

# Silence is a woman's glory

Women during the Ancient Greece period



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

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At the beginning I wasn't sure which topic to choose, but during the first year of *Batxillerat* we read *Lysistrata*, by *Aristophanes* as well as *The Odyssey* by *Homer* and that's when the topic about women caught my attention, since there were some women with important roles in the story and strong personalities that stood out among other character. Moreover, it's a theme that has always interested me, and being able to mix it with classical culture seemed to me an interesting topic to work on my research project.

Once I knew I wanted to talk about women I started searching for different aspects of Greek women so that I could focus more the theme of the project. I looked for literature, iconography, music, theatre, cinema... But I found out that I always ended up looking for aspects of their social life, their rights, their role in society... All these women who appeared in the myths such as Calypso or Lysistrata seemed distant and maybe unreal, but at the same time I wondered if they resembled in any way real woman from the Ancient Greece period and furthermore, if they were similar to women from nowadays and if I could find any similar situation or case with the ones in Greek literature such as Medea's terrible murder or Clytemnesta's.

### **Objectives:**

The objectives of this project are:

- Learn about women rights and lifestyle during Ancient Greece.
- Classify the different types of women, depending on their social status.
- Get to know the role of Greek women in society.
- Find out about the thoughts of the most important philosophers on women.
- Analyze and classify the different stereotypes of women in mythology, one of the most important sources of culture during the Greek period.
- Show some examples in art of the most famous women in mythology.
- Prove that we can still see lots of similitudes between modern women and females who belong to Greek literature and mythology, which means that the role models that were set at that period can still be applied to the current society.

## **Project's structure**

In order to organize all the information that allowed me to achieve the objectives of the project I divided it in four different parts:

First of all, there is the presentation, where the topic, the objectives and the elaboration and development of the project are explained. Next, there is an explanation about women's role and rights in Ancient Greece, including a subsection with a classification of the different types of women.

In the following section there are four different philosophers with their own books, where they somehow talk about either women's role or image during the Greek period. On the fourth place, it is explained the importance of mythology in Greek culture as well as a classification of the ten women I considered most important in mythology in five different stereotypes.

Moreover, I have added an annex where I compare women from mythology and the Greek society with women from the present time.

And last, the conclusions I have obtained throughout the information and the project itself.

## **Methodology**

I have used various founts so as to achieve all the necessary material:

- Reading different Greek translated books and fragments to learn about their myths and culture and make a classification
- Consultation of several books and websites that have information about women's role, rights and life in Ancient Greece
- Analysis of fragments and books written in Ancient Greece by famous philosophers
- Research of articles in press that contain stories and news related or similar to the Greek female role model and Greek literature.
- Establish similarities in order to make the conclusions

During the entire process I've face different difficulties, such as focusing the topic and knowing exactly what to talk about or fixing the structure of the project. I eventually

decided to set aside the artistic topics and try to get to know about their life, as well as finding out their roles in literature, since that was the source that initially attracted me to the topic, as well as obtaining an in-depth knowledge of the real life of women in Greece.

## 1. WOMEN'S ROLE IN ANCIENT GREECE

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First of all, I'm going to introduce the life of women in Ancient Greece. I must add, the purpose of this chapter is not to give an explanation of the habits and traditions from that period of time but to provide the information needed to show what women represented in the society and what was their role.

Women in ancient Greece were treated in a rather inferior way, they had no rights to vote or take part in politics and were not considered citizens, although some of them had some rights, nor adults either. Greek society was ruled just by men.

Females didn't have the right to choose on most of the actions, even if they affected to them, they were controlled by men at all stages of their lives.

Marriage, unlike nowadays, was not about being united with the person one loves, although it was considered one of the most important events in a woman's life.

Despite there wasn't any legal obligation to get married it wasn't socially acceptable for a woman to be single. They were denied the freedom to choose whom to marry; it was planned by the father or a male relative, who had to make a big financial contribution to the future husband. The bigger this contribution was, the more men would be attracted to that woman. This verses in *Medea* show how complicated was to get married for a woman "*First, we need a husband, someone we get for an excessive price. He then becomes the ruler of our bodies*" (Euripides, *Medea*, verses 232-233).

Women didn't know who his future husband was, since they were not allowed to leave the Gynaecium, a part of the house reserved for women. Sometimes, they married a relative, usually a cousin. This usually happened with rich families who wanted to maintain their economic level. It was permitted to marry a cousin, like Orestes and Hermione in mythology, an uncle or a niece; but it was forbidden to marry a parent, a son, a sister or a brother.

For men, marriage was seen as a chance to maintain a good position in society. Women were seen as objects: they were given in marriage by the father to the husband, so marriage was an exchange between two men.



1. Illustration of a Gynaecium scene

Additionally, the issue of property caused much conflict in marriage, of course always in benefit of males. Also, it was really common for young girls to marry quite older men. Girls were able to get married when they had their first period, but usually most girls could wait until they were about fourteen or fifteen years old. Actually, Hesiod recommended to men "*Bring home a wife to your house when you are of the right age, while you are not far short of thirty years nor much above; this is the right age for marriage. Let your wife have been grown up four years, and marry her in the fifth.*" (Hesiod, *Works and days*, verses 695-705). This age gap wasn't a problem at all as long as the couple was able to have children. As a result, many women were left without a husband, since men died a lot earlier than their wives because of that big age gap. Moreover, girls gave birth at such an early age that it caused an incredibly large amount of deaths.

Males could easily get divorced, even if they didn't have any reason. If their wives were caught with another man, it was obligatory to split up. Infertility was a usual reason to get separated because one of the objectives of marriage was to make sure the family had successors. For man, one of the downsides of divorce and the main reason why most men didn't split up with their wives, was because it was required to give back the financial contribution that had been given to them the day of the ceremony, so that the woman could get married again. On the other hand, women could hardly ever get divorced as they had no rights, and it was seen as a shame for the woman and her family "*For a divorce loses women all respect, yet we can't refuse to take a husband.*"(Euripides, *Medea*, verses 235-236). Females had just one option to get divorced: to write a letter to the leader of the city state, where she explained the reasons why she wanted to divorce but the reasons had to be really serious to be accepted, furthermore, men were able to have affairs so that wasn't taken into account. Anyway, divorced wasn't socially accepted so it just happened in really strange occasions. Here is an example, from the play *Medea* "*But if the marriage doesn't work, then death is much to be preferred. When the man tires of the company he keeps at home, he leaves, seeking relief for his distress elsewhere, outside the home.*" (Euripides, *Medea*, verses 244-248)

In Sparta, because they were constantly fighting it was necessary to have as many births as possible, so woman were permitted to be with other man while they were married.

Having just explained how marriage worked, there are two aspects that should be distinguished. First of all, we can see women always belonged to a man who controlled



them. It could be her father, brother, husband... Usually, their father controlled them before they were married and their husband would take the responsibility once they were married. If their husband died and they had no adult male kids who could take the responsibility she had to go back to her father.

Secondly, the explanation of why properties caused many issues in marriage was because women weren't allowed to have any possessions unless there were no male descendants, so the distribution of inheritance was quite unfair. That's why woman who had no brothers, and therefore they would receive all her family's inheritance, caused competition among men, whereas it was hard for poor women to find a husband because, obviously, that didn't help to raise their social status. In Sparta, especially from the beginning of the IV BC, women were able to control some of their properties.

The husband possessed total control of the property of the family while he lived, and control passed to their children, if adult, when he died. If a relative or child were about to pass away, his inheritance would go directly to the husband, instead of being shared between the husband and wife.

As you can see, the male had maximum authority over the situation. It prevented women from gaining any influence or authority in policy or economy.

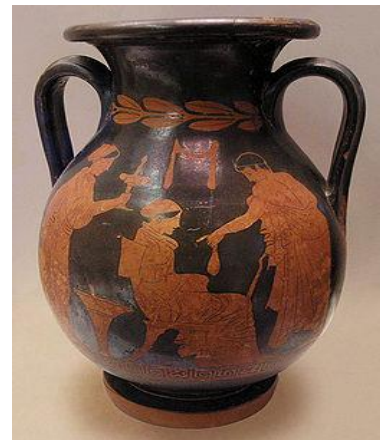
The social life of women in ancient Greece was very limited. Women were restricted from participating in outside events in which men were involved since working outdoors was perceived as a place for women to become a prey of rapists. A woman was permitted to socialize outside her home if her husband granted her permission, but usually she remained indoors, because the less a woman was seen the more respect she got. Therefore while men were outside the house working women remained home. The majority of activities girls were involved in were basically domestic.

The two primary responsibilities for women were having children and being a housewife. Bearing children was especially demanding and stressful. Giving birth to a girl was seen as an embarrassment. After giving birth to a daughter, a mother would turn her head away from her husband in shame. A father would not even consider his own daughters as his children; men often did not count daughters when asked how many children they had. Furthermore, women were not given a choice about carrying on their family's name. Again, another sign of how disrespectfully women were treated. Abortion was permitted, but it could only be done if either the husband of a woman or the owner of a slave gave permission. If the child had already been born it was abandoned.

As housewives, if they belonged to a more wealthy family they would have slaves to help them, but they still supervised the daily running of the house. They did domestic duties such as cooking, cleaning, sewing... Women of poorer classes, who could not afford slaves, had to work in the fields or in the market place along with men. The work that the poorer women did was not valued at all, so their only way to gain any respect in ancient Greek society was to be a housewife.

Women had no rights to wander about the town without any just cause. Any respectable woman would not be seen in public, this is reflected in this quotation that Thucydides, an Athenian historian, political philosopher and general, said: "*The greatest glory for women is to be least talked about among men, whether in praise or blame.*", although the work and freedom that a woman had depended on their social position in society.

While boys were allowed to learn in school, women of ancient Greece were often educated at home by their father or brothers, but their education was very basic and moreover not all women received it. They had to be educated to bear their children and learn how to take care of a house. Throughout the childhood, girls gained most of their education and knowledge concerning



**2. Courtesan and her client drawn in an Attic Pelike**

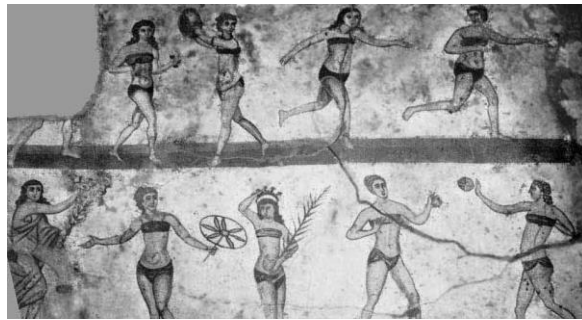
household management via their mother and other female relatives. Older slaves also took part in educating girls of their duties. Husbands also contributed to education as girls were married at extremely young ages, we can see that clearly in Xenophon's book *The oeconomicus*:

*"-Did you yourself educate your wife to be all that a wife should be, or when you received her from her father and mother was she already a proficient well skilled to discharge the duties appropriate to a wife? + Well skilled! (he replied). What proficiency was she likely to bring with her, when she was not quite fifteen at the time she wedded me, and during the whole prior period of her life had been most carefully brought up to see and hear as little as possible, and to ask the fewest questions? or do you not think one should be satisfied, if at marriage her whole experience consisted in knowing how to take the wool and make a dress, and seeing how her mother's handmaidens had their daily spinning-tasks assigned them? For (he added), as regards control of appetite and self-indulgence, she had received the soundest*

*education, and that I take to be the most important matter in the bringing-up of man or woman. - Then all else (said I) you taught your wife yourself, Ischomachus, until you had made her capable of attending carefully to her appointed duties? + That did I not (replied he) until I had offered sacrifice, and prayed that I might teach and she might learn all that could conduce to the happiness of us twain."*

Spartan women received a different education, they had more freedom and had a better education, which included a good athletic preparation that helped them be in a better shape to give birth as well as receiving a better alimentation. Sparta considered that important because they were always fighting so they needed lots of soldiers. House duties such as sewing were done just by poorer women.

Women who became priestesses were required to be really well educated in reading and writing as well as with music in order to carry out the duties associated with religious ceremonies and rituals. The *Hetaerai*, a group of women trained as prostitutes, were educated outside the home on things like entertaining, rhetoric and conversation. They were meant to sit and have conversations with men during long food festivals and therefore needed to have a higher education.



**3. Women from Ancient Greece playing sports.**

Slaves were not educated at all.

Religious rituals for the gods and goddesses were important to the ancient Greeks. Unlike women, goddesses were particularly valued in the Greek society, especially while girls were going through their different stages of life, such as marriage or puberty. Some of them were Persephone, Artemis, Athena or Demeter.

## 1.1. Main types of women in Ancient Greece's society

There are different sources where we can take some information about Ancient Greece's women. We can find allusions in some writings, laws and rights written on stones... From this information, we can find out which were the opinions on women and their rights.

First of all, we can't talk about women in general since in the Greek society they belonged to different social status and therefore their rights changed depending on that.

Demosthenes said "*Hetaerae we keep for pleasure, concubines for daily attendance upon our person, but wives for the procreation of legitimate children and to be the faithful guardians of our households.*" (Demosthenes, *Apollodorus Against Neaera*, 122). This quotation shows perfectly the general idea of what society thought of woman's roles. As we can see, females are just valued as someone who is useful for their "services" rather than for who they are themselves or what else they can provide to the society. But in this quotation there is still one kind of woman missing: foreign females.

### **1.1.1. Foreigners or *Xénai***

Any woman that wasn't born in the *polis* she was living was a foreigner. For example a woman that lived in Athens, but was born in another region, even if she was from a Greek region, she was a foreigner. They weren't considered citizens and for that reason they didn't have their rights and their union with a citizen wasn't legal.

The aspect of marriage between citizens and foreigners is present in one of Euripides's most famous plays: *Medea*.

Jason broke his promise, left *Medea* and decided to marry the daughter of a king. *Medea* came out with a revenge plan. Pretending to accept Jason's decision and saying she wished for peace between them, she sent a bridal gift to *Glauce*, the future wife: a beautiful dress, which, when the rays of the sun hit it, it burst into flames. Then *Medea* herself killed her children, which were Jason's kids too, to take revenge on Jason. She then disappeared from Corinth.

On the one hand, the reason why Jason left *Medea* was because his marriage with her stopped him from having lots of privileges; on the other hand, marrying the daughter of a king was the best opportunity he could be given since *Glauce* would give him many

advantages “*What greater good fortune could I have found than marrying the daughter of the king, me—an exile?*” (Euripides, *Medea*, verses 554-556). She brought him a higher social status as well as great economic benefits and most importantly, his future descendants would be able to enjoy the citizen rights “*As for my children, I want to raise them in the proper way, one worthy of my house, to have brothers for the children born from you, and make them all the same.*”(Euripides, *Medea*, verses 561-565) The children he had with Medea were considered illegitimate kids and didn't have any rights. Medea is conscious that she couldn't provide anything to Jason “*You thought as you grew old a barbarian wife would bring you disrespect.*” (Euripides, *Medea*, verses 592-593) Medea also reflects the downsides of marriage for females “*We women are the most unfortunate. First, we need a husband, someone we get for an excessive price. He then becomes the ruler of our bodies. And this misfortune adds still more troubles to the grief we have. Then comes the crucial struggle: this husband we've selected is he good or bad? For a divorce loses women all respect, yet we can't refuse to take a husband. Then, when she goes into her husband's home, with its new rules and different customs, she needs a prophet's skill to sort out the man whose bed she shares.*” (Euripides, *Medea*, verses 231-240).

On the other hand, Jason started saying all the benefits he had brought to Medea. Throughout their marriage Medea got to live in Greece and enjoy a country where there's justice and laws and moreover she had gained fame “*You're familiar with justice and the laws, rather than brute force. Besides, all the Greeks know that you're clever, so you've earned yourself a fine reputation. If you still lived out there at the boundary of the world, no one would talk about you.*” (Euripides, *Medea*, verses 537-543)

### **1.1.2. Wives or *gynaikes***

The most distinguished women of the time were the ones who were citizens and married. They had the most privileges compared to women from other status, although they still had very few. They could participate in celebrations such as sacrifices and other religious ceremonies. Their children would get all the rights since her mother was a citizen. They stayed in working at home, looking after the children and the house and were considered respectable. They were not allowed to go anywhere except for religious ceremonies or events they had to assist and they were allowed to associate with other women but never men.

When they went out a slave had to join them. *Wives* couldn't even ask or get interested on what was happening outside the house and didn't have a good relationship with their partner since he was most of the time away. When the man hosts a party the wife is not allowed to go, maybe just if she is watching the slaves. *Wives* who belonged to poorer families and didn't have any slaves could leave the house to do the house duties such as cleaning the clothes or bring water home.

The behaviour of these women was extremely important. Their attitude represented the city and family's pride. A woman who represented perfectly the ideal wife was Penelope, Odysseus' wife. She



4. Woman sewing

waits for her husband to get back from war for many years, and she prefers to die rather than marry someone else “*So I wish that they who have their homes on Olympus would make me vanish, or sweet-haired Artemis strike me, so that I could meet the Odysseus I long for, even under the hateful earth, and not have to please the mind of an inferior husband.*” (Homer, *Odyssey*, verses 18.182-184). During that period, many suitors came to marry her but she refused to get married again because she was sure her man was still alive and managed to avoid marriage until Odysseus came back.

Penelope was the perfect hostess, a faithful wife, a loving mother, and a really good weaver. Hospitality was really important in Greek culture so although she wants all the suitors to leave, she is generous and gives them food and a place to stay. Moreover, when Odysseus comes back home all dressed up so he doesn't get recognised, Penelope tells the maids to “*give him a wash and spread a couch for him here, with bedding and coverlets and with shining blankets*”(Homer, *The Odyssey*, 19.317-319 ) so we can see she cared about the visitors.

As a quiet and respectable woman, she never leaves her house and spends most of the time crying for the absence of Odysseus “*always with her the wretched nights and days also waste her away with her weeping*” (Homer, *Odyssey*,1638-1639). She didn't leave her house or get mixed with the suitors either as she said “*I think that immodest*” (Homer, *The Odyssey*, verse 18.184).

She shows her intelligence by being capable to run the entire house and the slaves by herself as well as raise her child with no help. The distaff was the symbol that represented wives in Ancient Greece, and Penelope spend all her time sewing. She uses that to keep all her suitors at bay, since they are trying to marry her so they can own all of Odysseus properties. She tricks all of the suitors promising to them that when she finishes sewing pieces she will choose a new husband "Young men, my suitors now that the great Odysseus has perished, wait, though you are eager to marry me, until I finish this web, so that my weaving will not be useless and wasted" (Homer, *The Odyssey*, verses 293-294) but everything she sewed during the day she would undo it at night. She does all of this because she wants to stay loyal to Odysseus, but at one point she gets caught. However the endless weaving trick is only the first one, at the end of the book suspecting that Odysseus is in the house she organises a competition where the first suitor to shoot Odysseus' bow will get to marry her, but only the owner of the bow could shoot it and she is conscious of it. When Odysseus finally reveals himself, she has one more trick: she tests he really is her husband making sure he knows the secret about their bed. With all of these plans she shows her intelligence.

Penelope's cleverness, excellent household management and modesty make her ancient Greece's ideal woman.

When girls weren't married yet, they had to be extremely careful about being quiet and discrete to the point where some of them hardly left home. We can see an example in a book by Xenophon where a man is really happy with his future wife because "*when she was not quite fifteen at the time she wedded me, and during the whole prior period of her life had been most carefully brought up to see and hear as little as possible, and to ask the fewest questions.*" (Xenophon, *Oeconomicus*, verses 122-123). We can find another example in *Iphigenia in Aulis* she is asked to go back home and keep an eye on Electra and Chrysothemis so they don't leave the house "*Agamemnon: Aye, and that those maidens at home should not be left alone. Clytaemnestra: They are in safe keeping, pent in their maiden-bowers.*" (Euripides, *Iphigenia at Aulis*, verses 731-732).

Silence was the most important feature in a respectable woman. Silence means respect and not discussing with men. Electra shows it saying she is not allowed to talk about certain topics. She couldn't say the reason that made her mother kill her husband "*Her reason a maiden's lips may not declare, and so leave that unexplained for the world to guess at.*" (Euripides, *Orestes*, verses 25-27).

### 1.1.3. Concubines o *Pallakai*

They could be girls with no freedom, foreigners, and girls that were left out to die by their parents when they were babies... and most of the times they belonged to poor families so they had to work as widows, slaves or prostitutes who worked on the streets or brothels. Some girls were given to rich families as slaves; in that case usually there would be a kind of contract signed to clarify some terms such as what they will be paid for the girl.

When it comes to rights, concubines didn't have many as they weren't citizens. It existed the possibility of giving birth to a free child if their father was a free citizen, but that depended on the political rights of the moment, since they changed during the entire Greek civilization. When the population was too high, those people born from mixed parents, a citizen and a foreigner, lost all their rights so the number of citizens decreased, but on the other hand, during the Peloponnesian war it was permitted again for a citizen man to be married but still have children with a concubine.

It was also possible that the legal wife shared her husband with a concubine, although it was not very usual since only the ones with a really high economic level could afford it. Usually, man would just visit brothels which were much cheaper. Bigamy wasn't permitted, but when the wife was sterile or the man had the desire to have a younger partner, the concubine could get pregnant by her owner.

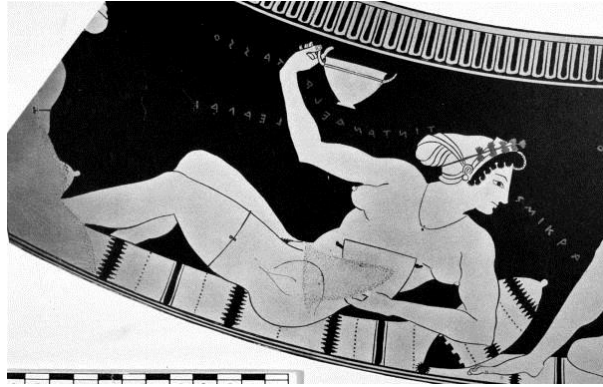
In mythology we can find some examples where a man has a wife and a concubine, such as Agamemnon with Cassandra and Clytemnestra, or Heracles with Iole and Deianira.

Clytemnestra, who had to share her man with Cassandra, takes a drastic decision. Her jealousy makes her commit the murder of both, her husband Agamemnon and Cassandra. When Clytemnestra receives the piece of news that Agamemnon is coming back from the war she explains how much she has cried and how much she loves him, but when she realises that there's a woman coming with him her jealousy appears immediately and shows rejection "*he's mad, too busy listening to her troubled heart.*

*She's just left her newly captured city, then come here, without sufficient time*



*to learn to stomach the controlling bit. She will, once her anger's been dissolved in foaming blood. But I'll waste no more time, dealing with her contempt outside the house."*(Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, verses 1254-1260).



5. Drawing showing a nude hetaira.

We can see that the murder of her daughter Iphigenia doesn't give her enough reasons to kill her husband, but her jealousy is bigger than the love for her daughter and makes her take this drastic decision.

#### 1.1.4. Courtesans or *Hetaerae*

Men did not marry until they were about thirty and with such little opportunity to talk to women and see them, it is perhaps understandable that prostitution was an important part of their life. It was legal and morally acceptable.

*Hetaerae* were more than simple courtesans. They were known for their physical appearance and worked as female companions to men. They were totally independent, had received a proper education as well as manners and served as a companion to men who belonged to the wealthy class.

These women had special training and were freer than the men's wives who were carefully kept at home. They were very important since they kept the social life very lively and served as advisors, entertainers, and courtesans.

There were many levels of *hetaerae*. There were schools for dancing and music. There were even schools where a *hetaera* could learn conversation and rhetoric. The more thing she could do, the higher her level and exclusivity.

The most successful girls were free and some of them had their own business as female companions. Less successful girls had to become prostitutes, πόρναι, who had a lower status. Prostitutes were very popular among men; they worked in brothels or in the streets. They didn't receive an education and they were paid a lot less for their job.

*Hetaerae* didn't have any rights, but they could do many things that other women could not do since they didn't depend on anyone. Their life was really different from any wife: housewives stayed home and got pregnant. *Hetaerae* went out with men to parties, tried not to get pregnant and got a proper education.

The *hetaerae* attended mainly feasts, called symposiums, where wives were never invited since they had to maintain a social image. In the feast there were the *hetaerae* as well as slaves serving food. In an age and society where "respectable" women were entirely dependent on the men in their life, a talented *hetaera* was able to live free and accumulate enough money to live in comfort. Men paid them for their company, but they couldn't buy them although they might win her favour with the right gift.

In mythology these females companions weren't mentioned, although we can see some concubines that could be considered as *hetaerae*, since they had a similar function such as Briseis, a young woman that was given to Achilles as a war booty or Cassandra, who was assigned to Agamemnon too. In addition to being a great beauty she was also a priestess and a prophetess, which means she had an education. But they depended on a man and didn't attend to symposiums or did any favours to other men, so that's why they can also be considered concubines.

One of the most famous *hetairai* was Aspasia, Pericles's mistress. Aspasia stood out as she was really beautiful, clever and had an amazing education, including rhetoric and music. It was said she made some of Pericles's speeches. When Pericles got divorced from his first wife, she started living with Aspasia and she attended with him at numerous events since her knowledge allowed her to participate in debates and she was a great influence on Pericles's opinions when he was Athens' leader. Depending on the source Aspasia did different activities, such as owning a rhetoric academy, having a brothel, or both, but the lack of evidences cause this incertitude, since even the famous authors that met her in person have really different versions, it is said that she was either a clever prostitute or a great counselor, who was incredibly intelligent as well as evil and manipulative.

For those reasons, she was admired by politicians, philosophers, including Socrates, and artists. When Pericles died she got married again, but there's not much information about the rest of her life.

At that time very few women had such a good education, so that's why she was a unique case. She was a really influential woman and many philosophers mentioned her in some books such as Plato, Xenophon, Anaxagoras or even Sophocles. Socrates

even recommended to his students to follow her advices. Plutarch said Aspasia was a significant person that was able to lead and manipulate lots of men with important charges in the state and did amazing speeches. So instead of staying in the Gynaecium, she participated on the meetings and symposiums along with her husband Pericles.

This shows how *hetairai* were a lot more than prostitutes and were a lot more respected in society.

In conclusion, with the information that we have nowadays we see Aspasia as a bold foreigner who that seduced Pericles and had a big influence on his life, specially in his political decisions, always setting before her own interests.

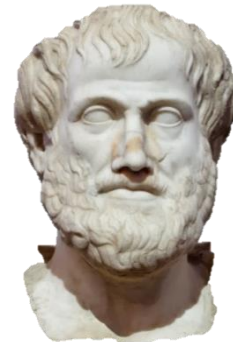
## **2. WOMEN'S IMAGE IN GREECE**

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As we've seen previously, women had very few rights compared to men and most of them had hardly any freedom. We can see the image men had of women through some examples of Greek philosophers who talk about the situation of women in Greece.

### 2.1 Aristotle's *Politics*

*Politics* was written by Aristotle in 365 BC, and it revolves on ethic and politics and how to reach the good for a whole community. He shows his views on the connection between the well-being of the political community and the citizens who create it, it wonders about who should rule a community, how democracy could be better, the conflicts between the poor and the rich... But we are going to focus on his view of women and the role Aristotle thought was appropriate for them.



**6. Aristotle's statue**

In chapter V from the first book, Aristotle focuses on the subject of the organisation of the households and the proper ways to rule women and children. Women are compared to animals or plants: humans rule over plants and animals because of the natural classification, and the same with the government over slaves; from his point of view the male is by nature better at leading than the female. This means that it is natural for the male to rule and for women to obey. It is said in the book that the main difference between a slave and a woman is that the female has freedom, although no authority.

The chapter starts explaining why men should always lead a house and women and children must be in charge of a male. According to Aristotle, family's administration is on charge of a man, who is the owner, the father and the husband at the same time. On the other hand, women and children should have the same freedom as a man but submitted to his authority. Males, except for a few exceptions, are born with the ability to rule, and just like the older and wiser man always rules over a younger and still incomplete boy, men rule over females.

Aristotle compares the relationship between a man and a woman with the one between Zeus and humans: the god is superior to humans because of his natural features. Zeus represents the wise man over the young one, or the father over his son.

Aristotle wonders if women and slaves aside from their job as servants have any other virtues such as wisdom or courage. Can somebody expect from them something else besides their services? If so, then, what's the difference between a man and a slave, or a man and a woman? Why should man have power over slaves and women? If one is meant to rule and the other to obey, why do they have the same virtues? The answer is, that although men, women, children, slaves... have virtues, they have different ones, to fulfill their objectives. So a man, since he must order and control, is prudent and fair, if not, how could he rule? And a slave or a woman, if she is lazy and disobedient, how is she going to accomplish all her duties? It is necessary that everyone has virtues, they are simply different in everyone and that is what decides what you are meant to do.

Aristotle believes the fact that *"some should rule and others be ruled is a thing not only necessary, but expedient; from the hour of their birth, some are marked out for subjection, others for rule."*(Aristotle, *Politics*, Chapter V, Book I) that means that simply by nature, some are meant to have the power and others to obey.

In conclusion, slaves and women have values too because it allows them to accomplish their duties and obey correctly but that doesn't mean that they are meant to rule. The ones who rule are the ones who have the perfect virtue. The philosopher says that the main difference between females and males is *"some are given the virtue of reason and some others don't"* (Aristotle, *Politics*, Chapter V, Book I).

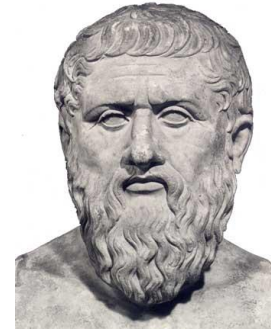
Aristotle recognizes that both women and man have virtue, but the women hasn't got the knowledge that a man has. Females will own all those virtues that help them run a house, raise their children... because that's what they are meant to do.

One of the most famous sayings of Aristotle is *"Silence is a woman's glory"*. The author with that sentence meant to make people understand that from his point of view women would benefit the community if they weren't noticed, either for good or bad reasons, and they should stick to being submissive to men.

Aristotle considers that women being submissive to men will help to achieve the perfect community and with this explanation, Aristotle justifies the submissive role of women.

## 2.2. Plato's *The Republic*

*The Republic* is one of the longest and most famous books of Plato and one of the most influential books of philosophy and policy, written around 380 BC. It is a Socratic dialogue, a genre of literary prose developed in Greece where the characters discuss moral and philosophical problems through the Socratic method and usually Socrates is the main character. In it, Socrates along with other people discusses about different topics like justice, the perfect city, the nature of humans, the soul or the role of philosophers in society.



7. Plato's statue

*The republic* is divided in ten books, in the fourth one Socrates proposes to establish an army, compound by men and women, and in the fifth book Socrates is asked which role would women have and how would the children be raised. Although Socrates warns that what he is about to say might be wrong, their followers insist to listen his theory.

He starts comparing dogs and humans:

*- "Are dogs divided into hes and shes, or do they both share equally in hunting and in keeping watch and in the other duties of dogs? or do we entrust to the males the entire and exclusive care of the flocks, while we leave the females at home, under the idea that the bearing and suckling their puppies is labour enough for them?"*

*- No, he said, they share alike; the only difference between them is that the males are stronger and the females weaker.*

*- But can you use different animals for the same purpose, unless they are bred and fed in the same way?*

*- You cannot.*

*+ Then, if women are to have the same duties as men, they must have the same nurture and education?*

*- Yes. (Plato, *The Republic*, Book V)*

In this fragment we can perfectly see Plato's point of view: Although he accepts that physically women are weaker than men, that is not at all a downside, since women can still do the same as man.

But he goes further on the topic, if women have to do the same tasks as males, then they should be given the same education, so they should be taught music, gymnastics

and knowledge about the war as well as being treated the same way boys are treated. Socrates recognises that this could seem ridiculous, since is far from what they are used to, who wants to see old ladies practicing gymnastics? But if men do it and it seen as normal, why women can't?

The next step is to prove that what has just been proposed is true. There are two things to analyse: First of all, check if women and men are different by nature, and on the other hand, if females are still capable to do everything males do despite that difference. This is one of the main differences between Aristotle and Plato: Aristotle simply thought that because women and men were different they couldn't do the same as men, whereas Plato went further into the subject and actually tried to prove that was wrong.

Plato accepts that it is easy to see that women and men have different characteristics and one of the most obvious is the capacity to give birth, so we should accept that there's a difference. But then it comes the second part, to demonstrate that women are capable to do a man's job although being different by nature. He shows an example:

*- "Suppose that by way of illustration we were to ask the question whether there is not an opposition in nature between bald men and hairy men; and if this is admitted by us, then, if bald men are cobblers, we should forbid the hairy men to be cobblers, and conversely?"*

*- That would be a jest, he said" (Plato, The Republic, Book V)*

By this example Plato shows that even if two humans are different by nature *"if those differences don't affect the pursuit in which the individual is engaged"* (Plato, The Republic, Book V) then there's no reason to forbid somebody to do something and this, applied to women means that

*"if the difference consists only in women bearing and men begetting children, this does not amount to a proof that a woman differs from a man in respect of the sort of education she should receive; and we shall therefore continue to maintain that our guardians and their wives ought to have the same pursuits."*

He tries to make their followers think of any profession that woman weren't given the aptitudes to do, but first he must specify what means having aptitudes: "one man will acquire a thing easily, another with difficulty; a little learning will lead the one to discover a great deal; whereas the other, after much study and application, no sooner learns than he forgets; or again, did you mean, that the one has a body which is a good servant to his mind, while the body of the other is a hindrance to him?". He then claims

that, except some few exceptions, man in general is better at any job than women, but it doesn't mean that most of the professions have to be done by men, but that although both of the sexes have been given the same qualities, they are both able to do them, keeping in mind that women will always be weaker and worse.

So eventually, Plato ends up proving that women should be given the same education and should be treated equally because it is not a violation of the nature to assign the same objectives to a female and a man. This, from his point of view, is what will benefit the most the state.

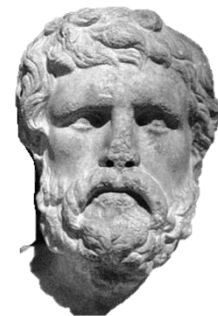
He arrives to the conclusion that if some people are better at doing one thing and others to doing something else, that is not determined by the sex but by the nature of a person, although Plato does claim that women are weaker and males are generally better at everything compared to females.

Probably for the first time ever, someone looks further from the limits imposed by the society and recognises gender equality, although he still thinks that men are generally better at most of the things.

### 2.3. Xenophon's *Oeconomicus*

*Oeconomicus* by Xenophon is a Socratic dialogue that talks about household management and agriculture. Throughout four chapters, the author revolves on the function of women in the family and the house and portrays the perfect woman.

This book might seem like it doesn't criticize or mention any negative aspect about them, but in fact, if you pay attention you can realise that Xenophon is totally excluding women from the society, keeping them home without knowing anything about the world outside the gynaecium.



**8. Xenophon's statue**

The VII chapter starts with Socrates, that goes to Ischomachus and asks him how does everyone considers him such a great man, what does he do to achieve that and where does he spend his time. Ischomachus answers that he is never home, since he doesn't need to, because he has a wife that takes care of the household and their properties. Socrates, curious, asks if his wife was already educated and had great manners, or if he was the one who taught her that, but she wasn't even fifteen at the time she wedded him and "*during the whole prior period of her life had been most carefully brought up to*



*see and hear as little as possible, and to ask the fewest questions*"(Xenophon, *Oeconomicus*, Chapter VII) so she hardly knew more than how to sew, the control of appetite and self-indulgence and seeing how her mother's handmaidens had their daily spinning-tasks assigned them. Ischomachus claims he is really proud of it, since she learnt how to be quite and discreet, which was really important.

Socrates wonders if Ischomachus taught her any other aspects. He explains they first made sacrifices to the gods, and he begged to be able to teach her and that she could learn, if that was their role in her life. By this, it shows how men had to rule over females, and the best way to make that happen was claiming Gods said it, since divinities were extremely important in Ancient Greece. She promised to be *"with many a vow registered to heaven to become all she ought to be"* (Xenophon, *Oeconomicus*, Chapter VII). The girl knew that she had to do anything to make his husband happy, and she cared about being the perfect wife; she was taught that if she was a great house housewife she would make her husband happy. Since her childhood her objective was to get married and run a household. Xenophon says that that's what Gods wanted women to do, that's what they are meant to be, and living in a period where Gods were really important, that was a good enough reason *"you may strive to do as well as possible what Heaven has given you a natural gift for and which the law approves."*(Xenophon, *Oeconomicus*, verse 17 Chapter VII). She was never said that she could be something else apart from a housewife, or anything outside home *"But how can I assist you? What is my ability? Nay, everything depends on you. My business, my mother told me, was to be sober-minded!"* (Xenophon, *Oeconomicus*, verses 18-19, Chapter VII). Since they were little girls this idea was set in their minds and it was unimaginable not to do it:

*"A painful task it might have been, had I bade her neglect her personal concerns! But to be obliged to fulfil the duty of attending to her own domestic happiness, that was easy. After all it would seem to be but natural, woman finds it easier to care for her own offspring than to neglect them,"*(Xenophon, *Oeconomicus*, Chapter VII)

Ischomachus claims that men and women must work together in order to make the most of their abilities. Humans, unlike animals, live in a house which needs to be taken care of so there has to be someone who runs and raises the children while the other is away trying to get food or money to bring home. In Ischomachus opinion, *"God made provision, as it seems to me, the woman's nature for indoor"* (Xenophon, *Oeconomicus*, Chapter VIII) whereas a male's body is made to endure the heat and the cold, the

war... It is also said that women have more capacity to love, since they have to take care of children and since they have to protect the properties that are in the house, they are fearful. From my point of view, the author is trying to make these features positive so it doesn't seem that he is trying to keep women inside. He is trying to justify with the gods that women can't endure the effort of working outdoors.

So now, being aware of the respective duties of each person, they should do it in the best way possible to make their properties grow. Fulfilling those duties will make a woman respectable *"for a woman to bide tranquilly at home rather than roam abroad is no dishonour"*(Xenophon, *Oeconomicus*, verse 30 Chapter VIII). The author tries to convince the reader that women will feel better if they do everything he explains.

Also, it's the husband's responsibility to show the wife how is the house organized and everything she has to do to keep everything nice and watch that all the slaves were doing their tasks. While he was explaining the functions of all the rooms, he mentions the gynaecium:

*"Then I showed her the women's apartments, separated from the men's apartments by a bolted door, whereby nothing from within could be conveyed without clandestinely, nor children born and bred by our domestics without our knowledge and consent"*(Xenophon, *Oeconomicus*, Chapter XI)

So besides wanting to keep women indoors, he had also a special area for them to stay to make sure they don't cohabit with any other men, such as a slave.

Socrates and Ischomachus also talk about beauty. Ischomachus says that once his wife appeared wearing a lot of make-up and heels and he explained her that it wasn't necessary to dress up so much, since she is trying to look like something she is not, and she outstands a lot. It was better to be discreet, and obviously she obeyed her husband *"thenceforward she never once indulged in any practice of the sort, but has striven to display the natural beauty of her person in its purity."*(Xenophon, *Oeconomicus*, Chapter X) What would make her more beautiful was to participate more in the house duties and the supervision:

*"to assume the attitude of a true mistress standing before the loom, and where her knowledge gave her the superiority. I counselled her to oversee the baking woman as she made the bread; to stand beside the housekeeper as she measured out her stores; to go tours of inspection to see if all things were in order, women who are always sitting, they are exposing themselves to being judged as lazy and irresponsible."*(Xenophon, *Oeconomicus*, Chapter X)

So in general, the author makes a big effort to portrait the importance of the union of a man and a woman and them fulfilling their tasks.

#### 2.4. Hesiod's Works and Days

Pandora was the first woman and she was created by the gods. The Greeks thought that in the beggining only males existed and the first female appeared because of Zeus.

Her name is Πανδώρα, derived from πᾶν, "all" and δῶρον "gift". The etymology can be translated in different ways: The gift from everyone or all the gifts, whereas some people understand it as "the one who gives everything"

According to Hesiod, the author of "Works and days" this is how the first woman was created:<sup>1</sup>

The mortals and immortals used to live together and marry each other, but at one point they got separated and they belonged to two different categories. One day at a feast, Prometheus made a trick: He sacrificed a beef and divided it in two parts, one with bones covered in the animal's fat and the other with meat covered in skin. Zeus, chose the most good looking one and gave the other one to men, which contained the good things. When he realised the trick , angry, denied giving the fire to the humans but Prometheus stole it and gave it to men.



9. Pandora opening the jar.

So in order to punish the human race for what Prometheus did, Zeus ordered Hephaestus to make a beautiful figure physically similar to the goddesses. Different gods and goddesses such as Aphrodite, who gave her the power to seduce, Athena, who gave her the art of sewing or Hermes, who gave her the ability to lie, trick and seduce. This

last feature, was given to create an evil human that would bring many troubles.

Zeus gave Pandora as a gift to Epimetheus. His name in Greek means "the one who thinks after" and he was the brother of Prometheus. His brother warned him not to

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<sup>1</sup> Hesiod also talks about the first female in his work "Theogony", although it isn't mentioned the name of Pandora and the explanation of the myth has less details.

accept any gift from Zeus since he might try to hurt them because he had stolen the fire, but Epimetheus didn't listen and accepted the gift. Zeus had given to Pandora a jar that she had to give to his husband, but they weren't allowed open it. Pandora, who was really curious, ignored Zeus and opened the jar. When she saw all kind of evils leaping out of the box, frightened, tried to close the jar but it was too late and the only thing left in the jar was Hope, everything else was gone.

Pandora is seen as the responsible of spilling all the evils in the jar and guilty of all the misfortunes of humans. Therefore, Pandora is the key change to the human existence, as from that point men had to struggle for survival. Human existence for the first time involves need and as a consequence men now have to work. The earth no longer gives to the mortal what they need to keep themselves alive, they must cultivate their food now.

So, although Greek mythology isn't interested in how the first man appeared, it gives a big importance to women's origin. This origin is a reason to prove women's evil, which helps men to stop them from being part of racial things such as politics and at the same time it relates women to chaos and evil.

Hesiod says women are thieves of all the work men do. Males work and females eat and waste, are lazy and useless to do any work. In *Theogony*, Hesiod says that although women are expensive, wasteful and bad ,because they are a punishment from Zeus, they take care of men when they are old and they can have children:

*"Zeus who thunders on high made women to be an evil to mortal men, with a nature to do evil. And he gave them a second evil to be the price for the good they had: whoever avoids marriage and the sorrows that women cause, and will not wed, reaches deadly old age without anyone to tend his years, and though he at least has no lack of livelihood while he lives, yet, when he is dead, his kinsfolk divide his possessions amongst them." (Hesiod, Theogony, verses 590-612.)*

On the other hand, Pandora was created by divinities, and given the feature of beauty. Women are beautiful, and therefore seductive. Zeus wanted them to be like that because then, they would have the power to attract men and they could be dangerous and harmful for males. When it comes to the inner features, it is said that they are unfaithful, fake, perverse, arrogant, deceiving...

As a reader, this myth transmitted me the image of women as an evil, dangerous creation which should never be given power or any kind of responsibility because it would only bring misfortunes, so it empowers the idea that females must be submitted to males. Since this was a really important tale in Greece and it was known by everyone, the message that it sends was set in people's mind and therefore people had a negative image of females.

In *Works and Days*, Hesiod explains how men should rule their house, their job... in order to survive in a world where humans must work because of Pandora's mistake. He talks about the relationship between men and gods, reproduction, relation between men and women, the house economy...

Males, as superior humans, have to take control over females; therefore Hesiod also gives some information about how to treat them. He says "*Don't let a woman with a tarted-up arse deceive your mind with cajoling words, while she rifles around in your granary. He who trusts a woman, trusts a cheater.*". Basically he thinks of women as humans who only waste what a man has gained with his efforts, so you should never let a woman rule over you because they will trick you. He also mentions when is more appropriate to get married:

*"When you are on your thirties, that's the right time to get married. The girl must be fifteen years old. You will have to teach her good habits and manners, but most importantly pay attention that you are not marrying some who is the laughing stock of the city. Nothing is better than having a good wife, and nothing is worse than having a terrible wife."* (Hesiod, *Works and Days*, verses 669-703).

This myth represents how Greek society perceived women: seductive and desirable, but also dangerous, irrational, uncontrollable and chaotic, the source of all the world's ills. To sum up, the image of women as guilty of the evils is set in people's mind and this myth along with some others will introduce the idea of woman as evil.

The popular saying "To open Pandora's jar" comes from this myth, it means that some actions that we do can come with some misfortunes.

Pandora is also known as the antecedent of Eve from Genesis since they have many similarities. They were both created by a God, were the first women that existed and they were tempted to do something that brought misfortunes to the world.

### **3. THE PURPOSE OF THE MYTH IN ANCIENT GREECE**

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A myth, from the greek μῦθος, is a tale transmitted orally through generations, which causes that it can have different versions, and talks about the topics that concern the society. They justify why things are in a certain way, either politics, society, life... The facts about nature and society were explained through Greek myths.

They may contain some historic elements, although these elements aren't reliable at all, and they are mixed with unrealistic and fantastical circumstances. Usually, they are set up in a specific and familiar place, like a Greek region or any known area and the characters can be humans, heroes, divinities... Moreover, they are arranged chronologically.

Greek myths reflect the mentality of that period. They were the best reference for the Greeks to their own story, and in that kind of tales were represented moral values, the position of the man in front of the gods... Those stories were the main educational instrument of Greek civilization since many people weren't able to receive an education. Myths were so important that they are used in most of the plays, poetry and art pieces of that time.

But which was the function of the myth in the society, and especially, concerning on women's role society? Ancient Greece had a patriarchal society, where men had authority over women and children, which appeared in the tales.

Throughout myths it was represented a kind of society. They represented female characters that belonged to a certain stereotype of women that should be followed or on the contrary, avoided. We must keep in mind that they don't represent real women of that period since that wasn't their intention, its objective was to teach people how society should work, what everyone's role should be and transmit some values.

The different stories were known by the people and were used to give credibility to something. Later on, all those myths were written down and the values that they transmitted helped building the values of the society. Myths had a huge impact, which we will see later.

Mythology shows lots of different women with many roles, situations and personalities. In the tales, women appear in the public eye and leave home even though in reality they were totally excluded from it. Actually, women's role has a big importance in lots of myths. They can be powerful, loyal, virtuous, killers, cheaters...

As the society develops and changes, myths do it too. So one same story can be seen in different points of views depending on the writer's intention and the period he is writing it. We can see this in Medea, although this play is supposed to show how perverse can women be, Euripides during the entire story supports females and complaints about the lifestyle they are forced to have, throughout the women choir.

In myths, women were attributed some specific features, and through some misogynist examples they showed why they weren't able to participate in politics or war.

If we analyse the different female characters we can see different stereotypes that will have either positive or negative impact in society, such as the loyal and submissive Penelope or the seductive, perverse, rebellious, powerful women, all hated by the Greeks.

### 3.1. Women Classification

#### 3.1. The ideal woman:

##### **3.1.1. Penelope**

Authors have created myths where women's role is based in modesty, submission, work, loyalty, pride for her house and family, silence... those are considered women's virtues. Females should only worry about fulfilling men's desires, not leaving home and being totally separated from society, specially from other men. That will make them respectable and proud.

These characters just run the house, weave, transmit their values to their sons and teach their daughters how to do the house duties. Beauty is also really important, although it can be considered dangerous as it can manipulate men; but if it comes together with all the other characteristics mentioned previously it is a good thing. One of the most typical activities for woman was weaving, which was represented by Athena. The woman that is known for having all of those features is Penelope.

Penelope, who appears in the Odyssey, is Odysseus's wife, the main character of the book. Together they have a son, Telemachus. Penelope waits twenty years for her husband to return from the Trojan War and during that period she has to face some problems at her house.

While Penelope fulfills the house work, many avaricious men come to her house to marry her and become the king of Ithaca. But as a loyal wife, Penelope doesn't want to

betray Odysseus, so she agrees that she will select a suitor to be her husband when she finishes weaving a burial shroud for Laertes. But every night she takes out part of the shroud so that it is never finished. Although she has no way to prove it, Penelope believes that Odysseus is still alive and will arrive home someday. Unfortunately, one of Penelope's maids discovers the trick and reveals it to the suitors.

Then, she decides to put the suitors to a challenge to choose one of them as her husband. When it is time for the challenge to take place, Odysseus has returned, but nobody recognized him because Athena had changed his aspect. Once he wins the challenge, his true identity is revealed and he gets his throne back.

Penelope has all the values and ideals of her society. She shows loyalty as well as patience to Odysseus by waiting for his return for twenty long years, unlike her husband who couldn't resist temptation in many occasions and commits adultery, for example, with Circe or Calypso. She did not want to choose a suitor until she knew for sure that Odysseus was dead. Because of her efforts to avoid remarriage, Penelope is seen as a symbol of fidelity. She anxiously waits for his arrival and is constantly thinking about him. For example, while the minstrel sings, the song reminds Penelope of Odysseus and she asks the musician to stop his song. She tells him that the song "*wears my heart away. It opens in me again the wound of longing for one incomparable, ever in my mind*" (Homer, *The odyssey*, verses 391-394).

Moreover, she takes pride in her home and family. As a single mother, she raises her son Telemachus and gives him the morals and ideology of his father Odysseus, including the love to his country. She also remains in her home and tries to preserve her son's patrimony. Without Penelope, Odysseus would not have had a home to return to. It is Penelope's intelligence which allows her to have control over her situation. With her trick to the suitors or the competition that she organizes of shooting Odysseus' bow, she shows to be really clever.

Besides intelligence, she had another admirable feature: precaution. When Odysseus had shot the bow and killed all the suitors Penelope didn't jump into his arms just yet. She was very cautious in accepting that it was really Odysseus who had come home, as she was afraid that it could have been a fraud. She told Eurycleia to move their bed out of the bedroom. Odysseus had built the bed into an olive tree and knew that it was impossible for it to be removed. Penelope knew that if the man was truly Odysseus it would anger him.



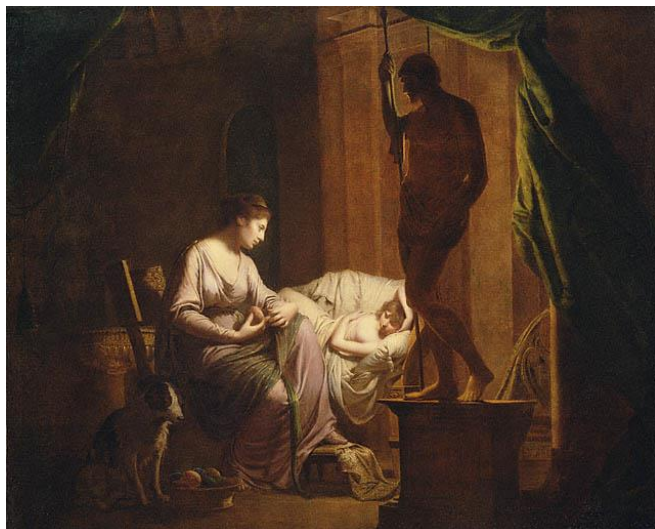
Another value that is significant to the Greek society is hospitality. One who treats his or her guests well is considered to be a good citizen. Unlike the suitors and some maids, Penelope shows a great hospitality upon her guests. We can see this when Penelope complains when Telemachus allows Odysseus to be so mistreated *"How could it happen in our hall that you permit the stranger to be so abused? Here, in our house, a guest, can any man suffer indignity, come by such injury? What can this be for you but public shame?"* (Homer, *The odyssey*, book XVIII)

As a reward for being faithful, clever and cautious Penelope ends up happy in the end with her husband and son. That's the message of the myth: act like Penelope and you'll be respected and happy.

There are some pieces in art that represent Penelope, where she usually appears unhappy and sewing in order to avoid the suitors.

In this painting by Joseph Wright called "Penelope Unraveling Her Web" (1783-84) we can see Penelope in a bedroom, where her son Telemachus is sleeping peacefully and in front of them there's a naked statue of Odysseus, whom she is patiently awaiting. The scene makes us see how much she thinks about her husband. The representation illustrates the faithfulness of Penelope. She is rewinding her thread into a ball, so that the next morning she can start sewing again. The painting has mainly dark colors that transmit how quiet the room is, it is probably night time, and sends a feeling of hope, but also sadness.

In general, it is a peaceful scene, as well as dramatic, caused by the shadows. There is light in the center, which maybe represents the hope that Odysseus will eventually come back. All this light effects contribute to add more drama to the painting.



10. Penelope Unraveling Her Web.

Another painting that shows perfectly Penelope's situation is this one by John William Waterhouse (1912). While in the previous picture she appeared during night, this represents her life during the day. She looks stressed, while all of her suitors are



trying to seduce her and **11. Penelope sewing.**

catch her attention but she is

focusing on the piece she is sewing. The painting represents her loyalty and her intelligence, which allows her to escape from marriage.

### 3.2. The perverse women: Clytemnestra and Medea

First of all, there are the perverse ones. Medea and Clytemnestra are two great examples. They are women that go further than the rules established and take men's role in order to accomplish their objective. Instead of just crying their misfortunes caused by their husbands, they try to revenge cheating everyone. Cheating is one of the features Zeus gave to women.

#### **3.2.1. Clytemnestra**

Clytemnestra was the wife of Agamemnon, ruler of the Ancient Greek kingdom of Mycenae.

Agamemnon killed a sacred deer and said some disrespectful things that caused a big anger to Artemis, so she made the wind stop so that the Greeks couldn't leave to Troy.

Menelaus consulted Delphi's Oracle, who said that the only way to make the wind blow was to sacrifice Agamemnon's daughter, Iphigenia. Agamemnon accepted but the girl was eventually saved by Artemis, that took her to one of her temples as priestess. Clytemnestra, the mother of the girl, didn't know about it and thought her daughter was dead and never forgave Agamemnon. Once her husband left, she started an affair with Aegisthus, who was the king of Mycenae while Agamemnon was gone. When Agamemnon came back he brought his lover Cassandra, but his wife, jealous and angry, with the help of Aegisthus killed him and his lover.

Clytemnestra, along with Medea, was a great known character in Greece because of all her actions and also one of the most hated women. She had everything to be considered a woman with no pride: disloyal, she murdered her husband and his lover, and manipulated Aegisthus to help her with the murder. Through her the Greeks tried to project the evil in women, in *The odyssey* Agamemnon says to Ulysses in Hades "*But she, by doing such a terrible thing makes people doubt of the kindness of all the other females, even the ones who haven't done anything to deserve it*" (Homer, *The Odyssey*, page 213)

The myth of Clytemnestra mainly gives the message that it is essential to have a constant distrust to women, that they won't be able to control their jealousy and anger and if they are given some freedom they might cheat on their husbands, so that's why they must be kept indoors. This distrust makes her a hateful character.

Clytemnestra also represents the evil in the household ambit. She is seen as dangerous: Clytemnestra wanted to gain power and was capable of anything to achieve it, even killing his husband, which meant she would have the power she had had all the time while Agamemnon was gone, as the ruler of Argos. Because females can be capable of doing unbelievable things in order to get the power as evil creatures created by Zeus, they can be controlled so that they aren't harmful. That's why it is so important to not give them the power that men have.

Clytemnestra has an incredibly strong personality as a woman, because she is very independent, confident and her pride is the most important thing to her. That's why she commits a crime, she can't permit being made fun of and even if that will make everyone hate her, she doesn't care if people don't understand what she does; she must take revenge and she feels like she will gain again her pride and will revenge the murder of her daughter Iphigenia with that action. Clytemnestra speaks about Agamemnon as if he was an enemy whilst defending her actions. This attitude is not typical of women of her time and murder is outside of the sphere of the female gender role. She has control over her life and her characteristics are definitely the ones men had at the time. This is clearly proved on the on the first verses when the watchman says "*She in whose woman's breast beats heart of man.*" (Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, verse 15). Womanly behaviour was characterised then by submissiveness and modesty, but the language used by Clytemnestra is neither of these things and instead she adopts male characteristics.

Clytemnestra also stands out because of her speaking skills, which she uses to achieve her objectives, to destroy her husband. That was seen as a manipulation and therefore another bad feature of women.

Clytemnestra represents a woman who breaks every convention of the female gender role, that's why she was described as 'shameless'. Through this change of the traditional gender roles, adopting masculine speech, behaviours and activities, Clytemnestra achieves her revenge for the sacrifice of Iphigenia.

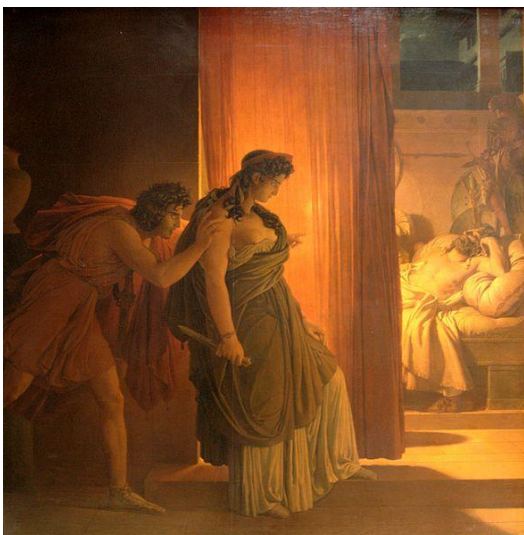


12. Clytemnestra after the murder.

Her behaviour is very dangerous for men because it is totally unexpected. All these females represent a negative role model, because they don't have the virtues that women are expected to have, such as secrecy and family devotion.

We can find some representations of Clytemnestra in art. In the first one is called "Clytemnestra after the murder" (1882) by John Collier.

She appears moments after the murder of her husband and his lover Cassandra. She has her clothes full of blood and a huge weapon, which transmits the violence of the murder. Clytemnestra looks serious but her face has no expression at the same time. This shows us that she doesn't feel terrified about what she has just done. All of her



13. Clytemnestra and Aegisthus.

background is really dark, it seems like the bodies might be there, while she appears in the light, so we can perceive all the blood she has on her.

The second picture, which shows Clytemnestra before she commits the murder, Aegisthus is inciting her to kill Agamemnon. It was painted by Pierre-Narcisse Guérin in 1817.

### 3.2.2. Medea

Medea was a sorceress daughter of King Aeëtes of Colchis and niece of Circe. She is known for her marriage with Jason, marriage which had a terrible ending.

Here is a summary of Medea's myth:

Aeson, king of Iolcus in Thessaly, had his throne stolen by his half-brother Pelias. Aeson's son Jason was saved and sent away to be educated. When he grew up, claimed his right to have the throne, but Pelias said he would give him the throne only on condition that Jason would bring him back the Golden Fleece from Colchis -- a demand which was almost impossible to do as it was situated at the end of the Black Sea, that was said to be unreachable.

He brought together fifty heroes from all over Greece, called the Argonauts, who after many adventures arrived at Colchis. But the King of Colchis set more impossible conditions: If he wanted the Golden Fleece he had to harness two fire-breathing brazen-footed bulls, defeat the earth-born warriors that would spring up after he had sown a field with serpents' teeth, and slay the deadly dragon that guarded the Fleece. Medea, a powerful sorceress who had fallen in love with Jason, used her occult knowledge to help him overcome various obstacles and to obtain the Fleece, in return for which Jason swore to remain faithful to her forever.

Medea herself murdered her younger brother Apsyrtus. Then, Jason and Medea needed to be purified for the death of Apsyrtus, and went to the island of Circe, Medea's aunt. Medea also got rid of the King Pelias by tricking his own daughters into killing him, making Jason's own kingdom an even healthier place for him to be. Medea and Jason, now married, were welcomed at Corinth by its King.

Jason left Medea in order to get married with Creon's daughter and become the heir to Corinth, but Medea came out with a revenge plan. Pretending to accept Jason's decision and to wish for peace between them, she sent a bridal gift to Glauce -- a beautiful dress, which, when the rays of the sun hit it, it burst into flame. Then Medea herself killed her kids, which were Jason's kids too, to pay Jason back for his betrayal. She then disappeared from Corinth.

Medea's image is far from what was considered respectable. She betrays her father and her country, leaving them to help Jason with his mission, and commits murder.

Remember, the ideal woman stays at home, is ashamed even to be seen by strangers, but Medea doesn't have any problem with being seen. Furthermore, she decides herself to leave her family and country.

Other reasons that make Medea have the image of a perverse woman are, first of all, her comments and critiques to marriage and woman's role:

*"We women are the most unfortunate. First, we need a husband, someone we get for an excessive price. He then becomes the ruler of our bodies. And this misfortune adds still more troubles to the grief we have. Then comes the crucial struggle: this husband we've selected, is he good or bad? For a divorce loses women all respect, yet we can't refuse to take a husband. Then, when she goes into her husband's home, with its new rules and different customs, she needs a prophet's skill to sort out the man whose bed she shares."*  
(Euripides, *Medea*, verses 264-276)

Moreover, she is full of anger and jealousy so she needs to take revenge. Her impossibility of having the man she wants, Jason, and knowing that he is with another woman drives her crazy to the point where she prefers to kill her children rather than accepting the betrayal. Medea realizes that the only way that she could completely destroy Jason is if she kills not only his new wife, but her own children as well.

Her change from nobly woman to a violent person causes the chorus to turn on her. During most of the play her actions are approved by the chorus, complaining about what Medea has to go through because of Jason. But when Medea comes to the point where she decides to commit murder, they stop supporting her. The chorus intensifies her image of an evil character:

*"How will this city of sacred streams, this land of strolling lovers, welcome you—a killer, who slaughtered her own children, an unholy woman—among its people? Consider this—the killing of your children. Consider the murder you are going to do. By your knees we beg you, in every way we know, do not slaughter your own children."* (Euripides, *Medea*, verses 996-1005).

We can see how her pride and jealousy makes her insensitive *"I can endure guilt, however horrible; The laughter of my enemies I will not endure"* (Euripides, *Medea*, verses 279-80). Medea has gone so far from what a Greek woman should be that even the chorus tries to control her. She doesn't care about the discretion, absolutely blinded by pride. Medea's final escape and conversation with Jason shows how completely she has changed from the woman she was at the beginning of the play. She is no longer



his wife, and she is no longer a woman that can be moved by emotion, even refusing Jason the chance of touching his dead sons.

Although Medea accomplishes what she wanted, I don't think we can consider her victorious, since she has had to renounce to her own children and being hated by everyone else. Her family hates her for leaving them for another man and Corinth for killing the daughter of their king and the king itself.

Because of all her actions we can consider Medea as one of the strongest female character in mythology.



**14. Medea about to Kill her Children**

Here we have a painting of Medea by Eugène Delacroix painted in 1862. Medea is hiding inside a cave, looking scared, with her wild messy hair and the terror in her eyes it is obvious that it represents the moment right before committing murder. Her face is covered by a shadow, which adds more drama to the scene and the children are quite relaxed, ignoring what is about to happen.

In the second picture, Medea has already killed her children. We can see them lying death on the ground, and Medea next to them without paying attention, totally careless. On the other hand, Jason is looking her and although we can't see his face, he is probably totally destroyed watching what has happened. All of the background looks really chaotic; reflecting the situation Medea has created in consequence of her jealousy.



**15. Medea after the murder.**

Both women are guilty of murder. They don't let others dominate them and that shows their perversity. Their behaviour is totally unexpected. They don't have the virtues that women are expected to have, such as secrecy and family devotion. They use their features for immoral objectives. In the case of Medea, the revenge on her husband, and Clytemnestra,

the death of his husband and Cassandra, his Trojan slave.

### 3.3. The seductive women: Helen, Calypso, and Circe

#### **3.3.1. Helen**

Helen is the symbol of beauty and seduction and since she is daughter of Zeus, sometimes she can be considered a goddess. Leda is Helen's mother; Zeus transformed in a swan and got her pregnant. Leda laid an egg where Helen and Clytemnestra were born from. When she was very young, Theseus, attracted by her beauty took Helen, but she was saved and returned to Sparta.

When she was old enough to get married Tyndareus, her human father, realised that Helen had lots of suitors. He feared that if he chose one of them, all the other ones would start a fight. He decided to let Helen decide herself and told the suitors to promise that they would accept Helen's choice and help the one chosen in case he needed.

Helen chose Menelaus, king of Sparta. They had one daughter and lived peacefully in Sparta during the first 10 years. One day Paris arrived as a guest in the house but Menelaus had to leave to Crete so he asked Helen to take care of their guest. Paris, with Aphrodite's help, seduced Helen. So Helen took her properties and treasures, abandoned her daughter and left.

When Menelaus received the piece of news, he went back to Sparta and got together all those Helen suitors who made the promise to help him and went to Troy to get her back. And that's when the Trojan War starts. Therefore, Helen is the cause of this huge war "*It is not reprehensible that the Trojans and the Greeks, with stunning greaves, suffer because of a woman like her, whose face resembles a goddess. But, however, it's better if the ships leave before this conflict destroys us and our children*". (Homer, *Iliad*, verses 156-161). Helen will be hated by all the Trojans, even though before that occurrence she was admired in Sparta : beautiful , a good wife, a mother and married with a king.

Helen is a character that shows the power of beauty in woman. First of all, her provocative beauty becomes the cause of the war. On the other hand, her story shows that her persuasive beauty disarms men. As many detractors as Helen has, she always



has supporters who attempt to justify her for the Trojan War. Neither her Spartan nor Trojan husband faults Helen. Menelaus values her no more than the treasure that had been stolen with her. She is simply an eminent possession that he must recover. Paris, as stubbornly as Menelaus, fights to get Helen back, he refuses to give her up and neither of them both holds her responsible for this conflict.

But Helen is really criticized for leaving his husband. She totally breaks the typical wife role, she isn't loyal, she decides by herself, leaves all the house duties... For women it was forbidden to be with more than one man, loyalty was extremely important, so by leaving with another man she lost all her respect and even his husband's too. Helen makes a decision herself and she doesn't care about the social consequences, as she is doing what she truly wants to. But she could afford all of this because of her physic. Helen didn't receive any kind of punishment for everything she did; the worst thing she got was the hate of Trojans. That's because, as it is said in *The Odyssey*, Helen put on the drinks a drug that made men forget their anger and pain, that along with her beauty helped her get away with no consequences for what she did. Anyways, she does regret betraying her husband and causing so many problems "*I wish that I had chosen death rather than to have come here with your son, far from my bridal chamber, my friends, my darling daughter, and all the companions of my girlhood. But it was not to be, and my lot is one of tears and sorrow*".(Homer, *The Iliad*, verses 172-175).

Through the whole myth there are references to Helen's beauty "*she marked the beautiful neck of the goddess, her lovely bosom, and sparkling eyes*" (Homer, *The Iliad*, but not so much about her personality. She is distant and very provocative, she uses her beauty constantly, for example to save herself from any punishment for causing the war, but we don't know more about her.

There are two points of views of Helens' story, with different opinions about her: One story says that Paris came to Sparta and stole her away. This is referred to as the rape of Helen. In contrast to this version there is the story of the Judgment of Paris in which Aphrodite gave Paris the love of the most beautiful woman in the world so that she, Aphrodite, would be declared the fairest. So when Paris arrived in Sparta Helen fell in love with Paris and left with him because she was overcome with the love that Aphrodite had forced on her. There is even a third tale which says that Helen was a woman who had no morals and really did not love her husband and left Sparta when given the opportunity. In the first story Paris is the responsible person and only he should shoulder the blame for the Trojan War. In the second story Aphrodite is the



16. The Love of Helen and Paris

cause of the Trojan War. In the third story Helen would be the cause. Although in general the most common point of view is that Helen herself made the decision to leave and therefore everything is her fault. An example of this is Homer, he considers she is a shameful and scandalous woman that caused the death of thousands men. Virtue and honor were the most important values that she didn't respect. She broke her role as a woman in Greek society, which is to be responsible of the house duties, bear the children and take care of his husband.

This painting by Francesco Primaticcio made

from 1530 to 1539 represents the rape of Helen. In this case Helen, illuminated in the center of the representation, is being kidnapped by Paris. I believe all the people in the background represent all the chaos this action will cause, rather than what was happening at the moment Helen left. That's why there is a ship at the back, which



17. The rape of Helen

symbolizes the journey The Greeks will start to Troy to rescue Helen.

Another painting is this one from Jacques-Louis David painted in 1788. In it appears Helen, wearing a see-through dress, and Paris, half naked, and it's obvious they have feelings for each other. They are probably at Menelaus' home while Paris was staying as a guest.

### 3.3.2. Calypso

Calypso is another woman that could be classified as a seducer. The Olympic gods sent her to an island called Ogygia as a punishment for being Atlas's daughter. It is said that every millennium the gods sent her a man to fall in love with, but then fate would force Calypso to let him go.

After the Trojan War Odysseus set off home, but his ship broke and he ended up at Calypso's island. She welcomed him and offered food. Calypso fell in love with Odysseus and hoped to make him her husband. At first, their affair was simply a matter of seduction and distraction; since Calypso's parents were gods, she was extremely beautiful, so as a seducer woman she made Ulysses fall in love and maintained him away from everything. Calypso used her charms to try to make Odysseus forget his home, but she didn't succeed and he didn't let his family behind. Initially Odysseus was enchanted with Calypso, but the attraction left quickly and he wanted to return to his wife, Penelope, and his throne. Odysseus was forced to stay with Calypso because he had no ship, and he spent most of the days crying and begging to be allowed to leave. She seduced him, made him stay for ten years and they had two children. Calypso tried even to make Odysseus forget his previous life and offered him immortality and eternal youth if he stayed with her, but Odysseus missed too much his country and his wife Penelope. The gods at Olympus ultimately intervened and sent Hermes to demand Calypso release Odysseus. Although Calypso wanted him to stay, she had to obey Zeus, and with Calypso's guidance, Odysseus built a boat and sailed away.



18. Calypso looking at Odysseys

There are some paintings of Calypso. In the first one I've chosen, made by Karl Ernest Rudolf, we can see her sitting on a rock, very upset looking at the horizon. The picture transmits sadness, with the dark stormy sky and rough waves and her expression and the tears on her face. Odysseus has probably already left, and she is remembering the time they spent together and how much she misses that.



19. Calypso missing Odysseus.

The second painting is by Arnold Böcklin made in 1883. It appears Odysseus' silhouette at the back, looking at the sea probably feeling nostalgic, thinking about her son and wife and if he will be able to see them again. At the opposite side of the painting, Calypso, lonely, is playing the harp and staring at him. Again, the scene is dark and lifeless and transmits both Odysseus and Calypso's sadness, since she doesn't want him to leave but she can tell he would prefer to get back home.

### 3.3.3. Circe

Circe is mainly known because of her role in *The Odyssey*, but she also appears in *The Argonauts* among others. She was Helio's and Perse's daughter. She is really similar to Calypso, a woman who fell in love and tried everything to make her man stay, but fate forces her to let him go.

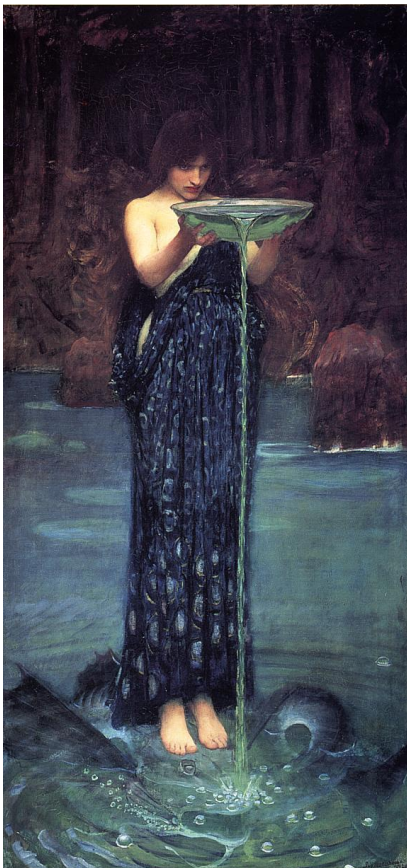
Circe was considered as a really powerful sorceress. She lived in the island of Aea, where she did potions that could turn people into animals; however, the victims were still conscious of what happened to them. While Ulysses was sailing back Ithaca, he stopped at the island with his partners, who were attracted by a beautiful voice "*There is someone inside working at a loom and singing most beautifully; the whole place resounds with it, let us call her and see whether she is woman or goddess.*" (Homer, *The Odyssey*, book X) and she converted most of them in pigs. Hermes helped



Odysseus and gave him a special plant so that the poisons wouldn't affect him "*I can tell you that you will never get back and will have to stay there with the rest of them. But never mind, I will protect you and get you out of your difficulty.*"(Homer, *The Odyssey*, book X). Surprised by the fact that Odysseus was immune, she fell in love with him "*sheathe your sword and let us go to bed, that we may make friends and learn to trust each other.*"(Homer, *The Odyssey*, book X). Because of that, Ulysses and his partners had to stay for a year until she accepted to let them go, and as Calypso helped Ulysses, Circe helped them warning them of all the dangers they would find during their journey.

Another tale where she uses her powers is this one: The god Glaucus, who was known for his unattractive aspect, wanted to seduce the nymph Scylla and only a powerful sorceress could make that happen, so Circe agrees to help him. But again, Circe ends up falling in love with him and she starts looking for him everywhere. Unfortunately, her beauty isn't enough to make him stay so she uses her poisons to turn the nymph into a disgusting monster with six heads thinking that Glaucus would reject her rival and come back to her, but conscious of the cruelty of the sorceress Glaucus didn't visit Circe anymore as a revenge of her act.

She also turned Picus, the first king of Latium, in a bird. Circe attempted to seduce him with her charms while he was on a hunting trip, but he rejected her so she turned him into a bird. When his comrades accused Circe of her crime she turned them too into a variety of beasts. After Picus' transformation she wandered madly through the forest for 6 days until she lay down on a bank and died.



20. Invidiosa Circe

It doesn't matter how powerful her magic is, she achieves nothing except her own self-destruction, caused by her evil.

In this Waterhouse's painting called "Circe Invidiosa" (1892) we can see Circe pouring a potion into the water where nymph Scylla swam, transforming her into a monster. In the background the dark colours predominate, making the green liquid stand out, the brightness of the potion might symbolize the power

and intensity of it. The image transmits the calm before the full catastrophic transformation of the nymph. We can see in Circe's expression that she is filled with jealousy, envy and anger, as the title suggests.

Through the water there's a blurred figure on the surface, who is Scylla suffering her transformation.

In this other painting, by John William Waterhouse as well (1891), Circe is on the centre offering Odysseus, who is reflected in the mirror behind Circe, the poison while she is sitting on a throne. The throne is situated on a platform higher than the floor, showing her power over the men in the house. All of them have been given the poison and are animals, we can see one reflected in the mirror, and one swine lying next to the throne.



21. Circe

### 3.4. Victim of a divinity: Phaedra and Cassandra

#### **3.4.1. Phaedra**

Phaedra was a Cretan princess and Ariadne's sister. Deucalion, her brother and king of Crete, decided to marry Phaedra with Theseus, Athens' king.

Theseus and Hippolyta, his first wife, had one son. Hippolytus had sworn chastity to Artemis. This led Aphrodite, the goddess of love, to initiate a plan of vengeance on Hippolytus. When Hippolytus went to Athens, she inspired Phaedra to fall in love with him. We can read the myth in Euripides *Hippolytus*, whose plot is as follows:

Phaedra, sickly, is with her nurse. After a discussion, Phaedra finally confesses why she is ill: she loves Hippolytus. The nurse and the chorus are shocked. Phaedra explains that she must starve herself and die with her honour intact. The nurse quickly tells Phaedra that she has a magical charm to cure her. However, having promised to keep the secret, she reveals Phaedra's illness to Hippolytus.

He reacts furiously and threatens to tell Theseus everything when he arrives. Phaedra believes she is ruined and after making the chorus swear secrecy, she kills herself.

Theseus returns and discovers his wife's dead body. Because the chorus swore to keep the secret, they couldn't tell Theseus why she killed herself. Theseus discovers a letter on Phaedra's body, which claims that she was raped by Hippolytus. Theseus, taking his wife's letter as proof, exiles his son.

While Hippolytus is about to die in an accident caused by his father's curse, Artemis appears and tells him the truth. She explains that it was Phaedra who lied. Finally, Hippolytus forgives his father for not believing him, and then he dies.

Phaedra can't control her passion, which will lead her to a tragic end. Although she has struggled to subdue this passion, her desire for Theseus' son remains strong. Phaedra is aware that her love for Hippolytus can never be fulfilled, and the shame that she feels is true.

After confessing her love to Hippolytus she curses the Gods for torturing her by making her love someone against her will, and she even asks for death since she *is "trying to turn shame into honour"* (Euripides, *Hyppolitus*, verse 330). The power of shame has overcome her, and she feels that if she cannot be with the man that she loves then she wishes to die *"Death will not only hide what good deeds I have committed but it will also spare me from a throng of witnesses to those deeds I am ashamed of."* (Euripides, *Hippolytus*, verses 403-404). She sees herself as a monster because of feelings. Hippolytus, due to the respect he has for his father and his chastity he totally rejects Phaedra and is horrified about it.

We can also see that most of her suffering isn't because Hippolytus rejection, but the consequences that this situation had on society:

*"I knew only too well that this madness I suffered and the deed that brought it about was shameful. Not only that but I am also a woman, something that men detest! Curse the woman who first began to pollute her marriage bed by sleeping with another one! Let her die a most miserable death!"* (Euripides, *Hippolytus*, verses 405-410)

Phaedra might be seen as a victim, it is her nurse who receives the brunt of the play's blame *"The secret is out! I'm destroyed! Out of love and out of a desire to cure this illness of mine, she has told him of my concerns! Love but betrayal also."* (Euripides, *Hippolytus*, verses 596-597). Feeling the shame after admitting her love to Hippolytus, she must face both her husband Theseus, the man she should love, and Hippolytus, the forbidden love. She feels confused and helpless and that makes her do some actions that cause viewing

her as a woman who has deceived and tricked Theseus. She creates the passion for revenge, the desire to kill in Theseus by writing that letter. She changes her role of victim, to victimizer. Although losing her life because of her forbidden passion, she takes revenge for it against Hippolytus. Despite the fact that she died to maintain her honour and that the situation was caused by Aphrodite, by blaming Hippolytus she completely loses her pride.



In this painting by Alexandre Cabanel painted in 1880 shows Phaedra probably after

telling her secret to the assistants. She is lying half naked and looking extremely pale,

ma  
kin

#### 22. Phaedra's death

g her stand out on the dark background. Her face transmits sadness, fear, and unhappiness, tormented by her passion. Her attendants look anxious and the oldest one, who is the nurse, might be telling her she has a remedy to cure her love. The details of the furniture, furs and fabrics create a luxury atmosphere.

In this other drawing by Roussy-Trioson done in



23. Phaedra

1824 , we can see Phaedra, who has just

killed herself with a sword, falling at the

ground and the nurse, horrified, holding her. She is grabbing a man's clothes, who is perhaps Hippolytus trying to escape from her shocked by what is happening.

#### 3.4.2. Cassandra

Cassandra was the daughter of King Priam and Queen Hecuba of Troy.

When she was a child, she and her brother Helenus were left overnight in the temple of the Thymbraean Apollo. When their parents looked in on them the next morning, the children were surrounded with serpents, which flicked their tongues into the children's



ears. This enabled Cassandra and Helenus to divine the future. After Cassandra grew up, she again spent a night in the temple. This time Apollo appeared and tried to get her, but she refused. As a punishment, even though Cassandra would be able to tell the future, she was also condemned never to be believed. Because of that, most of the people thought that she had gone crazy.

After the sack of Troy, Cassandra was kidnapped by Ajax while she was hiding in the Athena's temple but after he died she was given to the Greek commander Agamemnon as his concubine. When she arrived to Agamemnon's place, there is a situation in which she uses her gift to reveal the murder that took place in the house of Agamemnon, and predict her own imminent death, as well as Agamemnon's, at the hands of a woman:

*"That lord of war, who led the fleet and ravaged Ilium, has no idea what that cur is up to, what evil plans the hateful bitch is hatching, as her tongue licks his hands in welcome, ears perked up for joy, like treacherous Ate, goddess who destroys. It's outrageous— the woman kills her man." (Aeschylus, Agamemnon, verses 1448-1455)*

Even though the Chorus listen to her, they don't do anything concrete to help her.



24. Ajax and Cassandra

Cassandra, probably used to be in these situations, she doesn't expect anyone to believe her and accepts her destiny as she is conscious she can't change it *"Whether you credit what I say or not—that doesn't really matter. Why should it? What will come will come. And soon enough, as you stand here full of pity, you'll say Cassandra's prophecies were all too true."* (Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, verses 1464-1468). She also knows that Agamemnon's and her death will be revenged *"I say, revenge is on the way, someone's planning it, a craven lion, a beast wallowing in bed, keeping watch, waiting for my master to get back."* (Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, verses 1443-1446) so that might be another reason of her composure.

Cassandra doesn't blame her death to Clytemnestra, her murderess, but to Apollo "It was Apollo, god of

prophecy, who made me what I am.”(Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, verse 1202).

During the Trojan War there were similar situations: When the Trojans found the big wooden horse outside the gates of their city Cassandra warned them that it will destroy them if they brought it in the city. That's when she said the famous quotation “*Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes*”, I fear the Greeks even when they bring presents. Only Laocoon believed her, but he was soon silenced, and this seemed to confirm that Cassandra was merely raving again. The horse was admitted in the city and caused the destruction of Troy.

Usually, she is seen as a victim of circumstances, someone wronged by men and gods.

There are some representations of Cassandra in art, such as this one by Solomon Joseph painted in 1886. Ajax is abducting Cassandra, who was hiding, and she is trying to grab a statue to get rid of Ajax, but it looks like he is stronger and he will end up kidnapping her. Cassandra is the one who stands out the most in the painting, since she is a lot paler than the rest of the illustration.

Another one is this representation drawn on a ceramic piece, where Cassandra is being killed by Clytemnestra, as she foresaw.



25. Clytemnestra murdering Cassandra

### 3.5. The victim

#### **3.5.1. Iphigenia**

Iphigenia, daughter of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, is known for being killed by her own father.

The Greek army was at Aulis in order to leave to Troy, but the lack of wind prevented them from setting off. For that reason, they consulted the oracle, which said that they had to sacrifice Iphigenia so that they could leave. Agamemnon, his father, forced by the others ordered to fetch her daughter claiming that she had to get married with Achilles. After a while, Agamemnon regrets his decision and decides to send a letter to his wife to stop Iphigenia from coming, but Menelaus prevents it. At the end, Agamemnon feels the pressure to execute the sacrifice so he asks Clytemnestra not to be at the "wedding ceremony". Once Iphigenia and Clytemnestra get to know the truth, both of them are willing to do anything to stop it, even Achilles, very generously, decides to help them to stop the sacrifice.

Agamemnon ignores their petition since he considers more important his duty as a leader of the Greek army "*It grieves me having to execute this project, but it's my duty. Greece forces me, so it doesn't matter if I want this or not, I must sacrifice you.*" (Euripides, *Iphigenia at Aulis*, verses 1255-1257). As we can see, Agamemnon and Iphigenia are in two different levels, Iphigenia feels like his father is betraying the family, but on the other hand Agamemnon thinks he would be disloyal if he didn't obey the oracle. At this point, Iphigenia accepts her fate and gives up, conscious of what her death means to the army:

*"Greece is now looking at me, and it's my decision to let the ships set off and destroy the hostile city so that from now on any city dares to steal one of our women. Only my death could fix this, and my glory will be immaculate because of my sacrifice to my homeland. I shouldn't love life too much, many soldiers will attack our enemies with memorable feats, and will also sacrifice their own life to defend our glory, so I shouldn't be the one to prevent that, it wouldn't be fair."*(Euripides, *Iphigenia at Aulis*, verses 1368-1375)

So Iphigenia evolves and rises to the same level as Agamemnon, and now she considers the country more important than her life, adopting an heroic and glorious attitude: it becomes more valuable the objective of her death rather than the action itself.

Her mother Clytemnestra, on the contrary, never sees the sacrifice as a glorious action, she thinks that the aim of Iphigenia's death doesn't justify it, because she can't understand that the homeland is more important than family. She even suggests that she will never forgive Agamemnon for it "*How will you hug your children when you go back to Argos? It won't be lawful, Will your children be able to look at you without*

*feeling fearful? Have you ever thought about it? Or do you simply care about the power? (Euripides, Iphigenia at Aulis, verses 1191-1193)*

Depending on the source, Iphigenia was actually sacrificed or she was taken by Artemis to Tauris and instead the goddess left a deer in her place. For example, *The catalogue of Women* by Hesiod says that Artemis transformed her into the goddess Hecate.

There are many paintings that represent Iphigenia's sacrifice, such as this one by



26. The Sacrifice of Iphigenia

Leonaert Bramer (1623), where we can see her about to be killed and the rest of the army looking the scene. The man behind them, praying and looking up to the sky might be Agamemnon, apologising for letting this happen.

In this other painting by François Perrier (1632-33) there are very similar characters, including the man praying, but at the top there is the goddess Artemis holding a deer, about to exchange it for Iphigenia, who is in the centre of the picture.

This one is an image of Roman mosaic found in excavations in 1849 Empúries and it is thought that it was done at the end of the first century AD.

27. Iphigenia's sacrifice



#### **4. CONCLUSIONS**

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After having analysed different aspects of women during the Ancient Greece period, we can draw some conclusions.

##### **Women in Ancient Greece's society:**

First of all, when it comes to rights they had very few, since all the privileges were reserved for men. They were always under the supervision of a male, who was in charge of making all the decisions during all the stages of the girl's life. They were told whom to marry; moreover girls usually didn't know their fiancé and weren't allowed to own any property. In case they wanted to get divorced, it was incredibly difficult to accomplish it unless the man took the same decision as well. Anyways, divorce wasn't a common situation since most women were financially dependent from a man, as they weren't allowed to work unless they were slaves or belonged to the poorest classes.

Women's social life was quite restricted as well. Most of them had to stay in a special part of the house called *Gynaecium*, and in case they left they would do it with their husband's or father's permission and usually, if they belonged to the wealthy class, accompanied by a slave. Women from the lower classes might be free walking on the streets as they had to work to get some money.

In regard to their descendants, it was more honourable giving birth to a son rather than a girl, and in some cases their parents abandoned the new-born girl. It was a female task to raise your children and take care of them, and also, women had to run the house, keep everything neat and in place along with making sure there was everything necessary. In some cases they were helped by slaves and they simply had to supervise the work, but most of the times the wife was the one who had to do all the work.

Being able to raise correctly your children and running the house properly, being seen as little as possible, being reserved and discreet made a woman prestigious and honourable. That means that only women who belonged to the wealthy classes could be honourable, since all the others had to earn money themselves, so they had to be out and didn't have much time left to run the house or raise their children.

As to education for women, it was rather insignificant and basic, if they had any at all. They were mainly educated to behave well and do correctly the house duties. Depending on their social status they would receive a certain education, for example,



priestesses and *Hetaerae* were really well educated but, on the other hand, slaves wouldn't have any kind of education.

All of this meant that men were the ones with the power in society and women depended completely on them.

So we can see that although in general women had fewer rights than men, some of them had a better social situation and privileges than others.

### **Philosophers of the Greek period and their opinions on women:**

With regard to some Greek philosophers or writers, some of them talked about their opinion on women and their role:

- Aristotle thinks that the male is by nature better at leading than the female, so women should be controlled by a man and men should be in charge of everything, such as properties.
- As for Plato, he raises the question of what women's role should be. He has a different point of view compared to Aristotle: Plato considers that women are simply physically weaker, but that doesn't prevent them from being able to do the same or similar tasks men do. So for this reason they should be given the same education and have the same pursuits. He claims that the talent people have is determined by their nature and not their gender, however, he admits that women tend to be worse and slower at fulfilling the tasks.
- When it comes to Xenophon, he excludes women from society claiming that they must stay indoors fulfilling those duties will make and being discreet, since that's what makes them honourable. Since that's their role in life, they must only learn how to run a house and other home duties as well as controlling self-indulgence. One of the women's objectives is to make their man happy. Women should never be something else apart from a housewife, or anything outside home.
- In regard to Hesiod, he gives women an origin full of negative connotations. He portrays women as a punishment for humans. Women have been created to deceive and take advantage of men's work and to bring all the misfortunes to the world. The myth transmits an image of women as evil and dangerous by nature, and therefore they should never be trusted. This myth represents a perception of women seductive and desirable, but also dangerous, irrational, uncontrollable and chaotic, the source of all the world's ills.

To sum up, we can see that these writers, with their own hypothesis, empower the idea that females must be submissive to a man.

### **Women in mythology:**

When it comes to mythology, it is a really important source of the Greek culture since it was the main tool to educate the society, because most of the people didn't receive a proper one. So myths transmitted values and lifestyle of the Greeks, although we must keep in mind that some of the situations are fantastical and unrealistic, as well as the characters, therefore they aren't a reliable historic source. The women that appear in the myths and their actions don't necessarily apply to the real situations at that time, but it does give us an idea of the different images they had about women, since there are different stereotypes that get repeated in myths; some of them have either a positive or negative connotation, which allows us to see which were the most respected women and which ones were the most hated.

I have selected 9 out of all of the women who appear in Greek mythology and I have classified them in 5 different groups, taking into account their attitude:

- The ideal woman: Penelope
- The perverse women: Clytemnestra and Medea
- The seductive women: Helen, Calypso and Circe
- Victim of a divinity: Phaedra and Cassandra
- The victim: Iphigenia

So having classified all these women, we can see that Penelope was the role model every girl should follow if she wanted to be respected and honourable, whilst some others such as the perverse or the seductive warn about their strategies or how dangerous they can be, attracting men with their beauty or, such as Medea, doing some improper actions invaded by their jealousy. Others, such as Iphigenia, Cassandra or Phaedra are simply innocent girls who have suffered some unfortunate circumstances.

### **Similarities between the modern woman and the Greek woman:**

And last, we can also see how the Greek women isn't as different as women nowadays, as lots of situations that happen currently can be easily associated with the old Greek myths or actual acts in the Greek society. So still today there are many communities around the world where women's life resembles the one Greek women had.

Having ended this project, it is quite obvious to see that gender inequality was a real problem in Greek society, so in this case, finding similarities in the modern society with the Greek one isn't a good sign, which means that sadly gender inequality is still true today.

The equality of the sexes should be in all of the different aspects of life, so women or man shouldn't be limited with their education just because of their sex, they shouldn't get paid less for the exact same job, they should be able to decide about their body and their future, as well as participating in the political decisions that also affect them and having their interests represented in the governments. Moreover, everyone should receive the same respect as an individual and be given the same opportunities and be treated equally so they can reach their full potential and society can get benefit from everyone's skills.

Gender equality is not only a woman's issue, but men's as well, since building a better society, where everyone can have the same aspirations and being valued across all the aspects of life, is everyone's responsibility, not just of one of the sexes. So from my point of view, when any community reaches that, they will probably have the most fair society in that aspect.



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## 8. ANNEX

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Nowadays, thousands of years after the Ancient Greece disappeared, we can still find some similarities with the current society. One of these aspects is marriage at an early age because of economic interests and without the consent of the future wife.

Here is one example of this situation:

### ***Niña de 11 años fue obligada a casarse por dinero.***

*Una niña de 11 años llamada Nada-al-Ahdal publicó un video en donde relata al mundo entero el drama que le tocó vivir. Resulta que la pequeña fue obligada por su propia familia a contraer matrimonio, práctica muy común que se da en el país árabe de Yemen. La niña de 11 años fue obligada a casarse con un hombre mucho mayor como parte de un acuerdo económico de sus padres con el “novio”.*

*Gracias a la intervención de un tío, logró librarse de la boda que sus padres habían arreglado con un expatriado que residía en Arabia Saudita. Nada fue adoptada desde los tres años por su tío Abdel Salam al-Ahdal, quien trabaja como diseñador y editor en un canal de televisión.*

*Este video donde se puede ver a la pequeña de 11 años relatando como huyó de su casa para evitar que su padres la forzaran a casarse se ha virilizado rápidamente por Internet. Ella indica que sus padres ya le habían “arreglado” una boda con un hombre mucho mayor que ella, a cambio de dinero. Fue gracias a la intervención de su tío que Nada logró escapar. En pocos minutos describe la crítica situación que atraviesan otras muchas niñas que son forzadas a casarse en diferentes regiones de su país.*

*“Me escapé de mi familia. No puedo vivir más con ellos, quiero irme a vivir con mi tío. He logrado resolver mi problema, pero algunas niñas inocentes no pueden resolver los suyos y podrían morir, suicidarse”, aseguró.*

*“¿No tienen compasión? Soy un ser humano y preferiría morir antes que*

*casarme a esta edad”, “No soy un artículo que esté en venta”, exclamó la pequeña.*

*“Hay muchos casos como este. Algunas niñas deciden tirarse al mar y ahora están muertas. Esta práctica no es normal para personas inocentes”, fue el desgarrador relato de la la niña de 11 años fue obligada a casarse.*

*“Han matado nuestros sueños, han matado todo dentro de nosotras”, sostuvo Nada, quien recordó que su tía se roció gasolina y se prendió fuego cuando atravesó una situación similar.*

*El tío de Nada reaccionó rápidamente ya que el anuncio de los padres de la pequeña le horrorizó: “Cuando escuché del novio, entré en pánico. Nada no tenía ni siquiera 11 años, tenía exactamente 10 años y tres meses. No podía permitir que se casara y que su futuro fuera destruido, especialmente cuando su tía fue obligada a casarse a los 13 años y se suicidó”, dijo Abdel a un periódico de Líbano.*

We can see this is really similar to the situation from most women in Greece, with the difference that there are no evidences that the girls in Greece would commit suicide, maybe because it was such common to get married at an early age during that period. We can find many piece of news on the internet about this topic since it is a usual problem in the south-east of Asia and in the south of Saharan, Africa. That means that none of this girls have time to accomplish a proper education or are mature enough to figure out what they want to do with their lives, limiting their possibilities to become something else than a wife. They are simply forced at a young age to get married so their family can maintain a good position in society and don't have to take care of the girl anymore, which is a very selfish act. Moreover, the parents of the girl are taking away from their daughter the right she has as a person to decide either if she wants to get married or not, and who would she like to marry.

If they don't respect the girl's decisions, then that means she won't be able to make her own place in society and achieve her goals as an independent person. Consequently the girl will have to depend on her husband with everything, since she won't have any kind of income to become independent. So her family might reach their objective of



maintaining or raise their social status, but the girl will have to stay all their life as a housewife.

We can find as well *Hetaerae* nowadays, although it is now called luxury prostitution:

### ***Una noche con Berlusconi***

*Sale a la venta "Disfrute, primer ministro", el libro de Patrizia D'Addario, la prostituta de lujo que ha escandalizado Italia por sus confesiones sobre relaciones íntimas con 'Il Cavaliere'*

*"Disfrute, primer ministro". Éste es el nombre del libro que ha salido este martes a la venta en Italia y que cuenta con sumo detalle los supuestos encuentros íntimos de la prostituta de lujo Patrizia D'Addario y el primer ministro, Silvio Berlusconi.*

*En el libro, D'Addario cuenta las amenazas y los ataques que ha sufrido después de que se desatara el escándalo sexual que involucra a Berlusconi y a otros líderes europeos. D'Addario relata nuevos detalles sobre su vida de prostituta y, de modo particular, sobre las dos citas que hace justo un año mantuvo con Berlusconi en Palazzo Grazioli, la residencia romana del primer ministro.*

*"Desde hace tres meses, hablan de mí todos los periódicos del mundo, todas las televisiones del mundo. Me he ido a la cama con Berlusconi, soy una gran noticia", escribe D'Addario, de 42 años, al comienzo del libro, en el que describe con sumo detalle acerca de una de las noche que supuestamente pasó con Berlusconi, de 73 años.*

Throughout this piece of news we can see that still men who belong to the wealthy classes can meet with prostitutes that belong to a higher level than the ones in the street .Although these women might not have received a particularly great education, like the ones in Greece, they have the same function, as they also entertain and keep him company. As the *hetaerae* did, they also earn a good amount of money and they don't belong to any man, they are totally independent.

## ***Tres años de cárcel para el joven que vendió a su novia por 1.000 euros***

*La vista contra tres acusados de explotar sexualmente y coaccionar a una joven rumana, a la que obligaron a ejercer la prostitución en Vigo, se ha saldado con un acuerdo de conformidad en el que se ha rebajado sustancialmente la petición de penas. Según ese acuerdo, la Fiscalía acepta que Lonica B.R. sea condenada a tres años de cárcel por los delitos de trata de seres humanos con fines de explotación sexual e inducción a la prostitución. La pena de prisión se sustituirá por una multa de algo más de 7.000 euros. Daniel E., el joven que convenció a la chica con engaños para que viajara de Rumanía a España, ha sido condenado a tres años por trata de seres humanos e inducción a la prostitución, y a una multa de 360 euros. Este acusado permanece en prisión desde el 1 de marzo de 2013.*

*Finalmente, Juan Valentín P.C. ha sido condenado a dos años de prisión por trata, pero su abogado pedirá la suspensión de condena, ya que no tiene antecedentes. Inicialmente la Fiscalía pedía penas que sumaban más de 39 años de cárcel y multas por valor de unos 40.000 euros. La única petición que ha mantenido ha sido la indemnización: los tres acusados pagarán 7.000 euros a la víctima por daños morales.*

Although the situation that appears in this article isn't a common practice anymore, at least in the first world, it still happens around the world, specially in underdeveloped countries. In Ancient Greece there used to be the same problem: girls who were abandoned and found in the street, or families who had economic difficulties would sell those girls either as slaves or as prostitutes, since that was the easiest way to make a benefit out of them or to get rid of them. During that period it was an ordinary situation so it wasn't punished at all, unlike nowadays, as we can see in the piece of news it's not permitted at all.

### **30 años de esclavas cautivas en Londres**

*Londres tiene desde este jueves el dudoso honor de haber unido su nombre al de Amstetten y Cleveland después de que Scotland Yard revelara que hace unas semanas fueron liberadas tres mujeres que llevaban más de 30 años encerradas como esclavas domésticas en una casa "normal y corriente" del barrio de Lambeth, en el sur de la ciudad. Según se desprende de las confusas informaciones, tras la llamada de una de las retenidas a una organización benéfica, esta negoció con las mujeres hasta lograr liberarlas. Esta mañana fue detenida en el domicilio una pareja de 67 años, 28 días después, según el diario The Guardian, de la liberación de las mujeres. La policía ha achacado la tardanza en las detenciones a la necesidad de aclarar los hechos para poder acusarles.*

*Las liberadas son una mujer malasia de 69 años, una irlandesa de 57 y una británica de 30 que aparentemente nació en esa casa y no ha tenido nunca contacto con el mundo exterior. Aunque los hechos no están aún demasiado claros, parece que las mujeres podían haber escapado por sí mismas en otras ocasiones, pero no lo hicieron porque vivían completamente aterrorizadas por sus captores. Sufrieron malos tratos físicos y mentales, aunque en principio no han denunciado violencia sexual contra ellas.*

In this case we can see how domestic slavery still exists now, although it is not really usual to find this kind of cases anymore, as it used to be in Ancient Greece. As in the past, the girls who are in this situation don't have any rights; they are under the power of their owner so they must obey them and fulfil the tasks of the house. Occasionally they could be used as prostitutes for the man of the house, but in this particular occasion the article doesn't mention that those women had to prostitute themselves.

So although we've said that domestic slavery isn't common anymore, it is very habitual for some families to have women who help doing home duties, so Ancient Greece slaves who worked at the wealthy families' houses could be considered as predecessors of these women.

## **Los españoles invierten más tiempo en las tareas del hogar que en el trabajo, según un estudio**

*El tiempo que las mujeres y los hombres españoles mayores de 18 años dedican anualmente a las engorrosas tareas del hogar supera al que destinan al empleo que les da de comer, según revela un informe presentado hoy por María Ángeles Durán, catedrática de Sociología y profesora del Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC).*

*El estudio, titulado *El uso del tiempo en la vida cotidiana*, refleja que, mientras que el tiempo que los españoles mayores de 18 años dedican al trabajo remunerado es de 860 horas al año, las horas que se emplean anualmente en los hogares en actividades relacionadas con la cocina (comprar alimentos, cocinarlos, limpiar los utensilios) y con la limpieza o reparaciones equivalen a 793 y 558, respectivamente.*

*Del informe se desprende también que, si se suma el trabajo global, las mujeres trabajan diariamente 56 minutos más que los hombres, lo que significa que la carga total de trabajo de las mujeres es un 15% superior a la de los hombres. Así, si se analiza el tiempo dedicado al trabajo profesional, los hombres utilizan semanalmente en el empleo remunerado más del doble de horas que las mujeres (28,13 horas los hombres, 12,17 las mujeres), pero las **mujeres dedican dos veces y media más tiempo que los hombres al trabajo en casa** (36,50 horas las mujeres y 14,24 los hombres).*

*En cuanto al cuidado de los niños y los ancianos en los hogares, el CSIC revela que **las mujeres le dedican 10,78 horas a los más pequeños**, mientras que los hombres sólo tres. En el cuidado de los mayores se emplean anualmente 73 horas. Asimismo, el CSIC ha comparado los resultados de la encuesta con estudios anteriores sobre el uso del tiempo llevados a cabo por el Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE) y la Oficina Europea de Estadística (Eurostat), realizados, estos últimos, mediante procedimientos homogéneos en diez países europeos y referidos al conjunto de la población entre 20 y 74 años.*

## ***En América Latina, cascos y herramientas ya no son sólo para hombres***

*La rutina de Lucía Aquino Cuenca comienza al alba. Lo primero, dejar preparado el desayuno para sus hijos de 3 y 6 años. Luego, una ducha fría y a ordenar su vestimenta de trabajo: botas, pantalones cargo, una camiseta holgada, guantes y un sombrero. Lucía tiene por delante una jornada de sol a sol con una temperatura promedio de 40° grados haciendo lo que ama: trabajar en el mantenimiento de caminos rurales.*

*Al igual que Lucía, son cada vez más mujeres las que se animan a irrumpir en sectores tradicionalmente reservado para hombres, y el mantenimiento de carreteras en América Latina ha sido uno de ellos. Poco a poco, las empresas incluyen a mujeres en su nómina de empleados destinados a los trabajos más duros, algo que los expertos denominan “cuota de género”.*

*Así, casi un 30% de las microempresas que trabajan en un proyecto de mantenimiento de la red vial en Paraguay, son mujeres que obtienen por primera vez un salario por estas labores y trabajan mano a mano con los hombres. Otro caso emblemático es el de empresas comunitarias dedicadas al mantenimiento rutinario de carreteras en la región de Puno, en Perú, que están conformadas por un 28% de mujeres.*

*En ambos casos, se aseguró que las mujeres no desempeñaran labores tradicionalmente femeninas como servir comida y bebida a sus compañeros hombres. “Por más duro que parezca no es difícil. Simplemente hay que tener ganas de estar en este tipo de trabajo”, afirma Yuri Ibáñez, de la microempresa Paz y Fuerza que rehabilita rutas en Perú.*

*“Las mujeres fueron entrenadas para realizar las mismas tareas que sus colegas hombres”, asevera María Margarita Nuñez, experta en infraestructura del Banco Mundial.*

In these two articles we can see how women are the ones who spend most of the time doing house work, and how it is more usual to find men working, particularly in some occupations. The reason might be the role women had in Greece: their only target was

to raise their children and run the house, and that that's is still showing in our society: women spend more time taking care of their children and house duties than men.

In the second article it is said that the majority of the workers in the maintenance of the streets and roads are men, because it is a physical task. Not many women in Ancient Greece did physical jobs unless they necessarily had to for economic reasons, since they were reserved for men. Although it didn't had to be a physical duty to exclude women, since they were meant to just stay home, so that explains the abundance of men in the working market compared to women.

In some countries where they still haven't fully developed, and even in some developed ones, the incorporation of women in certain kind of jobs is an absolute novelty.

When it comes to myths, there are also some similarities in real life situations:

One of them is the horrifying myth of Medea. Although it might be hard to believe, the murder Medea committed has taken place more than once recently, for example in this case:

### ***Mató a su hijo para vengarse del marido***

*La voz se oye clara desde el asiento trasero del patrullero en que la llevan detenida. "Lo maté para cagar al padre." La que habla es Adriana Cruz, la madre de Martín, [el chico de 6 años que apareció muerto](#) en el jacuzzi de una lujosa casa en el country Lagos de San Eliseo, en el partido bonaerense de San Vicente.*

*"¿Lo mató por venganza?", preguntó el cronista de Telefé que logró arrancar la confesión. "Sí", fue la firme y lacónica respuesta de la principal sospechosa.*

*Cruz, que había iniciado los trámites de divorcio de su esposo, el contador Carlos Vázquez, ayer fue trasladada, en calidad de detenida, desde la Delegación Departamental de Investigaciones de esta ciudad hasta la Unidad Penal 45 de Melchor Romero. La Justicia investiga ahora si, tal como parecen confirmar los peritajes, la mujer durmió toda la noche con el cadáver de su hijo sumergido en el jacuzzi contiguo a su habitación.*

*Porque los estudios confirman que Martín murió 12 horas antes del hallazgo del cadáver.*

*El fiscal que investiga el caso, Leandro Heredia, dijo a LA NACION que [ya tiene suficientes pruebas](#) como para acusar a la mujer del crimen. Y sostuvo que no sería inimputable, ya que ella comprende la criminalidad de sus acciones. "No se ha detectado ninguna patología psiquiátrica de base en la mujer; esto nos lleva a presuponer que estaba en su sano juicio en el momento de cometer lo que cometió", explicó el funcionario judicial.*

*Heredia contó, además, que el cuerpo del niño permaneció flotando en la bañera durante casi diez horas, antes de que la mucama y un vigilador del barrio privado descubrieran el hecho.*

*La secuencia, dijo Heredia, fue dantesca: la noche del lunes último, la hermana de 15 años, la mayor de los tres hijos del matrimonio Vázquez, oyó un alarido de su hermano que le llamó la atención.*

*"Fue un grito fuera de lo común, pero no lo suficientemente fuerte como para generarle curiosidad. Y como ella y su madre estaban peleadas, la chica no salió de su habitación."*

*Sin imaginar lo que ocurría en el baño lindante con su dormitorio, la adolescente se durmió escuchando cómo, poco a poco, se llenaba el jacuzzi. "Al otro día, el padre la llamó por teléfono y la despertó para pedirle explicaciones de por qué había faltado a la escuela", explicó el fiscal.*

*Además, el representante del Ministerio Público afirmó que "la chica dijo que se había quedado dormida y mientras hablaba se dirigió a la habitación de su hermano. No lo encontró. Y como la puerta del dormitorio de su madre estaba cerrada con llave, se preocupó. Fue entonces cuando el padre le pidió que saliera urgentemente de la casa y avisara a la vigilancia privada y a la mucama".*

*Finalmente, cuando lograron entrar en el baño, encontraron al nene flotando en el jacuzzi: sólo vestía el calzoncillo. Esto hizo presuponer al fiscal que a Martín lo pudieron haber sedado antes de ahogarlo.*



*Según el informe preliminar de la autopsia, el menor falleció a causa de una asfixia por inmersión lo que le produjo un edema pulmonar que derivó en un paro cardiorrespiratorio. "Tenemos que esperar el resultado de los peritajes complementarios para saber si efectivamente el chico estaba bajo efectos de algún somnífero cuando lo atacaron."*

So as it happened with Medea, a woman in order to take revenge on her husband, since they were getting divorced, killed his kid because she knew that it was going to be the thing that would hurt her man the most. Her jealousy or annoyance, in this case because of a divorce and in Medea's case because of Jason's escape with another woman, was bigger than the love for her son. As crazy and fictional as the situation might look, it happened in real life and it shows how Greek mythology might not be that far from the reality.

Another similitude is Clytemnestra's myth, where she kills her husband with the help of her lover Aegisthus:

### ***Mujer mata a su esposo con la ayuda de su amante***

*Una mujer fue detenida en el sector de Patio Bonito en la localidad de Kennedy, luego de asesinar a su esposo con la complicidad de su amante.*

*La víctima sufrió varios golpes en la cabeza cuando estaba dormido, lo que lo dejó inconsciente. Los atacantes al creerlo muerto lo introducen en el baúl de su propio vehículo y los trasladan por la vía que comunica a los municipios de Viotá y Mesitas del Colegio en Cundinamarca.*

*Durante el recorrido el automotor presentó algunas fallas mecánicas por lo que los capturados decidieron incinerar el cuerpo sin saber que la víctima aún estaba viva. "Comprando gasolina con la cual, de acuerdo a la investigación que se está desarrollando, lo rociaron para después incinerarlo y tratar de borrar cualquier evidencia", afirma el comandante de la Policía de Cundinamarca coronel Flavio Mesa.*

*El seguimiento realizado a través de las redes sociales y los videos de las cámaras de seguridad permitió esclarecer los hechos y determinar la responsabilidad de los detenidos en el crimen.*

Here we can see the exact same case from Clytemnestra's story, in reality. A woman, helped by her lover, killed her husband. In Clytemnestra's myth it was in order to take revenge for her daughter's death, but it isn't mentioned in the article the reason of the murder.

Moreover, there's an example of Helen's story:

***Two men, one woman, one fight***

*A fight over a woman at a popular Polish-American club ended in bloodshed when one would-be lover slashed another early on Aug. 9.*

*The fight began at around 2:40 am when two men were both seeking the affections of the same woman, cops said.*

*At some point, the argument turned violent, and one of the men cut the other, sending the victim to Bellevue Hospital, and the assailant out of the club to parts unknown.*

*Cops say their suspect is a party promoter who sometimes works at the club, which is on the corner of Meserole and Manhattan avenues.*

This is a similar situation to the Trojan war: two men are looking for the same woman, and instead of letting the woman decided, they fight for her. In reality the fight is relatively small, in mythology it goes further than a simple fight and it ends up in a 10-year-long war. So in conclusion, Helen and the woman from the article, are both the cause of a fight.

## ***Belleza femenina provoca estrés en los hombres: Estudio***

*Si alguna vez te has preguntado qué provoca una mujer bonita en un hombre, un estudio realizado por la Universidad de Valencia acaba de revelar el gran misterio. Basta que una mujer atractiva se encuentre cerca de algún hombre para desestabilizar las hormonas masculinas y causar estragos en los hombres.*

*El estudio reveló que el hecho de observar a una mujer atractiva por un lapso de 5 minutos, es suficiente para que los hombres eleven sus niveles de cortisol, una hormona relacionada con el estrés, que altera el metabolismo celular.*

*Según el estudio, la belleza femenina causa estrés en los hombres y solo basta una pequeña mirada fija para que esta hormona enloquezca hasta llevarlos a una etapa de ansiedad inesperada.*

*Este estudio realizado en conjunto con la Universidad de Groningue, midió el cortisol en 84 hombres que fueron sometidos a la belleza de varias mujeres. Para ello, los participantes fueron invitados a resolver un sudoku en una habitación compartida con otro hombre y una mujer desconocida. Los investigadores se dieron cuenta que, con la presencia de una mujer atractiva en la misma habitación, los niveles de cortisol eran más altos, y volvían a bajar cuando la mujer se iba.*

*Este fenómeno está directamente relacionado con los mecanismos psicológicos masculinos, el peso de una cierta presión social que quiere que un juego de seducción se ponga en marcha cuando existe atracción hacia el sexo contrario.*

This could be an example of the effect of Calypso, Circe or again, Helen on men. Each of them has the control over their partner: Calypso made Odysseus stay during years although he had to go back to Ithaca with her wife, and the same happened to Circe, who fell in love with Odysseus and make him remain with her during an entire year, stopping him from continuing his journey. Helen's beauty, as we've mentioned before, drove crazy two men causing a huge war.

## ***Les dones del Sudan del Sud es declaren en “vaga de sexe” per la pau***

*Cansades d'aguantar la violència i la mort de la guerra, un grup de dones de Sudan del Sud han decidit passar a l'acció. Per construir la pau al país proposen utilitzar armes sexuals per obligar els homes a posar fi al conflicte armat, negant-se a mantenir relacions amb ells mentre duri la guerra. L'estratègia és vella i als amants del teatre potser els sona la història. Però el que sembla només fruit del mite grec de Lisístrata és ben real. Un grup d'activistes del Sudan del Sud han fet una crida a totes les dones del país perquè s'abstinguin del sexe per la bona causa de resoldre el conflicte. Solucions femenines per a un problema causat per un món d'homes. La setmana passada un centenar de dones -algunes diputades- es van reunir a Juba per buscar solucions al conflicte polític que viu el país, segons l'organització Sudan Tribune. Coordinades per l'exviceministra del Gènere i la Infància Priscila Nyanyang, el grup va agafar el timó per “avançar en la pau i la reconciliació” del país més jove del planeta. “Un suggeriment clau va ser mobilitzar totes les dones perquè neguin els drets conjugals als seus marits fins que els assegurin el retorn de la pau”, diu el comunicat en què les dones també exigeixen aparcar les rivalitats tribals impulsant una trobada entre la dona del president, Salva Kiir, i el líder rebel, Riek Machar. “Cal que elles s'involucrin”, afirma Nyanyang. Les activistes creuen que ha arribat l'hora que la dona jugui un paper actiu per dur la pau al país. La guerra entre el govern i els rebels va arrencar el desembre del 2013, i ha obligat 1,4 milions de civils a desplaçar-se, i més de tres milions a sobreviure amb l'ajut humanitari extern. Les sud-sudaneses no estan soles ni són les primeres. A Libèria i el Togo també han fet “vagues de sexe”. De fet, la liberiana Leymah Gbowee, premi Nobel de la pau del 2011, que va instigar les compatriotes a posar fi als 14 anys de brutal guerra civil al país, s'ha convertit en heroïna, la reencarnació de Lisístrata.*

Here we can see an exact example of *Lysistrata*: women in one country decide to stop having sex with their men in order to force them to stop the war, as that's the only

effective way they have found so far. It has happened multiple occasions such as in Liberia and Togo.

## ***Woman stripped, beaten and sexually assaulted at Tahrir Square***

*Yesterday thousands of Egyptians gathered in Tahrir Square to celebrate the inauguration of Egypt's seventh president Abdelfatah El Sisi. While many television networks have been featuring footage of large unified crowds cheering and holding Egyptian flags, one YouTube user posted a video from Tahrir Square, shot on his mobile phone, which documented a much grimmer reality for the country.*

*The original video, which was removed from YouTube due to its graphic nature, shows a naked, injured woman, attempting to flee a large group of men who have sexually assaulted her in the middle of the square.*

*The sexual assault was reposted by YouTube user Marwan Arafah, and already has over 148,000 views [Please note: Egyptian Streets removed the video at the request of the victim].*

*In another video that has gone viral, a Tahrir Channel correspondent is shown reporting live from Tahrir Square. During the report, she mentions a high number of sexual harassment cases. Before she is finished with her report, the in-studio anchor talks over her and states "they are just happy."*

*The Ministry of Interior released a statement claiming that it had arrested seven men between the ages of 15 and 49 for sexually assaulting "a number of women" and for injuring a police officer.*

As we can read in this article, in some countries women still are in distress of being abused or raped in the streets by men. Women in Ancient Greece had the same problem so most of them weren't allowed to leave their houses on their own, in order to prevent any trouble. Since the girls who belonged to the wealthy classes didn't leave the house often, they were more vulnerable when they were outside, but young women in general had to worry about staying safe while being on the streets.