SEXUAL ASYMMETRY
STUDIES IN ANCIENT SOCIETY

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MALE-FEMALE RELATIONSHIPS IN THE HOMERIC EPICS

F.G. Naerebout

Male-female relationships in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* have been written about for centuries, but the progress made is not particularly striking. Gisela Wickert-Micknat (1982) offers a comprehensive collection of the material in a useful but antiquarian way: the *realia* are diligently tabulated, but little attention is paid to more systematic aspects of the subject. Several of the more exciting, if not always convincing, recent studies stop short at Hesiodos and Semonides (Loraux, 1978; Sussman, 1978; Arrighetti, 1981; Arthur, 1982), while several of the studies which do include the Homeric epics are not very exciting (Arthur, 1981; Mossé, 1981; Woronoff, 1983; Weinsanto, 1983). Wagner (1982) is more daring, venturing out on paths which I intend to follow. She omits, however, to ask essential preliminary questions and gets too bogged down in speculation on the nature of pre-Homeric society. The present subject unfortunately lacks anything as innovative and inspiring as Gould’s article on women in classical Athens (1980) or Gallo’s excellent, if somewhat diffuse, article on Greek women in general (1984). Gould and Gallo succeed above all in pointing out the complexities of their chosen topic and in giving guidance to future research. Here I want to point out some of the comparable complexities of the subject of male-female relationships in the epics and to suggest some lines along which research into these relationships might proceed.

Several questions concerning the nature of the Homeric poems have to be asked and answered before we can start work on the epic material itself. These are not new questions, but they have to be asked time and time again. In the first place, we have to ascertain whether it is at all possible to arrive at some fairly comprehensive picture of
male-female relationships on the basis of only two epics. Do we have enough material? On a rough count, 1600 hexameters in the *Iliad* (10.2% of the whole work) and 2200 in the *Odyssey* (18.2%) tell us something worthwhile about male-female relationships. The content of these lines is reasonably variegated. A total of 3800 hexameters may not seem very much, but considering the plight of the ancient historian it is not very little either. Of course, the true apprehension of male-female relationships should come from a reading of the epics as a whole, but some information is simply not there. The almost total absence of information on bodily functions and awareness (hunger excepted) is very awkward; much of the 'Prosa des Lebens' (Andreev, 1975: 290) is studiously avoided by the poets. Thus apart from general remarks on heterosexual relationships, we find in the epics nothing at all on the sexual mores and behaviour (in as wide a sense as possible) of the men and women of epic. Many items that are important for reaching a full understanding of male-female relationships, such as menstrual and post-partum taboos, remain completely in the dark. Ill-health, deformity, non-violent death — all that strikes us as unpleasantness and which struck our ancestors much harder — are largely absent. Adversity only enters the epic range of vision if there is drama attached to it. This leaves our vision of epic society rather incomplete.

Secondly, we should ask ourselves whether the epics only provide information about abnormal situations (warfare before Troy, the Ithakan imbroglio, the tale of Odysseus en route). Are we left with a 'fragmented reality' (Kakridis, 1971: 68ff.)? Apart from the fact that our preconceptions about what must be considered abnormal in a given society might be beside the mark, an unbiased reading of the epics makes it clear that the poems in fact offer a very broad range of alternatives. 'Normal' and 'abnormal' situations seem to be contrasted to show the normative triumphing again and again over the deviant. Where the dividing line is to be drawn that separates disorder and inversion from order and the predictable remains to be seen. There is more at work here than merely literary considerations. Without going so far as to describe the epics as a 'tribal encyclopedia', we can single out from the manifold functions and purposes of epic poetry its didactic qualities. A poem which is intended to be didactic (among many other things) is likely to provide its audience with informative contrasts.

Thirdly, for whom are the epics intended? Are they poetry for aristocrats, about aristocrats, presenting the world as seen through
aristocratic eyes? Though the epics allow us several glimpses into the lives of less exalted human beings, it is obvious that most of the material concerns the upper strata of society. This has led to the supposition that the poets, who were most likely travelling démiourgoi not belonging to aristocratic circles themselves, adopted an aristocratic point of view to cater for their supposedly aristocratic employers' tastes. However, the subject matter of the epics does not tell us anything about the poets' audience (Kirk, 1962: 274-281). We simply do not know to whom these stories about the nobles were addressed and whose point of view is adopted. But this ignorance need not trouble us if we follow Walcot's view (1970: 15-20) that the society portrayed in the epics is a comparatively undifferentiated one. The differences in lifestyle and mental composition between social groups are rather differences of degree than of kind. Of course, there is no need to endorse a romantic vision of 'the homogeneous society of the past'. Differences of degree should not be glossed over, and 'similar' should be distinguished sharply from 'identical'. While the epics tell us about aristocrats, it does not make much difference whether the epics were intended for aristocrats (and it seems a priori likely that the audience was of a mixed composition) or composed by poets adopting an aristocratic point of view.

Fourthly, it should be stated that the vision of male-female relationships in the Homeric epics is an exclusively male one. The famous Andromache episode in the Iliad, showing a woman's ambivalent feelings about warfare, is often seen as an example of women's 'real emotions' (Farron, 1979), but this is wishful thinking. All we have is a male view of women's emotions. We might wonder, though, whether much would be added to our source if we did have a female vision, given the fact that in a society where women are subordinated (a characterisation which fits epic society too), we usually find an ideological subordination as well. In the way they express themselves, if they express themselves at all, women tend to subscribe to the dominant, male view of things. The best illustration of the extent to which women internalise male notions about themselves is to be found in the socialisation of children. During the educational process women transmit male-dominated attitudes and values to children of both sexes. In the end, women nearly always turn out to be defenders of the status quo. Whatever a female view would have contributed, we are forced to make do with an exclusively male view of the world, and nothing short of a personal interview with
Penelope will bring us back its female complement.

The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* thus provide us with a reasonable amount of material on male-female relationships, covering a sufficiently wide range of different situations. Some awkward lacunae remain, especially in the field of the 'history of the body' (sexual lore and behaviour, bodily functions and questions of sickness and health). The society portrayed is a wealthy upper-class one seen from a male point of view. The distortions created by this bias are of varying seriousness, but anyway they are irremediable and, as Syme put it, 'one uses what one has, and there is work to be done'.

If we can succeed in distilling from the two epics a reasonably comprehensive picture of male-female relationships, what we have is obviously an analysis of one particular aspect of a society, but what society? What is the relationship between the epics and extra-epic reality? As this perennial problem of Homeric scholarship has been treated in an astonishingly cavalier way by several of those who have written on male-female relationships in the epics, it is worth delving deeper than might seem to be required at first sight. The epics, the outcome of a long oral tradition, have been described as an inextricable amalgam of elements from many different sources, elements which during the long process of recreation upon recreation have been open to every form of idealisation, exaggeration and archaising (Hoekstra, 1981: 56; cf. Heubeck, 1974: 153-177), while the addition of elements created out of sheer fantasy, that is, elements related to reality in a tenuous way, cannot be ruled out either (Kirk, 1976: 14 and 40). To find our way in this labyrinth we might make use of external evidence, some aprioristic notions about the nature of literary work, or comparative material. The oral amalgam is best confronted with external evidence (Finnegan, 1977: 263; Vansina, 1965; Schott, 1968: 171, 186f.), but in studying Homeros we only rarely have sufficient external evidence, and in the field of male-female relationships we have none.

Textual material is lacking: we have to refrain at this stage of the argument from discussing post-Homeric material, which will only complicate rather than elucidate the matter, as we have to be certain that the external evidence used is a genuinely independent source. Linear B texts cannot be used because they have hardly anything to do with the epics. Several authors have convincingly shown that the epics contain almost no material that can be linked in a meaningful way to what we know of Mykenean society (cf. Heubeck, 1974: 166ff.; *id.*, 1979 [sum-
marised in *id.*, 1984]). Even if one does not agree with this judgement, it still has to be admitted that the Mykenean material tells us precious little about male-female relationships.\(^{12}\) Archaeology will not help out either, since male-female relationships are typically the sort of thing that does not leave much tangible evidence in the archaeological record.\(^ {13}\) Wickert-Micknat (1982) provides almost every scrap of even remotely relevant material (though she sensibly leaves out Minoan and Mykenean material), but even so this does not do very much to illuminate the epics. Imagery is very important, but notoriously difficult to handle. After all, 'the image is not the *mimesis* of the real... but an independent realm with its own laws' (Veyne, 1978: 54). Moreover, images that are supposed to illustrate some aspect of the epics need not constitute independent evidence, precisely because *they might indeed illustrate the epics, but not a contemporary reality*. Solid evidence might seem to be provided by the needles and pins, toilet articles, loom and spindle weights and cooking utensils, but these do not tell us very much beyond the self-evident, if they tell us anything about the lives of women at all, for the singularity of the written source means that reasoning is constantly threatened with circularity.\(^ {14}\)

In the absence of external evidence, much energy has been spent on finding other ways of distinguishing between fictive and historical elements, on tracing and eliminating distortions, and on dating the historical elements supposedly to be isolated from the amalgam.\(^ {15}\) The contrasting of 'imaginary' and 'historical' passages (Fränkel, 1975: 47ff.) is too simplistic. Fictive and historical elements might be found together in one and the same passage: it might be possible to hold a lifelike conversation with an imaginary Kyklops (cf. Vidal-Naquet, 1973: 275 n.4; Rockwell, 1974: 117). Several authors contrast plot and accidentals. On this view, the plot of the epics might be predominantly fictional, but the accidentals are historical. It is argued that the latter give us a picture of epic society that is much too plausible, consistent and coherent to be largely fictional.\(^ {16}\) But there is no reason why the fictional character of a work should be supposed to deprive it of plausibility, consistency or coherence. Anyone creating good fiction will try to ensure that it displays these virtues too. It is also argued that for accidentals to be relevant to an audience, the text must reflect the contemporary reality of that audience. Relevance, however, does not as such imply any kind of historical reliability: that heroes fought with monsters at the bottom of lakes was relevant to the audience of *Beo-
wulf (cf. Kiparsky, 1976: 98f.; Auerbach, 1977: 15). So long as Greek epic poetry was a living oral tradition, it took shape in a continuing dialogue between the norms, values and experiences of the poets’ audience and such norms, values and experiences as were expressed in the poems. In an oral context, every audience responds in a participatory way by expressing belief, denial or ambivalence, and it thereby helps in shaping the text. This must result in a close correlation between the reality of the audience and the contents of the poems, but we still need external evidence to judge the exact nature of this correlation. Calling the accidentals ‘plausible’ or ‘relevant’ does not clarify their position vis-à-vis an extra-epic reality. It has been shown that in other oral literary traditions, accidentals cannot be seen as always providing a reliable historical tradition. Not only plot but accidentals too should always be checked against corroborative material (Vansina, 1965: 80). As we have seen, such material does not exist for the aspect of male-female relationships. Aprioristic notions of what the usual relationship between a literary work and extra-literary reality is are much too crude and general to be of any help. The amalgam remains inextricable.

Before turning to our last resort, comparative material, it should be stated clearly what is being compared with what. As long as we lack sufficient evidence independent of the epics (we do not have and probably never will have such evidence for many aspects of epic society) and are thus unable to extricate the historical elements from the amalgam, to remove interfering distortions or to date a particular element, we have to renounce all efforts to locate ‘relics’ or to split the poems into several layers which would represent subsequent phases of historical development. Any inconsistencies, variations or contradictions in the epics can be explained in many different ways. Inconsistencies and the like could be the result of the literary nature of our source, as the plot makes demands on the poet (Kakridis, 1949: 2-5; id., 1971: 12f., 21). They could just as well be purely situational: what is threatening, for example, in one situation may not be so in another. They may arise from the fact that human life itself is full of inconsistencies (such as collisions between practice and system) and ancient sources should not be considered to be always attempting to make it appear otherwise (Dover, 1974: 3f.; Versnel, 1978: 6f.). Another possibility, exemplified in Finley’s successful approach to Homeric marriage practices, is to suppose that the inconsistencies are not there, but that
they arise from our lack of a proper understanding. The choice is open.

If we cannot unravel the amalgam, we should leave it as it is. The fact that oral poetry, progressing through 'additive oral composition', must be an inextricable amalgam of elements from different periods and possibly from different places, with inversion, archaising, idealising, fantasy and other kinds of distortions, is not a problem as long as we do not try to take the epics apart and to isolate 'real' and 'fictive' elements, or try to use the epics as evidence for a past that lies well before the final fixing of the poems. When we want to recover something of the reality of the time of their final creation (the second half of the 8th century B.C.) from the epics and to test the correlation between the poems and the audience's reality, we should take the epics as they are. If we take a fairly wide range of material on male-female relationships, compare this with all the epic material, and encounter overall structural similarities, we might be justified in supposing that the accidentals of the epics show us something of the reality of the 8th century B.C. This will never and can never be more than a supposition. Still, it could be a convincing one.

I intend to take as my standard of comparison material dealing with a wide range of contemporary situations in the Mediterranean, the Near East and India. The use of comparative material is fraught with difficulties, and above all it involves making choices. Discussion is rife among ethnologists working on male-female relationships and it is difficult to find a standard of comparison without committing oneself to the support of one party or the other. In what follows, I frequently do commit myself. There is no alternative when a communis opinio is nowhere to be found.

Asymmetry, inequality and domination of one party by the other are universal in male-female relationships. All known societies are sexually inequalitarian, and women are socially and symbolically opposed to men and evaluated differently. It is always the women who have secondary status. This secondary status is expressed in many different ways and the field displays enormous cultural variation. Despite major local variations, it seems possible to distinguish some basic patterns. One of these basic patterns, which displays a rather pronounced asymmetry in male-female relationships, is the Eurasian pattern, which is to be found in a large belt stretching from India to the Atlantic. This Eurasian pattern has the following characteristics:
a. the spheres of men and women are clearly separated and differentiated.

b. women live relatively secluded lives inside their homes and are veiled and/or chaperoned when they go out; in general women are to have as little contact as possible with men other than their husband or close kin.

c. marriages are arranged and are usually monogamous, with the male being older than the female marriage partner.

d. dowries form part of the marriage arrangements.

e. endogamy, in the sense of close-kin marriage, is prevalent.

f. women are economically dependent; they tend to be evaluated not in terms of their productive capacities, but in terms of their reproductive capacities, especially their ability to provide male heirs.

g. the pattern is ideologically buttressed by an androcentric ideology and by ideas of honour and shame.

The occurrence of this pattern over a wide area is explained by the prevalence of male-dominated agriculture (plough agriculture), producing a relatively large surplus. Land, the major productive resource, becomes scarce as the population grows. Access to this scarce resource is unequal, and families try to perpetuate this situation by controlling the marriages of their sons and daughters (because inheritance is bilateral: a dowry is to be seen as a pre-mortem inheritance) and by controlling their wives to ensure the paternity of their heirs. Misalliances and the birth of bastards are to be avoided. These ends are served by keeping the women secluded in the home, out of the reach of other men. This can be done more easily since agriculture is a male affair. Women are limited to working inside the home and caring for the children. All this is highly speculative, but whatever gave rise
to the pattern, its occurrence is well-documented.

Social stratification is a major factor (pace De Ste. Croix, 1981: 101). The pattern is found in its most complete forms only in the more wealthy strata of society. Poor women are forced to work outside the home to supplement the family income, thereby achieving some measure of equality through their economic role. The men compensate, however, by 'rituals of masculinity' (Driessen, 1983; cf. Marvin, 1984) intended to reassert their male, superior identity. There is thus an inverse ratio between items a-f and item g of the pattern: the less the ideal can be realised, the more it has to be supported by ideology. The following step is to see whether we can fit what the epics tell us about male-female relationships into this basic pattern.

Separated and differentiated spheres

In the epic world, men and women move in different spheres and perform different tasks. Women work in the house and garden and take care of small animals. The model queen Arete spins her wool while Alkinoos goes off to the boulè (6, 50ff.). All important female characters in the epics are shown spinning or weaving (III, 125; VI, 491; 5, 61ff.; 10, 221ff.; 17, 96), their servants and slave girls assist them or are preparing and serving the food (except for the meat, which is a male preserve: XVIII, 558ff.), building and keeping up the fire and carrying and heating water. There are also the children to care for. We find in the epics many explicit references to motherhood: the pain of a wound is compared to the pangs of labour (XI, 269ff.), we are shown the child seeking shelter with the mother (VIII, 271; XVI, 7ff.), the mother keeping guard over her sleeping child (IV, 130ff.), a mother who comforts her son (I, 361ff.), and a mother worried about her son (4, 817ff.). Actually the epics are full of caring mothers: Thetis, Hekabe, Penelope, Antikleia, Andromache. The ultimate appeal to the unresponsive warrior is the showing of the mother's breasts (XXII, 79ff.). Men work in the fields, tend the herds, hunt and fish. They meet other men to discuss politics, carry on trade and wage war: a set of ever-widening concentric circles around the focal point – the house. In the epics we have few examples of women who try to transgress the boundaries of their sphere: women who advise on politics or warfare are strongly reprimanded (VI, 490; 1, 356ff.; 21, 350ff.).

At this point we ought to pay attention to the debate on the
categories of public and private, since it has been maintained (Arthur, 1973: 19) that the Homeric world shows far less of a dichotomy than classical Athens. Indeed, in the epics the opposition of private and public is supposed to be virtually non-existent (cf. Humphreys, 1983: 22f.). As the dichotomy of public and private is central to many recent discussions of 'the position of women' in classical Athens, with the public world as an exclusively male territory (as far as middle-class, free citizen women are concerned), a possible absence of these categories in the Homeric world could be seen as an indication that the situation described there is radically different from that of 5th century Athens. The very use of these categories, however, is problematic. They are themselves difficult to define (for a start, we are hardly ever clearly told whether in a particular context 'public' and private' are emic or etic categories); they do not tell us anything about the evaluation of male and female; they favour a rigid systematisation that does not do justice to a complicated reality; and, as Rosaldo warned (1980: 409), we should be careful not to treat the study of the private domain (and women) as something different and apart. We are concerned with relationships, not with a female realm unrelated to the male world. Such a realm does not exist. A female sphere can be separate and clearly differentiated from a male sphere, as is the case in the epics, but we should at the same time stress the interrelatedness of both spheres.

Thus marriage in the epics is a partnership to ensure the maintenance of the oikos, a partnership in which men and women have different but complementary tasks directed towards the increase of wealth and the upbringing of children. It is in this complementary relationship, not in the separateness of spheres, that we find the asymmetry. Men appropriate female (re)production: 'man is the bourgeois while the wife is the proletariat' (Engels) – there is no reciprocity. Both men and women work for the oikos, but it is the men who tend to identify with the oikos. When Odysseus asks the shade of his mother in the underworld whether Penelope has remarried, what he wants to know is whether she is still watching over his son and his possessions (11, 178), not whether she is still waiting for him. Male and female spheres are separate, complementary, but evaluated differently.
In epic society the distinctive tasks for men and women do not seem to give rise to a strict physical separation of the sexes. Unmarried girls have considerable freedom of movement and are not kept separated from the opposite sex, but that is in controlled situations like dances; to be seen in the company of a strange man is injurious to one's reputation (6, 275ff.). Women do not live in separate quarters, or at least not always. We do not meet with a \textit{gynaikeion}, but women sit with the men in the \textit{megaron} (15, 461; 6, 51f.; 4, 120ff.), though they obviously do not share in meals. Penelope keeps out of the \textit{megaron}, but she is fleeing from the presence of the suitors (15, 516ff.). We may wonder, though, whether this is the reason that it takes more than a week for her to learn of her son's departure (2, 373f.). Women are not kept out of view. They can draw water from a well or spring (7, 20; 10, 105ff.), they do the washing far from home (6, 40; XXII, 153ff.), and they join in festivities (XVIII, 495; 6, 157). Arete goes about through the streets to decide in controversies (7, 72) and she is not the only woman about, for women argue right in the middle of the street (XX, 252ff.; perhaps this is the sort of controversy in which Arete had to pronounce judgement) and a road can be full of men and women (XV, 679ff.).

But even if women do move outside the home, if there is no real need to do so they had better not, for dangers are manifold and women should always be reticent in contact with unrelated males. Such males could be slave traders or rapists (15, 420ff.). If women do not stay indoors, they should be veiled and never move about unaccompanied. In the epics both married and unmarried women are veiled in public and are accompanied by female servants (III, 141ff.; 1, 331; 6, 100; 18, 182ff.). Even Kalypso, together with Odysseus, is veiled (5, 232), and in an absolute crisis Andromache and Hekabe do not appear unveiled on the walls of Troy (XXII, 406, 468ff.). Though we do not find anything that we could call seclusion, the epic women are clearly limited in their freedom of movement. Apart from on special occasions, women move between the inner apartments of the house, the garden gate and the well-house or brook, a relatively circumscribed world. When they do leave the inner apartments, they should not expose themselves fully to the view of unknown and potentially dangerous men. When Homeros speaks of the beauties of the female face he speaks of hidden charms.
Arranged marriages

Marriage in the epics is something arranged by men. Normally the kurios, who is usually the father of the prospective bride, negotiates with the father of the groom, sometimes with the groom himself. In this way fathers arrange marriages for both sons and daughters (4, 5ff.; IX, 394). It is not clear whether the parties concerned were supposed to have a say in the matter. Sometimes the father seems to ask for his child's opinion (2, 114; 18, 270; IX, 394, 397), sometimes there does not seem to be any consultation, as when Alkinoos offers Nausikaa's hand to Odysseus (7, 313; although 6, 276ff. could give rise to the idea that Nausikaa has some freedom of choice — has she prompted her father one way or another?). In one instance consultation is definitely absent, when Agamemnon promises one of his daughters in marriage to Achilles (IX, 144ff.). As was to be expected, amorous infatuation is not viewed with favour. Being caused by the gods (III, 64ff.; 164) does not make it any more acceptable, and both Diomedes and Helena speak harsh words to Aphrodite (III, 399; V, 349). The man who acts out of blind love is despised (III, 39; XI, 385), a woman in love loses her head and the results of her unthinking deeds are terrible (15, 421). Men should always be careful not to be taken unawares by a woman who uses her charms to arouse his lust and deceive him. Even Zeus is no match for Hera's tricks in this respect (XIV, 153ff.; XIX, 97). This does not mean that there was no affection in marriage; on the contrary, it seems to have been an epic ideal for a marriage to be an affective relationship.29

Monogamy seems to be the rule, if we discount gods, whose norms often seem to be slightly different from human ones because of their immortality — pace Adkins, 1972 — , especially in sexualibus. Priamos' household is the only exception. If offspring is lacking or insufficient, however, we find reproduction 'by proxy': men turn to co-wives, concubines or slaves.30 Thus Menelaos fathers a son with a concubine because Helena proved infertile after the birth of her daughter, Hermione (4, 11ff.). We also find bastard sons, who have the same rights as legitimate children, in families where there are regular sons (V, 69ff.; VIII, 283f.). It may be, though, that this is stressed so much in the texts (cf. 14, 199ff.: 'even the son born of an unfree women') because it is unusual. Such 'extra' children could be an insurance against untimely deaths, which seems a better explanation than to
suppose that the epics show concubinage (to be distinguished from casual sexual relationships between male masters and female slaves) as a current practice, whether there is a need for it or not. Thus we see some instances of opposition to concubines in cases where there is a son in the family and a concubine is not strictly necessary (IX, 449ff.; 1, 429ff.). One might be tempted to see in this a movement towards a more strictly monogamous marriage ideal, but that is not capable of proof.

Reciprocal fidelity is obviously not an epic ideal. Men have considerable scope for sexual relationships outside married life, but comparatively permanent relationships are the result of extraordinary circumstances such as lengthy warfare or getting stuck away from home (these relationships are actually ad hoc marriages). In the epic world, a sexual relationship between a man and a woman is considered pleasant and fulfilling. There is no suggestion that the male bonding which undoubtedly played an important part in epic society put male-female attachments in the shade. Homosexual relationships are not attested in the epics, unless we are prepared to interpret a not very explicit reference to Ganymedes (XX, 232ff.) in a pederastic way. As was stressed above, we have very little detail on sexual relationships, and in this respect comparative material is not always trustworthy either.

Women are esteemed sexual partners, but they are supposed to reserve their affections for their husbands alone. Here we have an obvious example of the double standard. What caused this double standard is one of the questions that lie at the root of the whole problem under discussion, whether we attribute it mainly to the fact that men consider women as their private property (Thomas, 1959), or to the fact that the woman may get pregnant. In the epics we find a frequent concern about fatherhood. Fatherhood is decisive in perpetuating the oikos, but then the wife must be faithful. One can never be sure about one’s paternity (1, 215ff.). A wife’s adultery is not a real issue in the epics. Apart from Klytaimnestra, wives are faithful. The ideal is to be faithful to a single oikos, as Penelope is. Epic men expect women to transfer their allegiance from one oikos to another. If they move to a new oikos, they forget about their previous husband and the children of their first marriage (15, 20ff.). These words are spoken by Athena to suggest to Telemachos that his mother might cheat him of his inheritance (Athena wants him to return to Ithaka quickly), but it is interesting that she chooses to say this and that
Telemachos acts on her words. A woman leaving the oikos is clearly not the ideal and is seen as a risk to stability. There are women who can be trusted, but one can never be quite sure: it is their husband’s task to keep an eye on them.

Helena has simply acquired a new husband (III, 329) and while she keeps blaming herself (VI, 344; III, 173ff.) when seeing her relatives die in battle, nobody else condemns her conduct. After the death of Paris she is passed on to another Trojan (4, 276). Even Aigisthos is said to have married Klytaimnestra (1, 29), but he took over the house as well. This does not mean that the deserted husband is willing to accept his wife’s departure: he tries to enlist the support of relatives, friends and dependants to get her back. The man who made off with someone’s wife damaged the ex-husband’s honour. If one of the suitors had married Penelope he would undoubtedly have been forced to contend for her after the return of Odysseus.

There is not much evidence in the epics to judge whether most marriages were of the type in which the male is the older partner, but there is apparently nothing strange about Nausikaa’s hand being offered to Odysseus.

Dowry

Part of the marriage arrangements is the offering of hedna and of dōra. Discussion of the nature of these terms has been raging for years (Wagner, 1982: 159ff.; Wickert-Micknat, 1982: 90ff.). The suggestion that we are dealing with a gift exchange like African and Polynesian bride-wealth practices (Finley, 1955; Lacey, 1966; id., 1968: 39ff.) is very attractive, solves many problems and is in complete accord with what we know of these practices in other cultures. In a few instances we see the groom himself coming to terms with the bride’s kurios, as he offers his services (or is asked to do so) in exchange for a spouse. Such a marriage is anahednos, for no hedna are involved. Nor are they when a bride is captured in battle or kidnapped. There is no point in presenting the material and arguments all over again here. One thing is clear: hedna are not a dowry.

Close-kin marriage

Outside the world of the gods we find in the epics only little
evidence for endogamy in the sense of close-kin marriage. The only two clear examples of such marriages are those of Iphidamas (XI, 221ff.) and Diomedes (V, 412ff.). When a male heir is lacking, however, the inheritance can be kept in a family by marrying off the heiress to a close-kin relative: the epiklerate. A clear example of such a marriage is found in the marriage of Arete, married to her father's brother Alkinoos (7, 54ff.) (Scott, 1939; Gates, 1971: 9f.; Wickert-Micknat, 1982: 93). Goody (1983) proposes close-kin marriage as a, or perhaps the, fundamental characteristic of social structure in the ancient Mediterranean (cf. Tillion, 1966; Pitt-Rivers, 1977: 126ff.), only changing when the Christian church forced an exogamous marriage pattern on society. In Islamic countries first-cousin marriage is still looked upon with favour, keeping the girls in the family for the boys of the family, as Tillion puts it. However, it is doubtful whether close-kin marriage obtained in ancient Rome and Greece. The only clear (and extreme) example from antiquity of close-kin marriage practised on a wide scale is that of the brother-sister marriages in Egypt (Hopkins, 1980).

In the epics we do find endogamy in the sense of marriage within one's own circle (a circle of comparatively wealthy families). Thus inheritances are safeguarded and ties between families developed or strengthened. In-marriage within village, ethnic unit, social class or status group, forging enduring patterns of loyalty and alliance, is not, however, endogamy in the sense of close-kin marriage.

**Woman's productive and reproductive functions**

A man cannot do without a wife, first and foremost because he wants to have children, primarily a son or sons. Every man is supposed to marry, even (all?) slaves (Odysseus promises a wife to Eumaios, 14, 62ff.). Even for a freebooter who prefers roaming the seas and doing battle, a life without marriage is inconceivable (14, 222ff. and 244f.). Offspring is the main concern of every married couple. They expect children to support them in old age (IV, 477ff.), but having an heir is most important (V, 154). A wife and children are mentioned in one breath along with place of birth, house and possessions and parents (V, 213, 480, 686ff.; XV, 496ff., 662f.). The possession of children is seen as a blessing from the gods and fecundity is at a premium (4, 207ff.). The line of Odysseus is seen to be in constant danger of extinction because it is a line of single-son families (16, 117ff.). The death of a son is a
disaster, especially if he did not have (enough) offspring to ensure the existence of the line (XXIII, 222f.; cf. the domos hêmítelès, the 'half-built house', II, 701). For a woman, married life and motherhood are synonymous. Unless one of the spouses is infertile, it goes without saying that every woman bears children.40 While it is obvious that the reproductive capacities of woman are highly valued in epic society, we are never told that their production is in any way essential. Though some authors (cf. Arthur, 1973: 13f.) have suggested that the epics stress the inclusion of women in society and not their exclusion from society as later sources are supposed to do, it is hard to find an evaluation of women's work as equivalent to men's work (cf. above, pp. 117-118). In the epics more importance is given to meat than to other foodstuffs. Tending herds is a male activity, while women only take care of small animals like geese, which are apparently only kept as pets. Preparing and carving meat are done by men. Metal is a more coveted valuable than textiles. Metal is acquired by male trading, textiles are made by women in the home. And so on. Once again it is not a question of including or excluding, of public versus private, but of differing evaluation. Slaves and servants of both sexes are a necessity to get the work done, while a wife is to bear children. Whatever else she may do – weaving, spinning, directing the female staff – is a pleasant extra.

**Androcentric ideology**

Several examples have already been discussed with the previous items: the differential evaluation of male and female spheres and tasks; the use of their sexual charms by women to deceive men; the fickleness of women, whose allegiance is uncertain; the sexual freedom allowed men and denied women. We can add the weakness of women, who need protection and cannot act on their own behalf. In fact, epic women hardly exist in their own right at all. The social position of free women can only be ascertained vis-à-vis particular men. In the epics we encounter marriageable daughters, married wives and widows with male offspring. With regard to the amorphous mass of female slaves and servants, it is unclear most of the time whether there are other men in their lives besides their male masters or employers, but a master is important enough: he can hang them if they behave in a way that is judged harmful to the oikos. It is obvious that every woman needs a
man as her kuriós or guardian. This is most clear in the case of Penelope, whose husband is missing (but is not known to be dead), whose son is on the brink of adulthood (but still has to prove himself a grown man), and whose father is still alive (but not present). Who is Penelope’s kuriós – many of the more complicated features of the Ithakan episodes derive from this uncertainty (Lacey, 1966). It is not only fathers, (future) husbands and sons that play an important part in women’s lives. We also encounter fathers-in-law (living under one roof with their daughters-in-law: Priamos, VI, 242ff.; Laertes, 18, 267; Alkinos, 6, 62ff.), brothers (Briseis, who mourns her dead brothers: XIX, 293ff.; Althaia, who curses her son Meleagros for killing her brother: IX, 566ff.). A brother is important to a woman because he is the future leader of her family of origin, with which she will maintain contact. There is no need to associate the prominence of the brother with matrilinearity (as does Hirvonen, 1968: 40ff.), a kinship structure for which I cannot find any clear indication in the epics.

Women should always give proof of typically female qualities, the ‘quiet virtues’ (Adkins, 1960: 36ff.; Walcot, 1970: 57-76). They should be subdued, retiring, modest, chaste and obedient. This is the norm for a woman, while quite different qualities are expected in male society (Adkins, 1960; 1971). Male and female qualities are evaluated differently: one of the worst taunts that can be levelled against enemy warriors on the battlefield is to call them ‘women’. Ideas about the ideal behaviour for both sexes are obviously related to ideas of honour and shame. We should beware of using these terms as an easy way out, though. If a woman is the locus of family honour, what is honour? Is it a set of property rights in cattle, land, women, etc. (Blok, 1981: 433)? Is it a competing to remain equal and to conform to a social code by living up to expectations, i.e. success, but success in a relative sense: noblesse oblige (Herzfeld, 1980)? Is it a zero-sum game, where one person’s success implies another’s failure (Gilmore, 1982: 191)? However one approaches the difficult notions of honour and shame – there is no room here for extensive analysis – the essential element seems to be that men need to acquire honour actively. Honour is something to achieve, something that a man can lose but can also add to. Men in the epics need competitive excellences. True masculinity is something that does not come naturally, but it is something for which one has to fight in order to get it. Women need not acquire anything. A relatively passive avoidance of danger by displaying the proper
amount of chastity and virginity (Schneider, 1971) safeguards the honour that is already there. Women in the epics need 'quiet' excellences. True femininity is something that comes naturally, but is also something which one has to be careful to keep.

If we review the seven items that make up the pattern, it is clear that the epics fit it, but only in a general way. Many details remain unclear and for some items evidence is slight or entirely absent. The fact that the androcentric ideology that is obviously present in the epics is hardly ever forcibly expressed (truly misogynous statements are rare) can be related to the importance of social stratification. As the epics describe the life of the upper strata of society, where the pattern should be developed to some degree, ideological underpinning can be expected to be weak. Hesiodos gives an example of the inverse situation: the pattern is not so easily realised in a less wealthy environment. A much more vehement androcentric ideology compensates for this threat to male superiority.

It is not so easy to deal with other items, such as the absence of dowries and possibly of close-kin marriage. We have to conclude that, on the basis of this particular comparative material, it is as yet only possible to suggest that the outer contours of male-female relationships in the epics do mirror some extra-epic reality. Even if this mirroring of an extra-epic reality is accepted, the lack of detail makes it difficult to distinguish system and practice within the epic reality. Further research, involving a detailed comparison of the epic material with as much comparative material as possible, might shed some light on this. In particular, material drawn from agricultural societies where stock-breeding is relatively important might be relevant.

If we are still unable to define the exact nature of the correlation between the society in the epics and some extra-epic reality, historians need not abandon the epics to the literary scholar, who can analyse the narrative aspects without bothering about historicity (cf. Fenik, 1974: 111 and 130). Every literary work is not only rooted one way or another in human reality, but also (re)creates reality. This is true of epic too. It is this process of (re)creation that the historian can study. Here we should return to the didactic function of the epics, which helped to shape the audience's mental universe. If we assume that this audience included substantial sections of the total populace – a reasonable assumption – the epics may be considered to be historical, not so
much in the sense of being about some past, as in the sense of being made continually into history.\textsuperscript{46} This is only true at the level of the system, since we are speaking about the audience’s mental universe, and as stated above, practice is not deducible from the system. We can thus use the \textit{Iliad} and the \textit{Odyssey} in reconstructing the mental universe of (a part of?) Greek society of the second half of the 8th century B.C. and beyond. This gives the historian plenty of scope for research on such topics as the use of Homeric women as exempla,\textsuperscript{47} or the continuing discussion on the received text of the epics.\textsuperscript{48}

If it is possible for the epics to be studied, with the help of comparative material, as a source for, informing us about the system and practice of male-female relationships of some past reality, it is certain that the epics can be studied as a source of, a \textit{fons et origo} and part of the system (though not of the practice) of some past reality. Either way, the men and women of the epics are not merely literary creations, but they are part of our past and present.
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NOTES

1. Extensive bibliographies of studies on 'women in Homeros' can be found in Hirvonen (1968); Wickert-Micknat (1982); Wagner (1982). Cf. Goodwater (1975) and the updated bibliography by S.B. Pomeroy (with R.S. Kraemer & N. Kampen) in Perradotto & Sullivan (eds.) (1984). An extremely relevant article by I. Morris only became available to me after this article had been completed. Morris' analysis of the value of the Homeric epics as a source for historical inquiry has very much in common with the arguments presented here. He puts too much trust, however, in consistency and plausibility of accidentals (Morris, 1986: 89-90, 115, 127) and his conclusions lack some of the sophistication of his arguments.

2. Gallo (1984: 42ff.) deals with women in the epics, but is mainly concerned with the refutation of the idea that the epics contain matriarchal residues and does not touch upon many of the specific problems to be discussed here.

3. On disease in early Greek society see Grmek (1983). For a general history of women's diseases (most of the material is from the 18th century or later, but has a wider applicability), see Shorter (1984). True to his 'bad old days' vision of the past, Shorter has undoubtedly worked in a very selective way to paint as bleak a picture as possible. I do not consider Shorter's version of 'anatomy is destiny' convincing, but the facts that he has so carefully amassed are grim enough. I do not recall having seen the book mentioned in any study on women in antiquity published since 1982: it should be required reading.

4. That is the position of Havelock (1963: 3-193) and Russo (1978: 40, 45, 49), with their one-sidedness eliminated: epic poetry can, and usually does, serve many functions at the same time (cf. Finnegan, 1977: 242ff.).

5. If the commoners are seen from the superiors' point of view, they are certainly not always regarded without compassion. Some have seen here indications that Homeros does not speak from an aristocratic standpoint at all, but expresses the views of an emerging independent peasantry (Rose, 1975). At any rate, Homeros was not unaware of those social antagonisms which were to find a clearer expression in the work of Hesiodos.
6. On the Homeric aristocracy as the richer members of a peasant society, see Gschnitzer (1981: 38ff.). On the basileus as a 'big man', whose power is strictly personal, depending on his riches alone, see Qviller (1981). It has been argued that the split between folk and elite culture is a relatively recent phenomenon (Burke, 1978). Others, such as Ingram (1984), warn against seeing too much of a split at all.

7. Of course, a 'male vision' is hardly ever clear-cut: there will most likely be much overlapping of the male and the female way of looking at things. Nevertheless, we do not have the story from an exclusively female point of view. The idea that the Odyssey was composed by a woman (Butler, 1897, still going strong in R. Ruyer's Homère au féminin [quoted by Délébecque, 1980: 135]) has as little basis in fact as the opinion that Homeros catered for a female audience (Hirvonen, 1968; Beye, 1974: 93f.).

8. This is not to say that women never have a world view of their own. Among themselves they may voice opinions that differ on several points from the male stereotypes, and sometimes women come to each other's support and force concessions (Dwyer, 1978: 161 on Moroccan women [though note that it is the male positive view of women which they deny, not the male negative view of women!]; Jeffery, 1985: 119ff. on pirzada women in India). In the end, however, the overall male world view is hardly ever seriously contested.

9. In the present context, 'reality' (and 'historical' as opposed to 'fictive') is used as pertaining to two levels — if we may so grossly simplify — which may be labelled 'practice' and 'system'. (This terminology is borrowed from the overview article by Ortner, 1984: 148ff., though the contents given to the terms is somewhat modified.) 'Practice' is what happens to us, through us and around us, a society's physical universe; 'system' is what enables us to classify and interpret what happens (or what is thought to happen) in the past, present and future and what tells us how to (re)act: the whole of organisational and evaluative schemes, a society's mental universe. These different levels can to a certain extent be studied in their own right, but in an empirical situation they always come together: the system shapes practice, practice shapes the system. The interconnections between the levels are often opaque, however. We find not only complete correspondence, but also partial correspondence and even opposition. We should never assume that the two levels are connected in a fairly straightforward manner. If, for instance, polygyny is the ideal, we cannot conclude that polygyny is the prevalent form of marriage; if monogamy is the prevalent form of marriage, we cannot conclude that polygyny is not the ideal; and so on.

10. Every literary work is rooted in human reality, one way or another (Rockwell, 1974; Lerner, 1979). Utter fiction in the sense of an
imaginary universe without any link with human reality seems an impossibility, however tenuous the link may be.

11. It is worth adding that the possession of external evidence would not put a sudden end to our troubles. In discussions on the use of literary sources by historians of the early modern European family, who have an enormous range of corroborative material at their disposal, we find a complete spectrum of possibilities (fantasy, inversion, reality, etc.) being defended (see e.g. Macfarlane, 1979:113f. versus Stone, 1977: 180, 272). If anything, this should warn ancient historians to be careful.

12. The best overview to date is Carlier (1983). On the Pylos tablets see Uchitel (1984). Billigmeier & Turner (1981) do not go much beyond the conclusions of the well-known article by Tritsch (1958), which have been shown to be quite unfounded (Ruygh, 1963). The few landowning women (probably priestesses) are interesting enough, but the scanty material cannot bear the many interpretations laid upon it, e.g. by Thomas (1973) – and it should be noted that Thomas is one of the more cautious.

13. Even when the amount of material allows some (pseudo)-statistical quantification (e.g. Cerchiai, 1982; Greco Pontrandolfo & Rouvret, 1982), we are left with conclusions that involve a lot of circular reasoning. Without reference to written material, the interpretation of the archaeological material would not progress much beyond the self-evident or the superficial.

14. To quote a single modern example: we have much 17th century verse in praise of embroidery as a quintessentially feminine occupation (Parker, 1984). If we had nothing but this verse, it would be tempting to see every 17th century piece of embroidery as an artefact of women’s history, but we do have other sources, and from these we learn that 17th century professional embroiderers were almost invariably men.

15. ‘Historical’ is used by most authors in the sense of ‘strongly related to some past reality’, usually without distinguishing between system and practice. ‘Fictive’ elements are those in whose creation fantasy plays a prominent part and which are only weakly linked to some past reality.

16. This is the position of Finley (1965), followed by many others, such as Adkins (most explicitly, 1971: 1) and Mossé (1981: 149). Wickert-Micknat (1982: 3) considers the accidentals to be ‘das selbstverständliche Grundmuster des Lebens’ (cf. id., 1970: 58). On the ‘plausible background’ in general, see Rockwell (1974: 117).

17. It has been sufficiently established that the epics are oral compositions in the fullest sense of the term. They are 100% oral creations, whether preserved (after final composition) by memory or by writing (dictation to a scribe or ‘dictation’ by the poet to himself) (cf. Janko, 1982: 41, 188, 191, 276 n. 1). Compare Jensen (1980), whose able defence of complete orality should be read in conjunction with Janko’s impressive study, but
whose dating of the final fixing of the text has to be revised in the light of Janko’s findings.

18. On subjective participation by the audience, see Foley (1986). In an extensive analysis of the 18th century Occitan story, Jean-l’ont pris, Le Roy Ladurie, who has external evidence available to him, convincingly shows that this story, deriving from an oral folk tradition, is not a model of (practice), but a model in order to (the expressions are borrowed from Geertz), i.e. a normative work. The story is related to reality, but it is not imitative of reality (Le Roy Ladurie, 1982: 146f.).

19. To mention two examples relevant to our present context, there has been and still is a lot of theorising about matriarchy and its possible relics in Homeros (good overview in Wagner, 1982: 13-37), but matriarchy, the matriarchate, mother right and so on should be considered figments of the male imagination: ‘the main charm of Amazonian fiction is to see how [women] live and move and have their being without any masculine guidance’ (Burton, 1886: 192). Not all Victorians were as critical as Burton: cf. Fee (1974). For a sketch of the background see Pembroke (1979). Most social anthropologists have entirely rejected these concepts and the subject is under discussion even in Marxist circles (Fluehr-Lobban, 1979). The whole thing is on a par with (and builds upon) the male fantasies of the ancients themselves (see Arthur, 1976/77: 385 for further references and add Briqueul (1974); Compernnolle (1975); Merck (1978); Tyrrell (1985)). It is thus strange that Pomeroy, who first manoeuvred with care (1976 [= 1973 lecture] and 1975a) let herself get carried away (1975b). On the extreme weakness of her case, see Den Boer (1976). Our second example concerns authors who see all sorts of shifts in marriage practice or in ideologies, but without any external evidence the results obtained must remain highly tentative (e.g. Arthur, 1973; Weinsanto, 1983).

20. This range is far too wide for an individual to be competent to handle. I have no access to a large part of the primary material and have to rely on the work of others. For bibliography: Davis (1977); Waines (1982); Gilmore (1982). Add to Gilmore’s list the following works on Greece from which I have drawn much profit: Hirschon (1978); Handma (1983); Rushton (1983). The material had to be drawn from a wide area to make a fruitful comparison possible (Galton’s problem; and cf. the strictures of Herzfeld, 1980) and contemporary to enable us to see something of practice and system at the same time. Practice and system were not so easily to be distinguished in the magnificent material gathered by the historians of the (early) modern European family, though at a later stage this should certainly be taken fully into account (for some guidance, see Plakans, 1984).
21. I am aware of the continuing discussion on hunting and gathering communities as possibly egalitarian societies (good overview in Tavris and Wade, 1984: 319ff.). No such community has yet been found and I adhere to the universality of asymmetry, with woman as the secondary partner, until it is disproved. This is not a priori impossible. After all, though women bear and lactate, a state of affairs which leads to some social organisation, a woman is not a product of what she does, nor of what she is, biologically speaking. It is in concrete social interactions that a woman's activities acquire a meaning. That is the point where we should stop speaking of sex and start speaking of gender (Deaux, 1985), and as far as gender is concerned, almost everything is possible, especially in the field of evaluations.

22. What follows is based mainly on the work of Boserup (1970) and Goody (1976; 1983), which I found supported by most of the more detailed studies used in the writing of this article.

23. This leaves the question whether this ideological compensation is a mere façade (the women who work outside the home really attain some measure of equality but let the men act out their 'rituals of masculinity') or whether it really works (the women cannot draw full profit from their economic role and remain as subordinate as they were). I tend to favour the second option (cf. note 26 below).

24. Following a convenient convention, references to the books of the Iliad are given in Roman numerals, while references to the books of the Odyssey are in Arabic numerals.

I refrain from giving full references to the text of the epics. Wickert-Micknat (1982) is a perfect tool for gathering very full references to most of the particular items mentioned below.


26. Stressing separation can also lead to the idea that women are not really subordinate (and indeed separation as such does not imply any subordination), but only in ideology: the 'power behind the throne' theories. Some separation of the sexes gives women the opportunity to live relatively independent lives and gives them the opportunity for covert defiance (e.g. Dwyer, 1978: 163; cf. Shorter, 1976: 66), but this is a far cry from the 'myth of male dominance' (as defended by e.g. Rogers, 1975; Cornelissen, 1976). See Gilmore (1982: 194ff.), who rejects a dichotomous and hierarchical model of sex roles. But rejection of the dichotomy need not imply rejection of the hierarchy.

27. If we accept the epic picture of lack of safety outside the home and walls, we would expect male servants, armed with clubs. Perhaps it is a telling detail that male servants are not considered the right sort of
companions for the women of the house.

28. On the importance of spatial patterns in assessing the social position of women see Ardener (ed.) (1981).

29. Odysseus praises the homophrosuné of husband and wife (6, 180). Laertes is more distressed by the death of his wife than by the loss of his beloved son (15, 355). Both Penelope and Odysseus evince a strong longing for the 'partner of their youth'. Several scholars are convinced a priori that this epic ideal never received translation into practice, on the supposition that 'the growth of emotionalism' took place in 18th century Western Europe. It is probably not so much the affection that people feel for each other that changes as the way in which they express this affection: see the perceptive remarks in Lerner (1979: x-xi); Segalen (1984: 21ff.); Evans-Pritchard (1965: 40ff.); Walcot (1970: 70).

30. The terminology is vague here because it is hard to draw the dividing lines between legal wife, co-wife, concubine and slave (Wickert-Micknat, 1982: 83-86; Gates, 1971: 17; Vernant, 1974: 65ff.). See the discussion in Clark (1940) on IX, 336 (cf. I, 29ff., 113ff.). If Goody's analysis (1973: 7ff.) of 'adding wives' as a 'strategy of heirship' is right, we might expect that what we have in the epics are concubines (slave or otherwise), whose task it was to procreate but who had no other formal rights.

31. What Harder (1960: 162) describes is a Person-Khc versus an 'Existenz-Ehe' (comparing the relationship of Odysseus with Kalypso to his relation with Penelope). It seems to be agreed in the epics that lasting continence is impossible, at least for men. Sexual contact is a necessity of life and renders it more agreeable. It is a theris anthrōpōn (IX, 132ff.; XIX, 177), and is bracketed together with sleeping, music and dance (XIII, 636).

32. The question is not without importance: we should beware of the idea that homosexuality, as an aspect of male sexual aggressiveness, necessarily leads to misogyny, etc. (an old thesis now presented in a new feminist guise; see for instance the deplorable phallic extravaganzas in Keuls, 1984), but it seems certain that institutionalised premarital homosexual practices can be linked with a low status of women (Creed, 1984). If one accepts the thesis that homosexuality in the Greek world had its origin in and retained many features of initiation practices (cf. Bremmer, 1980; Patzer, 1982; Sergent, 1984), we have to conclude that the practice existed well before and during the period that the epics took final shape (pace Dover, 1978: 194; Dover has since revised his ideas and now tends to accept the initiation thesis — see Dover, 1984: 240). But like so much other material on sexual life, it was left out of the account of epic society (cf. Patzer's convincing criticism (1982: 94ff.) of Clarke, 1978).

33. In comparative material this element is often suppressed. Herzfeld (1982:
30) notes how cumulative expurgation and bowdlerisation have led to a 'massively unbalanced portrait of the rural Greek as a sexual innocent'.

34. Versus Wickert-Micknat (1982: 103), a very odd attempt to deny the double standard. Its existence is most clearly voiced in Kalypso’s complaint (5, 118ff.) that the gods deny goddesses the sexual contacts with mortals which they themselves enjoy.

35. Two exceptions: Achilles when he is highly upset by the death of Patroklos (XIX, 325) and Eumaios, who is embittered by the supposed loss of his master (14, 68), but they are the only ones: neither Menelaos and Odysseus nor the Trojans complain. The shade of Agamemnon condemns Klytainmnestra in a fiercely misogynous speech (11, 405ff.), but he had after all been not only deserted but murdered into the bargain.

36. The attempt by Snodgrass (1974) to discredit the idea of gift exchange was not successful. For the facts see Goody and Tambiah (1973). An example of gift exchange in practice can be seen in Strathern (1972: 100ff.). An able defence of the views of Finley and Lacey can be found in Oviller (1981: 114f. and 121), to which the corrections made by Halverson (1986) should be added. For extensive discussion see Scheid (1979).

37. It is not clear, however, whether a woman captive could or would be a legal wife. Does Achilles intend to make Briseis his bride, or is she destined to be a mere bedmate (IX, 336; XIX, 297ff.)? Cf. note 30.

38. This is not a brother-sister marriage, as has been suggested by many authors (e.g. Vidal-Naquett, 1973: 290). Incestuous relationships in the epics are only found with gods. Lattimore’s suggestion (1969: 95ff.) that Nausikaa is to marry either Odysseus or one of her own brothers is not convincing.

39. Shaw and Sailer (1984) find no evidence for a prevalence of close-kin marriage in Roman society. Du Boulay (1984: 551) suggests that in Greece exogamy may have been the norm before it was declared binding by the Christian church and that this norm might have been 'stimulating, justifying, or legitimizing, the Conciliar prescriptions of the 6th century'. Cf. Herzfeld (1983). Thompson (1967) presents the evidence for first-cousin marriage in classical Athens. Though only attested among the wealthy, Thompson thinks close-kin marriage may have been a usual pattern of intermarriage (1967: 279), though proof is lacking.

40. Versus Wickert-Micknat (1982: 9). To say that the epics show a world full of married women but lacking mothers is anachronistic, for it is only in contemporary Western society that the two are not necessarily the same. As Athene puts it to Nausikaa (6, 33), the maturing girl, as yet unmarried and not yet a mother, 'will not remain a girl for long', that is, she will marry and bear children.

41. The central role played by the maturation of Telemachos is stressed by

42. Versus Hirvoncn (1968: 40ff.). Two different approaches to Homeric kinship structures: Gates (1971) and Szemerényi (1977). It is, however, impossible to use linguistic or structural similarities in the system of naming kin to draw any conclusions of a sociological nature (Peters, 1976: 27; Gates, 1971: 36). I refrain from discussing in the present context the by no means irrelevant problem of the role played by maternal kin in the upbringing of children ( fostering: Gernet, 1955: 19-28), on which cf. Bremmer (1983). The fact that maternal kin is recognised in one way or another requires no special explanation, since this is encountered in every organisation of descent groups, even the most strictly patrilineal (cf. Peters, 1976; Goody, 1983: 226). As to the particular form this recognition took in Greek society, it might be suggested that the position of a woman’s father or eldest brother as head of the *oikos* is of crucial importance.

43. There is nothing on this phenomenon in Adkins (1969) nor in Hohendahl-Zoetelief (1980), who has almost 40 pages on verbal abuse. A detailed analysis of this form of abuse, preferably making use of parallels from other cultures, would be most welcome.

44. See Herzfeld (1980), who pleads for the study of local taxonomy in a local context. Ideas on honour and shame are woven into the way people see the surrounding world. They do not form a single opposition, but are a part of a complex of oppositions (cf. Blok, 1981: 430ff.).

45. This dual functioning of a literary work is a popular item in feminist critiques of fiction (e.g. Stubbs, 1979), because it is one of the ways in which a male-dominated world view is sustained. Dwyer (1978) demonstrates the role of folk tales in teaching Moroccans what maleness and femaleness are; the telling of tales perpetuates the current ideology and power structure. On epic as mirror and paradigm, (though with the interference of the idea of the ‘tribal encyclopedia’) see Havelock (1963: 115). On oral poetry in general as both mirroring and creating reality, see Finnegan (1977: 268ff.).

46. This is a continuous process. Mirroring reality is a unique occasion. In an oral tradition we find a continuing series of such unique occasions, because a text is constantly being modified, but this process ends when the text is fixed. (Re)creating reality, on the other hand, goes on as long as the text is being read or recited.


48. E.g. the critical efforts of Aristarchos, who athetised VI, 433ff. (Andro-
mache tries to advise Hektor), XX, 252 (women are having an argument out on the street), 6, 244ff. (Nausikaa expresses her longing to have a man like Odysseus for a husband). Cf. Ploutarchos, *Moralia* 27b. On the reception of Homeros, see references in Strasburger (1972).

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