

‘THAT WAS NO LADY, THAT WAS . . .’

THE tradition that Socrates had two wives at once, Xanthippe and Myrto, though an established one among ancient scholars, has met with blank incredulity in modern times.¹ It impugns the character of Socrates, who has been established by Plato’s martyrology as the unimpeachable patron saint of Western philosophy.² And it appears to cast a slur on Greek marriage—not that the guiding lines of this somewhat ramshackle institution are perfectly known.³ Among ancient scholars only Panaetius argued against the tradition, and he did so by the expedient of assuming two characters of the name Socrates; this may fairly be called a last-ditch contention.⁴ The writers Plutarch and Athenaeus did not believe the story, but were daunted by the battery of scholars who did (Aristotle, Aristoxenos, Demetrios, Hieronymos). In modern times the tradition has been written off as malicious gossip,⁵ despite the fact that it derives from authorities (e.g. Demetrios) who were not malicious about Socrates. Or else the story was a fiction, in plain terms a lie, to illustrate a philosophical thesis,⁶ or, more subtly, a philosophical parable taken as fact.⁷ One

¹ Especially among philosophical writers. Among historians the position is better. See J. W. Jones, *The Law and Legal Theory of the Greeks*, 185; A. R. W. Harrison, *The Law of Athens* (Oxford, 1968), 15–17.

² Zeller, *Socrates* (trans. 1868), 57: ‘Such a thing is incompatible with the character of Socrates.’ Of course the one thing missing from the vivid accounts of Zeller and others (e.g. Cornford) is any appreciation of Socrates’ character: they are so busy making him chief knight in quest of the Holy Grail that his actual personality ceases to matter.

³ Zeller, *ibid.*: ‘(It) would most undoubtedly have caused a great sensation . . . the laws of Athens never allowed bigamy.’

⁴ Panaetius in Schol. Aristophanes, *Frogs*, 1491 (commenting on Aristophanes’ dig at Socrates’ chatter): ὅλα ταῦτα περὶ ἐτέρου Σωκράτους φησὶ λέγεσθαι, τῶν περὶ σκηνὰς φλυάρων, ὡς Ἐυριπίδης. It is a fair inference that Panaetius used this strategy elsewhere.

In like manner Sappho was (1) a great poetess; (2) engaged in erotic relationships with girls. Therefore there were two Sapphos: (1) a poetess and (2) a courtesan (Aelian, *VH* 12. 19).

⁵ e.g. Burnet, *Greek Philosophy*, 129 n. 2: ‘The scandal-monger Aristoxenos tried to fix a charge of bigamy on Sokrates. He said he was married at the same time to Xanthippe and to Myrto, the daughter of Aristides.’ A fine piece of journalism on Burnet’s part. The latter statement is false, as Aristoxenos said Myrto was the granddaughter of Aristides.

⁶ Zeller, 58: ‘Now none were more celebrated for their spotless virtue and their voluntary poverty than Aristides and Socrates. Accordingly the writer brought the two into connection. Socrates was made to marry a daughter of Aristides . . .’

⁷ Wehrli, *Aristoxenos*, 66–7: ‘Der Dialog [the *Περὶ εὐγενείας*] sollte mit der phantastischen Erfindung wohl dartun, was wahre *εὐγένεια* sei, wie darin weder dem Weisen kleinbürgerliche Herkunft noch seiner Gattin die Armut Abbruch tue. Für eine solche Deutung spricht Plutarch *Κατὰ εὐγενείας* (Stobaeus, *Ecl.* iv 29. 22), wo der arme Aristides an *εὐγένεια* über Midas, Sokrates über Sardanapallos gestellt wird.’ The latter reference might explain why Socrates and Aristides would be brought into the discussion, but not why they would be said to be linked by a marriage. If I understand ‘seiner Gattin’ aright, I take it that Aristotle is supposed to have said something resembling ‘Socrates married Myrto a descendant of Aristides’ as a (presumably whimsical) paraphrase for ‘a low condition is married to poverty’. Either Aristotle did say something resembling it, in which case he was lying and we are back at Zeller’s position; or he made a statement about poverty, etc., in which case the followers of Aristotle were idiots to misinterpret it. I do not believe they were such idiots.

A further variant on the ‘parable’ explanation has been given me by David Harvey in conversation. Aristotle may have said: ‘If Socrates the perfectly wise man had married

wonders why Euripides was also credited (or discredited) with two wives: did he too become a thesis? But the evidence for Euripides is much inferior, and so this case must be put on one side.¹ The tradition of Socrates’ bigamy, however, presents us with something solid but puzzling that requires manful efforts to explain away.

Let us begin with the evidence of Aristotle. He is said by Athenaeus (555 d) to have given the keynote to those scholars who attribute two wedded wives to Socrates—Xanthippe and the daughter of Aristides,² Myrto. The scholars named in the chorus are Callisthenes, Demetrios of Phalerum, Satyros, and Aristoxenos. The work of Aristotle in which the story appeared was the *Περὶ εὐγενείας*. Plutarch³ (*Aristides* 27) says that Demetrios, Hieronymos of Rhodes, Aristoxenos, and Aristotle tell the story that Myrto, granddaughter of Aristides, set up house with Socrates: he already had a wife, and he took on this one when she was widowed⁴ and short of the necessities of life. The context of Athenaeus’ passage and the wording (*γυναῖκα μὲν ἑτέραν ἔχοντι*) of Plutarch make it clear that both authors understood the story to mean that Socrates had two wives at the same time. Both authors disbelieved it. Nevertheless, the mainstream view was that Socrates had two wives at once. This must be emphasized because Zeller⁵ assigns to Aristotle the view that Socrates married Myrto after Xanthippe, i.e. after Xanthippe was dead (or put away). Shrugging off the Plutarch passage as ‘less accurate’, he relies on a statement by Diogenes Laertius (2. 26),⁶ according to which Aristotle said that Socrates took two wives, Xanthippe the first (who bore Lamprocles), and then Myrto, daughter of Aristides the Just, who was taken without a dowry and who produced Sophroniskos and Menexenos. Diogenes goes on to mention others who say that Myrto was the first wife, and Satyros and Hieronymos who say that Socrates had both together. Now by itself the statement about Aristotle could be squared with Plutarch and Athenaeus; it is the context, the triple division of sources, that conflicts with them. We must choose, and there seems little doubt that Diogenes’ summary is mistaken. Aristotle’s view was substantially the same as Aristoxenos’, which was that Socrates had two wives together, and Athenaeus and Plutarch would have seized on Aristotle as witness if Aristotle

Myrto the daughter of Aristides the perfectly just man, what wonderful *εὐγένεια* would have resulted.’ This is about as plausible as one can make it. But (1) *θυγατριδῇ*, not *θυγατῇ*, was the description of Myrto in Aristoxenos: this weakens the ‘parable’ effect; and (2) we are still assigning stupidity to the followers of Aristotle (not all of them hostile to Socrates) for being unable to distinguish a hypothetical from a categorical statement.

¹ Two wives at the same time: Gellius, *Noct. Att.* 15. 20; consecutively in the *Genos* and in the *Suda*.

² Athenaeus adds: ‘not Aristides the Just but his grandson’.

³ Δημήτριος δ’ ὁ Φαληρεὺς καὶ Ἱερώνυμος ὁ Ῥόδιος καὶ Ἀριστόξενος ὁ μουσικὸς καὶ Ἀριστοτέλης—εἰ δὲ τὸ περὶ εὐγενείας βιβλίον ἐν τοῖς γνησίοις Ἀριστοτέλους θετέον—ἰστοροῦσι Μυρτὴν θυγατριδὴν Ἀριστείδου Σωκράτει

τῷ σοφῷ συνοικῆσαι, γυναῖκα μὲν ἑτέραν ἔχοντι, ταύτην δ’ ἀναλαβόντι χηρεῦουσιν διὰ πένιαν καὶ τῶν ἀναγκαίων ἐνδεομένην.

⁴ χηρεῦουσιν διὰ πένιαν seems odd: John Gould points out to me that διὰ πένιαν gives Socrates’ reason for marrying, i.e. it goes grammatically with ἀναλαβόντι. But the sandwiching of διὰ πένιαν between χηρεῦουσιν and ἐνδεομένην is awkward. Possibly read ἐνδειαν for ἐνδεομένην?

⁵ p. 57.

⁶ φησὶ δ’ Ἀριστοτέλης δύο γυναῖκας αὐτὸν ἀγαγέσθαι· προτέραν μὲν Ξανθίππην, ἐξ ἧς αὐτῷ γενέσθαι Λαμπροκλέα· δευτέραν δὲ Μυρτὴν, τὴν Ἀριστείδου τοῦ δικαίου θυγατέρα, ἣν καὶ ἀπρικοῦν λαβεῖν, ἐξ ἧς γενέσθαι Σωφρονίσκον καὶ Μενέξενον. οἱ δὲ προτέραν γῆμαι τὴν Μυρτὴν φασιν· ἐνιοὶ δὲ καὶ ἀμφοτέρους σχεῖν ὁμοῦ, ὧν ἐστὶ Σάτυρος τε καὶ Ἱερώνυμος ὁ Ῥόδιος.

had innocuously said that Socrates married twice. Thus the view that Socrates married again after the demise or dismissal of his first wife, which as Zeller shows runs into difficulties, need not be discussed.

Plutarch doubts whether the *Περὶ εὐγενείας* was really composed by Aristotle,¹ but this may be simply because he does not believe the story about Socrates. The question of spuriousness is difficult to decide with just a few fragments of the work extant, but to assume that it is spurious in order to reject the evidence about Socrates seems to involve a *petitio principii*.² In any case the story would be in some sense 'Aristotelian' for the disciples of Aristotle to follow its lead (as Athenaeus said they did).

There is a further difficulty about who Myrto was: daughter, granddaughter, or great-granddaughter of Aristides the Just? Doubts about her pedigree, however, do not in themselves make away with her existence. Moreover, we can discard the 'daughter of Aristides the Just' version found in Diogenes. Here we have not a disagreement between ancient scholars about who Myrto was but a conflict of evidence on what Aristotle said. The 'daughter' view is intrinsically unlikely since Aristides the Just died in 467 and Myrto the second wife bears two children who are infants in 399.³ Even if the story of Myrto were a fiction, responsible scholars would hardly have accepted anything so improbable. We now turn to the other views. Athenaeus says 'the daughter of Aristides' and adds 'not the Just because the dates don't fit, but his grandson'; this looks like an attempt to rationalize the mistaken version found in Diogenes. So we end with Plutarch's view that Myrto was the granddaughter of Aristides or more precisely the daughter's daughter. *θυγατριδῇ* most probably was what Aristotle wrote, and *θυγάτηρ* the result of careless copying, the substitution of a more familiar word.⁴

We now turn to Callisthenes and Demetrios. From Plutarch (*Aristides*, 27) we learn that according to Callisthenes the daughter of Aristides' son Lysimachos was called Polykritē and was awarded public maintenance. It thus sounds as if Callisthenes had done some independent research into the descendants of Aristides. Callisthenes is mentioned by Athenaeus (555 d) along with Demetrios, Satyros, and Aristoxenos as following the story of Myrto. Unless Athenaeus is mistaken, it would seem that Callisthenes, who had checked on a granddaughter of Aristides, believed in the existence of Myrto. Next we have Demetrios who investigated and disproved the alleged poverty of Aristides and Socrates. As Plutarch says, he did this to relieve them of discredit.⁵ If Demetrios was biased, he was biased towards Socrates. He also knew about Aristides' descendants. He could recall a daughter's son of Aristides, a soothsayer called Lysimachos. Yet he too according to Plutarch and Athenaeus followed the Myrto story, which is nowadays dismissed as 'malicious gossip'.

Aristoxenos was a hostile witness, as Plutarch (*de Herod. malig.* 9. 856 c) and

¹ Plut. *Ar.* 27: εἰ δὲ τὸ περὶ εὐγενείας βιβλίον ἐν τοῖς γνησίοις Ἀριστοτέλους θετέον.

² Zeller of course says it is spurious. Ross and Rose include the *Περὶ εὐγενείας* as a genuine work of Aristotle's.

³ Plato, *Phaedo*, 60 a, 116 b. See Burnet ad loc. for the inference that Lamprocles was the eldest. At any rate two out of three sons are infants at the time of death, and since Myrto produced two of the

three, at least one of the infants must be Myrto's.

⁴ *Μυρτώ θυγατριδὴν Ἀριστείδου* is the phrase used by Plutarch and perhaps -δὴν Ἀριστείδου became τὴν Ἀριστείδου. In Athenaeus the reading is τὴν Ἀριστείδου Μυρτώ.

⁵ Plut. *Ar.* 1. 9: ὁ μὲν Δημήτριος οὐ μόνον Ἀριστείδην ἀλλὰ καὶ Σωκράτη δηλὸς ἔστι τῆς πενίας ἐξελεσθαι φιλοτιμούμενος ὡς μεγάλου κακοῦ.

Porphyry (to whom we owe the main Aristoxenian passage) realized.¹ Hostile, however, not so much to Socrates as to the idealization of Socrates by Plato for his own ends. This idealization has become canonical in modern times so that the question, for instance, whether Socrates had fits of bad temper is decided by appeal to what may be called the Jailor's Testament (Plato, *Phaedo*, 116 c.).² Aristoxenos' debunking of the Socrates legend is done critically and carefully. He uses as his source an acquaintance of Socrates, Spintharos.³ He balances pros and cons; this is admitted by Plutarch who takes it to be a sign of crafty malignity.⁴ He apparently makes nothing of the political issues aroused by Socrates' trial, though he tells a story to the discredit of Meletos, one of Socrates' accusers.⁵ He distinguishes an early wild period from the later development of Socrates,⁶ the normal charming manner from his occasional bursts of fury.⁷ He gives us insight into a man who was something of a living contradiction.⁸ Nor is his evidence irreconcilable with Plato's character drawing: the wild streak in Socrates is admitted by Plato in a famous and usually misunderstood passage of the *Symposium*;⁹ his erotic tendencies are also presented by Plato in an oblique form.¹⁰ The bias of Aristoxenos comes out in such

¹ In the Porphyry passage (Wehrli, fr. 51, quoted from Cyril) the text is uncertain but it is clear that Aristoxenos is being set aside as biased (and Menedemos 'older than Aristoxenos' is followed instead).

² γενναιότατον καὶ πρῶτατον καὶ ἄριστον ἄνδρα ὄντα τῶν πώποτε δεῦρο ἀφικομένων.

³ Cyril, quoted by Wehrli, fr. 54a: λέγει δὲ ὁ Ἀριστόξενος, ἀφηγούμενος τὸν βίον τοῦ Σωκράτους, ἀκηκοέναι Σπινθάρου τὰ περὶ αὐτοῦ, ὃς ἦν εἰς τῶν τούτῳ ἐντυγχόντων.

Spintharos may have been the father of Aristoxenos: Diog. Laert. 2. 20; Sextus, *adv. Math.* 6. 1.

⁴ Plut. *de Herod. malig.* 9. 856 c: οἱ τοῖς φύοις ἐπαίνους τινὰς παρατιθέντες, ὡς ἐπὶ Σωκράτους Ἀριστόξενος.

⁵ Schol. Plato, *Apol.* 18 b = Wehrli, fr. 60.

⁶ In Theodoretus, *Therap.* 4. 56, Porphyry (probably following Aristoxenos) says that Socrates after a disorderly youth removed these characteristics by instruction and assumed the impress of philosophy—σπουδῇ καὶ διδαχῇ τούτους μὲν ἀφανίσαι τοὺς τύπους τοὺς δὲ τῆς φιλοσοφίας ἐκμάξασθαι. In Theodoretus 12. 174 = Wehrli 54b πρῶτον μὲν αὐτὸν ἀκρόχολον . . . seems to mean 'at first irascible etc.' rather than 'in the first place'. The stories in Theodoretus 12. 175 (cf. 1. 8) about Socrates' naughty childhood and the turning-point at the age of seventeen come from Porphyry (and probably Aristoxenos): the framework is πρῶτον μὲν . . . ἦδη δὲ περὶ τὰ ἑπτακαίδεκα ἔτη . . .

⁷ Aristoxenos, fr. 54a Wehrli: Spintharos said ὅτι οὐ πολλοῖς αὐτὸς γε πιθανωτέροις ἐντετυχηκώς εἶη, τοιαύτην εἶναι τὴν τε φωνὴν καὶ τὸ στόμα καὶ τὸ ἐπιφαινόμενον ἦθος . . .

ὅτε δὲ φλεχθείη ὑπὸ τοῦ πάθους τούτου (anger), δεινὴν εἶναι τὴν ἀσχημοσύνην. Further on, the term *eukolos* is used, but qualified. With this, contrast Theodoretus' rhetorical summing up (12. 175), *δυσόργητος ἦν καὶ μόγις ἄττοντα κατέχειν ἡδύνατο τὸν θυμὸν καὶ λοιδόρον εἶχε τὴν γλῶτταν καὶ ἀχαλίνωτον . . .*, all without qualification.

⁸ τὸν διμορφὸν Σωκράτην Anon. Com. frag. 386 (Edmonds 3. 417); cf. Plat. *Symp.* 215 a, 221 d (of Eros). This duality links up with the Silenus and Marsyas image; in art (E. Gardner, *Handbook of Greek Sculpture*, 398) such figures as Marsyas were used to express the duality of human and feral natures.

⁹ In Plat. *Symp.* 215 b Socrates is compared to (1) a Silenus (with a special interior), (2) the satyr Marsyas. The supposed ugliness of Socrates would suit only (1), as Marsyas in fifth- and fourth-century art is (wild but) handsome. Socrates is disorderly (*ύβριστής*) and a charmer like Marsyas. At the same time, says Plato (making the best of it), he is restrained, not wild, inside. It is often thought that Socrates' appearance put people off; in fact it was an asset. He was accepted by Alcibiades as a lover before any philosophical conversion (*Symp.* 217 a). His influence derived from his physical magnetism: that is why Aristophanes and others thought he was so dangerous.

¹⁰ In the *Phaedrus* especially. Sensual elements in Socrates' love-relationships with men cannot be ignored; cf. T. Gould, *Platonic Love*, 193 (note). It was of course an 'ideal' homosexuality, but ideal in the way that the heterosexuality of a modern marriage is supposed to be ideal. It is amusing

terms as ἀπαίδευτος and ἀσχημοσύνη; here he is applying to Socrates the criteria of culture and decorum by which the Pythagorean Archytas emerged with so much credit and Socrates so little.¹ The question is whether he is using biographical tradition to make this contrast or wanton fiction, and this question cannot be answered by treating passages in Xenophon and Plato as if they were some sort of Holy Writ.

For Aristoxenos' evidence on Socrates' marriage we rely on fragments of the neo-Platonist Porphyry (Wehrli fr. 54a, 54b). Porphyry is known to have followed Aristoxenos (though not entirely²) for his depiction of Socrates, and in this particular passage the phrase ἀδίκια δ' οὐ προσήν is known to have come from Aristoxenos (Plut. *de Herod. Malig.* 9. 856 c). Porphyry tells us that Socrates in ordinary life was easy-going and modest in his demands for material things (ἐν δὲ τοῖς περὶ τὸν βίον τὰ μὲν ἄλλα εὐκόλον καὶ μικρὰς δεόμενον παρασκευῆς εἰς τὰ καθ' ἡμέραν). In his sexual behaviour, however, he was rather vehement, though this did not mean that he was unjust (πρὸς δὲ τὴν τῶν ἀφροδισίων χρῆσιν σφοδρότερον μὲν εἶναι, ἀδικίαν δὲ μὴ προσεῖναι). Then comes an explanation: Socrates used either married women or prostitutes alone (ἢ γὰρ ταῖς γαμεταῖς ἢ ταῖς κοιναῖς χρῆσθαι μόνας). This crabbed sentence may be, as Wehrli says, an addition by Porphyry. It is not, however, 'nonsensical'. It means that Socrates though sexy did not stray outside marriage. In the period before marriage he associated with prostitutes; after settling down he kept to his married partners. Since Socrates did not settle down before 430 in all probability, by which time he was forty, this gives quite a wide field for wild oats.³

Now comes the crucial passage. 'Socrates had⁴ two women/wives at the same time: Xanthippe, who was a citizen and a rather ordinary⁵ woman, and Myrto the granddaughter of Aristides the son of Lysimachos' (δύο δὲ σχεῖν γυναῖκας ἄμα, Ξανθίππην μὲν πολίτιν καὶ κοινοτέραν πως, Μυρτῶ δὲ Ἀριστείδου θυγατρὶδὴν τοῦ Λυσιμάχου). Two points are made about Xanthippe: she was a citizen, not an alien; she was ordinary in contrast with the high-born Myrto. Note that here Myrto is the granddaughter of Aristides, and this supports our

that the ancients (e.g. Ath. 219 a ff.) thought Plato unfair to Socrates in telling scandalous stories about him. Plato the bowdlerizer was thus further bowdlerized and the process has gone on into modern times, ending with the absurd concept of non-sexual sexuality (which is what 'Platonic love' seems to mean).

¹ Porphyry (ap. Theodoret. *Therap.* 1. 8), presumably following Aristoxenos, said that Socrates was πρὸς οὐδὲν μὲν ἀφυῆ, ἀπαίδευτος δὲ περὶ πάντα i.e. he had plenty of natural ability but was ineducable (there was a change at the age of 17). ἀφυῆ, not εὐφυῆ (a marginal variant in one out of the eight MSS. of Theodoretus, which is on the same cretinous level as ἡθους for εἶδους, αἰνῶς τε for ἐνίοτε in the Theodoretus passage quoted by Wehrli, fr. 54b. αἰνῶς τε is read by Zeller, 64).

² See above, p. 59 n. 1.

³ In this rendering I have taken the ἢ . . . ἢ

. . . μόνας to divide women into two exclusive classes: either Socrates used married women alone (and no others) or he used prostitutes alone (and no others). The prostitutes thus belong to the period before marriage. But John Gould has suggested to me that the point may simply be that Socrates did not seduce unmarried girls. This may well be right.

⁴ δύο δὲ σχεῖν γυναῖκας. One might have preferred ἔχειν τοὺς σχεῖν, and ἔχειν appears as a variant in Theodoretus (3 out of 8 MSS.). I suppose no one thought that Socrates took two wives in one fell swoop. So the text means that he 'came to have' two wives at once.

⁵ κοινοτέραν. LSJ κοινός A. iv does not give quite this sense, cf. LSJ A. iii ('ordinary' of things). Basically the word (as when combined with πρῶτος, affable) means that a person associates with others, is not exclusive.

view that *θυγατριδῇ* was the original reading in the *Περὶ εὐγενείας*, since early quotation is to be preferred to late paraphrase.

The following words do not make any reasonable sense. 'Socrates took Xanthippe in an embrace (??) and Myrto in marriage' (*καὶ τὴν μὲν Ξανθίππην προσπλακεῖσαν (περιπλακεῖσαν Cyril) λαβεῖν, ἐξ ἧς Λαμπροκλῆς ἐγένετο, τὴν δὲ Μυρτὼν γάμῳ, ἐξ ἧς Σωφρονίσκος καὶ Μενέξενος*).¹ A zeugma in more senses than one.² The compounds of *πλέκομαι* are used of bodily intertwining: *προσπλέκομαι* is not used in the sense 'have intercourse with' (LSJ: 'cling to, attach oneself to'); *περιπλέκομαι* is so used (e.g. Aelian, *VH* 12. 1 of Aspasia in bed with Cyrus); *συμπλέκομαι*, which is used by Cyril (*contra Jul.* vii. 226 b) in his rough summary of Porphyry, is the most derogatory, as it is used of copulating animals (LSJ II. 2; the words of Cyril are: *συνεφύρετο γυναιξί, Μυρτοῦ τε φημὶ καὶ Ξανθίππῃ, συνεπλέκετο δὲ καὶ ταῖς ἑταιριζομέναις*). But here the construction is strange—'he had her as she was wrapped round him', and the physical aura inept where we expect a word for social status contrasting with 'marriage'. *προσπλακεῖσαν* must be corrupt.

It is highly probable that Aristoxenos wrote *πρὸς παλλακείαν* 'for concubinage'. *παλλακεία* is a rare word; LSJ give Strabo 17. 1. 46; Isaeus 3. 39 (in the latter passage *παλλακία* was corrupted to *παλλακίδι*); *Peripl. M. Rubr.* 49. *πρὸς παλλακείαν* was turned into *προσπλακεῖσαν* for which the more common verb *περιπλακεῖσαν* was substituted.³ If this is accepted, Xanthippe was said by Aristoxenos to be the *παλλακή*, Myrto the duly married wife, of Socrates. It thus appears that the whole confusion in ancient and modern times derives from the ambiguity of the word *γυνή*⁴ and such phrases as *ἔχειν γυναῖκα, συνοικεῖν*; *γυνή* is used of a woman closely associated with a man, and *δύο σχεῖν γυναῖκας* means that Socrates kept two women, whose status is then defined.

The account in Athenaeus, as it stands, does not agree with this emendation (see below): but it is interesting that Athenaeus goes on from the two-wives situation to multiple households (e.g. the Persian king's) in general, where *τὸ πλήθος τῶν γυναικῶν* includes both wives and concubines (556 e).

The account in Plutarch (*Ar.* 27) *Μυρτὼ . . . Σωκράτει τῷ σοφῷ συνοικῆσαι, γυναῖκα μὲν ἑτέραν ἔχοντι . . .* can be easily reconciled with our emended Aristoxenos: *γυναῖκα* means Xanthippe who was not a wedded wife but Socrates' woman, resident with him.

The source of the whole tradition was Aristotle's *Περὶ εὐγενείας*. If Socrates had children by two mothers, it is easy to see why Aristotle would see fit to distinguish them, and their respective children, in a work which dealt with hereditary transmission. Socrates' children were dull-witted (*Ar. Rhet.* 2. 15 *ἀβελτερίαν καὶ νωθρότητα*; Plut. *Cato*, 21 where the adjective *ἀποπλήκτοι* 'stupefied' is used). There was a prejudice (Plut. *Mor.* 1 b) against getting children from courtesans and concubines: one was more likely to succeed with a proper wife.

¹ Porphyry's reading was *γάμῳ* (as given by Cyril: Wehrli, fr. 54a), which Theodoretus changed to *γαμηθεῖσαν* (Wehrli, fr. 54b) to make parallel to *προσπλακεῖσαν*. I also take *λαθεῖν* to be Cyril's (stupid) improvement of *λαβεῖν* (Wehrli, fr. 54a, line 4) and not a MSS. error: 'Xanthippe secretly embraced him.'

² I am indebted to David Harvey for this joke.

³ Or perhaps *πρ.* an abbreviation for *πρὸς* was expanded to *περί*?

⁴ LSJ *γυνή* II: in Hom. *Il.* 24. 497 it is used of a concubine. There are of course many instances where *γυνή* is used of females attached but not married to a man, e.g. Hom. *Il.* 2. 226 *πολλὰι δὲ γυναῖκες* (women in Agamemnon's tent).

The problems attendant on the Other Woman at Athens are well depicted in Demosthenes' *Περὶ προικός*. From it we can see how established the Other Woman could become at the expense of the proper wife. The mother of Boeotus, Plangon, although not properly married to Mantias, has managed to get her sons recognized by him and admitted to the phratries. Boeotus argues that money, counting as a dowry, passed to Mantias from Plangon's father. But it clearly counts against Plangon that she never resided with him. (This last point differentiates her from the normal *παλλακή*.) In two passages (*Περὶ προικός* 23 ἀνὴρ καὶ γυνή, 26 ἑτέραν εἶχε γυναῖκα) Demosthenes uses the term *γυνή* in referring to Plangon.

This is of course fourth-century evidence.¹ But there are signs that the Other Woman may have become a problem in the fifth century. Pericles' law of 451/0 B.C. excluded from citizenship those not born of citizens on both sides; this implies that Athenian men had been attempting to legitimate their children by foreign women, and such alliances would most likely be extramarital. During the Peloponnesian War, because of the lack of men, the Athenians are said to have passed a decree making it legal to marry one woman who was a citizen, and to get children from another (*γαμεῖν μὲν ἄσπλην μίαν, παιδοποιεῖσθαι δὲ καὶ ἐξ ἑτέρας*: Diog. Laert. 2. 26, Athen. 555 d, Gellius, *Noct. Att.* 15. 20). The sources for the decree are apparently late, though it is referred back by Diogenes to Satyros and Hieronymos.² Modern scholars have doubted whether there was such a decree, mainly because in the three places where it is referred to the two-wives story (relating to Socrates and Euripides) is being discussed and this story is generally discarded. But there is no intrinsic improbability in such a decree, as we know that in the fourth century the children of a *παλλακή* were legitimate. Such a decree would certainly suit the relationship of Socrates with Myrto and Xanthippe. We note that Aristoxenos makes the point that Xanthippe though a concubine is a citizen—thus her child Lamprocles is legitimate.³

Some echoes of the decree, or of the situation leading up to it, may be found in Euripides' *Andromache*. This play can be assigned to the Peloponnesian War because of its vigorous attack on Sparta; and the metre and style point to an early phase.⁴ The main problem of the play stems from the *ménage à trois* of Neoptolemus, with fierce rivalry between the concubine Andromache and the wife Hermione. In the opening words of the choral ode 465 ff. we hear: 'Never will I assent to double marriage for mortals, nor to children produced from two mothers, strife in the household' (*οὐδέποτε δίδυμα λέκτρ' ἐπανέσω*

¹ The fourth-century attitude is summed up by Ps.-Dem. 59. 122: 'We have courtesans for pleasure, concubines for the daily needs of our bodies, and wives to keep house for us and bear legitimate children.' Note that the passing of money from the other woman's parents to the husband meant that she was acquiring a status near to that of a wife (Isaeus 3. 39).

² In Ath. 556 d Hieronymos is said to have quoted the decree; we do not know if any of the other authorities mentioned there made anything of it.

³ J. W. Jones, *The Law and Legal Theory of the Greeks*, 185, concludes that the losses in the

war 'led to permission for the legitimation, and consequent recognition as citizens, of children born to a citizen by a concubine openly maintained as such by him'.

⁴ Sparta is at the height of her power (l. 449), so probably not 424–418 B.C. A hint of war-weariness (1037 ff.), so later than 429; and if the *δύπτηχοι τυραννίδες* (471) and *στάσις πολίταις* (475) allude to the Cleon-Nicias rivalry, this pushes it towards 425–4 (as perhaps the allusion to Argos, 734–5; for Athenian overtures to Argos cf. Ar. *Eq.* 465–7, dated 424). About 426 B.C. seems a fair guess.

βροτῶν οὐδ' ἀμφιμάτορας κόρους).¹ This would have extra piquancy if the alleged decree were being mooted at this time.²

The Euripidean *Phoenix* depicted the successful intrigue of a villainous concubine, probably acting against the wife. Only a few fragments remain. Produced before 425 B.C. (Ar. *Ach.* 421), it is linked by its theme of the rejected woman to the *Hippolytus* (428 B.C.). A fragment tells us that in it Euripides used the phrase ἀμνήστευτος γυνή to mean 'concubine': wife without a wooing, i.e. without the proper preliminaries of marriage. This touches on the above-noted ambiguity of the word γυνή.³

One may guess that the decree was passed between 428 (after the plague had reduced the population) and 424.

I will now deal with possible objections to my view of Socrates' marriage.

1. Zeller's argument that bigamy was incompatible with Socrates' character will no doubt have weight for some, even if we reduce bigamy to monogamy plus. Socrates on any account was a poor husband, and the venom of Xanthippe will have sprung from his casual treatment of her passionate nature. Socrates' brusque dismissal of Xanthippe shortly before his death is also revealing (Plato, *Phaedo*, 60 a); one has to wear special blinkers in order to view this treatment as 'considerate'.⁴

In Plutarch (*Ar.* 27) the account of the marriage of Myrto (though Socrates is said to have another woman) is quite sympathetic to Socrates. Myrto was widowed and indigent, so it seems almost an act of charity to marry her (see also ἀπρικοῦν in Diog. Laert. 2. 26). In Aristoxenos however, if we can trust Porphyry and his reporters, the marriage is brought in soon after the statement about Socrates' erotic tendencies and stress is laid on his having two women.⁵ Marriage at Athens was basically a property transaction and a means of family alliance, and Socrates' sexuality would not explain his marrying Myrto. Socrates was perhaps being kind to Myrto and consolidating his ties with Myrto's relatives. He seems to have taken Myrto's claim to εὐγένεια seriously.⁶

2. Zeller argues that there is nothing about the double marriage in Plato and Xenophon or the comic poets. Xenophon's work is a lifeless panegyric; Plato's in many ways a living portrait but idealizing and avoiding, whether for fear of

¹ In the same ode we hear of Helen pursuing her other man Paris and so the 'double marriage' could mean one woman plus two men (cf. Andromache herself). But here ἀμφιμάτορας is specific enough.

² The main obstacle to this view is the allegation that the *Andromache* was not produced at Athens but elsewhere (so Schol. *Andr.* 445); but this may be an erroneous inference (so Wilamowitz). I find it surprising in view of the *pièce-d'occasion* appearance, and the attack on strategoi 493 ff., esp. 699-700, which fits an Athenian context so well.

³ A wife without a dowry is practically a concubine: Plautus, *Trinummus*, 690-1—people may say 'I have given my sister into concubinage rather than into matrimony, if I give her without a dowry' (cf. Pl. *Stich.* 562, Ter. *Phormio*, 650-8). Here the concern about the wife's position (expressed by

'matrimonium') may be more Roman than Greek.

⁴ So Burnet ad loc.

⁵ Theodoretus (12. 175) says δύο γυναῖδι κατὰ ταῦτὸν ὁμιλῶν οὐκ ἐλάμβανε κόρον . . ., but in this passage Theodoretus is laying it on thick.

⁶ Aristotle, *Περὶ εὐγενείας*, fr. 92 Rose = Stobaeus 4. 29A 25: οἱ μὲν γὰρ τοὺς ἐξ ἀγαθῶν γονέων εὐγενεῖς εἶναι νομίζουσι, καθάπερ καὶ Σωκράτης· διὰ γὰρ τὴν Ἀριστείδου ἀρετὴν καὶ τὴν θυγατέρα αὐτοῦ γενναίαν εἶναι. This may be Socrates complimenting his mother-in-law. Perhaps my mention of this passage will spur someone to devise a new explanation of the Myrto story as a misunderstanding of it. I do not see that any clear inference can be made, and it would be easy to imagine a context in the dialogue where someone picked up this statement of Socrates and went into the εὐγένεια of his sons.

scandal or just lack of interest, the subject of Socrates' domestic arrangements. In Plato's *Phaedo* 60 a we come upon Socrates just freed from his chains and 'Xanthippe—you know who I mean—sitting by him holding his baby' (τὴν δὲ Ξανθίππην—γινώσκεις γάρ—ἔχουσάν τε τὸ παιδίον αὐτοῦ καὶ παρακαθημένην). Xanthippe here is a person 'you know' and not said to be his wife. The baby is said to be his, not hers; on Aristoxenos' evidence it would be Myrto's. In *Phaedo* 116 b women of the house (αἱ οἰκεῖαι γυναῖκες) are referred to; this presumably includes Xanthippe, and it might include Myrto.

Next the comic poets. The main author is Aristophanes. It does not seem certain to me that he would necessarily touch on Socrates' domestic arrangements. In *Frogs* 1045–8 there is a single oblique allusion to the fact that Euripides had trouble with his wife; what opportunities Aristophanes must have missed in his continual attacks on him! But in any case Socrates' marriage to Myrto must be well after the *Clouds* (423) if Myrto's children are infants in 399 (see above, p. 58 n. 3). And whether having a wife and concubine as well would be of more than passing interest to Athenians one cannot say; I would guess not, even if one doubts the existence of a special decree.

3. It has been inferred from the name Xanthippe, and the name of her son Lamprocles, that Xanthippe was a high-born lady.¹ If so she could hardly be a *παλλακή*. The name Lamprocles can be dismissed, since as in the case of Pericles' νόθος the child of an irregular union could have a high-sounding name. Xanthippe does sound aristocratic when compared with the name Xanthippos in Pericles' family. Names (especially mythological, e.g. Melanippe, Leucippides) compounded from ἵππος indicate the aristocratic possession of horses; however, ἵππος especially as applied to women might indicate high spirits or sexuality.² Thus Xanthippe may have been so called because she was a blonde with high spirits.³ For a horsey name with no apparently high connections we have Lysippos of Sicyon, a statuery, contemporary of Alexander. And we have Archedike (Aelian, *VH* 12. 63) and Callistrate (Ath. 220 f) as instances of low women with high-sounding names. Moreover, Aristoxenos explicitly says that Xanthippe was a rather ordinary person in contrast with Myrto. One can argue that Aristoxenos is lying, but to what end? I would sooner believe that Xanthippe is referred to in this way because she was known to be not high-born, and her parentage was thus not on record. Finally, Burnet suggests that Xanthippe's reputed shrewishness derives from her aristocratic pride. This is inept. If we accept the depiction of Xanthippe as shrew (not in Plato,⁴ twice in

¹ So Burnet on *Phaedo*, 60 a.

² Cf. the prostitute Hippias in Juvenal 6. 82, 'ἵππος' LSJ IV, κέλης, κελητίζω, etc. for sexuality. In Alcman's *Partheneion* the horse-image is applied to unmarried girls as indicating fine limbs and energy. The most frequent horse-word applied to spirited girls is πῶλος ('filly'). Socrates is said (Diog. Laert. 2. 37) to have compared Xanthippe to a spirited horse. In Semonides 7. 57 the daughter of the ἵππος ἀβρῆ is luxurious and snooty.

³ This may seem unlikely if she obtained this name soon after birth—but not impossible as the colouring of babies can be to some extent detected or inferred and they do

differ in docility and energy right from the start. Alternatively this could be a nickname adopted later in life: cf. Plato (originally Aristocles, called 'broad' from his broad shoulders or forehead: Diog. Laert. 3. 4); Stesichoros (originally Teisias: *Suda* s.v.). Or again it might be a case of ordinary parents choosing the *éclat* of a high-sounding name, just as modern English parents have a liking for the glamorous names of film-stars and celebrities.

⁴ David Harvey reminds me that the woman in *Republic*, 8. 549 cd may be modelled on Xanthippe (v. Adam ad loc.). She is annoyed at her man's neglect of money (this is alleged of Xanthippe in

Xenophon, *Mem.* 2. 2. 7, *Symp.* 2. 10, extensively in Diog. Laert. 2. 36–7, Aelian and Athenaeus) and do not dismiss it as mischievous fiction, then the anecdotes show her as utterly contrary to Greek standards of *εὐγένεια*: vain (Ael. *VH* 7. 10), greedy (Ael. *VH* 9. 29), bad-tempered (*passim*) and violent (Ath. 219 a). We are reminded of the Elder Cato’s words (Plut. *Cato*, 21) explaining why he married a wife more noble than rich: the rich and the high-born are equally proud, but the high-born are more ashamed of base actions and so more obedient to their husbands. Cato goes on to express admiration for Socrates for his ability to get on with his difficult wife i.e. Xanthippe, and if Cato¹ is being consistent, it would mean that Xanthippe was not high-born.

4. It may be objected that Xanthippe appears in the ancient tradition as wife, not concubine. This I would explain as arising from the inaccurate use of the word *γυνή*, from the fact that Xanthippe was established in Socrates’ ménage earlier and more solidly than Myrto, and from her prominence in the anecdotal tradition as a shrew. It must also be stressed that the arrangement between Socrates and Xanthippe would not have been officially defined as ‘concubinage’; it would have had much of the appearance of an ordinary marriage—living together, producing children—but without the normal preliminaries—negotiations between parents, payment of dowry. It is not as if Socrates, gauche as he was, said one day to Xanthippe, ‘I want you to be my concubine.’ Aristoxenos was being offensive as well as technically accurate in saying Xanthippe was taken *πρὸς παλλακείαν*.²

The most serious objection involves the use of the word *γαμετή*. Athenaeus talks of those who attribute two *γαμετὰς γυναῖκας* to Socrates (555 d); this can be explained away as misunderstanding (like *δύο γυναῖκας ἀγαγέσθαι* in Diog. Laert. 2. 26) based on the assumption that Xanthippe was a wedded wife as well as Myrto. But the use of *γαμετή* in Porphyry quoting Aristoxenos is more difficult: *ἢ γὰρ ταῖς γαμεταῖς ἢ ταῖς κοιναῖς χρῆσθαι μόνοις*. This seems to mean that there was more than one wedded wife. It is unlikely that the plural is used generically—wives as opposed to prostitutes (without reference to number). If the proposed emendation is followed, then these words cannot be a direct quotation of Aristoxenos, but, as Wehrli suggested, an insertion by Porphyry. The motive would be to provide a gloss on the words *ἀδικία δ’ οὐ προσῆν* used by Aristoxenos, which was found puzzling (Plut. *de Herod. Malig.* 856 c). Porphyry would be making a guess or possibly a rough paraphrase from another passage of Aristoxenos.³ The only other way out of this difficulty is to argue that Xanthippe’s position in the household became at some stage the equivalent of that of a *γαμετή*. If, for instance, Myrto, whose infant Xanthippe is holding in Plato, *Phaedo* 60 a, was dead in 399 (childbirth was a dangerous business then),

Aelian, *VH* 9. 29) and social position; she finds that he is indifferent to her (*ἐαυτὴν δὲ μήτε πάννυ τιμῶντα μήτε ἀτιμάζοντα*); and she keeps grumbling about him. I find this very likely, as not only is the woman like the anecdotists’ Xanthippe, but the man is in the position that Plato assigns to Socrates, and the reference to law courts (549 d) suggests an Athenian setting.

¹ Or, on a sceptical view, the inventor of the anecdote.

² The lack of properly defined terms for

man–woman relations in Greek texts is marked. In the *Περὶ προικῶς* Mantias’ relation to Plangon is expressed by such vague words as *ἐπλησίαζεν*. She is not called *παλλακή*, and I hardly think this is because Demosthenes wants to avoid giving her any standing at all.

³ Such paraphrasing is clear in Theodoretus in the passage following the two-wives story (*Therap.* 12. 174 = Aristoxenos, fr. 54 b Wehrli).

and Xanthippe was established in sole charge of the household and Myrto's children, she might then become virtually *γαμετή* as succeeding to Myrto. This would then accommodate the ancient view (suspiciously nameless, however) in Diogenes that Socrates married Xanthippe after Myrto. But I would prefer to bow to Occam's law and assume that *γαμετή* was a mistake.

CONCLUSION

That Socrates married a woman called Myrto and had by her two children, Sophroniskos and Menexenos, is one of the best-attested facts in Attic prosopography. Another woman, Xanthippe, lived with Socrates and produced his eldest son Lamprocles. The ancients, misled by the prominence of Xanthippe in stories about Socrates and by the ambiguous use of the word *γυνή* to describe her, assumed that Socrates must have had two properly wedded wives. They were thus puzzled by the statement of Aristoxenos and others that Socrates had both women at the same time. They took this to mean that Socrates was a bigamist and hence they disbelieved the whole story, unable at the same time to find any grounds for rejecting the evidence.

Xanthippe had a child by Socrates in about 414. She was by then living with him, and had presumably been doing so for some time. She was not properly married to him. This does not mean she was necessarily a loose woman: her male relatives may have been too poor to afford a marriage, or dead.

About 410–405 B.C. Socrates married Myrto. Myrto came from the now impoverished but once glorious line of Aristides the Just. Socrates' father had known Lysimachos the son of Aristides the Just, and Socrates was acquainted with a son of Lysimachos (Plato, *Laches*). Myrto's mother, the daughter of Aristides the Just, had been married off around 427 B.C. by a special decree proposed by Alcibiades, a close friend of Socrates and a then up-and-coming politician. Socrates married Myrto without a dowry, which probably signified his respect for the great line of Aristides, a respect corroborated by personal acquaintance with her family and sympathy for their indigence. He had two children by her, Sophroniskos (named after Socrates' father) and Menexenos; both were infants at the time of Socrates' death.

Xanthippe, already offended by Socrates' casual treatment and homosexual pursuits, was mortified by the marriage, which meant the end to her supremacy in the household. No doubt she was able to hold on to her position as woman of the house, as she had a forceful character. But it was only a matter of time before the conflict between the two women became open.¹ Myrto was, however, a self-effacing person, and remains in the tradition as merely a *magni nominis umbra*.

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¹ 'The two women joined battle with each other. When they'd stopped fighting they turned on Socrates who instead of trying to separate them just laughed at them and

watched them.' The (usually) imperturbable Socrates is well depicted in this story (Aristoxenos, fr. 54b Wehrli).