[73] and the Pelasgians,[74] were said to have gotten their wives in that manner. While these stories may or may not be apocryphal, there are others (in which the attackers, it is true, were Campanians, not Greeks) that are well into the historical period,[75] as is Herodotus' assertion that the Ephesians killed the Chians because they suspected them of just such a raid.[76] At home, the wives of citizens seem to have been able to keep their husbands from feeling too free about the servants;[77] on campaign this restraint, at least, will not have applied, and if expeditions like those just mentioned could be undertaken, it is not likely that the armies that sacked cities for more usual reasons will have shown much delicacy about the defeated women.

Oddly, however, rape is rarely mentioned in connection with the sack of a city. Plutarch does describe the Aetolian army engaged in the sack of Pellene, with "the soldiers dispersed in the houses, shoving each other and fighting over the money, while the leaders and captains were going around grabbing the wives and daughters of the Pellenians, and taking off their own helmets and putting them on [the women's] heads so that no one else would take them."[78] The story, or at least the part about the helmets, seems to be a fabrication;[79] but fabrication or not, I think that Plutarch has described accurately the behavior of an army in a conquered city, running either after wealth or after women. Elsewhere he says of a centurion who took advantage of a captive Galatian queen that "he made a soldier's use of his good fortune."[80] If the sources rarely mention rape, this is probably because the suggestion was indelicate as long as

73. Hdt. 1. 146. 2.

74. Hdt. 6. 138. He adds that the stolen wives' children got so outrageously uppity that the Pelasgians killed them and their mothers. Plut. *Mor.* 247A–F conflates this story with that of the Minyans (Hdt. 4. 145–48) and transfers the whole to the Tyrrhenians: F. Jacoby, *FGrH* 3b, suppl. vol. 1, pp. 405–19, takes the identification with the Pelasgians to be a Herodotean invention. See also Stadter, *Plutarch's Historical Methods*, pp. 58–68.

75. Diod. Sic. 14. 9. 9; Polyb. 1. 7. 4; cf. Polyb. 1. 28. 14.

76. Hdt. 6. 16. 2.

77. Not, of course, out of solicitousness about the slaves' virtue. See *Od.* 1. 433; Lys. 1. 12–13; Plaut. *Casina*. Alcibiades ([And.] 4. 14; Plut. *Alc.* 8. 3) is, as so often, the exception that proves the rule.

78. Plut. *Aratus* 31; the year is 241/240.

79. One might perhaps defend the rather bizarre way of marking captives as a way of making certain that each captain got only one, but there were generally more women in a city than captains in an army and should have been plenty to go around. Even if some restriction were wanted, a less costly method could have been devised, and one that did not leave the captor's head unprotected. The story apparently comes to explain an apparition in ch. 32; but the apparition, as Plutarch himself admits, was not mentioned by Aratus, who was in a position to know. The version of Polyaen. 8. 59, in which the Aetolians flee at the sight of the helmeted virgin, is even purer fairytale.

80. Ἐχρήσατο τῇ τύχῃ στρατιωτικῶς καὶ κατήσχυνεν, Plut. *Mor.* 258D–F; cf. Livy 38. 24. 2–11. He also suffered the fate of soldiers who behave too freely with queens. Plutarch's words are printed as Polyb. 21. 38; but, although the story is apparently from Polybius, the phraseology is Plutarch's. (F. C. Babbitt in the Loeb Plutarch seems to misunderstand Chiomara's husband's comment when he translates πίστις as "fidelity." Πίστις here means "good faith": the king is commenting on the practice of offering one's captor a ransom and then cutting off his head. "Fidelity" to her husband was not in her power while she was a captive, and he surely was not suggesting that she should have been "faithful" to her captor.)

the women were citizens,[81] superfluous once they were captives.[82] Herodotus does mention that the Persians, in passing through Phocis, killed some women by mass rape;[83] it is the only such story I know.

The wives of prominent men might have more to fear if their husbands' enemies got the upper hand. The lynching of Lycides' wife and children by the Athenian women has been mentioned at the beginning of this article. A similar fate befell the wife of Hermeias at the hands of the women of Apameia (and his children, says Polybius, at the hands of the children) when Antiochus the Great had condoned Hermeias' murder.[84] The wife of Aristotimus of Elis hanged herself as the crowd attacked her house after he was murdered; his two unmarried daughters were dragged outside to be abused and then killed, but Megisto, the wife of Timoleon, urged the crowd not to behave as tyrants did, and so the daughters were allowed to hang themselves.[85] Worse was the end of the wife of Philammon in Alexandria,[86] and most barbarous the revenge taken by Pheretime of Cyrene on her enemies' wives.[87] When the allies of Dionysius the elder, tyrant of Syracuse, mutinied, they mistreated his wife in a way that caused her death, apparently by suicide.[88] And, although general slaughter of women was rare, it did occur, at least between Greeks and barbarians: the Thracians at Mycalessus,[89] the Carthaginians at Selinus,[90] did not spare women from the sword; and the Greeks at Motye, a Carthaginian colony, behaved with no more restraint.[91]

After the violence was over, the normal fate of women in a sacked city was slavery. This was true whether the men were killed[92] or enslaved;[93] once the town was taken, nobody decreed wholesale execution of women

81. It may be behind such phrases as τὰ ἀπρεπέστατα (Thuc. 7. 68. 2), but the vagueness in these phrases is more probably deliberate.

82. Thus the rape of Timocleia (Plut. *Alex.* 12; Polyaen. 8. 40) is noteworthy, like that of Chiomara, only for the resourcefulness of her revenge.

83. Hdt. 8. 3.

84. Polyb. 5. 56. 15.

85. Plut. *Mor.* 253B–E.

86. Polyb. 15. 33. 11–12.

87. Hdt. 4. 202. 1.

88. Diod. Sic. 13. 112. 4, 14. 44. 5; Plut. *Dion* 3. 1. Mysta, mistress of Seleucus Callinicus, realized in time the disadvantages of important connections: she disguised herself as a pauper so that the Galatians would sell her with the other captives (Athen. 593E; Polyaen. 8. 61). The liberators of Thebes, on the other hand, when they surprised the traitor Leontiades at home, killed him but left his wife frightened but unharmed (Xen. *Hell.* 5. 4. 7).

89. Thuc. 7. 29. 4.

90. Diod. Sic. 13. 56–57.

91. Diod. Sic. 13. 53. 1. Prusias, king of Bithynia, behaved similarly to the Galatians in Arisba. Since the Celts were not yet among the civilized races, Polybius praised him for teaching a good lesson to generations to come (5. 111. 6–7).

92. As at Plataea, Thuc. 3. 68. 2; Corcyra, Thuc. 4. 48. 4 (and this in a civil war); Scione, Thuc. 5. 32. 1; Melos, Thuc. 5. 116. 4; Himera, Diod. Sic. 13. 62. 4; and as was originally decreed for Mytilene, Thuc. 3. 36. 2.

93. As at Miletus, Hdt. 6. 18–20—though here, despite the oracle that they would "wash the feet" of the Persians (6. 19. 2), they do not seem to have been enslaved in the end; Torone, Thuc. 5. 3. 4; Corinth, Xen. *Hell.* 4. 5. 5 (where some of the men were killed). Polyb. 2. 57–58 considers that the Mantineans got off very lightly when only the men were enslaved: even τοῖς μηθὲν ἀσεβὲς ἐπιτελεσαμένοις, says he, the rules of war decree enslavement of men, women, and children.

and children. Their lot was to be apportioned to a soldier or sold on the block, to a life of drudgery if they were old or ugly, degradation if they were young and beautiful. The adjustment was not easy, as Demosthenes described to the Athenians after the fall of Olynthus:

> When they got to drinking, he brought in an Olynthian woman, good-looking but free[94] and modest, as the event showed. At first they made her drink like this, in silence, and nibble . . . but as matters went on and they warmed up, they told her to recline and sing something. When the woman was distressed, and neither was willing to sing nor knew how, this fellow and Phryno said that the matter was an outrage and intolerable, for her, a captive from the sinful Olynthians, the enemies of the gods, to give herself airs; and "Call a slave!" and "Have somebody bring a strap!" A servant came with a rein, and—for they were drunk, I think, and there were little things that provoked them; she had said something and cried—the servant ripped off her shift and thrashed her many stripes on her back. Beside herself with her misfortune and what had happened, the woman, jumping up, fell at Iatrocles' knees and overturned the table. And if he hadn't taken her away, she would have perished in their drunkenness.[95]

The affair was scandalous,[96] since Aeschines and Phryno were ambassadors of a state that had recently been allied with Olynthus; and it seems to have been somewhat extreme to whip a new slave so violently for so slight and so human an offense. Many women, no doubt, adjusted more submissively. But whatever we may say to mollify the image of slavery, it must always have been a bitter thing for a free woman to become a slave.

Not every woman who was captured remained a slave; it was legal and honorable to ransom a captive and restore him to his homeland and his rights. But when one's homeland had been destroyed and one's relatives either killed or enslaved themselves—and this was the normal case with women, for as long as their homeland survived, they would not be taken captive—the chances for a ransom must have been small.[97] When her city fell, a woman of Greece had to presume that she would never see another free day.

Those who escaped, whether by evacuation or by flight, were generally spared enslavement, but their lot, the lot of exiles, was not easy. If they were evacuated under the protection of a friendly city, that city might take care of them or give them a place to settle.[98] The Plataean evacuees were not only allowed to settle in Athens (a city traditionally hospitable

94. The sexual meaning of this adjective in Greek is precisely the opposite of its meaning in English: to the Greeks chastity was the hallmark of a free woman, lewdness of a slave.

95. Dem. 19. 196–98.

96. Dem. 19. 198.

97. Dem. 19. 192–96 mentions such a case, by way of contrast with Aeschines' treatment of the Olynthian woman; Thuc. 5. 3. 4 tells us that the men of Torone were later ransomed by a prisoner-of-war exchange. It would appear that the women were not included in that deal, though of course some of the men, once freed, may have searched out their mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters and ransomed them, if they were able to get the money together.

98. Thuc. 1. 103. 1, 2. 27. 2, 5. 32. 1. The city that gave them a haven might put the men to work immediately as soldiers (Thuc. 4. 67. 2).

to foreigners) but were, when their city fell, made Athenian citizens.[99] The Samians met with similar generosity at the end of the war.[100] Sometimes exiles were allowed to return to their cities,[101] though this might, if they had been driven out in a civil strife, simply mark the beginning of a new phase of war.[102] Sometimes they went to found a new city,[103] though this, too, was a dangerous undertaking. But many evacuees were permanent exiles, allowed to leave with little more than the coats on their backs,[104] to find a new home where they could[105] and live as foreigners in a strange city. Since Greek cities did not normally adopt new citizens, they could not hope, as modern immigrants may, to see their sons citizens of their new homes; their families were permanent aliens.

## THE HARDSHIPS OF A DISTANT WAR

These, of course, were the sufferings of the losers; in a victorious war, women suffered none of these disasters. In this respect they had an easier lot than the men, who were exposed to discomforts, hard labor, and mortal danger even on the easiest of campaigns. But war, for all that, made its impression on the lives of women even when it was fought far from home. Surely the most immediate hardship was loneliness: other problems might come later, but a woman was lonely from the day that the army left. All ages were affected, as we quoted from Lysistrata at the beginning of the article: mothers missed their sons, wives their husbands, and young girls worried as their marriageable age passed by.[106] When Aristophanes' Dicaeopolis was the only one in Athens with a little peace in a wine-skin, although he wouldn't sell any for ten thousand drachmas, he did agree to give a little to a bride, "since she is a woman, and not responsible for the war."[107] Thucydides describes the Athenians on the day the Sicilian expedition sailed, escorting the men to the Piraeus "with hope and lamentation, for what they might gain, and for those whom they might never see again."[108] Such is the nature of solitude that one suspects that the worry, as the absence wore on, occupied more of a woman's thoughts than the hope of riches.

Solitude was the lot of all women when their husbands were away; but often the city suffered from privation as well, as fields were not worked,

99. [Dem.] 59. 104; Isoc. *Panath.* 94, *Plat.* 51–52; Lys. 23; cf. Thuc. 3. 55. 3 (with Gomme's note ad loc.), 3. 63. 2. Whatever the precise timing of this grant, there is no doubt that by the fourth century the Plataeans were full Athenian citizens.

100. *IG*, $2^2$. 1; but this was before the fall of Athens and Samos, and when Samos finally fell, during the tyranny of the Thirty at Athens, we do not know how many availed themselves of this right.

101. Diod. Sic. 13. 114. 1.

102. Thuc. 6. 7. 1–2.

103. Hdt. 1. 164–68.

104. Thuc. 2. 70. 3; Xen. *Hell.* 2. 3. 6; Plut. *Mor.* 245A.

105. Thuc. 2. 70. 4; cf. 2. 27. 4.

106. Ar. *Lys.* 589–93. I am sure they also missed their fathers and brothers, but that is not the point that Lysistrata mentions.

107. Ar. *Ach.* 1048–62.

108. Thuc. 6. 30. 2.

goods not imported, and sometimes—when the war came closer—crops and possessions plundered and destroyed. The country folk of Attica had to look on for years as the Spartans ravaged their fields; in the meantime they crowded into the city, taking up residence where they could,[109] an easy prey to the plague. Their fantasies of peacetime, as we can see very well from the *Acharnians* and the *Peace*, were fantasies of a plentiful market and of feasting. But as long as there was no peace, there was no plenty. Trygaeus complained that he hadn't "a grain of silver" to buy his daughters a roll;[110] and, when the Megarian in the *Acharnians* asked his daughters which they would rather, be sold or be wretchedly hungry, they answered eagerly πεπρᾶσθαι πεπρᾶσθαι.[111]

If the women worried when they sent their men off to war, it happened all too often that their fears came true. Year after year, women of Athens walked with the wagons that carried the bones of husbands, brothers, sons—and one empty bier for the missing.[112] Sometimes the women would remarry; often they were left to a dreary widowhood. For a girl, the loss of a father or brother, who would have provided her dowry, might threaten spinsterhood, or at least a marriage much worse than she would have hoped for.[113] And in the death of a relative, a woman's own troubles were only part of the loss. Herodotus tells a story of an Athenian defeat by the Aeginetans, from which a single survivor reached Athens: "and when the wives of the men who had sailed against Aegina heard, considering it monstrous that he alone should have been saved out of all of them, they surrounded the man and stabbed him with the pins of their clothing, each of them asking where her own husband was";[114] and so died the last survivor of the battle. The story may well be apocryphal; the bitterness of the women must have had many real parallels.

## THE MEANING OF WOMEN'S LOYALTY

Time and again, when cities of Greece were threatened, the women rose to the occasion and helped in their salvation. The more striking, then, is the complete absence of women from the record of foreign wars. We hardly expected to find ancient Greek women serving as hoplites,[115] but they do not seem to have contributed in other ways, either. Praxagora

109. Thuc. 2. 14. This was when Praxagora, who took up residence near the Pnyx, had learned public speaking (Ar. *Eccl.* 243–44).

110. Ar. *Peace* 119–23.

111. Ar. *Ach.* 731–35.

112. Thuc. 2. 34. 3.

113. Dem. 28. 21; [Dem.] 59. 8, 59. 112–13; and cf. Men. *Aspis* for the distressing circumstances that might be connected with a brother's death.

114. Hdt. 5. 87. 2.

115. The story told in Plut. *Mor.* 245C–F—thanks, again, to Prof. Lefkowitz—and Paus. 2. 20. 8–10 about Telesilla the poetess defending Argos with female soldiers against Cleomenes I of Sparta is probably an aetiological invention: Hdt. 6. 77, on whom it is based, would hardly have passed over a story so much in his style and could hardly have failed to hear it along with the oracle, had it been told in his day; cf. How and Wells ad loc. For the women of Sinope, see above, n. 15.

in the *Ecclesiazusae* urged that the city be turned over to the women, "considering only this: that first of all, they will be eager to save the soldiers, being their mothers; and, moreover, who would send provisions better than the one who bore them?"[116] Sending provisions, perhaps, took more public organization than Greek women were used to; but of the more homely types of support—homemade clothing for the soldiers, jewelry contributed to the war chest—we hear hardly anything.[117] Even when the women had come out to help Sparta, they returned to their homes as soon as their own soldiers arrived, even though Pyrrhus was still there with his army.[118] If they were so willing in time of crisis, why were they so reticent when things were merely difficult?

Part of the answer, surely—and the only answer that will explain the women of Sparta—is that Greece put a higher value on women's reticence than modern countries do. Still, we should not have expected the line to be so sharp between total commitment and total withdrawal. What was the difference between a foreign war and an attack on the city that brought the women out of their homes?

The most obvious suggestion follows directly from the previous two sections of this paper: only when the war came home were the women being attacked. A foreign war brought them suffering that was real enough, but not dangerous. It was suffering, besides, which could be ended as well by an ignominious peace as by a glorious victory. Once a Greek city was directly threatened, its women faced dangers—slavery, rape, exile—that could be avoided only by victory. There was rarely a peaceful solution that could be counted on to save them.[119] The women, in short, fought when attacked, but sat on the sidelines as long as they were left alone.

This is surely part of the truth, for there is no doubt that great and inevitable danger calls forth extraordinary efforts from human beings, male and female. If no Greek women showed the ready wit that Herodotus attributes to the wife of Pharaoh Sesostris—caught with her husband and six children in a blazing house, she advised her husband to throw two of the children on the flames so that the rest of them could walk over them to safety[120]—self-preservation was nevertheless an instinct of Greek women as well as anybody else. But there are too many heroines, women who exposed themselves to danger and to death, for us to believe that the women who defended cities were fighting only for themselves. Some women were loyal to their kinsmen: the wife of Panteus of Sparta ran

116. Ar. *Eccl.* 232–35.

117. Polyb. 1. 72. 5 does mention Libyan women contributing their jewelry to the mercenaries' revolt against Carthage after the First Punic War, but I have found no Greek parallel until Diaeus in 147/146 (Polyb. 38. 15. 6, 38. 15. 11), and that was under compulsion.

118. See p. 194.

119. Plataea eventually surrendered, but its male defenders were killed, its women enslaved (Thuc. 3. 68. 2). The Abydenes were driven to their suicidal determination only after Philip had spurned their offer to abandon their city to him if they would be spared (Polyb. 16. 30. 8). The defenders of Ithome, Potidaea, and Samos were able to avoid slavery, but not exile (Thuc. 1. 103. 1, 2. 70. 3; Xen. *Hell.* 2. 3. 6).

120. Hdt. 2. 107.

away to share her husband's exile and eventually shared his death.[121] Chilonis, the wife of Cleombrotus, left her husband to follow her father into exile, then—when the scales turned and her father Leonidas gained power—left her father to join her husband in his exile.[122] No less striking tales are told of women's loyalty to the state: Brasidas' mother who refused to hear her son called the best of all the Lacedaemonians,[123] Agesistrata who said at her own execution, "Just let this be good for Sparta,"[124] Cratesicleia who, taken with her grandson as a hostage to Egypt, advised her son Cleomenes "to do what was proper and good for Sparta, and not to be forever in fear of Ptolemy because of one old woman and a little boy."[125]

These are individual stories, all but one of them from the same author; but there are occasional indications of similar feelings on a larger scale. The women mentioned above who refused to be evacuated from apparently doomed cities were putting family and state above self-preservation. When the list of the Spartans who had fallen at Leuctra was made public, the ephors "directed the women not to make a clamor, but to bear the misfortune in silence. And the next day it was possible to see those whose relatives had died bright and beaming, walking about in the open; while of those whose relatives had been reported alive you would have seen few, and these going around sullen-faced and dejected."[126] One group, by command, put the state's welfare above their private mourning; the other, on their own, put the state's calamity above their private relief.

Often, indeed, the women's mourning for a national calamity was fixed by law or by custom, as was the case when a king of Sparta died.[127] Two stories from Herodotus may not be true,[128] but may be illustrative: it was, says Herodotus, a law passed by the Argives that they should not grow their hair long, nor should their women wear golden jewelry, until they should reconquer Thyrea from Sparta.[129] The second story we have already mentioned, of the Athenian women who lynched the messenger reporting the defeat at Aegina by sticking him with their dress pins. The men of Athens decreed that the women should henceforth wear Ionian dress, which had no pins. The Athenians, perhaps, had matters other

121. Plut. *Cleom.* 38.

122. Plut. *Agis* 17.

123. Diod. Sic. 12. 74. 3, who adds that the ephors honored her publicly for putting her country's praise above her son's reputation. Plutarch brings down this story, and others of similar import, in his *Apophthegmata Lacaenarum* (*Mor.* 240C–242D); and it seems to have been retold in the unknown work of which a fragment is preserved in P. Oxy. 441 (M. Gronewald, "Bemerkenswerte Frauen in P. Oxy. 441 (= Pack² 1995)," *ZPE* 36 [1979]: 49–50).

124. Plut. *Agis* 20.

125. Plut. *Cleom.* 32.

126. Xen. *Hell.* 6. 4. 16. The gender of *ὧν μὲν ἐτέθνασαν οἱ προσήκοντες . . . ὧν δὲ ζῶντες ἠγγελμένοι ἦσαν* does not restrict the description to women, but as the previous sentence shows, and as anyone will know who has been in a city when all the able-bodied citizen men were at war, it will have been the women who set the tone.

127. Hdt. 6. 58.

128. On the second in particular, see T. J. Dunbabin, "Ἔχθρη παλαιή," *BSA* 37 (1936–37): 83–91, though his own explanation is no more compelling than Herodotus'.

129. Hdt. 1. 82. 7.

than their defeat on their minds: the women were upset over the loss of their husbands, and the men were upset at the idea of women lynching men. But the women of Argos and Aegina, who from that time on wore yet longer dress pins, were gloating over a national, not a personal victory.[130]

The loyalty of these women was not self-seeking, nor was it a loyalty that sprang full-blown when their city was threatened. Why was it so rare when the city was merely at war?

A group may fail to have an opinion on a subject for one of three reasons: the subject may be of no interest to the group, or the group itself may not be a self-contained one that formulates opinions within itself (there is, for example, at least as I write this, no real body of blue-eyed opinion), or the feelings of people in the group may not be articulated into a policy. In our case, I am certain that a war involving their own army, however distant, was of interest to women. I think it probable, too, that women had enough social contact, both formal and informal, to establish a group identity and opinion. Women knew their female neighbors, of course, as Menander or Aristophanes will attest; they had, moreover, a certain amount of religious organization, at least in connection with the Thesmophoria.[131] They should have been able to form a group opinion, and indeed, in time of crisis they must have done so, if we are to take seriously the actions the historians attribute to "the women." If they were silent when there was no danger, I think the reason must have been that they did not articulate any real policy with regard to the war.

Most people, in wartime, wish the war were over. Most of them also wish for their side's war aims to be achieved. Policy, however, must go deeper than these wishes to decide what should be done to bring about the desired end: should we give back the hostages from Sphacteria in order to get peace? Shall we send the extra men to Sicily and risk losing them all? People who feel themselves to have some influence over events—and this generally includes the citizens of a successful democracy—tend to talk about such issues at length and develop opinions about policy. People who feel themselves to have no influence usually do not go beyond the wishing stage: let's hope that the army recovers and doesn't need the reinforcements, or that the new troops win a speedy victory and all come home safely. Even when these wishes resemble policy—"I hope they vote to give back the hostages and conclude peace"—the strength of the conviction is weakened by a feeling that the decision is in any event out of one's hands, and often a feeling that the people deciding may have good

130. Hdt. 5. 88. 3.

131. In Ar. *Thesm.* 372 ff., the women use the Thesmophoria to pass motions relating to themselves, but this is Aristophanic fantasy. There was a feast given by the ladies of wealth, Isaeus 3. 80, 6. 64, in addition to the more magical observances; and it is in any event hard to imagine that the women got together for three days and did not speak to each other, or that their discussions did not reflect the way they felt about what was going on.

reasons, unknown to us, for their decisions. If Lysistrata was quiet when her husband told her to be, she may have been quiet as much from diffidence about her own opinions as from fear of her husband.

Greek women were surely powerless in political matters, and I would expect that their opinions did not normally progress beyond the pious wish. What changed when the enemy reached the gates? For one thing, they were directly threatened; for another, they were forced to forgo their reticence for fear of worse. But another thing that changed was their powerlessness. Objectively, of course, they were in the very depths of powerlessness, a defenseless group in a hopeless situation. But, since the men themselves were now so near to collapse, the aid that the women could give—whether throwing tiles, bringing food, or simply the moral support of their presence—took on an importance that it did not have when things were going well. Now there was something that the women could do, and now it made a difference whether they did or not. The Spartan women of the Theban invasions, who panicked at the sight of smoke, were women who continued to think in an emergency as they had thought in better times, wishing that things would be better and alarmed when they were worse. Their great-granddaughters who helped stave off Pyrrhus were women who, brought up in more difficult times for Sparta, saw their opportunity to be of value to the state and rose to the occasion.

The reader may have noticed that the striking instances of women's loyalty to the state come from Sparta. If he is perceptive and reads the footnotes, he will notice something else: that our sources for these Spartan women are mostly of Roman date. Neither of these facts is accidental. At Sparta loyalty to state over family was a matter of national principle, one might well say *the* national principle, and it applied to women as well as to men. Roman society was not organized according to this idea: Roman men did not eat in communal messes, and Roman children were brought up by their mothers, not by public institutions. Indeed, the child of a Roman noble, brought up among the *imagines* of his ancestors, learning to take care of (and to use) his clients and his *amici* within the state and without, was being brought up to put family before all. Rome counterbalanced his upbringing with a mythology that said the opposite. The story of Horatius' execution of his sister, and of his father's approval of the deed,[132] said explicitly that women, too, should love the state more than their families. The history of the Late Republic, of course, was a flagrant contradiction of this ideal; all the more did the Romans dote upon these stories, after the state had dissolved in an orgy of personal ambition, its proud families had destroyed each other, and patriotism was a fair memory.

For a woman to subordinate family to state was not the Athenian ideal. Athens was built of families, and a woman's place was within the family. To fill this place loyally, even in the face of the state, was not treasonous,

132. Livy 1. 26. 9.

but noble. Alcestis died for her husband, Antigone for her brother. Clytemnestra defended herself by recalling the sacrifice of her daughter,[133] and had she not been an adulteress, her argument would have had force: it was an argument to justify the murder of a husband and a king.[134] One can draw the distinction too sharply: it was Athenian women who lynched Lycides' wife and children, and they did so for no familial lapse but because Lycides had proposed betraying the Greeks. The truth is that family and country were usually associated, not opposed, in the mind of a Greek. "For [victory], if a god will it, will now return to us fatherland and homes and freedom and civic honors and children, for those who have them, and wives." But the education and life of an Athenian woman was centered in the family, while that of a Spartan woman was heavily impressed by the state. In time of war, it was Sparta that produced the heroines who died for their country.

## CONCLUSION

The study of Greek women is based on little enough information, and it has been the subject of psychological projection on a wide scale, both from male and from female scholars. This projection is easy to deplore but hard to avoid. I have tried in this article a somewhat novel approach, inferring women's attitudes from the attested actions of real women. I have paid particular attention to cases where women took mass action, hoping thereby to learn something about women in general rather than a few exceptional personalities. This method has had the singular advantage of limiting the extent to which we must see Greek women through Greek men's eyes. We are still dependent on the selection of our sources, but the women with whom we are dealing are real ones, not literary characters invented by men. We can still see the women only in moments of extraordinary stress, for when times were peaceful they did not assert themselves publicly; but what we see under stress can be revealing of fundamental attitudes.

The picture that emerges from the women's behavior is less equivocal than the literary evidence: the men and women of a city were partners in war. The men fought to defend the women and removed them to a place of safety if necessary and possible. As was generally the case in Greece, the fundamental decisions that affected everyone were taken by the men; and this power of decision went as far, in the most extreme cases, as the self-destruction of the entire population, men and women. The women took no active part in the war as long as it was safely removed from their borders, but when the city was in danger, they often came to

133. Aesch. *Ag.* 1412–20, a passage that indicates that the loyalty to the family expected of a woman was not, as it is sometimes misrepresented, simply loyalty to its men or its κύριος.

134. Xen. *Hell.* 2. 4. 17.

its assistance, refusing evacuation, bringing food and ammunition to the defenders, pelting the invaders from the rooftops. They seem to have subscribed in good measure to the ideals of family and state—the former particularly in Athens, the latter particularly in Sparta—that are known to us from literary sources; but they did not "forsake their modesty" to take an active role until they were faced with the stark dangers of rape and enslavement that conquest normally brought. We have not a shred of evidence to dispute Lysistrata's assertion that they preferred peace to war, as most men do; but they do not seem ever to have formed a true body of opinion in favor of a policy of peace, and they had—again, as most men do—a point at which they chose war and even death rather than submission.

This is not all that can be said about women's attitudes in ancient Greece; it is simply all that I have been able to gather on the subject at hand. It does strongly suggest that citizen women did not see themselves as an entirely disfranchised group. They would not have been willing to die for a city that was not theirs. It suggests, moreover, that the sympathy between women and men was greater than we might perhaps have expected from a society so heavily patriarchal. Women's history in this respect differs markedly from the history of other groups studied separately, for the men and women of ancient Greece, like those of all societies, were always each other's close relatives. They surely were not identical in their experiences or in their outlooks, nor was their society necessarily one with which all its component groups were happy. But it does seem that the women of Athens were Athenians, the women of Sparta Spartans; and they felt and acted that way.

*Bar Ilan University*