Classical Quarterly **44** (ii) 336–346 (1994) *Printed in Great Britain*

THE LABOUR OF WOMEN IN CLASSICAL ATHENS*

'We agree that we sell ribbons and that we do not live as we would prefer. ... He has also said of my mother that she worked as a wet-nurse. We do not deny that this happened, at a time when the city was suffering misfortune, and everyone was in a bad way; but I will make clear to you the manner in which she worked as a nurse and the reasons why she did so. Let none of you interpret it unfavourably, men of Athens; for indeed, you will find that many citizen women work as nurses, and, if you wish, I will mention them by name.' (Demosthenes 57.31, 35)

Demosthenes' client Euxitheos is attempting to defend his claim to citizenship, and finds himself obliged to counteract the prejudice raised by his opponent Euboulides from the fact that his mother works, and has worked, in menial wage labour.[1] The implication is that no citizen woman would sink so low; therefore, she is no citizen, and so neither is he. His response is defensive: he acknowledges that such labour is a source of prejudice (42), but argues that people often find themselves obliged to undertake such demeaning work through poverty, which is deserving of the jury's sympathy, and in any case has no bearing on questions of citizenship (45). He does not challenge the assumptions behind the prejudice, suggesting that he expects the jury to share them, and this might encourage us to extrapolate from the passage to a set of common values held by Athenian citizens, namely that paid work by women is degrading, embarrassing and only acceptable as a temporary expedient under the compulsion of poverty. If we then align these attitudes with the implications elsewhere in the orators that women led lives of seclusion, usually confined indoors and largely separated from the exterior male world, we might be inclined to conclude that the labour of women was also confined to the *oikos* and almost entirely distinct from the labour of males,[2] not least in having little or no monetary aspect, a point which the usual view of the economic capacity of Athenian women appears to confirm.

The prejudices reflected in Demosthenes 57 seem to find confirmation in Antiphanes, who makes a character praise the Scythians for giving their infants mares' or cows' milk rather than using 'malignant nurses'.[3] However, a completely different picture is given by the evidence of women's tombstones, on which nursing is the best attested occupation: many of them are quite lavish and include depictions of the nurse and her former charge, now adult (and presumably the donor); it is also common for the nurse to be described as χρηστή or φίλη.[4] The affection which the

* Earlier versions of this paper were given to the Women in Antiquity seminar in Oxford and to the Department of History in Manchester; I am grateful to the audiences on both occasions for helpful suggestions and reactions. I am also much obliged to the *CQ* referee and to Paul Millett for their criticism, which produced a substantially improved final version.

[1] Euxitheos also mentions agricultural labour as typical of the δουλικὰ καὶ ταπεινὰ πράγματα into which citizen women had been forced by Athens' circumstances (57.45); since he adds that many have since gone from poverty to wealth, he seems to be suggesting that work of this sort was often temporary.

[2] This is the idealized division presented in Xenophon's *Oeconomicus* 7.17–43, especially 22.

[3] Antiphanes fr. 157 (all comic fragments are cited from Kassel–Austin unless otherwise noted); cf. Hunter on the *Τίτθαι* or *Τίτθη* of Eubulus.

[4] The following tombstones commemorate nurses (* denotes the description χρηστή, # denotes φίλη; in those marked +, τίτθη indicates both name and function: see L. Robert in N. Firatli & L. Robert, *Les Stèles Funéraires de Byzance Gréco-Romaine* [Paris, 1964], 186): IG II^2

tombstones reflect is also indicated by the freeing of nurses (Dem. 47.55–6, Men. *Sam.* 236–8, IG II² 1559.60). Dry nurses (*τροφοί*) were the object of similar affection, to judge by their role as confidants in tragedy;[5] although they are much less frequently attested epigraphically as a distinct group (n.b. IG II² 12563), this may be because many *τίτθαι* went on to serve as *τροφοί*, but are commemorated in their original capacity. The fact that the daughter of an *isoteles* is commemorated as a nurse on her tombstone (IG II² 7873) is a further indication that nursing was not in fact viewed as disgraceful.

There is obviously a conflict here between the overt ideology and attitudes reflected in some literary sources and the reality reflected by the evidence of epigraphy, as well as by casual allusions elsewhere in literature. This is a characteristic of the condition of women in ancient Athens of which we have become increasingly aware and which has been particularly illuminated recently by studies of their economic capacity;[6] here, indeed, close scrutiny of literary sources often uncovers a conflict between ideology and practice within one work. A general study of the labour of women in classical Athens may therefore be useful by providing a fuller analysis of the fact, already noted in earlier discussions, that working women form an exception to the ideology of female seclusion,[7] and by offering some refinement of the more recent model of an essential separation of spheres between the sexes.[8] The sources are, as we have already seen, problematic, but while oratory and comedy in particular may give a misleading impression of Athenian *attitudes* to female labour, the basic information which they can supply about the existence of that labour remains of value if handled with caution, especially when it can be controlled by information from sources of other types, above all epigraphic material such as manumission records and curse tablets, not all of which has previously been taken into account.[9]

In general, I shall naturally be concerned only with the sort of work which citizen women might possibly do; hence I shall pass over a few areas confined to slaves, such

10843, 11647*, 12177⁺, 12242*, 12387*, 12559*, 12632#, 12812–4⁺, 12815–6⁺*, 12996, 13065; SEG XXI 1064*, XXVI 341*. On IG II² 7873 (below) and 9112 (below, n. 22), see C. W. Clairmont, *Gravestone and Epigram* (Mainz, 1970), nos. 25 and 18 respectively.

[5] In Soph. *Trach*, Eur. *Medea*, *Hipp.*, *Andr.* and, apparently, *Stheneboea* (T. B. L. Webster, *The Tragedies of Euripides* [London, 1967], 80–4), they are confidants of principal female characters (and it is striking how much better informed the Nurse is than the Paidagogos in the prologue of the *Medea*), but the relationship of Odysseus and Eurycleia in *Odyssey* 19–23 (n.b. Rutherford [Cambridge, 1992] on 19.357) and the fact that most of the presumed donors depicted on the relevant gravestones are male imply that this is due to dramatic economy rather than simply reflecting reality.

[6] L. Foxhall, *CQ* n.s. 39 (1989), 22–44; E. M. Harris, *Phoenix* 46 (1992), 309–21.

[7] J. Gould, *JHS* 100 (1980), 38–59 esp. 48–9; R. Just, *Women in Athenian Law and Life* (London, 1989), ch. 6, esp. 106–8, 113. Interestingly, revisionist scholars trying to debunk the standard picture of female seclusion have made little or nothing of female labour as an argument: e.g. A. W. Gomme, *CP* 20 (1925), 1–25, H. D. F. Kitto, *The Greeks* (Harmondsworth, 1951), 219–36, C. D. Richter, *CJ* 67 (1971/2), 1–8 (who takes Euxitheos' words at face value on p. 8).

[8] D. Cohen, *Law, Sexuality and Society* (Cambridge, 1991), ch. 6, developing his arguments in *G&R* 36 (1989), 3–15. Gould had already suggested that it might be a question of 'submerged lines of demarcation', even among the poor (op. cit. [n. 7], 48–9).

[9] The standard discussion of women at work in ancient Greece is still P. Herfst, *Le travail de la femme dans la Grèce ancienne* (Utrecht, 1922; repr. Salem, New Hampshire, 1980), which covers a wide geographical and chronological area: officially, his field is the Greek world to the 1st century A.D. (11), but he regularly cites later authors such as Clement of Alexandria and Eusebius and even the 12th-century Theodorus Prodromus (43n.10). Some of the relevant material from curse tablets is now made more accessible in J. Gager (ed.), *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World* (Oxford, 1992), ch. 4.

as domestic service (other than nursing), and shall have nothing to say about prostitution, an area where there was clearly a respectability barrier. The same probably applied to related activities such as music and dancing, which had strong links to the world of the symposium: citizen women do not seem to have been acrobats, dancers or musicians, though we know of two fluteplayers who were freedwomen.[10] Equally, I shall take for granted the work women did within their own *oikos* which was directed towards that *oikos*, rather than being done for material reward; I do not of course mean to suggest by this that such work was not economically productive, but my concern here is with female interaction with the world of exchange and paid labour.

Indeed, it is plain that a great part of that interaction had its roots in the work which women did within the *oikos*, and the skills which they employed there. One obvious area is the making and selling of textiles: wool-working is the characteristic area of feminine expertise normally cited by ancient authors.[11] Free women might therefore turn their skills to profitable account on an *ad hoc* basis, as in Ar. *Frogs* 1349–51, where a woman plans to take her spinning to the market. Since even women of high status learnt wool-working (Xen. *Oec.* 7.6), they too might, in exceptional circumstances, as during the crisis after the end of the Peloponnesian War, practise their skills to earn money, like Aristarchus' female relatives, whom he turned into a sort of domestic cloth factory (Xen. *Mem.* 2.7); further down the social scale, Crates the Cynic described a husband and wife carding wool together due to poverty (*apud* Plut. *Mor.* 830c). Such expertise was equally common among slaves, and almost half of the freedwomen attested in the fourth-century manumission inscriptions are 'wool-workers'. Dyeing was clearly part of this domestic skill, though we also hear of a professional dyer, and the same was true of weaving, though we also seem to have a record of a specialist carpet-weaver, and Timarchus' slave weaver and seller of linen was presumably an expert too. The sewing of garments might likewise be turned into a profession, as might their sale; hence we also find a woman called Thettale selling felt caps for the slaves engaged in building works in the sanctuary at Eleusis.[12]

Considering that cooking was also viewed as quintessentially women's work,[13] female professional cooks are surprisingly thin on the ground: all the chefs so prominent in Middle Comedy seem to be men, and their only female equivalents are δημιουργαί, patissiers or confectioners.[14] Indeed, the tone of the scene in Plutarch's *Life of Phocion* (18.2) in which Alexander's messengers find the statesman's wife making her own bread may suggest that even in the home, cooking was largely for poor women. Certainly, women were involved in the sale of bread in the food market, and some, like the bread-seller in Byzantium who lost her mixing bowl to Philocleon's

[10] SEG 18.36 B212, 25.178.5; n.b. Athen. 415ab on Aglais the trumpeter. For women following artistic and intellectual careers in general, see S. Pomeroy, *AJAH* 2 (1977), 51–68.

[11] Pl. *Alc.* 126e, *Lys.* 208d, *Laws* 805e, Xen. *Mem.* 3.9.11, *Lac.Pol.* 1.3.

[12] Wool-workers: M. N. Tod, *Epigraphica* 12 (1950), 10–11; M. Jameson, *CJ* 73 (1977/8), 134 n. 63; n.b. also the great frequency of scenes of wool-working on Attic vases: T. B. L. Webster, *Potter and Patron in Classical Athens* (London, 1972), chs. 16–17; dyeing: Ar. *Eccl.* 215 (amateur), Eup. fr. 434 (professional); carpet-weaver: SEG 18.36 B62; linen-working: Aeschin. 1.97, Alexis fr. 36; sewing of garments: IG II² 1556.28, E. Ziebarth, *SBAW* 33 (1934), n. 7.8 (= D. R. Jordan, *GRBS* 26 (1985), n. 72) and Antiphanes' play Ἀκεστρία (frr. 21–4); n.b. also the net-weaver, below 342; sale: Elephantis the cloak-seller IG II² 11254, Apollod. Car. fr. 30 (a play sub-titled 'The Cloak-seller'); Thettale: IG II² 1672.70–1. In the same inscription, one Artemis of Piraeus sells 70 dr. worth of reeds (line 64); these were probably roofing material.

[13] Pl. *Rep.* 455c cf. Thuc. 2.78.3; Herfst, op. cit. (n. 9), 24–32.

[14] Men. fr. 451.12, Alexand. Com. fr. 3, Antiph. fr. 224; their services were particularly associated with weddings: Poll. 3.41.

comrades, must have been bakers as well. Later in the same play, another bread-seller appears in pursuit of Philocleon; since she has arrived with a witness to summons him, she is presumably a citizen, as the recitation of her parentage also suggests.[15] Pherecrates (fr. 10) implies that contemporary free women did not do their own milling, but Eubulus wrote a play about a *Milleress* (*Μυλωθρίς* fr. 65) and women (of unknown status) were also involved in the toasting of grain.[16] Trade in porridge (*λέκιθος*) furnishes another example of women selling prepared food,[17] while the sale of meal, seed and pulse involved related raw materials.[18] Women sold other foods, too: Euripides' mother was, according to Aristophanes, the most famous Athenian vegetable-seller,[19] but we meet a number of others, as well as traders in garlic, figs and sesame; other foods attested as sold by women are salt and honey.[20]

A further domestic activity which developed into a trade was washing: we have a dedication by one washerwoman from before the Persian Wars, and another elaborate one from the fourth century by a group of fullers including two women.[21]

We have already touched on nursing, the best-attested area of women engaged in paid labour, and another natural deployment of domestic expertise. As we have seen, it could be represented as dishonourable, although Euxitheos' defensiveness may mainly reflect the shame felt at working for someone else (for nurses as hired help n.b. Ar. *Lys.* 958), but the other evidence makes it clear that such attitudes were far from universal, and ties of affection might be established between nurse and charge.[22]

[15] Bread-sellers: Ar. *Frogs* 857–8, *Lys.* 458 and n.b. Hermipp. frr. 7–12 (*Ἀρτοπώλιδες*); Philocleon in Byzantium: Ar. *Wasps* 238; the summons: ibid. 1388–1414; cf. fr. 129 for a similar victim in another play. Their association in comedy with loud voices and abuse might be simply popular prejudice, but a low status elsewhere is suggested in the linking of bread-sellers with prostitutes by Anacreon, PMG 388.4–5. Bread-sellers at Athens were not exclusively female: see Rhodes on [Arist.] *Ath.Pol.* 51.3.

[16] *κοδομή, κοδομεύτρια*: Poll. 1.246, 6.64, 7.181. Other domestic activities seem to be viewed in the same ideological light: like milling, water-carrying is represented as an activity which women did for themselves in the Golden Age before slavery (Herod. 6.137.3 cf. Pherec. fr. 10; P. Vidal-Naquet, in J.-P. Vernant and P. Vidal-Naquet (edd.), *Travail et Esclavage en Grèce ancienne* [Paris, 1988], 104–6); hence some passages in drama imply that it is unusual for a respectable contemporary woman to fetch water, or acceptable only in a crisis (Eur. *El.* 107–9, 309; Men. *Dys.* 189–94; water-carrying in ritual contexts might have been felt to hark back to the Golden Age, though n.b. D. Williams, in A. Cameron and A. Kuhrt [edd.], *Images of Women in Antiquity* [London, 1983], 102–5 for complexities here), yet other evidence implies that many free women did still fetch water (Ar. *Lys.* 327–35, Eur. *Hipp.* 123–4; Webster, op. cit. [n. 12], 98–9).

[17] Porridge (*λέκιθος*): Ar. *Lys.* 457, 562, *Wealth* 427–8; this last passage again links the trade to abusive language.

[18] Meal and seed: Ar. *Lys.* 457, Poll. 6.37, IG II^2 1554.40, D.L. 7.168; in the last case, the woman involved was presumably of free status, since Cleanthes cited her as a witness before the Areopagus; pulse: IG II^2 1558.67.

[19] *Ach.* 478, *Thesm.* 387, 456, *Frogs* 840; more precisely, she was a herb-seller, a female equivalent of the *σκανδικοπώλης* of Fr.Adesp.Vet. 97A (Edm.): see C. Ruck, *Arion* n.s. 2 (1975), 14–16. Might the slur perhaps have been due either to origins in a deme represented as economically backward (though Phlya is not especially remote), or to the family's practising market-gardening rather than growing cereals?

[20] Vegetables: *Wasps* 497–9, *Lys.* 457, Poll. 7.199; garlic: Ar. *Lys.* 458; figs: ibid. 564, Poll. 7.198; sesame: IG II^2 1561.27 – apparently working with her husband: ibid. 23; salt: IG II^2 12073; honey: IG II^2 1570.73, Poll. 7.198.

[21] Washerwoman: IG I^2 473 (= A. E. Raubitschek, *Dedications from the Athenian Akropolis* [Cambridge, MA, 1949], no. 380); fullers: IG II^2 2934 n.b. Poll. 7.37.

[22] There was also a vogue for Spartan nurses at Athens (Plut. *Lyc.* 16, *Alc.* 1); IG II^2 9112, the tomb of Malicha of Cythera, might indicate that nursing was sufficiently lucrative to encourage migration to Athens, but Plut. *Lyc.* 16 makes it clear that some Spartan nurses at least

A related profession, which seems to have been entirely in the hands of women, is that of midwife (Pl. *Tht.* 149a–50b); Socrates' mother Phainarete is one instance of a citizen midwife. The story of Hagnodike in Hyginus, and the 4th-century tombstone of a citizen woman, 'Phanostrate, midwife and doctor' suggest that by the mid-fourth century a few women were becoming obstetricians as well as midwives, and the elaborate nature of Phanostrate's tombstone suggests a considerable status.[23] These professionals represent a refinement and specialisation of medical activities common to many women: it was clearly normal for wives to minister to sick members of the household (Xen. *Oec.* 7.37, Dem. 59.56), and women with 'female complaints' would often prefer to be attended by other women, usually friends or neighbours.[24]

As well as exploiting their domestic activities for profit, women might also manufacture goods at home for sale elsewhere. Most, perhaps all, garlands were made and sold by women like the widow of Ar. *Thesm.* 446–58; it was also the profession of the famous Phye, impersonator of Athena, according to one account.[25] Ribbons were another area in which women specialised, and again the sources imply a low status: Eupolis (fr. 262) refers to somebody's mother (a politician's?) as a Thracian ribbon-seller, and Euxitheos is, as we have seen, defensive in referring to trade in ribbons by himself and his mother.[26] Both ribbons and garlands can be seen as luxury goods, principally for the symposium.

There is a degree of consistency in the goods women sell: they tend to be things which women can make themselves, or which they can produce or acquire from nature, or both. This is certainly true of garlands, clothing, bread and, presumably, porridge, and one may suspect that many sellers of vegetables, fruit and other foods were also producers. The involvement of women in the manufacture and sale of perfume, however, will have entailed a more elaborate process and must have required some capital: it is therefore a little surprising to find Pherecrates claiming that the trade was restricted to women, and, although the claim is erroneous, it may well reflect popular perceptions.[27] On the other hand, there may have been certain areas from which women were excluded: they are not attested as selling metalwork,

were slaves. The involvement of nurses in the household in which they worked is implied by the titles of several 4th-century comedies: there were plays called *Τίτθη* by Alexis and Menander and *Τίτθαι* or *Τίτθη* by Eubulus.

[23] Hagnodike: Hyg. *Fab.* 274; Phanostrate: IG II² 6873 (n.b. the masculine form of *ἰατρός*: Robert, op. cit [n. 4], 175–8 discusses the terms used to denote women practising medicine); on both see Pomeroy, op. cit. (n. 10), 58–60, but n.b. the sceptical treatment of H. King (*PCPS* 32 [1986], 53–77), who regards the story of Hagnodike as a kind of myth. Alexis is reported to have used the word *ἰάτριαν* (fr. 319), but this might simply have been a humorous coinage: Geoffrey Arnott has kindly drawn my attention to fr. 214, where Alexis uses *περιστερός* 'in order to stress humorously by means of the masculine ending the sex of a speaker whose identification of himself with Aphrodite's pet bird is itself an amusing conceit' (I quote by permission from his forthcoming commentary).

[24] E.g. Eur. *Hipp.* 293–4, Ar. *Eccl.* 528–50, and see in general G. E. R. Lloyd, *Science, Folklore and Ideology* (Cambridge, 1983), 63, 70–80 and Herfst, op. cit. (n. 9), 55–6 for female healers. One might also note the popular association between women and *φάρμακα*: Just, op. cit. (n. 7), 265–8.

[25] [Arist.] *Ath.Pol.* 14.4, Athen. 609c. The point seems to be that Hippias in marrying her took a wife of low status, hence, presumably, the alternative version in *Ath.Pol.* which makes her a Thracian (n.b. Rhodes ad loc.). Other testimony on garland-sellers: Eubulus' play 'Garland-sellers' (frr. 97–104), Poll. 7.199.

[26] Dem. 57.31, 35; note that Euxitheos uses the 1st person plural, suggesting that he works together with his mother, and the present tense, implying that they are still practising the trade.

[27] Pherecr. fr. 70 with Athen. 612ab, 687a, citing an alleged law of Solon, is refuted by, for example, IG II² 1558.37. Sale of perfume: Ar. *Eccl.* 841, IG II² 1576.17, SEG 25.180.34; manufacture: *Θρᾷττα μυρεφός* (IG II² 11688) – presumably a skilled slave.

including arms, or books, and Pherecrates claims that no-one has seen a woman fishmonger or butcher.[28] Exclusion from the fish market is readily comprehensible, as fish could be very expensive, and the trade involved a considerable degree of violence and disorder. Other absences are less easy to explain: one might suspect that some taboo was involved in women selling metalwork, but if there was, it did not prevent them working in metals (below, 342), and we may be seeing little more than an accident of source survival.

Clearly, much of this trade was on a small scale, and indeed, was required to be by law, since a woman was not competent to enter into contracts above the value of one medimnos of barley. This is not a trivial sum, since that volume of barley would feed the average family for 6 or 7 days, and in monetary terms was equivalent to 3–6 dr. (exceptionally, up to 18 dr. – the sum was, as it were, index-linked).[29] Opinion is still divided as to whether a woman required the consent of her *kyrios* even within this limit, or whether she was herself competent thus far, but required approval for any higher sum.[30] The examples of Artemis the reed-seller and of Elephantis the cloak-seller (above, n. 12), whose prices must have been over the limit, might argue in favour of the latter, but it is not clear that either was a citizen. What can be said is that if the consent of the *kyrios* was required for every transaction, it must have been taken for granted most of the time, but that trade on a large scale by women is virtually unknown, so that the financial limitation does seem to have operated in practice.

The keeping of inns by πανδοκεύτριαι and καπηλίδες also made use of skills practised in the *oikos*, while transferring the labour itself to a distinct location. The milieu is a low-status one: these women too had a reputation for bad language as well as dishonesty, and are frequent targets of curse-tablets, though probably attacked as much by commercial rivals as by customers, and they are often associated with uncontroversially low-life figures like pimps and prostitutes.[31] The two in *Frogs* are metics, since they look to their patrons, Cleon and Hyperbolus, for redress against Heracles-Dionysus (Ar. *Frogs* 569–71). Another area outside the *oikos* in which women appear to have provided services is the baths: Pollux attests the term βαλανεύτρια, presumably a manageress, and we hear quite a bit about masseuses (ἀλείπτρια): Amphis, Diphilus and Antiphanes (or Alexis) wrote plays of that title, which might suggest a non-servile origin for the character, if romance was involved, although the fact might only have emerged in the course of the drama. This too is a low-status area: working in the baths was generally regarded as demeaning, and hence one might expect to find a mix of free and non-free labour.[32]

[28] Fr. 70; since the passage is speaking of trade, this seems a more likely sense for μάγειρος than 'cook'.

[29] The classic text is Isaeus 10.10 with Wyse, the implications of which are discussed by L. J. T. Kuenen-Janssen, *Mnemosyne*[3] 9 (1941), 199–214.

[30] See D. M. Schaps, *Economic Rights of Women in Ancient Greece* (Edinburgh, 1979), 52–8, 61–3; G. E. M. de Ste. Croix, *CR* n.s. 20 (1970), 273–8; Foxhall and Harris (opp. citt. [n. 6]) discuss practical ways in which women could escape the formal limitations of their capacities.

[31] πανδοκεύτριαι: Ar. *Lys.* 458, *Frogs* 114, 549–78; καπηλίδες: *Thesm.* 347, *Wealth* 1120–2, Theopomp. Com. frr. 25–9, IG II[2] 1533.16, 1557.51; bad language: Ar. *Wealth* 426–36, cf. *Wasps* 38; dishonesty: *Wealth* 435–6, Pl. *Laws* 918d. Curses: R. Wünsch, *Defixionum Tabellae Atticae* (IG III.3), 30.10, 68a.5, 13, b.6, 87a.8 (compare the κάπηλοι cursed in 30, 68, 70, 73, 75, 87), Gager (op. cit. [n. 9]), no. 74 and n. 47, Jordan, op. cit. (n. 12), no. 11. Prostitute(s?) and procuress: Wünsch 68a; purpose of curses: Gager, op. cit., 151–3, C. A. Faraone, in C. A. Faraone and D. Obbink (edd.), *Magika Hiera* (Oxford, 1991), 11.

[32] βαλανεύτρια Poll. 7.166; ἀλείπτρια: cf. also Lys. fr. 88S = Poll. 7.17; note also the plays titled *Βαλανεῖον* by Amphis, Diphilus and Timocles. For the disreputable character of bath-attendants see C. A. Anderson, *TAPA* 121 (1991), 151 and n. 10.

Not all female labour had its roots in the *oikos*, and a handful of women practised crafts: we know of two cobblers, a gilder, who is cursed together with her husband the helmet-maker, a potter (perhaps) and a groom; Aeschines' mother, Glaukothea, who, as Demosthenes puts it, 'convened the sect' perhaps deserves mention here too, if the implication is that she made a living from religion. Also worthy of note is Euphrosune the net-weaver, who is cursed with her business and workshop, and so was presumably an independent worker or employer.[33]

The contribution of women to Athenian agriculture has sometimes been represented as minimal, partly on the basis of an assumption of female seclusion or of a separation between the interior female world and the exterior male one,[34] and partly due to an apparent paucity of evidence. The subject is certainly problematic: the evidence is at its least satisfactory here, and an accurate assessment of the use of female labour in Attic farming still apparently eludes us, despite a lot of recent work,[35] since we lack, and are unlikely ever to have, the hard information which would be needed on the size and pattern of landholdings in Attica, the number and ownership of slaves, the labour required to cultivate a unit area for various crops (together with quantification of the assertion that for cereals productivity increases with labour input), and the amount of time which a citizen's wife could spare from domestic tasks, especially child-bearing and rearing, for labour elsewhere. Nevertheless, a certain amount can be said, albeit mainly by argument *a priori* and from analogy.

First, there is a reasonable amount of evidence for hired labour. The fourth-century records of freedmen include eleven farmers and two vine-dressers, as well as two μισθωτοί, who may have worked on the land, some 15% of the total, while the metics rewarded after the liberation of Attica in 403 reveal a similar proportion, including a gardener.[36] Although much hired labour was clearly seasonal (e.g. Xen. *Oec.* 18.2, 5, 20.16; Ar. *Wasps* 712; Dem. 18.51), including some slaves (Dem. 53.20–1), it need not all have been; we hear in Lysias of a freedman leasing a plot of land for a year (7.10 cf. Hes. *WD* 602, Solon fr. 13.47–8W) and there is no indication that 'the song of the hired workers on their way to the fields' (Telecleides fr. 8) was a seasonal affair. Equally, use of hired labour was not incompatible with owning slaves: Theophrastus' boorish man has both (*Char.* 4.2–3; n.b. Men. *Georgos* 55–62). Some of these hired labourers were certainly women, since Euxitheos speaks of women whom poverty has obliged to become grape-pickers and hired hands.[37] Other evidence is more sketchy,

[33] Cobblers: IG II² 1578.5, Wünsch (op. cit. n. 31) 12.2; gilder: SIG³ 1177 (probably Hellenistic, but may well reflect earlier conditions); potter: Beazley, *ARV*² 571.73, but R. Green, *JHS* 81 (1961), 73–5 argues that the scene depicts metal-workers; *ARV*² 658.29, which shows a woman cresting a helmet, may furnish another woman associated with metalwork; groom (πσηκιστρι[α]): SEG XVIII 36 B91; Glaukothea: Dem. 18.129, 259, 19.199, 281 – the cult was that of Sabazius (see Wankel on 18.259); Euphrosune the net-weaver: Ziebarth, op. cit. (n. 12), no. 5.3–5 [= Jordan, op. cit. (n. 12), no. 52]; again, the tablet is 3rd century, but seems likely to reflect classical conditions.

[34] So for example A. D. Fitton Brown, *LCM* 9 (1984), 71–4, following Herfst (op. cit. [n. 9]), 13–17.

[35] Notably R. Sallares, *The Ecology of the Ancient Greek World* (London, 1990), esp. 55–7, 82–3; T. W. Gallant, *Risk and Survival in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge, 1991), esp. 30–3, 127–8; Jameson, op. cit. (n. 12), 122–45; A. Burford Cooper, *CJ* 73 (1977/8), 162–75; R. Osborne, *Demos: The Discovery of Classical Attika* (Cambridge, 1985), 142–6, and *Classical Landscape with Figures* (London, 1987), esp. ch. 2; G. E. M. de Ste. Croix, *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World* (London, 1981), esp. Appx. II.

[36] 18%; Jameson, op. cit. (n.12), 133–5; in general, see Tod, op. cit. (n. 12).

[37] Dem. 57.45; for this general sense of ἔριθος n.b. Hes. *WD* 602–3, Poll. 1.221, 7.141 and cf. 1.222, 7.141 for τρυγήτρια.

allowing us only to observe women at work: a number of comic poets speak of the song of the winnowers, and terms for various women workers are recorded: ποάστρια (weeder), θερίστρια (reaper), φρυγανίστρια (wood-collector), and καλαμήτρις (gleaner).[38] Clearly, although Plato asserts that Athenian women are spared the lot of Thracian wives working in the fields, which he calls no better than servitude (*Laws* 805e), such labour was in fact far from unknown in Attica, and not only at harvest-time.

This conclusion may be tentatively reinforced by theoretical considerations. Burford Cooper suggests a pattern of landholding *c.* 403 in which 5000 citizens owned no land, 11000 owned an average of 10 plethra (0.9 ha), 8000 an average of 50 plethra (4.5 ha) and 1200 an average of 200 plethra (18.2 ha); we also know that in the late 4th century 9000 citizens owned more than 30 plethra, and 12000 less than that. According to this picture, only a minority, perhaps eight thousand, would have owned the 3 hectares which Robin Osborne reckons would have fed a family of five reliably each year.[39] For those below this line, the economics of slave ownership were not appealing: the cost of purchase, perhaps 150–200 dr., though it might be borrowed initially, had to be generated as surplus, and thereafter the slave would cost (or rather, consume the equivalent of), perhaps 50 dr. per annum, but unlike the slave craftsman, would not be generating a visible return through tangible output or wages. The costs of slave ownership were, of course, perennial rather than seasonal, and furthermore, slaves required supervision. By contrast, animals could be at least partly supported by pasturing on public land, hence Aristotle's observations that the poor substitute ox-power for slave-power, and use their wives and children as servants.[40] It is certainly not a new insight to observe that most Athenians were αὐτουργοί,[41] but the consequences for their wives, mothers and daughters (Men. *Dys.* 333–4) are never spelt out. Writers describing their modern equivalents say that their labour is essential;[42] presumably this was true in ancient Attica too, at least seasonally, and for any work needed while their menfolk were preoccupied with warfare or political participation, and their irregular availability owing to child-rearing and other domestic duties will have been more compatible with the periodic demands of

[38] Song of the winnowers: Ar. *Clouds* 1358, fr. 352, Phryn. Com. fr. 14, Nicophon fr. 8; ποάστρια: Poll. 7.141, Archipp. fr. 44, Phryn. Com. frr. 39–45, Magnes fr. 5; θερίστρια: Ar. fr. 829; φρυγανίστρια: Ar. fr. 916, Poll. 7.142; καλαμήτρις: Poll. 1.222, 7.142; ἀμητρίδες in 1.222 appears to be the result of scribal confusion. N.b. also Fitton Brown (op. cit. [n. 34]), 73 for vase-paintings of women picking apples; these were perhaps inspired by the erotic overtones of apples (A. P. Burnett, *Three Archaic Poets* (London, 1983), 267 and n. 102).

[39] Burford Cooper, op. cit. (n. 35), 168–72; Osborne, *Classical Landscape* (n. 35), 45–6, reinforced by the theoretical and comparative studies of Gallant, op. cit. (n. 35), ch. 4, esp. 82–92, who concludes that 3 hectares was a minimum holding for a household and 4–6 the norm.

[40] Arist. *Pol.* 1252b12, 1323a5–6; contrast Ar. *Eccl.* 651, the utopian ideal. There are other considerations: Gallant, op. cit. (n. 35), 33 notes the status aspects of slave ownership, which might override purely economic calculations, and also points out that, in a crisis, slaves might be sold (ibid. 127–8). S. Todd (*JHS* 110 [1990], 167–9) suggests that political and jury pay may have been a significant supplementary income, especially for farmers, who would look on it as a bonus on top of their annual crop; any juror 'covered for' by his womenfolk would obviously be getting a genuine bonus, but the apparent profit might affect the readiness of any potential juror to buy a compensating slave.

[41] The point is made by, among others, C. Mossé, in M. Finley (ed.), *Problèmes de la terre en Grèce ancienne* (Paris, 1973), 179–86; De Ste. Croix, op. cit. (n. 35), 33, 52–3, and ch. 4; E. M. Wood, *Peasant, Citizen and Slave* (London, 1988), chs. 2–3; cf. Pl. *Rep.* 565a, and especially Isocrates' identification of the poor with farmers and traders in Golden Age Athens (7.44).

[42] P. Walcot, *Greek Peasants Ancient and Modern* (Manchester, 1970), 37, 40–2; Jameson, op. cit. (n. 12), 138 n. 79.

agriculture than with continuous work in trade or as craftswomen.[43] Jameson suggested that agricultural slaves were largely invisible in the sources because they were everywhere; it would be more economical to argue that the invisible labour-force which he seeks is one which is equally hard to detect in the evidence (hence Herfst's conclusion that the role of women in agriculture was negligible), but which we can be absolutely sure existed.[44]

Female labour, especially in agriculture, has sometimes been explained in terms of a response to crisis, in particular to the damage and disruption in Attica caused by the Peloponnesian War, especially in its later stages, and to the financial crisis of the mid-fourth century.[45] No doubt these upheavals did force some women into work to survive; however, the evidence collected above is both too diverse and too well-distributed in time (especially that of comedy) for this explanation to be generally satisfactory. Indeed, even on its own terms, the argument needs handling with some care: the garland-seller who lost her husband in Cyprus (Ar. *Thesm.* 446–58) was, if one takes her story seriously, presumably widowed before 450 B.C., rather than in the Peloponnesian War. Again, Euxitheos is, as we have seen, concerned to mitigate the damage which might be done to his case by the fact that he and his mother work, and does so deftly by putting it down to economic necessity and then implying that his opponent is sneering at the poor, but we should be wary of taking his statements at face value (particularly his claim to be able to name many others in the same condition), since it is clear that the family has been practising the trade for some while, and is continuing to do so.[46] Finally, the picture sometimes painted of large numbers of people driven onto the land as hired labourers by crisis is not without problems: whence, in such a crisis, did the money come from to pay them all, and if they replaced slaves on the estates of the more prosperous, who bought the slaves (and with that funds)?

It is equally difficult to draw firm conclusions about the relationship between female labour and legal status. We have noted that some trades do not seem to have been practised by citizen women, perhaps because of the physical labour, or because of the amounts of money and attendant pressures involved, as with the fish trade, or because they were not respectable, as with prostitution and related forms of entertainment. In other cases, however, such as nursing or the sale of bread or ribbons, it is clear that although some stigma might be attached (hence the comic portrait of traders as loud-mouthed, vulgar and so unfeminine), these were trades which citizens did practise. It would therefore be rash to assume that, where other trades are attested, they could not or would not have been carried on by citizens. The bread-seller in Aristophanes' *Wasps* is clearly a citizen, and one might suspect that the sensitivity of the vegetable-seller earlier in the play to tyranny indicates the same; the garland-seller in *Thesmophoriazusae* is another citizen, and the way in which Lysistrata contrasts the army of traders which she calls up with slaves (*Lys.* 463) suggests that we are meant to think of it as composed of citizens. We have also met

[43] See also Gallant, op. cit. (n. 35), 87–92 for long-term fluctuations in the labour available to his model *oikos*.

[44] Jameson, op. cit. (n. 12), 137; Herfst, op. cit. (n. 9), 13–17.

[45] E.g. Mossé, op. cit. (n. 41), esp. 184–5.

[46] The case for widespread labour by citizen women at an early date would in fact be strengthened if we could trust his citation of a law of Solon forbidding the slandering of any citizen, male or female, for working in the agora (Dem. 57.30), but its authenticity is doubted by E. Ruschenbusch, *ΣΩΛΩΝΟΣ NOMOI* (*Historia* Einzelschriften 9, Wiesbaden, 1966), F117. One is the more inclined to suggest that his offer to name other citizen nurses, if the jurors wish, is a bluff, since it lays on them the onus for a breach of the apparent convention that citizen women are not mentioned by name in court (D. Schaps, *CQ* 27 [1977], 323–31).

citizen nurses and midwives. On the other hand, the innkeepers of *Frogs* are metics,[47] as are all those women cited from the φιάλαι ἐξελευθερικαί. For the most part, however, we simply cannot tell, and it might be suggested that just as the 'Old Oligarch' and Plato complain of the lack of distinction between slaves and citizens,[48] so in reality it will have been hard to deduce a woman's status simply from her occupation, except that if she did not work she was presumably a citizen, and if she was handling significant sums of money, she was probably not. The status of women working in agriculture is harder to establish, but it is worthy of note that none of the freedwomen in the inscriptions worked in this area, which suggests that female hired labour was mostly free, as (obviously) was that supplied by the wives and daughters of poor farmers.

Few would now want to argue for a picture of Athenian women living in 'oriental seclusion'. Aristotle observes that it is impossible to 'prevent the wives of the poor from going out when they want to' (*Pol.* 1300a6–7), and we have numerous indications of women visiting one another, making loans and giving mutual assistance.[49] In the same way, the labour of women clearly took them into the exterior world outside the *oikos*. The possibility remains open, however, that all this might be going on parallel to but separate from the male world, as argued most recently by Cohen.[50] However, if hired labour, and the local sharing of labour at times of high demand for which Osborne argues,[51] were widespread, with women doing a range of jobs similar to that done by men, then it becomes less likely that demarcations either between sexes or between *oikoi* were rigidly maintained, and more likely that while males would not stoop to entering female areas of activity in the domestic sphere, such as cooking or weaving,[52] the converse would not hold true in the face of practical need, a fairly familiar double standard. In the market and workshops clear distinctions will have been still harder to draw: although we hear from Theophrastus and Pollux of an area named 'the women's market', it is clear from Pollux as well as the evidence of Old Comedy that women were not confined to any one physical area; rather, this area specialised in goods appealing mainly to women, such as cosmetics, needles (Pollux 7.197) and what Cratinus and Hermippus call γέλγη ('fripperies').[53] Aristophanes' market scenes (*Wasps* 493–9, *Lys.* 555–64) show clearly that women rubbed shoulders with strange men both as customers and as fellow-traders (as well as occasionally working with their kin, as the epigraphic evidence implies). Although the female gilder mentioned earlier worked with her husband, it is not so clear that the woman pot-painter (or metalworker) is related to the three men in the scene. Even in the context of work outside the *oikos*, of course, the operation of 'submerged lines of demarcation' remains impossible to disprove (or prove, for want of the sort of

[47] Which should warn us against identifying anyone threatening legal retribution as a citizen (e.g. Theopomp. fr. 28, Ar. *Wealth* 418–21, 433–4).

[48] [Xen]. *Ath.Pol.* 1.10–12; Pl. *Rep.* 563b, cf. Dem. 9.3.

[49] Visits: Dem. 55.23–4, Men. *Sam.* 35–41; loans: Ar. *Eccl.* 446–9, Thphr. *Char.* 10.13, Cropp on Eur. *El.* 191, P. Millett, *Lending and Borrowing in Ancient Athens* (Cambridge, 1991), 37–9, 144–5; mutual assistance: Lys. 1.14, Eur. *El.* 1129–30, Ar. *Eccl.* 528–50.

[50] loc. cit. (n. 8). [51] *Demos* (n. 35), 144–6.

[52] See, for example, Xen. *Oec.* 7.20–3, [Ar.] *Oec.* I.3.4; the picture of Heracles working wool at Omphale's behest is the ultimate rôle-reversal. This outlook persists in contemporary Albania: 'no self-respecting male would be seen dead doing "women's work" for fear of being the laughing stock of his mates' (*The Guardian*, 8th July, 1993).

[53] Women's market: Thphr. *Char.* 2.9, 22.10, Poll. 10.18. γέλγη: Eup. fr. 327, Poll. 3.127, Cratin. fr. 51, Hermipp. fr. 11 with Hesychius s.v. γελγόπωλις, against Pollux 7.198, who seems, since the context concerns terms for sellers of foods, to take γελγόπωλις to mean 'garlic-seller', from γέλγις (as do *LSJ* s.v.).

evidence Gould [n. 7] cites from modern parallels); it is, however, reasonable to suggest that they will have been most prone to blurring in such crowded, informal exterior situations.

As far as attitudes to women working are concerned, Just (op. cit. [n. 7] 113–4) is surely right to point to a 'dominant ideology' of seclusion, which we can see is closely aligned with a more general dominant ideology concerning wealth and leisure: for men and women of the wealthier classes, there was some shame in working, even when one had the necessary skills (Xen. *Mem.* 2.7.6) and more disgrace in wage labour;[54] the poor, however, had to make compromises in the interest of survival – and the washerwoman who made a dedication on the Acropolis (n. 21) was clearly proud of her work. If the pattern of land-holding suggested earlier is approximately correct, the number of those who could afford to adhere to this ideology may not have been much larger than the total of those liable for *eisphora*, the lowest level of 'taxation'. Seclusion may thus have been something of a status symbol, advertising a household's prosperity, particularly if it involved additional expenditure, for example in the design and construction of the house needed to maintain it;[55] Semonides had already remarked that the work-shy 'horse woman' was a suitable wife for a king or tyrant (fr. 7.57–70W).

A final example may help to indicate further tensions between ideology and practicality. Just notes (op. cit. 122–3) that the ideal complexion for an Attic woman was the pallor of one who spends all her time indoors, and points out that this is reflected in contemporary art. However, since women did not in fact remain indoors during the hours of daylight, this appearance had, we know, to be artificially maintained by the use of cosmetics and parasols;[56] evidently there was some work involved even in being a woman of leisure.

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[54] De Ste. Croix, op. cit. (n. 35), 179–88; it is hard to know how much to make of Xenophon's preference for work over idleness even in high status women (*Mem.* 2.7.7, *Oec.* 10.10–13).

[55] So S. Walker, 'Women and housing in classical Greece: the archaeological evidence', in A. Cameron and A. Kuhrt (edd.), *Images of Women in Antiquity* (London, 1983), 81; n.b., however, M. Jameson, in O. Murray and S. Price (edd.), *The Greek City from Homer to Alexander* (Oxford, 1990), 186–92.

[56] See, for example, Xen. *Oec.* 10.2, Ar. *Eccl.* 878 with Ussher; *Lys.* 530–1, *Thesm.* 823. On the parasol as a status-symbol in its own right see M. C. Miller, *JHS* 112 (1992), 91–105.