The Greek is conservator: in the public sphere the man is moving; in the domestic one, the woman (as a compensation: in the public sphere there is nothing that belongs to the man directly, in the domestic one the woman owns everything in what the administration is regarded, and the keys to the pantry with supplies and to the cellar are for the woman the sign of authority, even if the man may exert some sort of extra control. Teofrast, in Characters, 18, shows how the man, distrustful, before bedtime, asks the wife if she had closed the chest, if she had putted the seal, if she had locked the gate). I would like to curdle things and to say that the separation from the domestic space did not imply any obligation from the man.

Key words: Greek philosophy, public sphere, domestic sphere, courtesans, love, marriage

The Greek is by definition a spectator, a curious one, good observer and talented story-teller. Homer and Herodotus answer for the quality of listener, that of spectator and actor of the Greek. The Greek, in the end, sees more (and here Homer is not an inconvenient witness!) than he hears, his civilization is one of the eyesight and his paideia is one the sight. The eye is the one facing the sun and goes blind because of its too great brightness. Most of the Greeks are blind, their teacher – Homer – was blind and Socrates wants to educate the sight. He is an oculist handicrafts-man without a workshop and without a license. No wonder he falls under the incidence of “the illicit”! He does it in public space, that is in a place in the open and which offers itself to the domestic sphere. This domestic sphere is inherited by Socrates from myths and rites and finds it sitting in the ideology of polis. Socrates knows well that “the choice that a nation makes when representing itself may say a lot, by what it passes over in silence, but also by what it shows”1.

Because they are immortal, god’s sons live and their daughters get married. And this is where the folly of things is: mistakes doubly divided, at the domestic

1 James Redfield, “Man and Domestic Life”, from Jean-Pierre Vernant (coordinator), Greek Man, translated by Doina Jela, Iassy, Polirom Publishing House, 2001, p. 144
level (where they bring tragedies) and at the great history level (bravery acts; heroes). And it is all connected to the natural succession of generations and to the prevention of this succession!, which means that succession is not so much of a legal matter, no, but one that aims at and vitiates the establish report between nature and culture. Here is where Hermes intermediates, the god of trade (that is of words), of robbery, of founded objects. But Hermes was also the god of moving wives from the old house to the new one, and Plato does not shrink from making Glaucón talk about marriage as a form of trade (*Republic*, 362b): “on such bases, marriage is solidly placed in a male world, of public transactions, of competing for honors and earnings. As far as it is thus understood, marriage no longer has as center the private relationship between man and woman. A consequence, one may add, is the lack of love stories”\(^2\). The classic Greek is not exactly a gentleman, but that does not stop him to be, from time to time, sad. Euripides seems to be, among the dramatist, the most interested in marriage. Even in him, *Alcestis* is the only one who expresses a regret for the lost of blissful marriage\(^3\). Marriage is a well repressed subject in Greek culture, and Athens (the stronghold) wants to protect the Athenians from an excess of the intrusion of domestic into public space. It is thus eliminated the private sphere out of the public conscience, and this makes impossible a Greek Romeo (what it means, in reality, a Greek Juliet).

From here to the exclusion of woman there is not even a step to be made. Socrates himself could not avoid the customary law (or Plato, rather). In Plato’s dialogues, Socrates mentions a few conversations that he “had” with some women (Aspasia, a courtesan and Diotima). Otherwise, it is mentioned Xanthippe, only once. Xenophon (*Memorabilia*, III, 10-11) presents a conversation of Socrates with a courtesan\(^4\) who visited Athens, visited, not living in it nor practicing it. As far as the courtesans are regarded, I would like to add a few things. Ancient Greek was the ideal country where sacred prostitution and civil prostitution could fully manifest. Solon, as a matter of fact, creates the first *dicterion* (brothel) in Athens and wanted, among others, with this position, to protect the chastity of young girls, of brides and also to fight against sodomy, so

\(^2\) *Ibidem*, p. 147

\(^3\) *Ibidem*, p. 148

common at his time. Prostitution remained free in other towns. In Corinth, for example, merchants and strangers used to come to “enjoy” themselves; in Sparta, love was “freely” practiced, and in Athens courtesans were tolerated, though Solon’s law was strict (it even imposed a special kind of clothes).

To be more explicit, courtesans’ corporation included three classes: *dicteriades*, *auletrides* and *hetairae*.

On the lowest level we have the *dicteriades*; they used to populate the dicterion and they came back to what the French called *bordelières*. They each belonged to a master (a “pimp”, frankly speaking).

The *auletrides* had a different status, they were musicians and dancers, they had the intermediary rank in the hierarchy of courtesans, they animate the holidays and feasts of these fond of the bottle that the Greeks were. They used to give themselves, according to lechery, to those whom they attract.

Finally, the *hetairae*, queens of courtesans in Greece, did not give themselves unless they wanted and usually for a great deal of money. Most of them were true beauties, educated, artists, they were honored by everyone and accessible only to the wealthy ones. One can see, therefore, that Greek prostitution of this kind was addressed to all tastes and all pockets. They had private courts and separate neighborhoods.

Basic prostitution (the one practiced by dicteriades) was frequent in Piraeus, the intermediary one, hierarchically speaking, was intensely practiced in Megara, while the hetairae occupied the most select neighborhood of Athens. A man of the world would prefer the hetaera to the wife. The wife was for him duty, hetaera was pleasure and the mentioned man did not believe in any way that he was mistaking by adding pleasure to duty. Hetaera is newness, ornament of the stronghold, is to be found in the elite audience of the rhetoric and philosophers, inspires artists and writers, advices princes and people of the state. Her presence, in sum, is benefactress. Two examples:

- Aspasia, comes from Miletus to Athens, intelligent, beautiful, accompanied by a suite of charming students, all perfectly educated in the matters of spirit and love. Pericles was not just her lover (and she was his second wife, they had a son together, also called Pericles), but also her disciple. Aspasia’s power was huge so it is not randomly the fact that she was accused of impiety and immorality. She was judged in Areopagus and Pericles’ intervention can barely save her. It is not the case of Phidias and Anaxagoras, brought under the same accusation;

- Sappho, married to Cercala, a rich fellow from Andros (terrible irony!), has a daughter, Kleis. Widow, with a mess of her own imagination and senses, convinces herself that each sex must focus on itself. She was not beautiful (as Laïs was). She was small, brunette, with bright eyes, not tall, blonde, languishing, as we usually imagine her. Horatius claims that she was hermaphrodite, Dionysius that she was a lesbian. In order to punish her, Venus (well, Aphrodite!) makes her fall in love with
a young man – Phaon, who rejects her. Sappho comits suicide by throwing herself out of a rock in the sea.

In conclusion, namely always on the road, Venus’s religion admits an applicable hierodulism to the two sexes. Here we can see the origin of homosexual behavior and which is previous to the feminine one, invented later by refined and bored women or dissatisfied by the canonical patterns of love. Shortly, Athens was famous by its sodomites and its pedophiles, just like Corinth was by its lesbians.

Citizens were the free adult men (in democracy), or just some of them (in oligarchy). Children, women and slaves were excluded. “They were family members, but not of the stronghold, only in an indirect way; the stronghold was of course their country, but they were not part of the public sphere”15. In attic jurisprudence, atimia was equal with the loss of the right to appear in public (which returned to a kind of inner provoked exile, and the “atimos” citizen was “reduced”, throughout the atimia to the condition of woman, child, slave). The competition of citizens was among equals, not among the unequal, and it was public. The coward became atimos, the war was a male occupation and even talking belonged to an exclusively male privilege (Iliad, VI, 492; Odyssey, I, 358). Male monopoly on intelligence (political) is easy to grasp, also after our scale of values, “the irrationality” of this claim. It must be pointed out that such an irrationality is observed (and contested!) during the time, before Socrates, by Aristophanes, in Lysistrata, in a play written for men, not for women! Socrates develops such a theme in Republic – he is not against admitting women in public life. There is however a difference that makes “life separate”: the political and the private sphere. The public sphere is masculine (word, idea, competition, equals). The public sphere wants to identify its own equals, case in which the body should not be covered (it is the so-called “erotic nudity”), and that means that the person (citizen) is a social unit whose purpose is to affirm itself. The exigency of competition places the other one in the exact same situation and, in competition, citizens do not improve their similarities, but their differences. They are common by the fact of being initially similar; they are different since they improved in dissimilarity. This is the public sphere (military by excellence and so much more standardized). Finally, the community of competition has as exigency the initial similitude.

The private sphere has as principle the difference man-woman. Marriage is a relation between the different, not between the similar (alike). Marriage is relationship, not competition, is cooperation of things not competition of ideas: “this is the place of origin of both production, as well as consumption, the place where the citizen makes contact with its natural self and with earth. Socrates’ imaginary hypothesis tries to cut this bound with the earth, to deny the being to the

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1 James Redfield, op. cit., p. 153

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body, of the natural self⁶. A closed society is a male society, but that does not mean that an opened one would be a female one.

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⁶ Ibidem, p. 158
Differently on public and private

not because she is his, but because he can give her in to someone else: “the more
wanted she is, the more desired for marriage and, thus, he will loose her even more
secure and faster. For the woman, the moment of maximum ambiguity is, at the
same time that of maximum accomplishment, to be more precise the moment when
she becomes wife”

8, wife by excellence (Pandora, Penelope), abandoned wife
(Hera)9. Pandora is the first woman (she brings on the world death, but also life),
Hera is the last woman (sterile marriage is the sign of eternal reign, but of course,
only in Olympus). In the space under the moon, however, things are not exactly the
same. For them not to happen in contrary, there is the need of an intermediary; the
intermediary is not a man but a woman – Aphrodite. She is paraitios (“participant”) at the marriage she makes with the earth. She is, somehow,
accomplice at this marriage, she encourages it and transforms a whole story into
only a half one: the man enjoys the public space and there is thus a dichotomy
born. From it he can only turn out mediated, but the mediation is not in him.
Whether the Greek likes it or not, the mediation can be found in the woman. When
he does not like it, the mediation can be found in some sort of substitute which
must respect a rule: temporal difference and sexual homology. It is in fact about a
“rite of transition” (about hair, veil, special languages, sexual rites and so on)10.
The exigency of the substitute is an ontological commandment, because to love
yourself by yourself means, in reality, to cease existing. It takes a certain
availability in the fact of wanting to return being childish, case in which eros (just
like irony) is nothing else but a demonic creature11.

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Timpul, 2008).

8 James Redfield, op. cit., p. 164. For the Greek marriage is, however, a “tragic institution”.
Around it there are “metaphorical games” weaved. By comparison, in Greece, “marriage
means, for the consumption of the sexual act, what sacrifice represents for the consumption
of meat” (Claude Calame, Eros in Ancient Greece, translated by Margareta Sfîrschi-Lăudat,
9 Ibidem, pp. 165-171
10 Arnold Van Gennep, Rites of Transition, translated by Lucia Berdan and Nora Vasilescu,
Iasi, Polirom Publishing House, 1996, pp. 147-165
11 Vladimir Jankélévitch, Irony, translated by Florica Drăgan and V. Fanache, Cluj-Napoca,
Dacia Publishing House, 1994, pp. 149-155