THE NEW CLASSICAL CANON

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THREE PLAYS by ARISTOPHANES

Staging Women

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INTRODUCTION

1. The Historical Context

*Lysistrata* was produced at the Lenaia of 411, twenty years into the Peloponnesian War, a panhellenic struggle pitting Athens and her island empire against Sparta and her allies. Athens and Sparta had emerged from the Persian invasions (490–478) as the two superpowers of Greece. Athens, relying on her navy, had turned a defensive alliance against Persia into a tribute-paying empire composed mainly of small subject states with democratic governments controlled by the Athenian demos. Sparta, the chief city of the Peloponnesse (the lower half of mainland Greece) and the greatest land power in Greece, feared the growing power of Athens and disapproved of its imperialism and its democratic government. Although Perikles, the major proponent of the war, had predicted a quick victory, the war lasted for 27 years, ending in 404 with Athens’ loss of her navy, her empire and even (for a time) her democracy.

At the start many Athenians questioned Perikles’ war-plan. First, it granted the Spartans supremacy on land and allowed them to invest the Attic countryside, so that farmers and landowners had to abandon the countryside to the invaders and move into the city, where they spent the first six years of the war as virtual refugees. Second, it proved too passive for a quick victory, so that by 428 the Athenians had run through their financial reserves and were forced to raise new funds. The burden fell mainly on the wealthy (especially the landed aristocracy), on the farmers and on the subject allies, while the benefits went mainly to those who could profit financially or politically in wartime conditions: military provisioners, ambitious commanders, popular leaders. In his early plays Aristophanes championed the former group and denounced the latter. After ten years of indecisive warfare and internal division at Athens, the Peace of Nikias was arranged in 421. But it proved to be merely a time-out, lasting
only until 418, when Athens accused Sparta of violating its terms and embarked on aggressive new campaigns.

The war began to go decisively against the Athenians in 413, when their great armada, launched in 415 in hopes of conquering Sicily, was wiped out at Syracuse, with crippling losses of men, material and wealth. Important territory fell out of Athenian control; several major allies quickly defected from the empire and others threatened to follow suit; the Persians were negotiating with Sparta; and many believed that Athens would soon be helpless. By the end of 412, however, the Athenians had somehow managed to stave off defeat by winning back some strategic territory and rebuilding an effective navy. The political and fiscal discipline required to do this was facilitated by the agreement of the Assembly to accept the imposition of restraints on its own autonomy, in particular the appointment of an extraordinary board of ten elderly statesmen (including the tragic poet Sophokles) called Probooli ("executive councillors"), who could expedite the war-effort by bypassing the popular Assembly. An unnamed member of this board is the heroine's antagonist in Lysistrata.

But in spite of their political housecleaning and their renewed hope of achieving an honorable peace, the Athenians at the time of Lysistrata (the Lenaia festival of 411) were still in a bad way, once again surrounded by a Spartan army of occupation, unsure of their remaining allies, financially straitened and politically volatile. And the audience that watched Lysistrata did not yet know the worst: that officers of the main Athenian naval base at Samos had entered into talks with the exiled Athenian aristocrat, Alkibiades, who promised to bring Persia into alliance with Athens if the Athenians would arrange his recall and agree to "a more moderate constitution with a rather smaller number eligible to hold office." The general Peisandros—the only politician singled out by name for abuse in the play—had recently returned from Samos to engineer the acceptance of Alkibiades' demands but had not yet put them before the people in Assembly. The following months would see the formation of an antidemocratic conspiracy complete with a campaign of propaganda, intimidation and assassination. Although Alkibiades was ultimately unable to deliver Persian support for Athens, the conspirators moved ahead with their plans anyway, and by summer they had succeeded in installing (temporarily) an oligarchic government.

2. The Play

Although Lysistrata has a heroine, portrays a battle of the sexes and has much to say about men and women, sex and gender, its main theme is peace—political peace at home and an end to the great war between Greeks—and its characteristics are constructed to develop that theme.

An Athenian woman named Lysistrata organizes and successfully prosecutes a panhellenic conspiracy of wives that forces the men of Athens and Sparta to negotiate a peaceful settlement of the war and promise never to fight one another again. Her conspiracy consists of two separate initiatives. One is a conjugal strike, whose divine supporter is Aphrodite, goddess of sexual enjoyment: the young wives from all the warring states will refuse to perform their domestic (especially sexual) duties until their warrior-husbands lay down their arms and come home to stay. The other initiative is the occupation of the Akropolis, the sacred citadel of Athens, and its divine supporter is Athena, goddess of domestic arts and protector of the polis: by denying access to the state treasuries, which were kept on the Akropolis under Athena's aegis, the politicians will no longer be able to fund the war-effort. The occupation is carried out by the older women of Athens, who are too old to participate in the conjugal strike; when they have secured the Akropolis the young wives join them there. The strike-plot, described in the prologue and illustrated later in the play by Kinesias and Myrrhin, succeeds virtually unopposed: after only six days the young warriors are sexually desperate enough to agree to whatever terms Lysistrata demands. The occupation-plot contains the agonistic component of the play: strife between semi-choruses of old men who storm the Akropolis and old women who repulse them, and a debate between Lysistrata and an elderly Magistrate (one of the board of ten Probooli) who has come to arrest her. When the occupation-plot has eliminated official opposition, and the strike-plot has made the young husbands capitulate to their wives, Athenian and Spartan ambassadors negotiate their differences and promise eternal friendship. Reconciliation of the semi-choruses prefigrures reconciliation between the warring cities and symbolizes the end of bitter divisiveness between sexes and citizens generally. Lysistrata's name, though it was borne by actual women, is appropriate to her dramatic role both strategic and sexual: it means "Disbander of Armies," with the first element (Lysi-) also connoting the power of sexual desire to "loosen" a man's limbs.

The plot of Lysistrata is typical of Aristophanes' "heroic" plays (the others are Acharnians, Peace, Birds and Assemblywomen). By means of a fantastic scheme a hero(ine), who typifies a class of citizens who feel frustrated or victimized by the operations of contemporary society, manages to evade or alter the situation about which (s)he initially complains and proceeds to effect a triumph of wish-fulfilment over reality. Those powers human, natural or divine which would obstruct the scheme are either converted by argument or overcome by guile, magic or force. At the end there is a restoration of normality (typically portrayed in terms of an idealized civic past) and a celebration (typi-
military actions, women—and therefore the vantage-point of the family—were excluded. In this role comedy was a form of experimental politics.³

But Lysistrata differs in important ways from earlier comic plays. The idea of making the comic savior-hero a woman was apparently new: although tragic and other mythical heroines were not uncommon, we know of no comic heroine before Lysistrata. That the heroine acts not alone (like the heroes of earlier plays) but in concert with, and as the leader of, her whole class (citizen women both Athenian and foreign) seems to be a further novelty. Over and above sheer novelty, however, these ideas made political and dramatic sense: creating not a hero but a heroine solved some difficult problems confronting a poet with an appeal for peace in early 411. The volatile political atmosphere discouraged the usual finger-pointing, and an appeal for solidarity ruled out a hero representing any of the embattled factions. Somehow Aristophanes had to find a respectable citizen-hero who could make plausible arguments for reconciliation at home and abroad while at the same time standing outside and above the prevailing political turmoil and the military uncertainty. To make the hero a woman was an effective, and perhaps the only available solution. Furthermore, to portray women as a united class provided an ideal model for the important theme of solidarity, which Aristophanes urged both for citizen males at home and for the Greek states generally. The women’s concerted action in a just cause contrasts sharply with the factional and chaotic actions of the men, just as the old notion of a “race of women” (see Introduction, IV) neatly exemplifies a wished-for “race of Greeks” at peace with one another.

But the women of Lysistrata are no mere mouthpieces for male arguments, even though Aristophanes’ appeal for peace and solidarity is directed to the men in his audience (after all, the men were the only people in a position to act on his advice). As the women are careful to point out, their real-life counterparts all had a vested interest in the war and had sacrificed much; they represented every group and social class, and each combatant city; they had had nothing to do with bringing on the war in the first place; and though they stood outside its politics, they were integral to the polis: their importance in the home and in the cults of the gods entitled them to give sane advice to the men of their respective cities. And surely their comic complaints echo the complaints that actual women would indeed have been making at this time.⁴ By using women as his heroic voices, Aristophanes could admonish and advise the Athenians from an unpartisan direction (the private world), and in case the spectators should be offended they would have to admit that it was only a woman talking.

The utopian fantasy of Lysistrata also differs from the other comedies in being more practical. Its characters’ actions are not fundamentally outside the realm of human possibility, nor do they alter their characteristic situations or
adopt uncharacteristic ones. That women might occupy and barricade the Akropolis is of course highly unlikely in fifth-century Athens, but it is not unthinkable: after all, women, not men, normally had business on the Akropolis, which belonged to Athena and not to the male government, and the women are more or less in asylum there; the theme of helpless people taking refuge from malevolent men was a familiar one in epic and tragedy. And tactical dereliction of domestic duties has always been a wife’s chief weapon under patriarchal systems. By continuing the war the men (warrior-husbands, politicians and their supporters) have threatened the survival of the polis, and the women stop them simply by withholding their services as wives and mothers and by transferring their skills as managers of the household and its finances temporarily to the Akropolis. Though Lysistrata protests women’s exclusion from policy-making that affects women’s lives, the women do not question their ordinary roles or seek in any way to change them; they merely want to force the men to listen to their good advice, then return to their ordinary lives, which the war has disrupted. Unlike the gynocentricity of Assemblywomen, where the women adopt exclusively masculine roles, usurp public functions reserved for men and effect fundamental and permanent changes in Athenian society, the women’s rebellion in Lysistrata aims only to restore pre-war normality. The women do not take power from the men and become rulers, but only obstruct the men in order to safeguard the state’s money until the men come to their senses; their conspiracy is unselfish and temporary and relies not on magical or supernatural mechanisms but only on the traditional skills, attributes and prerogatives peculiar to their gender: domestic management, care of kin, procreation.

Both the practicality and the idealism of Lysistrata’s scheme required Aristophanes to represent domestic life in a more sympathetic manner than was usual in drama. The extramarital outlets for husbands that in actual life were normally available (slaves and prostitutes of either sex), an l which enabled husbands to neglect their wives if they so chose, are ignored in order to motivate the sexual tension on which the strike-plot turns. And in spite of the wives’ stereotypical preoccupation with sex, it is their husbands they long for, not lovers. Drawn from life, too, is the wives’ complaint that war disrupts domestic life, the sphere after all where Athenian women were traditionally in charge and from which they drew their civic identity and had their safety. Although the household could be portrayed, as it often was in tragedy, as a place of dangerous disharmony or, as elsewhere in comedy, as a venue for selfish female conspiracies against men (e.g., in Women at the Thesmophoria), in Lysistrata the household and its women are shown to embody the stable core of Athenian life both civic and religious. Lysistrata’s plan may be a conspiracy, but not the kind that the spectators would initially expect. It is a noble conspir-acy designed to save the men and the polis, and so the women and their typical roles are portrayed in a largely positive light that is unusual in comedy but continuous with such traditional figures as the Andromache of epic and the self-sacrificing heroines of Euripides’ recent tragedies.

The really fantastic idea in Lysistrata thus lies not in its portrayal of the women themselves but in its projection of their characteristic roles outside the domestic sphere. Aristophanes’ comic mechanism is to assimilate the polis (Athens) to the individual household, and the aggregate of poleis (Greece) to a neighborhood. For in effect, Lysistrata converts the Akropolis into a household for all citizen women. Its exclusivity turns the tables on the men, who have neglected their wives and excluded them from the process of policy-making. And just as a wife might protect the household money from a spendthrift husband, so Lysistrata bars the Magistrate’s access to the state treasuries. Fantastic, too, is the strength, independence and discipline displayed by the women versus the weakness, dependency and rapid capitulation of the men: a reversal of prevailing gender stereotypes and one that in Athenian terms could only reflect badly on the men. If this reversal, despite its humor, struck many men in the audience as threatening in principle (compare the dangerous female usurper Klytaimestra in Aeschylus’ Agamemnon), the women’s return to normality in the end would have been reassuring.

Except for Lysistrata, the play’s characters are portrayed as conventional citizens and conform to the prevailing (male) stereotypes of gender, class and (in the case of the foreigners) ethnicity. The young wives (typified by Myrrhine) bear the brunt of Aristophanes’ male-oriented jokes at the expense of women: as usual in comic satire of women, the wives are portrayed as frivolous, bibulous, ignorant of realities outside the home, obsessed with sex, untrustworthy and prone to making silly excuses for their misbehavior. The Spartan wife, Lampito, is an exception, being more courageous and politically astute than the Athenian wives; but for the sake of the plot Lysistrata’s chief foreign counterpart must be given a certain stature. For Lampito, the humor involves not frivolousness but rather ethnic jokes at the expense of Spartans. The wives’ antagonists, the young warriors (typified by Myrrhine’s husband, Kinesias), fare little better, as is also usual in comic portrayals of young men: they are just as obsessed with sex as the wives (and even less able to withstand deprivation), and just as eager to return to a life of peace. It is important to note that Aristophanes isolates his gender-jokes within the strike-plot involving wives and young husbands, assigning the play’s serious issues to the occupation-plot involving older men and women; neither Lysistrata nor the older women are made the butt of gender-jokes. In addition, Lysistrata and the older women, as part of their serious arguments for peace, invite male sympathy for the plight of actual young wives and husbands in wartime, an appeal that is at variance
with their comic caricatures in the play but that allows Aristophanes to have his cake and eat it too.

It is not the young warrior-husbands but the older men—the Magistrate and the men’s chorus—who are eager to continue the war and who oppose the women’s defiance on principle, and their characterization leaves no room for spectator sympathy. Unlike the satire of husbands and wives, which is light and innocuous, the satire of the Magistrate and the choristers is rough and politically pointed. The old choristers are irascible veterans of earlier wars who make a miserable living at the city’s expense by serving on juries. Their champion, the Magistrate, is a bureaucrat recently drawn out of retirement to serve on an emergency board that had usurped some of the functions of the citizen Assembly. Both the men’s chorus and the Magistrate are motivated by misogyny and greed, and their defeat at the hands of the women is intended to be both just and humiliating. Their antagonists, the older women of the chorus and Lysistrata’s older helpers onstage, are indifferent to sexual temptation (and thus more disciplined than the young wives); display the wisdom, forthrightness, independence and bold temper characteristic of their age-group; and boast of lifelong service in the city’s most venerable religious institutions. Because they work for a righteous cause, Aristophanes portrays both older women and wives as belonging to the respectable, perhaps even upper-class stratum of Athenian society, and he associates them with the city’s most venerable religious cults, while the old men are clearly aligned with the vulgar strata of jurymen and popular politicians.

Only Lysistrata is extraordinary. She is identified neither as a young housewife nor as an older woman. She is the master-strategist, commander and spokesman, while the other women are her agents. She understands and uses her helpers’ talents but does not herself share in them; in fact she intentionally differentiates herself from the other women, especially the licentious young wives. She champions not only the interests of her own sex but also the traditional values of all Greeks male and female, and she possesses a degree of intelligence, will and eloquence that would have been considered extraordinary in a citizen of either sex. In her possession of the most admired attributes of power, wisdom and statesmanship, in her dual role as defender of home and of polis, in her acquaintance with both domestic and martial arts, in her panhellenic outlook, in her advocacy of internal solidarity, in her self-discipline and immunity to sexual temptation, in her appeal to young and old and in her close connection with the Akropolis, Lysistrata finds her closest analogue in Athena herself.

The Akropolis-cult of Athena Polias, patron-goddess and citadel-protectress of Athens, was the city’s oldest and most revered religious institution. Its priestess, who served for life, came always from the ancient and aristocratic family of the Eteoboutadai and had an official residence on the Akropolis, where she managed the cult and its female personnel, and where she discharged many ritual functions on behalf of the polis (including the guardianship of Athena’s treasures). Since Athena’s temple on the Akropolis symbolized the ideal Athenian household, and her priestly personnel epitomized every household’s female managers, the Polias priestess—the highest public position a woman could hold in Athens—was in effect the First Lady of the polis. She had a public visibility and authority unavailable to any other woman.

In 411 the Polias priestess was Lysimache, who held office for sixty-four years and who appears to have been known, or thought, to be opposed to the war. Since her name is very close to our heroine’s (Lysimache means “Disbinder of Battles,” Lysistrata “Disbinder of Armies”) and may be specifically alluded to in the play itself (in lines 572–73 Lysistrata says “all Greece will one day call us Disbinders of Battles [Lysistrachas]”), it is not unlikely that Aristophanes intended to assimilate Lysistrata to Lysimache in order to invest his heroine with some of the priestess’ authority, thus further strengthening her association with the goddess. We should not, however, imagine that Lysistrata represents Lysimache in any thoroughgoing way. The priestess, like the goddess, was but one associative element that went into the making of a unique heroine, who in the course of the play achieves a stature that no woman (Lysimache included) could ever actually have attained. That said, the apparent assimilation of a comic heroine to an actual woman who was prominent and respected in civic-religious life suggests that (at least in Lysistrata) Aristophanes represents the views not merely of the theatrical construct “women” but of real women.

Still other elements from the world of cult and myth inform the plot of Lysistrata. Festive events in which women ritually exclude, defy or even replace the men figure prominently in the religious calendars of many Greek cities and, together with their associated myths, made a natural backdrop for comic plots involving women: Women at the Thesmophoria is actually set at the Thesmophoria festival, and in Assemblywomen we are told that the woman’s conspiracy was hatched at the Skira festival. In Lysistrata the formative mythic and ritual associations are broader and more complex, but four principal ones can be identified:

1. Dionysos’ maenads (“mad women”), who desert their homes and live together in the wild, following the god. In myths like the one treated in Euripides’ play Bakchai, produced six years after Lysistrata, the women and the god (disguised as a mortal) combat a king, whom they kill or expel after dressing him in women’s clothing; the Magistrate in our play is an obvious analogue. Related to Dionysian maenadism proper were the many festivals of the
Agronia/Agria, type, where the maidens and wives banded together in rebellion against the men during a ritual period of social dissolution. 15

(2) The Adonia, an unofficial ritual practiced by women, who go to their rooftops, plant quick-blooming and quick-withering plants, and mourn the death of Aphrodite's handsome young favorite, Adonis; in the play the Magistrate bitterly recalls how the Adonia counterpointed the dispatch of the disastrous expedition to Sicily.

(3) The myth of the Amazons, legendary women who behaved like, and lived without, men and who once seized the Pnyx (the hilltop where the Assembly met and the Thesmophoria was held) and then tried to occupy the Akropolis. They were defeated by the Athenian culture-hero Theseus in a battle frequently depicted on monuments; their graves lay around the Pnyx. 16

(4) The festival of the New Fire on the island of Lemnos (at this time an Athenian colony): women and men gather separately; all fires are extinguished; a ship brings new fire; the sexes reunite. The festival's origin-myth explains that Aphrodite, angry at the women, afflicted them with a bad smell; their husbands abandoned them; the women massacred their husbands except for King Thoas, whose daughter Hypsipyle saved him by hiding him in a coffin or dressing him as Dionysos (i.e., in women's clothes); the women then ruled the island alone until Jason and his Argonauts arrived and married the women, with Jason marrying Hypsipyle. 17

The pattern common to each of these mythic/ritual events is the takeover of the polls by "outsiders" (in this case women) during a liminal period marked by social dissolution, disorder, role-inversion (including cross-dressing) and the suspension of vital processes (principally sexuality, fertility, care of the young); the subsequent misrule leads to the reestablishment of (male) order and stability. In Lysistrata, the rebellious women show that the men are in the wrong: male warfare and misgovernment have caused the disorder represented by the women's rebellion. 18 The women master the men and thereby save the polis, just as women do when the individual household is disrupted or threatened. 19 But just as Jason each year replaces old King Thoas, who is feminized and ritually killed, male control is restored at the end—but in a better form: the men promise never to make the same mistakes again.

Finally, the prominence of Athena behind the heroine, and of the Akropolis behind the plot of Lysistrata, cannot have failed to remind the spectators of the foundation-myth of Athens itself: Athena had challenged Poseidon for the city and won, only to support, in her uniquely gender-neutral way, the primacy of male institutions in the polis. 20 In 411 Aristophanes used such traditional myths and rituals as symbolic ingredients in a comic drama intended in large part to remind males of the crucial role women still played in the maintenance and success of those institutions.

LYSISTRATA

CHARACTERS

LYSISTRATA, an Athenian woman
KALONIKE, Lysistrata's friend
MYRRHINE, an Athenian wife
LAMPITO, a Spartan wife
MAGISTRATE, one of the ten Probouloi
OLD WOMEN (three), allies of Lysistrata
WIVES (four), Lysistrata's conspirators
KINESIAS, Myrrhine's husband
BABY, son of Kinesias and Myrrhine
SPARTAN HERALD
SPARTAN AMBASSADOR
ATHENIAN AMBASSADORS (two)

Mute Characters
ATHENIAN WOMEN
ISMENIA, a Theban woman
KORINTHIAN WOMAN
SPARTAN WOMEN
SKYTHIAN GIRL, Lysistrata's slave
MAGISTRATE'S SLAVES
SKYTHIAN POLICEMEN
OLD WOMEN, allies of Lysistrata
MANES, Kinesias' slave
SPARTAN DELEGATES
SPARTAN SLAVES, with the Spartan delegation
ATHENIAN DELEGATES
RECONCILIATION
DOORKEEPER

Chorus
OLD ATHENIAN MEN (twelve)
OLD ATHENIAN WOMEN (twelve)

PROLOGUE

SCENE: A neighborhood street in Athens, after dawn. The stage-building has a large central door and two smaller, flanking doors. From one of these Lysistrata emerges and looks expectantly up and down the street.
LYSISTRATA: Now if someone had invited the women to a revel for Bacchos, or to Pan’s shrine, or to Genetyllis’s at Kolas, they’d be jamming the streets with their tambourines. But now there’s not a single woman here. [The far door opens.] Except for my own neighbor there. Good morning, Kalonike.

KALONIKE: You too, Lysistrata. What’s bothering you? Don’t frown, child. Knitted brows are no good for your looks.

LYSISTRATA: But my heart’s on fire, Kalonike, and I’m terribly annoyed about us women. You know, according to the men we’re capable of all sorts of mischief—

KALONIKE: And that we are, by Zeus!

LYSISTRATA: But when they’re told to meet here to discuss something that really matters, they’re sleeping in and don’t show up!

KALONIKE: Honey, they’ll be along. For wives to get out of the house is a lot of trouble, you know; we’ve got to look after the husband or wake up a slave or put the baby to bed, or give it a bath or feed it a snack.

LYSISTRATA: Sure, but there’s other business they ought to take more seriously than that stuff.

KALONIKE: Well, Lysistrata dear, what exactly is this business you’re calling us women together for? What’s the deal? Is it a big one?

LYSISTRATA: Big!

KALONIKE: Not hard as well?

LYSISTRATA: It’s big and hard, by Zeus.

KALONIKE: Then how come we’re not all here?

LYSISTRATA: That’s not what I meant! If it were, we’d all have shown up fast enough. No, it’s something I’ve been thinking hard about, kicking it around, night after sleepless night.

KALONIKE: All those kicks must have made it really smart.

LYSISTRATA: Smart enough that the salvation of all Greece lies in the women’s hands!

KALONIKE: In the women’s hands? That’s hardly reassuring!

LYSISTRATA: It’s true: our country’s future depends on us: whether the Peloponnesians become extinct—

KALONIKE: Well, that would be just fine with me, by Zeus!

LYSISTRATA: and all the Boiotians get annihilated—

KALONIKE: Not all of them, though: please spare the oels!

LYSISTRATA: I won’t say anything like that about the Athenians, but you know what I could say. But if the women gather together here—the Boiotian women, the Peloponnesian women and ourselves—together we’ll be able to rescue Greece!

KALONIKE: But what can mere women do that’s intelligent or noble? We sit around the house looking pretty, wearing saffron dresses and make-up and Kinberic gowns and canoe-sized slippers.

LYSISTRATA: Exactly! That’s exactly what I think will rescue Greece: our fancy little dresses, our perfumes and our slippers, our rouge and our see-through underwear!

KALONIKE: How do you mean? I’m lost.

LYSISTRATA: They’ll guarantee that not a single one of the men who are still alive will raise his spear against another.

KALONIKE: Then, by the Two Goddesses, I’d better get my party dress dyed saffron!

LYSISTRATA: nor hoist his shield—

KALONIKE: I’ll wear a Kinberic gown!

LYSISTRATA: nor even pull a knife!

KALONIKE: I’ve got to buy some slippers!

LYSISTRATA: So shouldn’t the women have gotten here by now?

KALONIKE: By now? My god, they should have taken wing and flown here ages ago!

LYSISTRATA: My friend, you’ll see that they’re typically Athenian: everything they do, they do too late. There isn’t even a single woman here from the Paralia, nor from Salamis.

KALONIKE: Oh, them; I just know they’ve been up since dawn, straddling their mounts.

LYSISTRATA: And the women I reckoned would be here first, and counted on, the women from Acharnai, they’re not here either.
KALONIKE: Well, Theogenes' wife, for one, was set to make a fast getaway. [Groups of women begin to enter from both sides.] But look, here come some of your women now!

LYSISTRATA: And here come some others, over there!

KALONIKE: Phew! Where are they from?

LYSISTRATA: From Dungstown.

KALONIKE: It seems they've got some sticking to their shoes.

MYRRHINE: I hope we're not too late, Lysistrata. What do you say? Why don't you say something?

LYSISTRATA: Myrrhine, I've got no medal for anyone who shows up late for important business.

MYRRHINE: Look, I couldn't find my girdle; it was dark. But now we're here, so tell us what's so important.

LYSISTRATA: No, let's wait a little while, until the women from Boiotia and the Peloponnese come.

MYRRHINE: That's a much better plan. And look, there's Lampito coming now!

[Enter Lampito, accompanied by a group of other Spartan women, a Theban woman (Ismenia) and a Corinthian woman.]

LYSISTRATA: Greetings, my very dear Spartan Lampito! My darling, how dazzling is your beauty! What rosy cheeks, what firmness of physique! You could choke a bull!

LAMPITO: Is true, I think, by Twain Gods. Much exercise, much leaping to harden buttocks.

KALONIKE: And what a beautiful pair of boobs you've got!

LAMPITO: Hey, you feel me up like sacrificial ox!

LYSISTRATA: And this other young lady here, where's she from?

LAMPITO: By Twain Gods, she come as representative of Boiotia.

MYRRHINE: She's certainly like Boiotia, by Zeus, with all her lush bottomland.

KALONIKE: Yes indeed, her bush has been most elegantly pruned.

LYSISTRATA: And who's this other girl?

LAMPITO: Lady of substance, by Twain Gods, from Korinth.

KALONIKE: She's substantial all right, both frontside and backside.

LAMPITO: Who convenes this assembly of women here?

LYSISTRATA: I'm the one.

LAMPITO: Then please to tell what you want of us.

KALONIKE: That's right, dear lady, speak up. What's this important business of yours?

LYSISTRATA: I'm ready to tell you. But before I tell you, I want to ask you a small question; it won't take long.

KALONIKE: Ask away.

LYSISTRATA: Don't you all pine for your children's fathers when they're off at war? I'm sure that every one of you has a husband who's away.

KALONIKE: My husband's been away five months, my dear, at the Thracian front; he's guarding Eukrates.

MYRRHINE: And mine's been at Pylos seven whole months.

LAMPITO: And mine, soon as he come home from regiment, is strapping on the shield and flying off.

KALONIKE: Even lovers have disappeared without a trace, and ever since the Milesians revolted from us, I haven't even seen a six-inch dildo, which might have been a consolation, however small.

LYSISTRATA: Well, if I could devise a plan to end the war, would you be ready to join me?

KALONIKE: By the Two Goddesses, I would, even if I had to pawn this dress and on the very same day—drink up the proceeds!

MYRRHINE: And I think I would even cut myself in two like a flounder and donate half to the cause!

LAMPITO: And I would climb up to summit of Táygeton, if I'm able to see where peace may be from there.

LYSISTRATA: Here goes then; no need to beat around the bush. Ladies, if we're going to force the men to make peace, we're going to have to give up—
KALONIKE: Give up what? Tell us.
LYSISTRATA: You’ll do it, then?
KALONIKE: We’ll do it, even if it means our death!
LYSISTRATA: All right. We’re going to have to give up—cock. Why are you turning away from me? Where are you going? Why are you all pursing your lips and shaking your heads? What means thine altered color and tearful droppings? Will you do it or not? What are you waiting for?
KALONIKE: Count me out; let the war drag on.
MYRRHINE: Me too, by Zeus; let the war drag on.
LYSISTRATA: This from you, Ms. Flounder? Weren’t you saying just a moment ago that you’d cut yourself in half?
KALONIKE: Anything else you want, anything at all! I’m even ready to walk through fire; that rather than give up cock. There’s nothing like it, Lysistrata dear.
LYSISTRATA: And what about you?
WOMAN: I’m ready to walk through fire too.
LYSISTRATA: Oh what a low and horny race are we! No wonder men write tragedies about us: we’re nothing but Poseidon and a bucket. Dear Spartan, if you alone would side with me we might still salvage the plan: give me your vote!
LAMPITO: By Twain Gods, is difficult for females to sleep alone without the hard-on. But anyway, I assent; is need for peace.
LYSISTRATA: You’re an absolute dear, and the only real woman here?
KALONIKE: Well, what if we did abstain from, uh, what you say, which heaven forbid; would peace be likelier to come on account of that?
LYSISTRATA: Absolutely, by the Two Goddesses. If we sat around at home all made up, and walked past them wearing only our see-through underwear and with our pubes plucked in a neat triangle, and our husbands got hard and hankered to ball us, but we didn’t go near them and kept away, they’d sue for peace, and pretty quick, you can count on that!
LAMPITO: Like Menelaos! Soon as he peek at Helen’s bare melons, he throw his sword away, I think.
KALONIKE: But what if our husbands pay us no attention?
LYSISTRATA: As Pherekrates said, skin the skinned dog. Facsimiles are nothing but poppy-cock. And what if they grab us and drag us into the bedroom by force?
LYSISTRATA: Hold onto the door.
KALONIKE: And what if they beat us up?
LYSISTRATA: Submit, but disagreeably: men get no pleasure in sex when they have to force you. And make them suffer in other ways as well. Don’t worry, they’ll soon give in. No husband can have a happy life if his wife doesn’t want him to.
KALONIKE: Well, if the two of you agree to this, then we agree as well.
LAMPITO: And we shall bring our menfolk round to making every day fair and honest peace. But how do you keep Athenian rabble from acting like lunatics?
LYSISTRATA: Don’t worry, we’ll handle the persuasion on our side.
LAMPITO: Not so, as long as your battleships are afoot and your Goddess temple have bottomless fund of money.
LYSISTRATA: In fact, that’s also been well provided for: we’re going to occupy the Akropolis this very day. The older women are assigned that part: while we’re working out our agreement down here, they’ll occupy the Akropolis, pretending to be up there for a sacrifice.
LAMPITO: Sounds perfect, like rest of your proposals.
LYSISTRATA: Then why not ratify them immediately by taking an oath, Lampito, so that the terms will be binding?
LAMPITO: Reveal an oath, then, and we all swear to it.
LYSISTRATA: Well said. Where’s the Skythian girl? [A slave-girl comes out of the stage-building with a shield.] What are you gawking at? Put that shield down in front of us—no, the other way—and someone give me the severings.
KALONIKE: Lysistrata, what kind of oath are you planning to make us swear?
LYSISTRATA: What kind? The kind they say Aischylus once had people swear: slaughtering an animal over a shield.
LYSISTRATA: At home in celibacy shall I pass my life—

KALONIKE: At home in celibacy shall I pass my life—

LYSISTRATA: wearing a party-dress and makeup—

KALONIKE: wearing a party-dress and makeup—

LYSISTRATA: so that my husband will get as hot as a volcano for me—

KALONIKE: so that my husband will get as hot as a volcano for me—

LYSISTRATA: but never willingly shall I surrender to my husband.

KALONIKE: but never willingly shall I surrender to my husband.

LYSISTRATA: If he should use force to force me against my will—

KALONIKE: If he should use force to force me against my will—

LYSISTRATA: I will submit coldly and not move my hips.

KALONIKE: I will submit coldly and not move my hips.

LYSISTRATA: I will not raise my oriental slippers toward the ceiling.

KALONIKE: I will not raise my oriental slippers toward the ceiling.

LYSISTRATA: I won’t crouch down like the lioness on a cheese-grater.  

KALONIKE: I won’t crouch down like the lioness on a cheese-grater.

LYSISTRATA: If I live up to these vows, may I drink from this bowl.

KALONIKE: If I live up to these vows, may I drink from this bowl.

LYSISTRATA: But if I break them, may the bowl be full of water.

KALONIKE: But if I break them, may the bowl be full of water.

LYSISTRATA: So swear you one and all?

ALL: So swear we all!

LYSISTRATA: All right, then, I’ll consecrate the bowl. [She takes a long drink.]

KALONIKE: Only your share, my friend; let’s make sure we’re all on friendly terms right from the start.  

[After they drink, a woman’s joyful cry is heard offstage.]  

LAMPITO: What’s that hurrah?  

LYSISTRATA: It’s just what I was telling you before: the women have occupied the Akropolis and the Goddess’ temple. Now, Lampito: you
Lysistrata, lines 251–77 [243–76]

take off and arrange things in Sparta, but leave these women here with us as hostages. [Exit Lampito.] Meanwhile, we'll go inside with the other women on the Akropolis and bolt the gates behind us.

Kalonike: But don't you think the men will launch a concerted attack on us, and very soon?

Lysistrata: I'm not worried about them. They can't come against us with enough threats or fire to get these gates open, except on the terms we've agreed on.

Kalonike: No they can't, by Aphrodite! Otherwise we women wouldn't deserve to be called rascals you can't win a fight with!

[All exit into the central door of the scene-building, which now represents the Akropolis.]

Parodos

[A semichorus composed of twelve old men, poorly dressed, slowly makes its way along one of the wings into the orchestra. Each carries a pair of logs, an unlit torch and a bucket of live coals.]

Men's Leader: Onward, Drakes,™ lead the way, even if your shoulder is sore; you've got to keep toting that load of green olivewood, no matter how heavy it is.

Men: (strophe)

If you live long enough you'll get many surprises, yes sir! Strymodoros: who in the world ever thought we'd hear that women, the very creatures we've kept in our homes, an obvious nuisance, now control the Sacred Image™ and occupy my Akropolis, and not only that, they've locked the citadel gates with bolts and bars.™

Men's Leader: Let's hurry to the Akropolis, Philourgos, full speed ahead, so we can lay these logs in a circle all around them, around all the women who have instigated or abetted this business! We'll erect a single pyre and condemn them all with a single vote, then throw them on top with our own hands, starting with Lykon's wife.

Men: (antistrophe)

By Demeter, while I still live they'll never laugh at me! Not even Kleomenes™ the first to occupy this place, left here intact. No, for all he breathed the Spartan spirit,
of logs to the ground.] They’re finally stopped crushing my back! Now it’s your job, bucket, to rouse your coals to flame and thus supply me, first of all, with a lighted torch! Lady Victory, be our ally, help us win a trophy over the women on the Akropolis and their present audacity!

[As the men crouch down to light their torches the second semichorus enters on the run. It is composed of twelve old women, nicely dressed and carrying pitchers of water on their heads.]

WOMEN’S LEADER: I think I can see sparks and smoke, fellow women, as if a fire were ablaze. We must hurry all the faster!

WOMEN: (strophe)
Fly, fly, Nikodike, before Kalyke and Krityla are incinerated, blown from all directions by nasty winds and old men who mean death! I’m filled with dread; am I too late to help? I’ve just come from the well with my pitcher; it was hard to fill by the light of dawn, in the throng and crash and clatter of pots, fighting the elbows of housemaids and branded slaves. I hoisted it onto my head with zeal, and carry the water here to assist the women, my fellow citizens faced with burning.

(antistrophe)
I’ve heard that some frantic old men are on the loose with three talents of logs, like furnace-men at the public bathhouse. They’re coming to the Akropolis, screaming the direst threats, that they mean to use their fire “to turn these abominable women into charcoal.” Goddess, may I never see these women in flames; instead let them rescue Greece and her citizens from war and madness!

O golden-crested Guardian of the citadel, that is why they occupy your shrine. I invite thee to be our ally, Tritogeneia, defending it with water, should any man set it afire.

WOMEN’S LEADER: Hold on! Hey! What’s this? Men! Awful, nasty men! No gentlemen, no god-fearing men would ever be caught doing this!

MEN’S LEADER: This here’s a complication we didn’t count on facing; this swarm of women outside the gates is here to help the others!

WOMEN’S LEADER: Fear and trembling, eh? Don’t tell me we seem a lot to handle; you haven’t even seen the tiniest fraction of our forces yet!

MEN’S LEADER: Phaidrias, are we going to let these women go on jabbering like this? Why hasn’t somebody busted a log over their heads?

WOMEN’S LEADER: Let’s ground our pitchers then; if anyone attacks us they won’t get in our way.

MEN’S LEADER: By Zeus, if someone had socked them in the mouth a couple of times, like Boupalos, they wouldn’t still be talking!

WOMEN’S LEADER: OK, here’s my mouth; someone take a sock at it; I’ll stand here and take it. But then I’m the bitch who gets to grab you by the balls!

MEN’S LEADER: If you don’t shut up, I’ll knock you right out of your old hide!

WOMEN’S LEADER: Come over here and just touch Stratyllis with the tip of your finger.

MEN’S LEADER: What if I give you the one-two punch? Got anything scary to counter with?

WOMEN’S LEADER: I’ll rip out your lungs and your guts with my fangs.

MEN’S LEADER: There isn’t a wiser poet than Euripides: no beast exists so shameless as women.

WOMEN’S LEADER: Let’s pick up our pitchers of water, Rhodippe.

MEN’S LEADER: Why did you bring water here, you witch?

WOMEN’S LEADER: And why have you got fire, you tomb? To burn yourself up?

MEN’S LEADER: I’m here to build a pyre and burn up your friends.

WOMEN’S LEADER: And I’ve come to put it out with this.

MEN’S LEADER: You’re going to put out my fire?

WOMEN’S LEADER: That’s what you soon will see.

MEN’S LEADER: I think I might barbecue you with this torch of mine.

WOMEN’S LEADER: Got any soap with you? I’ll give you a bath.

MEN’S LEADER: You give me a bath, you crone?

WOMEN’S LEADER: A bath fit for a bridgroom!

MEN’S LEADER: What insolence!
WOMEN'S LEADER: I'm a free woman.  
MEN'S LEADER: I'll put a stop to your bellowing.  
WOMEN'S LEADER: You're not on a jury now, you know.  
MEN'S LEADER: Torch her hair! [The men advance.]  
WOMEN'S LEADER: Acheoloos, do your thing! [The women douse them.]  
MEN'S LEADER: Oh! Damn!  
WOMEN'S LEADER: It wasn't too hot, was it?  
MEN'S LEADER: Hot? Stop it! What do you think you're doing?  
WOMEN'S LEADER: I'm watering you, so you'll bloom.  
MEN'S LEADER: But I'm already dried out from shivering!  
WOMEN'S LEADER: You've got fire there, why not sit by it and get warm?

EPISODE

[Enter the Magistrate, an irascible old man, accompanied by two slaves carrying crowbars and four Skythian policemen.]

MAGISTRATE: So the women's depravity bursts into flame again: beating drums, chanting "Sabazios!" worshiping Adonis on the rooftops, I heard it all once before while sitting in Assembly. Demostratos (bad luck to him!) was moving that we send an armada to Sicily, while his wife was dancing and yelling "Poor young Adonis!" Then Demostratos moved that we sign up some Zakynthian infantry, but his wife up on the roof was getting drunk and going "Beat your breast for Adonis!" But he just went on making his motions, that godforsaken, disgusting Baron Bluster! From women, I say, you get this kind of riotous extravagance.

MEN'S LEADER [Pointing to the Chorus of Women]: Save your breath till you hear about their atrocities! They've committed every kind, even doused us with those pitchers. Now we get to shake water out of our clothes as if we'd peed in them!

MAGISTRATE: By the salty sea-god it serves us right! When we ourselves are accomplices in our wives' misbehavior and teach them profligacy, these are the sort of schemes they bring to flower! Aren't we the ones who go to the shops and say stuff like, "Goldsmith, about that necklace you made me: my wife was having a ball the other night, and now the prong's slipped out of its hole. Me, I've got to cruise over to Salamis.

So if you've got time, by all means visit her in the evening and fit a prong in her hole." Another husband says this to a teenage shoemaker with a very grown-up cock, "Shoemaker, my wife's pinky-toe hurts. It seems the top-strap is cramping the bottom, where she's tender. So why don't you drop in on her some lunchtime and loosen it up so there's more play down there?" That's the sort of thing that's led to this, when I, a Magistrate, have lined up timber for oars and now come to get the necessary funds, and find myself standing at the gate, locked out by women! But I'm not going to stand around. [To the two slaves] Bring the crowbars; I'll put a stop to their arrogance. What are you gaping at, you sorry fool? And where are you staring? I said crowbar, not winebar! Come on, put those crowbars under the gates and start jimmying on that side; I'll help out on this side.

LYSISTRATA [emerging from the gates]: Don't jimmy the gates; I'm coming out on my very own. Why do you need crowbars? It's not crowbars you need; it's rather brains and sense.

MAGISTRATE: Really! You witch! Where's a policemen? Grab her and tie both hands behind her back! [One of the policemen advances on Lysistrata.]

LYSISTRATA: If he so much as touches me with his fingertip, by Artemis he'll go home crying, public servant or not! [The policeman retreats.]

MAGISTRATE: What are you scared? [To a second policeman] You there, help him out; grab her around the waist and tie her up, on the double!

[A large old woman emerges from the gates.]

FIRST OLD WOMAN: If you so much as lay a hand on her, by Pandrosos I'll beat the shit out of you! [Both policemen retreat.]

MAGISTRATE: Beat the shit out of me! Where's another policemen? [A third policeman steps forward.] Tie her up first, the one with the dirty mouth!

[A second old woman emerges from the gates.]

SECOND OLD WOMAN: If you raise your fingertip to her, by our Lady of Light you'll be begging for an eye-cup! [The third archer retreats.]

MAGISTRATE: What's going on? Where's a policeman? [The fourth policeman steps forward.] Arrest her. I'll foil one of these sallies of yours!

[A third old woman emerges from the gates.]
Third Old Woman: If you come near her, by Eastern Artemis I'll rip out your hair till it screams! [The fourth policeman retreats.]

Magistrate: What a terrible setback! I'm out of policemen. But men must never be worsted by women! Skythians, let's charge them en masse; form up ranks!

[The four policemen prepare to charge.]

Lysistrata: By the Two Goddesses, you'll soon discover that we also have four squadrons of fully armed combat-women, waiting inside!

Magistrate: Skythians, twist their arms behind their backs!

[The policemen advance.]

Lysistrata [Calling into the Akropolis like a military commander]: Women of the reserve, come out double-time! Forward, you spawn of the marketplace. You soup and vegetable mongers! Forward, you landladies, you hawkers of garlic and bread! [Four squadrons of tough old market-women rush out of the Akropolis and, together with the women already on stage, attack the four policemen.] Tackle them! Hit them! Smash them! Call them names, the nastier the better! [The policemen run away howling.] That's enough! Withdraw! Don't strip the bodies!

[The women of the reserve go back into the Akropolis.]

Magistrate: Terrible! What a calamity for my men!

Lysistrata: Well, what did you expect? Did you think you were going up against a bunch of slave-girls? Or did you think women lack gall?

Magistrate: They've got it aplenty, by Apollo, provided there's a wineshop nearby.

Men's Leader: You've little to show for all your talk, Magistrate of this country! What's the point of fighting a battle of words with these beasts? Don't you comprehend the kind of bath they've given us just now—when we were still in our clothes, and without soap to boot?

Women's Leader: Well, sir, you shouldn't lift your hand against your neighbors just anytime you feel like it. If you do, you're going to end up with a black eye. I'd rather be sitting at home like a virtuous maiden, making no trouble for anyone here, stirring not a single blade of grass. But if anyone annoys me and rifles my nest, they'll find a wasp inside!

ONSTAGE DEBATE

Men: (strophe)
Zeus, how in the world are we going to deal with these monsters? They've gone beyond what I can bear! Now it's time for a trial: together let's find out what they thought they were doing when they occupied Kranaos' citadel and the great crag of the Akropolis, a restricted, holy place.

Men's Leader: Question her and don't give in; cross-examine what she says. It's scandalous to let this sort of behavior go unchallenged.

Magistrate: Here's the first thing I'd like to know, by Zeus: what do you mean by barricading our Akropolis?

Lysistrata: To keep the money safe and to keep you from using it to finance the war.

Magistrate: So we're at war on account of the money?

Lysistrata: Yes, and the money's why everything else got messed up too. Peisandro's and the others aiming to hold office were always fomenting some kind of commotion so that they'd be able to steal it. So let them keep fomenting to their hearts' content; they'll be withdrawing no more money from this place.

Magistrate: But what do you plan to do?

Lysistrata: Don't you see? We'll manage it for you!

Magistrate: You'll manage the money?

Lysistrata: What's so strange in that? Don't we manage the household finances for you already?

Magistrate: That's different!

Lysistrata: How so?

Magistrate: These are war funds!

Lysistrata: But there shouldn't even be a war.

Magistrate: How else are we to protect ourselves?

Magistrate: We'll protect you.

Magistrate: You?

Lysistrata: Yes, us.
Magistrate: What brass!
Lysistrata: You'll be protected whether you like it or not!
Magistrate: You're going too far!
Lysistrata: Angry, are you? We've got to do it anyway.
Magistrate: By Demeter, you've got no right!
Lysistrata: You must be saved, dear fellow.
Magistrate: Even if I don't ask to be?
Lysistrata: All the more so!
Magistrate: And where do you get off taking an interest in war and peace?
Lysistrata: We'll tell you.
Magistrate: Well, make it snappy, unless you want to get hurt.
Lysistrata: Listen then, and try to control your fists.
Magistrate: I can't; I'm so angry I can't keep my hands to myself.
First Old Woman: Then you're the one that's going to get hurt!
Magistrate: Croak those curses at yourself, old bag! [To Lysistrata]

Start talking.
Lysistrata: Gladly. All along, being proper women, we used to suffer in silence no matter what you men did, because you wouldn't let us make a sound. But you weren't exactly all we could ask for. No, we knew only too well what you were up to, and too many times we'd hear in our homes about a bad decision you'd made on some great issue of state. Then, masking the pain in our hearts, we'd put on a smile and ask you, "How did the Assembly go today? Any decision about a rider to the peace treaty?" And my husband would say, "What's that to you? Shut up!" And I'd shut up.

First Old Woman: I wouldn't have shut up!
Magistrate: If you hadn't shut up you'd have got a beating!
Lysistrata: Well, that's why I did shut up. Later on we began to hear about even worse decisions you'd made, and then we would ask, "Husband, how come you're handling this so stupidly?" And right away he'd glare at me and tell me to get back to my sewing if I didn't want major damage to my head: "War shall be the business of menfolk," unquote.

Magistrate: He was right on the mark, by Zeus.

Lysistrata: How could we be right, you sorry fool, when we were forbidden to offer advice even when your policy was wrong? But then—when we began to hear you in the streets openly crying, "There isn't a man left in the land," and someone else saying, "No, by Zeus, not a one"—after that we women decided to lose no more time and to band together to save Greece. What was the point of waiting any longer? So, if you're ready to take your turn at listening, we have some good advice, and if you shut up, as we used to, we can put you back on the right track.

Magistrate: You put us—outrageous! I won't stand for it!
Lysistrata: Shut up!
Magistrate: Me shut up for you? A damned woman, with a veil on your face too? I'd rather die!
Lysistrata: If the veil's an obstacle, here, take mine, it's yours, put it on your face [she removes her veil and puts it on the Magistrate's head], and then shut up!
First Old Woman: And take this sewing-basket too.

Lysistrata: Now hitch up your clothes and start sewing; chew some beans while you work. War shall be the business of womenfolk!

Women's Leader: Come away from your pitchers, women: it's our turn to pitch in with a little help for our friends!

Women: (antistrophe)

Oh yes! I'll dance with unfailing energy;
the effort won't weary my knees.
I'm ready to face anything
with women courageous as these:
they've got character, charm and guts,
they've got intelligence and heart
that's both patriotic and smart!

Women's Leader: Now, most valiant of prickly grandmamas and spiky grannies, attack furiously and don't let up: you're still running with the wind!

Lysistrata: If Eros of the sweet soul and Cyprian Aphrodite imbue our thighs and breasts with desire, and infect the men with sensuous rigidity and club-cock, then I believe all Greece will one day call us Disbanders of Battles.

Magistrate: What's your plan?
LYSISTRATA: First of all, we can stop people going to the market fully armed and acting crazy.

FIRST OLD WOMAN: Paphian Aphrodite be praised!

LYSISTRATA: At this very moment, all around the market, in the pottery shops and the grocery stalls, they’re walking around in arms like Korybantes!¹²⁺

MAGISTRATE: By Zeus, a man’s got to act like a man!

LYSISTRATA: But it’s totally ridiculous when he takes a shield with a Gorgon-blazon to buy sardines!

FIRST OLD WOMAN: Yes, by Zeus, I saw a long-haired fellow, a cavalry captain, on horseback, getting porridge from an old women and sticking it into his brass hat. Another one, a Thracian, was shaking his shield and spear like Tereus; he scared the fig-lady out of her wits and gulped down all the ripe ones!

MAGISTRATE: So how will you women be able to put a stop to such a complicated international mess, and sort it all out?

LYSISTRATA: Very easily.

MAGISTRATE: How? Show me.

[LYSISTRATA uses the contents of the basket which the Magistrate was given to illustrate her demonstration.]¹²⁺

LYSISTRATA: It’s rather like a ball of yarn when it gets tangled up. We hold it this way, and carefully wind out the strands on our spindles, no v this way, now that way. That’s how we’ll wind up this war, if allowed, unsnarling it by sending embassies, now this way, now that way.

MAGISTRATE: You really think your way with wool and yarnballs and spindles can stop a terrible crisis? How brainless!

LYSISTRATA: I do think so, and if you had any brains you’d handle all the polis’ business the way we handle our wool!¹²⁰

MAGISTRATE: Well, how then? I’m all ears.

LYSISTRATA: Imagine the polis as fleece just shorn. First, put it in a bath and wash out all the sheep-dung; spread it on a pallet and beat out the riff-raft with a stick and pluck out the thorns; as for those who clump and knot themselves together to snare government positions, card them out and pluck off their heads.¹²⁴ Next, card the wool into a basket of unity and goodwill, mixing in everyone. The resident aliens and any other foreigner who’s your friend, and anyone who owes money to the people’s treasury, mix them in there too. And by Zeus, don’t forget the cities that are colonies of this land: they’re like flocks of your fleece, each one separated from the others. So take all these flocks and bring them together here, joining them all and making one big bobbin. And from this weave a fine new cloak for the people!

MAGISTRATE: Isn’t it awful how these women go like this with their sticks and like this with their bobbins, when they share none of the war’s burdens!

LYSISTRATA: None? You monster! We bear more than our fair share, first of all by giving birth to sons and sending them off to the army—¹²⁵

MAGISTRATE: Enough of that! Let’s not open old wounds.

LYSISTRATA: Then, when we ought to be having fun and enjoying our bloom of youth, we sleep alone because of the campaigns. And to say no more about our case,¹²⁶ it pains me to think of the maidens growing old in their rooms.¹²⁷

MAGISTRATE: Men grow old too, don’t they?

LYSISTRATA: That’s quite a different story. When a man comes home he can quickly find a girl to marry, even if he’s a greybeard. But a woman’s prime is brief; if she doesn’t seize it no one wants to marry her, and she sits at home looking for good omens.¹²⁸

MAGISTRATE: But any man who can still get a hard-on—¹²⁹

LYSISTRATA: Why don’t you just drop dead? Here’s a grave-site; buy a coffin; I’ll start kneading you a honeycake.¹³⁰ [Taking off her garland] Use these as a wreath.

FIRST OLD WOMAN [Handing him ribbons]: You can have these from me.

SECOND OLD WOMAN: And this garland from me.

LYSISTRATA: All set? Need anything else? Get on the boat, then. Charon is calling your name and you’re holding him up!¹³¹

MAGISTRATE: Isn’t it shocking that I’m being treated like this?³³³ By Zeus, I’m going straight to the other magistrates to display myself just as I am!

LYSISTRATA [As Magistrate exits with his slaves]: I hope you won’t complain about the funeral we gave you. I tell you what: the day after tomorrow, first thing in the morning, we’ll perform the third-day offerings at your grave! [The women exit into the Akropolis.]
CHORAL DEBATE

MEN'S LEADER: No free man should be asleep now! Let's strip for action, men, and meet this emergency! [The men remove their jackets.]

MEN: (strophe a)
I think I smell much bigger trouble in this, a definite whiff of Hippias' tyranny!\(^{120}\) I'm terrified that certain men from Sparta have gathered at the house of Kleisthenes\(^{236}\) and scheme to stir up our godforsaken women to seize the Treasury and my jury-pay, my very livelihood.\(^{135}\)

MEN'S LEADER: It's shocking, you know, that they're lecturing the citizens now, and running their mouths—mere women!—about brazen shields. And to top it all off they're trying to make peace between us and the men of Sparta, who are no more trustworthy than a starving wolf. Actually, this plot they weave against us, gentlemen, aims at tyranny! Well, they'll never tyrannize over me: from now on I'll be on my guard, I'll "carry my sword in a myrtle-branch"\(^{134}\) and go to market fully armed right up beside Aristogeiton.\(^{137}\) I'll stand beside him like this [assuming the posture of Aristogeiton's statue]: that way I'll be ready to smack this godforsaken old hag right in the jaw! [He advances on the Men's Leader with fist raised.]

WOMEN'S LEADER: Just try it, and your own mommy won't recognize you when you get home! Come on, fellow hags, let's start by putting our jackets on the ground. [The women remove their jackets.]

WOMEN: (antistrophe a)
Citizens of Athens, we want to start by offering the polis some good advice, and rightly, for she raised me in splendid luxury.\(^{128}\) As soon as I turned seven I was an Arrephoros;\(^{129}\) then I was a Grinder;\(^{148}\) when I was ten I shed my saffron robe for the Foundress\(^{144}\) at the Brauronia.\(^{141}\) And once, when I was a beautiful girl, I carried the Basket, wearing a necklace of dried figs.\(^{143}\)

WOMEN'S LEADER: Thus I owe it to the polis to offer some good advice. And even if I was born a woman, don't hold it against me if I manage to suggest something better than what we've got now. I have a stake in our community: my contribution is men. You miserable geezers have no stake, since you've squandered your paternal inheritance, won in the

Persian Wars, and now pay no taxes in return. On the contrary, we're all headed for bankruptcy on account of you! Have you anything to grunt in rebuttal? Any more trouble from you and I'll clobber you with this rawhide boot right in the jaw! [She raises her foot at the Men's Leader.]

MEN: (strophe b)
This behavior of theirs amounts to extreme hubris,\(^{144}\) and I do believe it's getting aggravated. No man with any balls can let it pass.

MEN'S LEADER: Let's doff our shirts,\(^{145}\) 'cause a man's gotta smell like a man from the word go and shouldn't be all wrapped up like souvlaki. [The men remove their shirts.]

MEN:
Come on, Whitefeet!\(^{146}\) We went against Leipsydron\(^{147}\) when we still were something; now we've got to rejuvenate, grow wings all over, shake off these old skins of ours!

MEN'S LEADER: If any man among us gives these women the tiniest thing to grab on to, there's no limit to what their nimble hands will do. Why, they'll even be building frigates and launching naval attacks, cruising against us like Artemisia.\(^{148}\) And if they turn to horsemanship, you can scratch our cavalry: there's nothing like a woman when it comes to mounting and riding; even riding hard she won't slip off.\(^{132}\) Just look at the Amazons in Mikon's painting, riding chargers in battle against men.\(^{133}\) Our duty is clear: grab each woman's neck and lock it in the wooden stocks! [He moves toward the Women's Leader.]

WOMEN: (antistrophe b)
By the Two Goddesses, if you fire me up I'll come at you like a wild sow and clip you bare, and this very day you'll go bleating to your friends for help!\(^{705}\)

WOMEN'S LEADER: Quickly, women, let's also take off our tunics;\(^{152}\) a woman's gotta smell like a woman, mad enough to bite! [The women remove their shirts.]

WOMEN:
All right now, someone attack me! He'll eat no more garlic and chew no more beans. If you so much as curse at me, I boil over with such rage, I'll be the beetle-midwife to your eagle's eggs.\(^{153}\)
WOMEN'S LEADER: You men don't worry me a bit, not while my Lampito's around and my Ismenia, the noble Thesban girl. You'll have no power to do anything about us, not even if you pass seven decrees: that's how much everyone hates you, you good-for-nothing, and especially our neighbors. Why, just yesterday I threw a party for the girls in honor of Hekate, and I invited my friend from next door, a fine girl who's very special to me: an eel from Boiotia. But they said she couldn't come because of your decrees. And you'll never stop passing these decrees until someone grabs you by the leg and throws you away and breaks your neck! *She makes a grab for the Men's Leader's leg.*

**EPISODE**

*Lysistrata comes out of the Akropolis and begins to pace.*

WOMEN'S LEADER: O mistress of this venture and strategem, why com'st thou from thy halls so dour of mien?

LYSISTRATA:

The deeds of ignoble women and the female heart do make me pace dispirited to and fro.

WOMEN'S LEADER:

What say'st thou? What say'st thou?

LYSISTRATA:

'Tis true, too true!

WOMEN'S LEADER:

What dire thing? Pray tell it to thy friends.

LYSISTRATA:

'Twere shame to say and grief to leave unsaid.

WOMEN'S LEADER:

Hide not from me the damage we have taken.

LYSISTRATA:

The story in briefest compass: we need to fuck!

WOMEN'S LEADER:

Ah, Zeus!

LYSISTRATA:

Why rend the air for Zeus? You see our plight. The truth is, I can't keep the wives away from their husbands any longer; they're running off in all directions. The first one I caught was...
LYSISTRATA, LINES 769–802 [749–80]

LYSISTRATA [knocking on it]: By Aphrodite, it's obvious you've got something metallic and hollow in there. Let's have a look. [She lifts up the wife's dress, exposing a large bronze helmet.] Ridiculous girl! You're big with the sacred helmet, not with child!182

THIRD WIFE: But I am with child, by Zeus!

LYSISTRATA: Then what were you doing with this?

THIRD WIFE: Well, if I began to deliver here in the citadel, I could get into the helmet and have my baby there, like a pigeon.

LYSISTRATA: What kind of story is that? Excuses! It's obvious what's going on. You'll have to stay here till your—helmet has its naming-day.

THIRD WIFE: But I can't even sleep on the Akropolis, ever since I saw the snake that guards the temple.

FOURTH WIFE: And what about poor me—listening to the owls go whoo whoo all night is killing me!

LYSISTRATA: You nutty girls, enough of your horror stories! I guess you do miss your husbands; but do you think they don't miss you? They're spending some very rough nights, I assure you. Just be patient, good ladies, and put up with this, just a little bit longer. There's an oracle predicting victory for us, if we stick together. Here's the oracle right here. [She produces a scroll.]183

THIRD WIFE: Tell us what it says.

LYSISTRATA: Be quiet, then.

Yea, when the swallows hole up in a single home, fleeing the hooops and leaving the penis alone, then are their problems solved, what's high is low: so says high-thundering Zeus—

THIRD WIFE: You mean we'll be lying on top?

LYSISTRATA: But:

if the swallows begin to argue and fly away down from the citadel holy, all will say, no bird more disgustingly horny lives today!

THIRD WIFE: A pretty explicit oracle. Ye gods!

LYSISTRATA: So let's hear no more talk of caving in. Let's go inside. Dear comrades, it would be a real shame if we betray the oracle. [All enter the Akropolis.]
Women’s Leader: How would you like a punch in the mouth?

Men’s Leader: No way! You’re really scaring me!

Women’s Leader: Then how about a good swift kick?

Men’s Leader: If you do you’ll be flashing your twat!

Women’s Leader:

Even so you’ll never see
any hair down there on me:
I may be getting antiquated
but I keep myself well depilated.168

[The Women’s Chorus picks up their and the men’s discarded clothing and both semichoruses withdraw from the center of the orchestra to sit along its edges; during the ensuing episode the women put their clothing back on.]

**EPISODE**

[Lysistrata appears on the roof of the stage-building, which represents the Acropolis ramparts, and walks to and fro, looking carefully in all directions; suddenly she stops and peers into the distance.]

Lysistrata: All right! Yes! Ladies, come here, quick!

[Myrhrine and several other wives join Lysistrata.]

Wife: What is it? What’s all the shouting?

Lysistrata: A man! I see a man coming this way, stricken, in the grip of Aphrodite’s mysterious powers. Lady Aphrodite, mistress of Cyprus and Kythera and Paphos, make thy journey straight and upright!

Wife: Where is he, whoever he is?

Lysistrata: He’s by Chloe’s shrine.

Wife: By Zeus, I see him now! But who is he?

Lysistrata: Take a good look. Anyone recognize him?

Myrrhine: Oh God, I do. He’s my own husband Kinesias!

Lysistrata: All right, it’s your job to roast him, to torture him, to bamboozle him, to love him and not to love him, and to give him anything he wants—except what you swore over the bowl not to.169

Myrrhine: Don’t you worry, I’ll do it!

Lysistrata: Great! I’ll stick around here and help you bamboozle him and roast him. Now everyone get out of sight!

[All the wives go back inside except Lysistrata. Enter Kinesias, wearing a huge erect phallus and accompanied by a male slave holding a baby. He is in obvious pain.]

Kinesias [to himself]: Oh, oh, evil fate! I’ve got terrible spasms and cramps. It’s like I’m being broken on the rack!

Lysistrata [Leaning down from the ramparts]: Who’s that who’s standing up within our defense perimeter?

Kinesias: Me.

Lysistrata: A man?

Kinesias [brandishing his phallus]: Of course a man!

Lysistrata: In that case please depart.

Kinesias: And who are you to throw me out?

Lysistrata: The daytime guard.

Kinesias: Then in the gods’ name call Myrrhine out here to me.

Lysistrata: Listen to him, “call Myrrhine”! And who might you be?

Kinesias: Her husband, Kinesias, from Paionidai.170

Lysistrata: Well, hello, dear chum! Among us your name is hardly unknown or without celebrity. Your wife always has you on her lips; she’ll be eating an egg or an apple and she’ll say, “This one’s for Kinesias.”171

Kinesias: Oh gods!

Lysistrata: Yes, by Aphrodite. And whenever the conversation turns to men, your wife speaks up forthwith and says, “Compared to Kinesias, everything else is trash!”

Kinesias: Come on now, call her out!

Lysistrata: Well? Got anything for me?

Kinesias [Indicating his phallus]: Indeed I do, if you want it. [Lysistrata looks away.] What about this? [He tosses her a purse.] It’s all I’ve got, and you’re welcome to it.172

Lysistrata: OK then, I’ll go in and call her for you. [She leaves the ramparts.]

Kinesias: Make it quick, now! [Alone] I’ve had no joy or pleasure in my life since the day Myrrhine left the house. I go into the house and feel agony; everything looks empty to me; I get no pleasure from the food I eat. Because I’m horny!
Lysistrata, lines 892-921 [870-95]

MYRRHINE [Still out of sight, speaking to Lysistrata]: I love that man, I love him! But he doesn't want my love. Please don't make me go out to him!

KINESIAS: Myrrhinikins, dearest, why are you doing this? Get down here!

MYRRHINE [Appearing at the ramparts]: By Zeus I'm not going down there! 895

KINESIAS: You won't come down even when I ask you, Myrrhine?

MYRRHINE: You're asking me, but you don't want me at all.

KINESIAS: Me not want you? Why, I'm desolate!

MYRRHINE: I'm leaving.

KINESIAS: No, wait! At least listen to the baby! [He grabs the baby from the slave and holds it up towards Myrrhine.] Come on you, yell for mommy!

BABY: Mommy! Mommy! Mommy!

KINESIAS [To Myrrhine]: Hey, what's wrong with you? Don't you feel sorry for the baby, unwashed and unsuckled for six days now?

MYRRHINE: Him I feel sorry for. Too bad his father doesn't care about him! 900

KINESIAS: Get down here, you screwy woman, and see to your child!

MYRRHINE: How momentous is motherhood! I've got no choice but to go down there. [She leaves the ramparts. Kinesias returns the baby to the slave.]

KINESIAS: <Absence really does make the heart grow fonder!> She seems much younger than I remember, and she has a sexier look in her eyes. She acted prickly and very stuck-up too, but that just makes me want her even more!

[Myrrhine enters from the Akropolis gates and goes over to the baby, ignoring Kinesias.]

MYRRHINE: Poor sweetie pie, with such a lousy father, let me give you a kiss, mommy's little dearest!

KINESIAS [To Myrrhine's back]: What do you think you're doing, you naughty girl, listening to those other women and giving me a hard time and hurting yourself as well? [He puts a hand on her shoulder.]

MYRRHINE [Wheeling around]: Don't you lay your hands on me!

KINESIAS: You know you've let our house, your things and mine, become an utter mess?

MYRRHINE: It doesn't bother me.

Lysistrata, lines 922-53 [896-919]

KINESIAS: It doesn't bother you that the hens are pulling your woollens apart?

MYRRHINE: Not a bit.

KINESIAS: And what a long time it's been since you've celebrated Aphrodite's holy mysteries. Wouldn't you come home?

MYRRHINE: Not me, by Zeus; I'm going nowhere until you men agree to a settlement and stop the war.

KINESIAS: Well, if that's what's decided, then that's what we'll do.

MYRRHINE: Well, if that's what's decided, I'll be going home. But for the time being I've sworn to stay here.

KINESIAS: But at least lie down here with me; it's been so long.

MYRRHINE: No way. But I'm not saying I don't love you.

KINESIAS: Love me? So why won't you lie down, Myrrhine?

MYRRHINE: Right here in front of the baby? You must be joking!

KINESIAS: Zeus no! Boy, take him home. [Exit slave.] There you are, the kid's out of our way. Now, why don't you just lie down?

MYRRHINE: Lie down where, you silly man?

KINESIAS [Looking around]: Where? Fan's Grotto will do fine.

MYRRHINE: But I need to be pure before I can go back up to the Akropolis.

KINESIAS: Very easily done: just wash off in the Klepsydra.

MYRRHINE: You're telling me, dear, that I should go back on the oath I swore?

KINESIAS: Don't worry about any oath; let me take the consequences.

MYRRHINE: All right then, I'll get us a bed.

KINESIAS: No, don't; the ground's OK for us.

MYRRHINE: Apollo no! I wouldn't dream of letting you lie on the ground, no matter what kind of man you are. [Myrrhine goes into one of the flanking doors, which represents Fan's Grotto.]

KINESIAS: She really loves me, that's quite obvious!

MYRRHINE [returning with a cot]: There you are! Lie right down while I undress. [Kinesias lies on the cot.] But wait, I forgot, what is it, yes, a mattress! Got to get one.
KINESIAS: A mattress? Not for me, thanks.

MYRRHINE: By Artemis, it's shabby on cords.

KINESIAS: Well, give me a kiss.

MYRRHINE [kissing him]: There. [She returns to the Grotto.]

KINESIAS: Oh lordy! Get the mattress quick!

MYRRHINE [returning with a mattress]: There we are! Lie back down and I'll get my clothes off. But wait, what is it, a pillow, you haven't got a pillow!

KINESIAS: I don't need a pillow!

MYRRHINE: I do. [She returns to the Grotto.]

KINESIAS: Is this cock of mine supposed to be Heralds waiting for his dinner?

MYRRHINE [returning with a pillow]: Lift up now, upsy daisy. There, is that everything?

KINESIAS: Everything I need. Come here, my little treasure!

MYRRHINE: Just getting my breastband off. But remember: don't break your promise about a peace-settlement.

KINESIAS: May lightning strike me, by Zeus!

MYRRHINE: You don't have a blanket.

KINESIAS: It's not a blanket I want—I want to fuck!

MYRRHINE: That's just what you're going to get. Back in a flash. [She returns to the Grotto.]

KINESIAS: That woman drives me nuts with all her bedding!

MYRRHINE [returning with a blanket]: Get up.

KINESIAS [pointing to his phallus]: I've already got it up! [Myrrhine carefully arranges the blanket while Kinasias fidgets.]

MYRRHINE: Want some scent?

KINESIAS: Apollo no, none for me.

MYRRHINE: But I will, by Aphrodite, whether you like it or not.

KINESIAS [as Myrrhine returns to the Grotto]: Then let the scent flow! Lord Zeus!

MYRRHINE [returning with a round bottle of perfume]: Hold out your hand. Take some and rub it in.

KINESIAS: I don't like this scent, by Apollo; it takes a long time warming up and it doesn't smell like conjugal pleasures.

MYRRHINE: Oh silly me, I brought the Rhodian brand!

KINESIAS: No, wait, I like it! Let it go, you screwy woman!

MYRRHINE: What are you talking about? [She returns to the Grotto.]

KINESIAS: Goddamn the man who first decocted scent!

MYRRHINE [returning with a long, cylindrical bottle]: Here, try this tube.

KINESIAS [pointing to his phallus]: Got one already! Now lie down, you slut, and don't bring me anything more.

MYRRHINE: By Artemis I will. Just getting my shoes off. But remember, darling, you're going to vote for peace. [At this, Kinasias exerts his eyes from Myrrhine and fiddles with the blanket; Myrrhine dashes off into the Akropolis.]

KINESIAS: I'll give it serious consideration. [He looks up again, only to find Myrrhine gone.] The woman's destroyed me, annihilated me! Not only that: she's pumped me up and dropped me flat!

[During the ensuing duet both semichoruses return to the center of the orchestra; the women carry the shirts that the men had removed earlier.]

Men's Leader:

Yea frightful agony, thou wretch,
dost rack the soul of one so sore bediddled.

Sure I do feel for thee, alack!
What kidney could bear it,
what soul, what balls,
what loins, what crotch,
thus stretched on the rack
and deprived of a morning fuck?

KINESIAS:

Ah Zeus! The cramps attack anew!

Men's Leader:

And this is what she's done to you,
the detestable, revolting shrew!
WOMEN'S LEADER:
No, she's totally sweet and dear!

MEN'S LEADER:
Sweet, you say! She's wicked, wicked!

KINESIAS:
You're right: wicked is what she is!
O Zeus, Zeus, raise up a great tornado,
with lightning bolts and all,
to sweep her up like a heap of grain
and twirl her into the sky,
and then let go and let her fall
back down to earth again,
and let her point of impact be
this dick of mine right here!

EPISODE

[Enter a Spartan herald, both arms hidden beneath a long travelling cloak and
pushing it out in front.]

HERALD [to KINSEIAS]: Where be the Senate of Athens or the Prytaneis?
Have some news to tell them.

KINESIAS: And what might you be? Are you human? Or a Konisalos?

HERALD: Am I Herald, youngun, by the Twain, come from Sparta about
settlement.

KINESIAS: And that's why you've come hiding a spear in your clothes?

HERALD: Not I, by Zeus, nor any spear!

KINESIAS: Why twist away from me? And why hold your coat out in front
of you? You've got a swollen groin from the long ride, maybe?

HERALD: By Kaster, this guy crazy! [He accidently reveals his erect phallus.]

KINESIAS: Hey, that's a hard-on, you rascal!

HERALD: No, by Zeus, is not! Don't be silly!

KINESIAS: Then what do you call that?

HERALD: Is Spartan walking-stick.

KINESIAS [pointing to his own phallus]: Then this is a Spartan walking-
stick too. Listen, I know what's up; you can level with me. How are
things going in Sparta?
And if you weren’t so hostile I’d have removed
that bug in your eye, that’s still in there, I see.

MEN’S LEADER:
So that’s what’s been driving me nuts! Here, take my ring;
please dig it out of my eye, then show it to me;
by god, it’s been biting my eye for quite some time.

WOMEN’S LEADER:
All right, I will, though you’re a grumpy man.
Great gods, what a humongous gnat you’ve got in there!
There, take a look. Isn’t it positively Trikorsian?!

MEN’S LEADER:
By god, you’ve helped me; that thing’s been digging wells,
and now it’s out my eyes are streaming tears.

WOMEN’S LEADER:
Then I’ll wipe them away, though you’re a genuine rascal,
and kiss you.

MEN’S LEADER:
Don’t kiss me!

WOMEN’S LEADER:
I’ll kiss you whether you like it or not!

[She does so, and the other women follow suit as before.]

MEN’S LEADER:
The worst of luck to you! You’re born sweet-talkers.
The ancient adage gets it in a nutshell:
“Can’t live with the pests or without ’em either.”
But now I’ll make peace, and promise nevermore
to mislead you or to take mistreatment from you.
Let’s get together, then, and start our song.

[The semichoruses become one and for the remainder of the play perform as a
single chorus.]

CHORUS: (strophe)
We don’t intend to say anything
the least bit slanderous about
any citizen, you gentlemen out there,
but quite the opposite: to say and do

only what’s nice, because the troubles
you’ve got already are more than enough.

So let every man and woman, if they need to have a little cash,
say two or three minas; we’ve got it at home
and we’ve got some purses for it too.
And if peace should ever break out,
everyone that we lent money to
can forget to repay—if they got anything!

(antistrope)
We’re getting set to entertain
some visitors from Karystos today,
they’re fine and handsome gentlemen.
There’ll be a special soup, and that piglet
of mine, I’ve sacrificed it on the grill,
and it’s turning out to be fine and tender meat.
So come on over to my house today:
get up early and take a bath,
and bathe the kids, and walk right in.
You needn’t ask anyone’s permission,
just go straight on inside like it was yours,
because the door will be locked!

EPISODE

[The Spartan Ambassadors enter, their clothes concealing conspicuous bulges.
They are accompanied by slaves.]

CHORUS-LEADER: Hey! Here come ambassadors from Sparta, dragging
long beards and wearing something around their waists that looks like
a pig-pen. [To the Spartans.] Gentlemen of Sparta: first, our greetings!
Then tell us how you all are doing?

SPARTAN AMBASSADOR: No use to waste a lot of time describing. Is best
to show how we’re doing. [The Spartans open their cloaks to reveal
their erect phalli.]

CHORUS-LEADER: God! Your problem’s grown very hard, and it seems
to be even more inflamed than before.

SPARTAN AMBASSADOR: Unspeakable! What can one say? We wish for
someone to come, make peace for us on any terms he like.
[Athenian Ambassadors enter from the opposite direction, with cloaks bulging.]

CHORUS-LEADER: Look, I see a party of native sons approaching, like men wrestling, holding their clothes away from their bellies like that! Looks like a bad case of prickly heat. 1126

FIRST ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR [To the Chorus-Leader]: Who can tell us where Lysistrata is? The men are here, and we’re . . . as you see. [They reveal their own erect phalli.]

CHORUS-LEADER: Their syndrome seems to be the same as theirs. These spasms: do they seize you in the wee hours?

FIRST ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR: Yes, and what’s worse, we’re worn totally raw by being in this condition! If someone doesn’t get us a treaty pretty soon, there’s no way we won’t be fucking Kleisthenes! 1130

CHORUS-LEADER: If you’ve got any sense, you’ll cover up there: you don’t want one of the Herm-Dockers to see you like this. 1131

FIRST ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR: By god, that’s good advice. [The Athenians rearrange their cloaks to cover their phalli.]

SPARTAN AMBASSADOR: By the Twain Gods, yes indeed. Come, put cloaks back on! [The Spartans follow suit.]

FIRST ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR: Greetings, Spartans! We’ve had an awful time.

SPARTAN AMBASSADOR: Dear colleague, we’ve had a fearful time, if those men saw us fiddling with ourselves.

FIRST ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR: Come on, then, Spartans, let’s talk details. The reason for your visit?

SPARTAN AMBASSADOR: Are ambassadors, for settlement.

FIRST ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR: That’s very good; us too. So why not invite Lysistrata to our meeting, since she’s the only one who can settle our differences? 1140

SPARTAN AMBASSADOR: Sure, by the Twain Gods, Lysistrata, and Lysistratos too if ye like. 1141

[Lystrata emerges from the Akropolis gate.]

FIRST ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR: It looks as if we don’t have to invite her: she must have heard us, for here she comes herself.

CHORUS-LEADER: Hail, maeniest of all women! Now is your time: be forceful and flexible, high-class and vulgar, haughty and sweet, a

LYSISTRATA: Well, it’s an easy thing to do if you get them when they’re hot for it and not testing each other for weaknesses. I’ll soon know how ready they are. Where’s Reconciliation? [A naked girl comes out of the Akropolis.] Take hold of the Spartans first and bring them here; don’t handle them with a rough or mean hand, or crudely, the way our husbands used to handle us, but use a wife’s touch, like home sweet home. [The Spartan ambassador refuses to give his hand.] If he won’t give you his hand, lead him by his weenie. [The Spartan ambassador complies, and she leads him and his colleagues to Lysistrata, where they stand to her left.] Now go and fetch those Athenians too; take hold of whatever they give you and bring them here. [Reconciliation escorts the Athenians to Lysistrata’s right.] Spartans, move in closer to me, and you Athenians too; I want you to listen to what I have to say. I am a woman, but still I’ve got a mind: I’m pretty intelligent in my own right, and because I’ve listened many a time to the conversations of my father and the older men I’m pretty well educated too. Now that you’re a captive audience I’m ready to give you the tongue-lashing you deserve—both of you. 1150

Don’t both of you sprinkle altars from the same cup like kinmen, at the Olympic Games, at Thermopylae, at Delphi, and so many other places I could mention if I had to make a long list? Yet with plenty of enemies available with their barbarian armies, it’s Greek men and Greek cities you’re determined to destroy! That’s the first point I wanted to make.

FIRST ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR [Gazing at Reconciliation]: My cock is bursting out of its skin and killing me!

LYSISTRATA: Next I’m going to turn to you, Spartans. Don’t you remember the time when Perikleidas the Spartan came here on bended knee and sat at Athenian altars, white-faced in his scarlet uniform, begging for a military contingent? That time when Messenia was up in arms against you and the god was shaking you with an earthquake? And Kimon came with four thousand infantrymen and rescued all Lakedaimon? And after that sort of treatment from the Athenians, you’re now out to ravage their country, who’ve treated you so well?

FIRST ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR: By Zeus they are guilty, Lysistrata!

SPARTAN AMBASSADOR: We’re guilty—[looking at Reconciliation] but what an unspeakably fine ass!
LYSISTRATA: Do you Athenians think I'm going to let you off? Don't you remember the time when you were dressed in slaves' rags and the Spartans came in force and wiped out many Thessalian fighters, many friends and allies of Hippias? That day when they were the only ones helping you to drive him out? How they liberated you, and replaced your slaves' rags with a warm cloak, as suits a free people?^{282}

SPARTAN AMBASSADOR: [Still gazing at Reconciliation:] I never saw such a classy woman!

FIRST ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR: I've never seen a lovelier cunt!

LYSISTRATA: So after so many good deeds done, why are you at war? Why not stop this terrible behavior? Why not make peace? Come on, what's in the way?

[During the following negotiations Reconciliation's body serves as a map of Greece.]^{285}

SPARTAN AMBASSADOR: We are ready, if they ready to return to us this abutment.^{284}

LYSISTRATA: Which one, sir?

SPARTAN AMBASSADOR: Back Door^{286} here, that we for long time count on having, and grope for.

FIRST ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR: By Poseidon, that you won't get!

LYSISTRATA: Give it to them, good sir.

FIRST ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR: Then who will we be able to harrass?

LYSISTRATA: Just ask for some other place in return for that one.

FIRST ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR: Well, let's see now. First of all give us Echinous here and the Malian Gulf behind it and both Legs.^{286}

SPARTAN AMBASSADOR: By Twain Gods, we will not give everything, dear fellow!

LYSISTRATA: Let it go: don't be squabbling about legs.

FIRST ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR: Now I'm ready to strip down and do some ploughing!

SPARTAN AMBASSADOR: Me first, by Twain Gods: before one ploughs one spreads manure!

LYSISTRATA: You may do that when you've ratified the settlement. If, after due deliberation, you do decide to settle, go back and confer with your allies.

FIRST ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR: Allies, dear lady? We're too hard up for that! Won't our allies, all of them, come to the same decision we have, namely, to fuck?

SPARTAN AMBASSADOR: Ours will, by Twain Gods!

FIRST ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR: And so will the Karystians, by Zeus!

LYSISTRATA: You make a strong case. For the time being see to it you remain pure,^{287} so that we women can host you on the Akropolis with what we brought in our boxes. There you may exchange pledges of mutual trust, and after that each of you may reclaim his wife and go home.^{288}

FIRST ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR: What are we waiting for?

SPARTAN AMBASSADOR: [To Lysistrata:] Lead on wherever you wish.

FIRST ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR: By Zeus yes, as quick as you can!

[LYSISTRATA escorts RECONCILIATION inside; followed by the Spartan and Athenian ambassadors; the Spartans' slaves sit down outside the door, which is attended by a doorkeeper.]

CHORUS:^{289} (Strophe)

Intricate tapestries,
nice clothes and fine gowns
and gold jewellery: all that I own
is yours for the asking
for your sons and for your daughter too,
when she's picked to march with the basket.^{289}
I declare my home open to everyone
to take anything you want.
Nothing is sealed up so tight
that you won't be able to break the seals
and take away what you find inside.
But you won't see anything
unless your eyes are sharper than mine.

(Antistrophe)

If anyone's out of bread
but has slaves and lots of little kids to feed,
you can get flour from my house:
puny grains, but a pound of them
grow up to be a loaf
that looks very hearty.
Any of you poor people are welcome
to come to my house with sacks and bags
to carry the flour away; my houseboy will load them up.
A warning though: don't knock at my door—
beware of the watchdog there!

EPISODE

FIRST ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR [still inside, knocking at the door and
yelling to the doorkeeper]: Open the door, you! [He bursts through the
door, sending the doorkeeper tumbling down the steps. He wears a
garland and carries a torch, as from a drinking-party.] You should
have got out of the way. [Other Athenians emerge, similarly equipped.
To the slaves] You there, why are you sitting around? Want me to singe
you with this torch?

What a stale routine! I refuse to do it. [Encouragement from the
spectators.] Well, if it's absolutely necessary we'll go the extra mile, to
do you all a favor. [He begins to chase the slaves with his torch.]

SECOND ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR [joining the First]: And we'll help you
go that extra mile! [To the slaves] Get lost! You'll cry for your hair if
you don't!

FIRST ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR: Yes, get lost, so the Spartans can come out
after their banquet without being bothered. [The slaves are chased off.]

SECOND ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR: I've never been at a better party! The
Spartans were really great guys, and we made wonderful company our-
selves over the drinks.

FIRST ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR: Stands to reason: when we're sober
we're not ourselves. If the Athenians will take my advice, from now on
we'll do all our ambassadorial business drunk. As it is, whenever we go
to Sparta sober, we start right in looking for ways to stir up trouble.
When they say something we don't hear it, and when they don't say
something we're convinced that they did say it, and we each return
with completely different reports. But this time everything turned out
fine. When somebody sang the Telamon Song when he should have been
singing the Kleitagra Song, everybody would applaud and
even swear up and down what a fine choice it was. [Some of the slaves
approach the door again.] Hey, those slaves are back! Get lost, you
whip-fodder! [They chase the slaves away.]

SECOND ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR: Yes, by Zeus, here they come out of the
door. [The Spartan ambassdors file out; their leader carries bagpipes.]

SPARTAN AMBASSADOR [to the stage-piper or to a pipe who accompa-

nies the Spartans]: Take pipes, my good man, and I dance two-step
and sing nice song for Athenians and ourselves.

FIRST ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR: God yes, take the pipes: I love to watch
you people dance!

SPARTAN AMBASSADOR:
Memory, speed to this lad
your own Muse, who knows
about us and the Athenians,
about that day at Artemision,218
when they spread sail like gods
against the armada
and whipped the Medes,
while Leonidas led us,219
like wild boars we were, yes,
gnashing our tusks, our jaws running
streams of foam, and our legs too.
The enemy, the Persians,
outnumbered the sand on the shore.

Goddess of the Wilds, Virgin Beast-Killer,220
come this way, this way to the treaty,
and keep us together for a long long while.
Now let friendship in abundance
attend our agreement always,
and may we ever abandon
foxy stratagems.
Come this way, this way,
Virgin Huntress!

[A mute Lysistrata comes out of the Akropolis, followed by the Athenian and
Spartan wives.]

FIRST ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR: Well! Now that everything else has
been wrapped up so nicely, it's time for you Spartans to reclaim these
wives of yours; and you Athenians, these here. Let's have husband
stand by wife and wife by husband; then to celebrate our great good
fortune let's have a dance for the gods. And let's be sure never again to
make the same mistakes! [The couples descend into the orchestra to
dance to the Ambassador's song; around them dance the members of
the chorus, who are also paired in couples.]221

Bring on the dance, include the Graces,222
and invite Artemis,
and her twin brother, the benign Healer,217
and the Nysian whose eyes flash
bacchic among his maenads;²¹⁸
and Zeus alight with flame
and the thriving Lady his consort;²¹⁹
and invite the divine powers
we would have as witnesses
to remember always
this humane peace,
which the goddess Kypris²²⁰ has fashioned.

CHORUS:
Alalai, yay Paian!
Shake a leg, iai!
Dance to victory, iai!
Evoi evoi, evai evai!

FIRST ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR: Now, my dear Spartan, you give us
some music: a new song to match the last one!

SPARTAN AMBASSADOR:
Come back again from fair Taygetos,
Spartan Muse, and distinguish this occasion
with a hymn to the God of Amyklai²²¹
and Athena of the Brazen House²²²
and Tyrnareos' fine sons,²²³
who gallop beside the Erotes.
Ho there, hop!
Hey there, jump!
Let's sing a hymn to Sparta,
home of dance divine
and stomping feet,
where by the Erotes' banks
young girls frisk like fillies,
raising dust-clouds underfoot
and tossing their tresses
like maenads waving their wands and playing,
led by Leda's daughter,
their chorus-leader pure and pretty.²²⁴

[To the chorus] Come on now, hold your hair in your hand, get your
feet hopping like a deer and start making some noise to spur the
dances! And sing for the goddess who's won a total victory, Athena of
the Brazen House!

[All exit dancing, the chorus singing a traditional hymn to Athena.]
Notes

See Goldhill 1994. I find Goldhill’s attempt to discredit the Platonic testimony unconvincing (the principal texts are Corgias 502b–d and Laws 685a–d).


17. See MacDowell 1985:257–58. For a critique of the attempt by Taefe 1993 to find comic rupture of this illusion see Gilbert 1965.

18. Thus Taefe’s employment of approaches from film-criticism, with its emphasis on close-ups and directorial shaping of the viewer’s gaze, to analyze Aristophanic comedy is largely inappropriate.

19. See Schaps 1977, Sommerstein 1980. For the important dichotomy of public and private in Athenian life see IV, below.

20. See Thucydides 8.45.2 (Pericles’ plea for public decorum to the war-bereaved women), with Kallet-Marx 1993.

21. Taking the advice of a woman could indeed be cited in court to prove an opponent’s incompetence (Demosthenes 46.16, Isocrates 2.20).

22. In general see Stone 1981.

23. The phallos, in addition to being a traditional element of comic and satiric costumes, was a traditional symbol of fertility and masculine power, and it was especially associated with the worship of Dionysus; on the phalephoria see II, above.

24. There was no ancient counterpart to the “choral speaking” often heard in modern performances of Greek drama.

25. For a selection of epitaphs see Lattimore 1942, and for cult-records see Turner 1983.

26. The archaic period, by contrast, did produce female poets, notably Sappho of Lesbos, who flourished around the turn of the sixth century BCE.

27. Schaps 1977, Sommerstein 1980; for women’s conventional invisibility in the theatrical audience see III, above.

28. Euripides’ violation of this protocol motivates the women’s conspiracy against him in Women at the Thesmophoria.

29. The women of tragedy often protest their lot too, but they are significantly distanced by their confinement to the heroic age and mostly to places other than Athens.


31. Athenian cults, festivals and religious societies at both the local and national levels offered many opportunities for citizen women to serve the community outside the household. As priestesses women could even have a public identity and some public influence, since they were public officials subject to public scrutiny and review; see further Lysistrata, Introduction 2, Blundell 1995:160–69.

32. For the ways in which women’s corporate public esteem was managed according to proper gender-norms see Kallet-Marx 1993.

33. Wives who came with a large dowry (dowries remained with a wife during her lifetime and would be passed on to her male children after her death) could have considerable influence over a husband.


35. For the prominence of women at the local (deme) level see Whitehead 1986:77–81; for the heroines worshipped in local communities see Larson 1995.

36. See n. 31, above.

37. Hitherto women had appeared in comedy only sporadically and as minor characters, representing disreputable types like prostitutes, market-women and the female relatives of "demagogues."

38. See further the Introduction to Women at the Thesmophoria; the character Agathon (a follower of Euripides) would not be so concerned to turn himself into a woman if the verisimilitude of his female characters were not actually characteristic. For the question of verisimilitude as it involves male actors portraying women, see III, above.

39. For drama’s often critical stance toward civic ideology see Goldhill 1990.


41. See above, Introduction III.

42. For the age-distinction see Henderson 1987a.

43. Euripides’ Alkestis (produced in 438) is the only extant tragedy that portrays a loving relationship between a husband and a wife.

44. The emphasis on this motif in comedy suggests that in real life women may not have been fed as much as men (they did not typically take meals with the men, but with the children and slaves) and that their access to wine was strictly regulated—presumably to deter its potential interference with their household work and their sexual propriety. In classical Athens, drinking occurred in occasional religious festivities but as an everyday activity was confined to bars (public) and symposia (all-male), so that respectable women would normally have no licit opportunities to drink.

45. Unless the wine-drinking in Women at the Thesmophoria counts as misbehavior.

46. See Blundell 1995:143–44.

47. See Lysistrata, Introduction 2.

48. This view has been most systematically advanced by Zeitlin, cf. esp. Zeitlin 1985.

49. This may have been a consideration in Aristophanes’ choice of women to argue against continuing the war in 411; see Lysistrata, Introduction 1.


Lysistrata

1. The principal historical source for the Peloponnesian War is Thucydides’ History; book 8 records the events of 411.

2. Thucydides 8.53.

3. See further Introduction II.

4. It would not be surprising if, in the course of the long war and in the aftermath of such a great loss of men as in 413, normal male supervision of women was relaxed,
Notes

allowing women greater scope for independent action and expression than was usual in normal times.

5. On these see further Introduction IV.

6. For the dramatic typology of a household’s women taking public action to save it from the men see Shaw 1975, Foley 1982a, Bowie 1993:199–206, for historical examples see Schaps 1982.

7. For the characterization of older women in comedy generally see Henderson 1987a.

8. Ordinary Athenians (like their counterparts in modern democracies) envied but also admired the rich and privileged, and tended to identify with people higher in the social hierarchy than lower.

9. But not (like Artemis) chastity, despite Loura 1993:147–83: Athena was the patron of both girls and married women, and her Akropolis cult was the polis’ symbolic household.

10. For more details see Vaio 1973, Henderson 1987:xviii–xix; for the special social, economic and legal benefits that priestesses enjoyed see Gould 1985, Turner 1983:383 ff.; and for the importance of religion in connecting women with the polis see Introduction IV. Modern readers should bear in mind that in classical Greece priestesses were not, like nuns, expected to devote their whole lives to religion; except when performing their offices for a particular divinity (usually only on certain days of the year), they lived the same sort of lives as other women.

11. She is apparently appealed to by name in a particular cause of peace in Aristophanes’ Peace (991–92).

12. The name Lysistrata was in fact borne by more than one Polias priestess in later times, and perhaps in earlier times too, since Lysimache is the first identifiable incumbent.

13. Some scholars have suggested that the other wives in the play also represent priestly personnel, since they seem to be familiar with one another and with the Akropolis; in particular, the Athenian wife Myrrhine is given the same (admittedly common) name as a woman known to have served in the latter fifth century as the priestess of Athena Nike (“Victory”), whose bastion was at the entrance to the Akropolis (see MacDowell 1985:341–42, and Lysistrata n. 79). But even if this is so, none of the other women in the play is so strongly characterized in terms of the Akropolis cult as Lysistrata.


15. For a survey see Burkert 1985:168–79 (including the Skira festival, p. 170).


18. Dillon 1987 points out that the threat to fertility represented by the Spartan occupation of the Attic countryside (see section 1, above) is an element underlying the idea of the women’s conjugal strike (a threat to human fertility that is equally “abnormal”).

19. See n. 6, above.

20. The central text for this role of Athena is Aeschylus’ Eumenides.

21. The wine-god Dionysos (here referred to by his epithet Bacchos) was worshipped by private groups of men, women or (if disreputable women were involved) both together; respectable women, whose access to wine was ordinarily restricted (Miniari 1982),

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were in comedy typically portrayed as bibulous and thus as being fond of “Bacchic” religion.

22. Pan was especially associated with “wild” music and dancing, activities that for women could be enjoyed only in the context of religious festivals; he also had erotic associations, embodying the power of animal procreation.

23. The Genetekides were goddesses of procreation who also had erotic associations.

24. These symposiae were used (mainly by women) in ecstatic worship of Dionysos and such Asiatic deities as Sabazios (below, n. 92) and the Great Mother.

25. Comic poets often refer to women’s religious activities as being mere excuses for drinking, dancing and illicit sex. In Lysistrata the young wives conform to this stereotype, but from the start the heroine herself is exempted.

26. The name means “Fair Victory.”

27. The name means “Disbander of Armies.”

28. Kalokou seems to be older than Lysistrata, but not very much older, since she aligns herself with the other housewifes.

29. Meaning “difficult” but also implying that wives who go out are likely to cause mischief. Note that the wives’ freedom to leave their houses is assumed, but at the same time they must be sure that their husbands have no reason to deny permission.

30. Young women are conventionally portrayed as incapable of controlling their sexual appetites, just as men were supposed to be capable of disciplining their own. In Lysistrata these gender-roles are to be comically reversed, with the women resisting sexual temptation and the husbands succumbing.

31. The Peloponneseans (beheaded by Sparta) and the Boiotians (headed by Thebes) were Athens’ chief enemies in the war.

32. Eels from Lake Kopais in Boeotia were a great delicacy, now contraband.

33. An expensive import from a place (probably in Asia Minor) no longer identifiable.

34. Kalokou represents the stereotypical wife of a prosperous husband: a frivolous and spoiled spendthrift.

35. The chief deities of the Eleusinian Mysteries, Demeter and Kore (Persephone), whose worship was intimately associated with human and agricultural fertility and thus with women.

36. Two regions of Attika that evoke the names of Athens’ two fastest ships, the Palauros and the Salamina.

37. An allusion to the “equestrian” mode of sexual intercourse (woman on top), apparently a risque posture, since it was a favor for which a prostitute might charge extra.

38. The name (meaning “Myrtle”) was a very common one in life and in comedy, but it is particularly appropriate for the character in Lysistrata because it was a slang term for the vulva (“Pussy” would be a rough modern equivalent), was associated with Aphrodite and was used in bridal garlands.

39. The zone was a waistband worn just above the hips.

40. Lampito was an actual royal name in Sparta, but no contemporary of that name is known.
41. In the following introduction of the foreigners the women show physical interest in one another, which may have erotic overtones (for female homoeroticism see Dover 1978:171–84); at the same time we must remember that the scene was played by men for a notional audience of men.

42. Spartan girls, unlike their Athenian counterparts, took outdoor physical training, so that Spartan women were stereotypically portrayed as “masculine”: see Cartledge 1983.

43. In Lysistrata the Spartans speak a caricatured version of their local dialect of Greek (Lakonian).

44. The Dioskouroi, Kastor and Pollux, brothers of Helen and special patrons of the Spartans.

45. For women, partial or total pubic depilation (by plucking or singeing) was considered to be a necessary element of good grooming; for the Greek male’s preference for the sexually immature female see Kilmer 1982.

46. Humorously substituting the name of an Athenian commander for the name of a city that the Athenians were besieging, comedy routinely assumes that all military commanders are cowardly, incompetent or corrupt.

47. Though adultery was in reality a very serious offense at Athens, comic wives are typically portrayed as ready to take lovers.

48. The Ionian city of Miletos, Athens’ former ally, was famous for its leather dildoes, either as a major exporter or because Miletian women were thought to be sexually insatiable. Six inches (literally “eight fingers”) was a comparatively short size for a dildo.

49. Lysistrata uses the Greek “four-letter word” for the penis, peos, which would have been shocking on the lips of a respectable woman, but which here emphasizes the shocking nature of Lysistrata’s proposal.

50. Here and elsewhere in comedy, characters often speak in “paratresadgy,” either quoting from or mimicking the general style of tragedy.

51. Comparing the women to the mythical Tyro, who was seduced by the god Poseidon disguised as her lover (the river-god Enipeus) and who exposed the twin boys born of that union in a tub or trough by the riverbank; the myth had been twice dramatized by Sophokles. Lysistrata’s point is that young women cannot rise above sex and procreation.

52. Comically adapting the typical male compliment, “real man.”

53. After the fall of Troy Menelaos (the King of Sparta) intended to kill his unfaithful wife Helen, but at the sight of her beauty dropped his sword; apparently Euripides in his play Andromache had added the detail about Helen’s breasts.

54. In Attic slang “skinning” meant “causing an erection” and “skinned dog” meant “dildo.” Pherekrates was a contemporary comic poet, but the context of the phrase quoted is unknown.

55. The Greek word *hia*, here translated “force,” is commonly used to denote sexual assault, but Athenian men would probably not think of forced sex with a spouse as being rape because they considered sexual compliance to be a wife’s duty that they could choose to command. Nevertheless, men who beat their wives were considered brutes (see below, nn. 110–11), and later in the play Kinesias, though desperate, never thinks of forcing his wife Myrrhine to sleep with him.

56. She means sexual unresponsiveness in a spouse, not rape, which comic males typically enjoy when an opportunity presents itself.

57. Playing on the contrast (and conflict) between the authoritarian Spartan monarchy and the Athenian direct democracy (“mob rule,” according to its critics).

58. The temple of the citadel-goddess, Athena, on the Akropolis, was Athens’ main treasury; for the importance of Athena to the play’s symbolism, see Introduction 2.

59. That is, the women who are too old to participate in the sex-strikes; they are the counterparts of the older men of the “home guard” who are too old to serve on military expeditions.

60. What follows is a parody of an old-fashioned oath-ceremony, in which a black sacrificial animal was slaughtered and its testicles severed; participants stood on the severed parts while taking the solemn oath. The principal humor lies in the spectacle of women performing such a ceremony, which was ordinarily the prerogative of men.

61. The Athenians used slave-archers, mostly from western Asia, as policemen and security-guards for officials (like the Magistrate later in the play); the slave-girl here, apparently dressed like such a policeman (hence her possession of the shield), increases our impression of Lysistrata’s ability to challenge males on their own ground (cf. Stone 1980:336). We are not to ask where Lysistrata came by a Skythian warrior-girl.

62. Lysistrata seems more warlike than her comrades. The reference is to Aischyllos’ Seven Against Thebes 42–48, where the Seven vow to take Thebes or die trying.

63. A “white horse” made a rare and costly sacrifice normally associated with myths (e.g., the oath of Helen’s suitors, taken over a severed white horse) and with the fabulous east; its appropriateness here is as a slang term for the erect penis or as an allusion to the Amazonas (a mythical, eastern race of women who rejected and battled with men: see below, n. 151).

64. The Greeks typically mixed their wine with water; a liking for neat wine—which more quickly intoxicates and was therefore considered excessive—was a comic stereotype about women. Wine from Thasos was exceptionally fine. The vessels used in this scene are the *kyles*, the standard drinking bowl, and a *stamnos*, a large jar more appropriate for festive cult than private drinking. The women violate the protocol of an oath-ceremony, in which nothing was eaten or drunk.

65. Alluding to the practice at male drinking-parties (*symposiums*, from which respectable women were barred) of determining the drinking-order by drawing lots.

66. That is, on all fours, to be penetrated (vaginally or anally) from behind. The handles of household utensils were often made in the form of crouching animals.

67. For the importance of the women’s solidarity see Konstan 1993.

68. The Greek word *oladyge* designated (1) women’s ritual shouts at the completion of a sacrifice (here, the old women’s pretext for being on the Akropolis) and (2) any victory-cry.

69. The favor of the goddess of sexual enjoyment is of course crucial for the conspiracy’s success.

70. Chorus members in comedy (but not in tragedy) are often given personal names; the men’s names here seem to be generic for old men.
71. The ancient olive-wood image of Athena Polias was both a venerable symbol of Athens and an important guarantor of the goddess' goodwill toward the polis.

72. Since the Acropolis was in actuality open to the public at large, both men and women, and since virtually every Athenian participated in some way in its many sacred activities, the men's proprietary and exclusive attitude toward it is unwarranted.

73. The men imagine (wrongly) that the ringleader of the conspiracy must be Lykon's wife, a citizen woman who had a reputation for promiscuity in Athens at the time.

74. A Spartan king (c. 520–490) who in 508 had occupied the Acropolis for two days on the invitation of Athenian oligarchs and was allowed to leave under truce, paving the way for the restoration of the democratic leader Kleisthenes.

75. The men speak of Athens and of the Acropolis in a proprietary way, since they boast of having personally taken part in glorious actions of the past that would make them about 120 years old!

76. Euripides' reputation as a misogynist—based on his unprecedentedly vivid portrayals of female deviousness (e.g. Phaidra) and even criminality (e.g. Medea)—underlies the plot of Aristophanes' play Women at the Thesmophoria.

77. The stone monument that commemorated the great Athenian victory over the Persians in 490.

78. For the myth of the Lemnian women and its significance for the plot of Lysistrata see Introduction 2.

79. i.e., Athena Nike, whose temple stands on your right as you face the Propylaia (the main entrance to the Acropolis).

80. The women's names, like the men's, are apparently generic for old women, but Nikodike ("Victory for Right") probably has additional significance in immediately following the men's appeal to Lady Victory.

81. Drawing water from a well was a typical morning chore for women.

82. Branding was meted out to slaves who had run away or committed some other serious offense. The women emphasize the toughness of the competition at the well (to match the men's martial exploits).

83. Around 175 pounds (an exaggeration).

84. An ancient epitaph of Athens thought to recall her birth near a mythical river or lake and thus suited to the women's task of dousing the men's fire.

85. A Chian sculptor venerated by the sixth-century iambic poet Hipponax.

86. For Euripides' reputation for misogyny see Women at the Thesmophoria. Introduction.

87. i.e., not a slave or foreigner but a citizen entitled to the Athenian right of free speech.

88. Jury-service, for which a small stipend was paid by the polis, was popular with impecunious old men and with others unfit for more remunerative occupations.

89. Ascodelos, a river in NW Greece, was metonymic for "water," especially in ritual contexts—suggesting that the women are countering an impious action by the men.

90. For these slave archers see n. 61, above.

91. Exemplifying the typical male assumptions about women's business (and echoing Lysistrata's first words), though this time these assumptions are wrong.

92. A Phrygian (and therefore barbarian) god similar to Dionysos, whose worship had recently become popular at Athens, especially among women and slaves; but the women in the play associate themselves only with the major polis gods.

93. Adonis (in myth, the mortal youth whom Aphrodite loved) was another eastern (Semite) import who was not officially recognized by the city. His cult was celebrated by women in the heat of midsummer on rooftops: the women planted quickly flowering and quickly withering gardens and lamented the death of the young god.

94. That is, in the summer of 415; for the disastrous Sicilian expedition, see Introduction.

95. A very bad omen, considering that the Athenians were moving to send the flower of their youth to Sicily, and one that proved only too accurate.

96. Still a prominent politician at the time of the play.

97. Note that the Magistrate's anecdote actually demonstrates the recklessness of Lysistratas and the male assemblymen rather than any ill-effects resulting from the women's festival.

98. An overnight voyage. In addition, "sailing" and "Salamis" can connote sexual intercourse.

99. Like women, slaves were stereotypically bibulous.

100. Artemis, sister of Apollo, was a fearsome maiden huntress associated with wild places and untamed beasts.

101. One of the daughters of the mythical King Kekrops; along with her sister Aglauros she was worshipped as a heroine on the Acropolis, and their myth may well be commemorated in the ritual of the Arkephoria (see n. 139, below).

102. A title of Hekate, a popular women's goddess associated with the moon and with the birth and rearing of children; her epitaph here pans on "eye" or "eye-salve".

103. An impossibility in actual life, but we are reminded of Athena, who was imagined as bearing arms in her capacity as polis-guardian.

104. Market-women were (conventionally) older women of the lower citizen or slave classes and (proverbially) bold, tough and abusive, so that they make perfect "combat troops" for Lysistrata.

105. Emphasizing the sanctity of the Acropolis by invoking the name of a mythical king of Athens.

106. In the typical comic agon (contest) both contestants state and argue a case as if in a lawcourt; in this one, the Magistrate is given no argument in favor of continuing the war but merely challenges Lysistrata's arguments against it.


108. For women and domestic management, see Introduction IV.

109. A common male oath.

110. It was illegal (because undemocratic) to strike any male citizen, and in terms of democratic ideology physical violence against women was disapproved behavior as well, being attributed in all our sources only to drunks and scoundrels. Violence against women is stressed in this play as one element of its portrayal of males as interloper and ill-behaved (though the husbands who appear later on are not at all violent).

111. The following account of dispute between husbands and wives about the war is modeled on the famous conversation between Hektor and Andromache in the sixth book.
of Homer's *Iliad*. There Andromache gives Hector sound tactical advice (to defend Troy from the walls) that he refuses to follow, preferring the more masculine path of honor (to confront Achilles in single combat), with results disastrous for himself, his city and his wife and small son. But even in refusing his wife’s advice Hector, in contrast with Lysistrata’s husband, nevertheless treats her with tact, sympathy and compassion—traditional marks of the civilized man: see also *Iliad* 19.285 ff., 24.762 ff., *Odyssey* 20.105 ff. By echoing this scene Aristophanes not only evokes the ideal (heroic) models of husband and wife, but also singles out the one episode in the heroic tradition when a leader would have done well to heed a woman’s advice.

122. Quoting Hector’s words (previous note); proper gender-roles were conventionally epitomized by the antithesis weeping/fighting.

123. Respectable women normally veiled their faces when they went outside the house.

124. The ancient equivalent of gum-chewing, and associated with menial tasks.

125. The feminization and (thus) disempowerment of the Magistrate by dressing him as a housewife scenically underlines the play’s wholesale gender-reversals, and it recalls such mythical prototypes as Pentheus in Euripides’ *Bacchae*; see Zeitlin 1985, Levine 1987.

126. The list combines conventionally male and female attributes.

127. Not necessarily indicating that Lysistrata is old, for she is here addressed in her role as leader of the occupying (older) women.

128. In Greek *Lysistratai*, possibly alluding to Lysimache, the current priestess of Athena Polias; see *Lysistrata*, Introduction.

129. Eastern deities associated with ecstatic dancing, and a popular way to refer to lunatics.

130. During the war many wealthy young men had taken to wearing their hair long and affecting other “Spartan” manners, to the disgust of older, more conventional Athenians.

131. Thracian mercenaries struck Athenians as wild and uncivilized. These were the mythical Thracian king who raped and mutilated Philomela, the sister of his wife Prokne, daughter of the Athenian King Pandion; when Prokne found out, she killed her son Ixion and served him to Tereus for dinner. In the end, Tereus was transformed into a hoopoe, Prokne into a nightingale and Philomela into a swallow. The myth was dramatized by Sophocles.

132. Lysistrata’s polis-as-ball-of-wool metaphor appeals to the item of domestic management most characteristic of wives, and is thus a central illustration of Lysistrata’s main argument, that female skills are a better model for running the polis than the male predilection for aggression.

133. Here Aristophanes signals a departure from the comic plot: his heroine is about to give advice on how the *men* ought to govern the actual polis; that is why her following metaphor does not include women in its list of useful citizens to be included in a newly constituted polis: see MacDowell 1995:238–39.

134. Referring both to open political cliques and to antidemocratic conspiracies (cf. Thukydides 8.54).

135. She was about to add, “never to see them again,” an indication of the intended seriousness of Lysistrata’s words; the men in the audience are being asked to see the situation through women’s eyes.

136. I.e., wives and widows.

137. In the Greek world, every woman was expected to marry and bear children, and it was considered her right to have a husband. Those women who for some reason did not marry faced social isolation, were both an embarrassment and an unwelcome expense to their families, and represented for the community a horrible and illomened wastage that called the basic social order into question. The recent destruction of the Sicilian expedition had in fact significantly reduced the number of young citizen men and created real fear that many young women might go without husbands. The future dearth of citizen males was of course an additional consideration if the marriage-rate dropped.

138. That is, omens foretelling marriage.

139. The Magistrate might have continued “has a perfect right to take the most attractive woman he chooses as a wife” (crudely disregarding the right of every woman to have a husband: see n. 127, above).

140. Lysistrata and her comrades playfully enact one of the traditional duties of older women, managing funerals.

141. Charon ferries dead souls across the river Styx into the underworld.

142. That is, dressed first as a housewife and then as a corpse.

143. This last Athenian tyrant was expelled in 510, but a public curse against anyone aiming to be or to abet a tyrant was still solemnly pronounced on important civic occasions. Since Hippias’ name is based on *hippos* “horse,” there is an allusion here to the “equestrian” position in sexual intercourse (woman on top).

144. A beardless man ceased to be effeminate and for taking the woman’s role in sexual intercourse in eight of Aristophanes’ eleven extant plays; in *Women at the Thesmophoria* he is the intermediary between the women and the polis. He was also a suitable intermediary between the women and the Spartans, since the latter were thought by the Athenians to be especially fond of performing anal intercourse: see Dover 1978:185–96.

145. Pay for jury-service, introduced by Pericles, enabled the poorer classes of citizens to serve and was especially attractive to older men with nothing better to do with their time. Many conservative Athenians regarded this pay as a needless expense and even as a danger to democracy, since it tended to introduce a class imbalance between litigants (mostly wealthy) and jurors that demagogues might exploit for their own political purposes.

146. Quoting from a patriotic drinking-song about the tyrant-slayers (see next note); the phrase could also have a slang double-meaning referring to male sexual penetration of women.

147. In the marketplace stood bronze statues of Harmodios and Aristogeiton, the young men who killed Hipparchios, the brother of the tyrant Hippias, in 514; they and their descendants were subsequently revered as “tyrant-slayers” and freedom-fighters. (Thucydides’ account [6.53–59], that the two were merely lovers avenging a personal insult, is unlikely to have been common knowledge at the time of the play.) Here the Old Men pose incongruously as the young and handsome Harmodios.
138. Aristophanes further develops the contrast between the well-born and well-trained old women and the poor, ignorant old men. The rôle of religious distinctions offered by the old women here is the most prestigious that any Athenian woman could boast. For the importance of service in the public cults for women's status in the polis see Introduction IV and Gould 1980:50-51.

139. The Archephoriai were two girls who spent a year living on the Akropolis in ritual service to the cult of Athena Polias and under her Priestess' supervision. Among their other duties, they began the weaving of Athena's Panathenaic robe and marched in the procession at the Panathenaia, a great festival honoring Athena and held every four years. The girls had to be at least seven and no more than eleven years old and came only from the noblest Athenian families; their selection was made by the people's assembly and the King Archon, the polis' chief religious magistrate. The Archephoriai ritualistically represented all Athenian girls' preparation for their married lives as domestic managers, and their service helped assure the goddess' favor toward the polis itself. In general see Burkert 1983:150-4, Simon 1983:38-46, 66-69, Sourvinou-Inwood 1988:58-59, 73-74.


141. That is, Artemis (see n. 100, above), the patron deity of the Brauronia.

142. The Brauronia, an elaborate ritual sequence celebrated every four years, was open to select girls five to ten years old (criteria for eligibility are unknown). Its climax was the Arkteia (Ritual of the Bears), in which the girls donned various costumes representing their passage from girlhood to adulthood (eligibility for marriage); at one point they removed a saffron-dyed robe and performed naked. See in general Burkert 1985:253, Simon 1983:33-38, Sourvinou-Inwood 1988. Here the old women, who shed their jackets, thus reenact their youthful Arktieia, producing a humorous incongruity to match the old men's imitation of the young tyrannicides.

143. Maiden basket-bearers were a feature of many processions, and figs symbolized fertility; see Simon 1983:77-78. The climactic placement of basket-bearing here perhaps suggests the most prestigious of all processions, in the Panathenaia.

144. The word *habris* ranges in significance from "outrageous conduct" to "assault" to "behaving as if more than human."

145. Leaving them "naked," i.e. wearing only their theatrical skin (leotards and phallos).

146. A military nickname of unknown (but evidently patriotic) significance.

147. In the hills of northern Attika where rebels battled the tyrant Hippias after his brother's assassination (see n. 137, above).

148. The following items of martial activity have double-meanings suggesting fear that the women will take command in sexual relations—an idea dramatized in *Assemblywomen*.

149. A queen of Halikarnassos who commanded naval actions against the Greeks during the Persian invasion of 480.

150. Yet another allusion to the equestrian (woman-on-top) mode of sexual intercourse.

151. According to legend the Amazons, a mythical race of women who shunned men, once invaded Attika and occupied the Akropolis in order to rescue an Amazon princess who had been captured by Heracles and given to the Attic king Theseus as a prize; but they were routed by the Athenians in battle. See in general DuBois 1982, Tyrrell 1984, Bowie 1993:184-85.

152. They will be "naked" like the old men—something that in actual life no respectable woman would ever do except as a performer in the Ritual of the Bears (see n. 142). But now the need to match the men's aggression overrides concern for their own dignity.

153. Alluding to an Aesopic fable, the beetle avenges a wrong done it by an eagle by breaking the eagle's eggs; these had been placed in Zeus' lap for safekeeping, but when the beetle dropped its dung-ball into Zeus' lap, he unthinkingly jumped up and spilled the eggs. Here the eggs seem to indicate the men's testicles.

154. See n. 102.

155. See n. 32. The women liken the Greek world at war to a neighborhood disrupted by a troublemaker.

156. The elevated style incongruously parodies tragedy, in which the stage building typically represents a troubled palace.

157. The (obscene) word she uses, being grammatically in the active voice, would typically be used by horny men.

158. For Pan see n. 22, above. This grotto, on the northern slope of the Akropolis, was where Apollo raped Kreusa; later in the play it serves as a trysting-place for Kinesis and Myrrhaire.

159. Sparrows were emblematic of sexual appetite and eaten as aphrodisiacs, and "sparrow" was a slang term for both "penis" and "vagina"; thus the sparrow was sacred to Aphrodite.

160. Evidently a "ladies' man." For a wife to visit her lover's house is a sign of sexual desperation because it was normal for an adulterer to visit the wife at her own house.

161. Birth and death were forbidden in sanctuaries like the Akropolis.

162. That is, the helmet from the great bronze statue of Athena Promachos on the Akropolis.

163. Like omen and even dreams, oracles were frequently used in political persuasion and deliberation, but Aristophanes, like many educated people, considered those who believed in them to be gullible; here the gullible wives are being treated to the sort of "demagogic" tactics that were familiar to their husbands in Assembly.

164. An allusion to the myth of Tereus (see above, n. 121).

165. The mythical Melanion is best known for using the trick of the golden apples to win a footrace against the huntress-maiden Atalante and thus her hand in marriage; here the old men seem to be thinking of an earlier phase of the myth, in which Melanion was celibate and Atalante was his divine companion (compare Hippolytus and Artemis in Euripides' play *Hippolytus*).

166. Two Athenian generals, now dead, who were remembered for their toughness and bravery. Hairy headquarters were a sign of strength and courage in men.

167. A legendary misanthrope who (despite the old women's claim in this song) reportedly hated both men and women. He was a main character in several Greek comedies and in Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens*.

168. Just as body-hair was a sign of virility, so its absence was a sign of femininity; see above, n. 45.

169. The ensuing scene, which illustrates the sex-strike in action, reverses the Greek norm of seduction, in which the male takes the lead. But it also takes off on such well-known
170. Kinesias was an actual (though uncommon) name that was borne by a contemporary poet whom Aristophanes had caricatured in *Birds* three years earlier; if Aristophanes is caricaturing him here, then it is possible that Myrrhine represents his actual wife, perhaps the priestess of Athena Nike (see *Lysistrata*, Introduction, n. 13). But the name alone suits the role of the representative husband in this play, since it reminds us of the verb *kinein* "screw (a woman)"; the demi-name Pionisai similarly reminds us of *paion* "bang"—we might translate 'Roger Baling from Bangor.' Myrrhine's name ('*myrte* = "pussy," see above, n. 38) is similarly significant.

171. The typical toast for an absent loved one, except that here Myrrhine is represented as toasting with food rather than with drink, which would be inappropriate for a respectable wife.

172. Although Kinesias is bribing a "seamy" here, the audience will think of the usual association of men and parasites: negotiation with prostitutes; see Keuls 1985:153–203.

173. A line of text has been lost here, but its gist must be as indicated by the supplement offered here.

174. That is, "had sex with me," which Kinesias tries to portray as a sacred duty.

175. See above, n. 158.

176. No one who had had sex was allowed to enter a sanctuary until (s)he had bathed, for this and other taboos involving sex see Parker 1983:74–103.

177. It was in this spring, in a cave below the NW side of the Akropolis, that Zeus' wife Hera was said to have recovered her virginity; in Aristophanes' time the image of Aphrodite Peitho ("The Persuader") was ritually bathed there.

178. Women, being legally incompetent to swear an oath, were popularly regarded as being too untrustworthy to live up to one.

179. The he-man hero Herakles was portrayed in myths as having a huge appetite for food and sex; various kinds of trouble about meals is a typical feature of his comic persona.

180. Apparently an inferior brand.

181. This duet parodies scenes in tragedy where a stricken hero is consoled by the chorus (-leader).

182. The nickname of the pimp or brothel-keeper Philiscrator.

183. Early morning is often mentioned as a conventional time for conjugal sex.

184. A demon or divinity associated with ithyphallic dances.

185. Significance obscure: either a place-name with a sexual significance now lost, or a pun on an unattested word meaning vagina or anus.

186. Pan (above, n. 22) was frequently portrayed as ithyphallic and thus able to inflict ithyphallic.

187. The deme Trikorythos abutted a large marsh on the Bay of Marathon.

188. Choral songs in the latter parts of an Old Comedy often ridiculed or abused specific members of the audience; here, by contrast, Aristophanes wants to underline the theme of general reconciliation, so that the chorus merely teases the spectators by making comically insincere promises; this routine is continued in another pair of songs after the following Episode.

189. The only passage in surviving Greek comedy that explicitly recognizes the presence of women in the audience (see further Introduction); note that the women are thought of as having a need for money of their own.

190. A substantial amount of money.

191. Troops from this ally were stationed in Athens and were (to judge from this passage) attractive to Athenian women.

192. The Greek puns on *asketikon* ("pertaining to athletic training") and *askiton* ("suffering from abdominal swelling").

193. See above, n. 144. This was not, of course, the only available outlet for an Athenian husband who wished to have access to his wife: masturbation was considered slavish, and no free man would admit to resorting to it, but slaves and prostitutes were in reality freely available. But so as not to complicate his plot (which emphasizes the supreme desirability of marital love) Aristophanes avoids mentioning any alternative outlet save for this one (a joke he could not resist).

194. In 415, just before the departure of the Sicilian expedition, the faces and phalli of the pillar-images of Hermes, which stood in the streets throughout Athens, had been mutilated. Since not all of the perpetrators had been identified, Aristophanes suggests that some were among the spectators.

195. The men’s references to Lysistrata by name in these final scenes are the only exceptions in extant comedy and oratory to the rule of Athenian etiquette that a free man does not publicly refer by name to a respectable woman not holding a public office: see Sommerstein 1959. This exception may have to do with the heroine’s assimilation to the Polia priestess Lysimache (see Introduction 2), but in any case it is significant that Lysistrata is not so named until her victory (and thus her extraordinary status) is assured.

196. Either the Spartan (who can know nothing of Lysistrata) does not care whether the mediator is male or female, or Aristophanes is poking fun at an effeminate Lysistratos.

197. Humorous oxymoron (because "manly" was an inappropriate epithet for a woman), but also calling attention to the fact that Lysistrata has done, in the fantasy of the play, what no man has been able to do in reality.

198. That is, a man (or boy) wearing a girlish mask and a leotard to which false breasts and genitalia were attached; similar "naked girls" appear in most of Aristophanes’ plays. Aristophanes typically portrays people concretely and in terms of sensory enjoyment (food, drink, sex and festivals).

199. Intelligence and knowledge of the world were attributes not conventionally associated with women (cf. Dover 1974:99); that Lysistrata has paid attention to her father plausibly explains her possession of these masculine attributes and is yet another detail linking her with Athena (see Introduction 2).

200. Some scholars think that the following appeals cannot have been intended seriously: the context is ludicrous and salacious, and the appeals themselves are both historically dubious and impracticable (see MacDowell 1985:244–46). Yet the context can be explained as Aristophanes’ way of defusing a potentially outrageous moment (sympathetic portrayal of Spartans), and the appeals as more in tune with popular sentiment and wish-fulfillment than with expert analysis. Evidently, some of the same arguments were in fact made in actual debate at the time.
NOTES

201. Lysistrata recalls the great earthquake that devastated Sparta in 464; it was followed by the revolt of Sparta's helots (serfs) and other subject communities, who waged a guerrilla war from bases on Mt. Ithome; Athens was among the cities that agreed to send military assistance. Lysistrata omits to mention the sequel: the Athenian commander Kimon, who advocated a friendly policy toward Sparta, was ignominiously dismissed by the Spartans—an act that led to Kimon's exile and strengthened anti-Spartan sentiment at Athens.

202. Referring to the expulsion of the Athenian tyrant Hippias in 510, when the assistance supplied by the Spartan king Kleomenes was decisive. Again Lysistrata omits the sequel: the return of Kleomenes to Athens three years later, this time to undermine its fledgling democracy.

203. Of this negotiation-scene Taft 1993:71 writes, "Creatures who play to the male gaze have caused that gaze to refocus upon masculine desire. In addition, woman has been put back into one of her rightful places, as a silent token of exchange between men."

204. The places mentioned during these comic negotiations might have been relevant were actual negotiations held, but for Aristophanes' purposes their main attraction was that they all had sexual double-meanings that could be illustrated by reference to Reconciliation's "naked" body.

205. Fyllos ("gate"). Throughout this scene Aristophanes exploits the stereotype of Spartan predilection for anal intercourse (both homo- and heterosexual); since the Athenians prefer the vagina, the "settlement" turns out to be satisfactory to both sides.

206. Echinous ("sea-urchin place"—female pubis), Malian Inlet (malos was slang for breasts or, as here, buttocks), Legs ("connecting walls") of Megara.

207. See above, n. 176.

208. Lysistrata's last words in the play: her plot-functions are now concluded and control of affairs passes back to the newly reformed men. The final business of celebration and the reunion of husbands and wives is orchestrated by the Athenian Ambassadors; compare Frasagora's early exit in Assemblywomen. Most modern readers, however, will prefer to follow the role-assignment in the medieval manuscripts and allow Lysistrata to preside over the finale, as does Sommerstein 1990:211-22.

209. A continuation of the chorus' previous song (see above, n. 185).

210. See above, n. 143.

211. The Telamon Song (Telamon was the father of the epic hero Ajax) was warlike, while the Kleistagora Song (named after and/or composed by a woman, perhaps a courtesan) began (we have only the opening words) by referring to peace and prosperity.

212. The Athenian naval battle against the Persians in 480.

213. In the valiant Spartan stand at the pass of Thermopylae, where all 300 Spartans were killed, this land action occurred at the same time as the sea action off Artemision.

214. Artemis under this special title (Agrotera) was worshipped at both Sparta (where she was invoked before battle) and Athens (where a yearly sacrifice commemorated a vow made to her before the battle of Marathon).

215. This dance by couples is exceptional in Greek drama, and was probably rare in Greek life as well.

216. Goddesses who personify the beauty and joy of the dancers themselves.

NOTES

217. Apollo.

218. Dionysos was the patron of the dramatic festivals and emblematic of peace; Nysa was the legendary place of his rearing.

219. Hera.

220. Aphrodite.

221. Apollo.

222. The Spartan equivalent of Athena Polias at Athens.

223. The divine horsemen Kastor and Polydeuces (Lat. Folluck).

224. I.e., Helen, who was worshipped at Sparta not as the adulterous wife familiar to us from epic poetry but as the ideal Spartan maiden and bride.

Women at the Thesmophoria

1. The idea that an author's characters reflect the character of the author himself is exploited by Aristophanes in other plays (especially Acharnians and Frogs), and no doubt there were actors and writers in Athens, as there are today, who prepared for a role by imitating real-life examples.

2. For these see Introduction IV.

3. For this see Lysistrata, Introduction 1. Rockford 1987:299-300 suggests, however, that despite its apolitical focus, the play, with its irresistible Kinsman, "suggests that Athenians can play many parts, can survive humiliation and defeat, can find a way out of seemingly hopeless difficulties."

4. It goes without saying that the two stereotypes—virtuous wives as loyal defenders of their households and homy wives as deceivers of their husbands—can coexist in the same culture, as they still do today.

5. See Introduction IV.


7. Fuller descriptions and analyses of the Thesmophoria can be found in Brunfels 1981, Burkert 1985:242-46, Detienne 1999, Parke 1977:82-86, Parker 1983:81-83, Simon 1983:17-22, Zeitin 1982a, MacDowell 1993:259-62. The festival, which had its origins in neolithic times, when grain-growing and hog-raising were still done by women, is named for one of its central acts, the "carrying of themenoi" (literally "things laid down"); in terms of the ritual the word themenoi, which in classical times had come to mean "laws" or "ordinances," retained its earlier meaning, "fertilizer."

8. For women and sacrifice generally see Detienne 1989, who however is wrong in placing a connection between restrictions on women's sacrificial roles and their political disabilities (Osborne 1993).

9. Inscriptiones Graecae (ed. J. Kirchner [Berlin 1913-40]) ii.2 1006.50-51.


11. The principal text is the Homeric Hymn to Demeter, for which see Foley 1994.