

THE NEW CLASSICAL CANON

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David M. Halperin

THREE PLAYS by  
ARISTOPHANES

Staging Women



Translated and Edited

by

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## INTRODUCTION

### 1. *The Play*

In the prologue, the tragic poet Euripides (who was at this time about seventy years old), accompanied by his Kinsman (whose name we are never told), visits the young tragic poet Agathon to seek his help in a crisis. Agathon is portrayed as effeminate: he is clean-shaven, has a high-pitched voice, wears women's clothes and enjoys the passive role in sex. Under hostile questioning by the conventionally masculine Kinsman, Agathon reveals that his effeminacy not only expresses his own nature, and his preference for the luxurious clothing of old-time Ionian poets, but also has a practical purpose: by dressing and acting like a woman he can better create female roles for his plays.<sup>1</sup> Now we learn the reason for Euripides' visit: the matrons of Athens are about to decree a death-sentence on him because his scandalous heroines have opened husbands' eyes to the hitherto secret misbehavior of wives. This decree is to be enacted at the festival of Thesmophoria, which in actual life was exclusively run by citizen matrons and off-limits to men. In the play, the matrons plan to use their festive assembly to usurp the juridical function of the male Assembly and thus condemn Euripides to death. Euripides asks Agathon to infiltrate the Thesmophoria as a woman and plead his case. When Agathon refuses, the Kinsman volunteers to go. Shaven and disguised as a woman, the Kinsman attends the festival and delivers a defense speech that outrages rather than mollifies the matrons: Euripides, he argues, failed to reveal even the tiniest fraction of the whole shocking truth about women, a claim which he proceeds to document graphically. The women become suspicious, and with the help of another Athenian effeminate, Kleisthenes, soon expose the Kinsman as a male intruder and sentence him to death. But the Kinsman (in parody of Euripides' play *Telephos*) seizes a hostage (which turns out to be a wine-skin disguised as a baby girl) and



takes refuge at an altar, where he is guarded first by Kritylla, a tough old woman, and then by a barbaric archer-policeman. Euripides tries to rescue the Kinsman by reenacting rescue scenes from his own recent plays (*Palamedes*, *Helen* and *Andromeda*), but these fail to deceive Kritylla. Finally, Euripides disguises himself as an old bawd, distracts the policeman with a sexy young prostitute and escapes with the Kinsman, having promised the women that he will never again portray them unfavorably.

Like *Lysistrata*, *Women at the Thesmophoria* was produced in 411 (some three months later than *Lysistrata*, at the Dionysia) and depicts a conspiracy of citizen wives that is provoked by a grievance against men and ends with reconciliation between the genders. But there the major similarities end. Unlike *Lysistrata*, *Women at the Thesmophoria* makes practically no references to the current political and military situation; focusing almost entirely on the worlds of art and festival, it is one of Aristophanes' least politically engaged plays. And while reversal of gender-roles is essential to the humor of both plays, in *Lysistrata* it is the wives who infiltrate male space and temporarily occupy male gender-roles,<sup>2</sup> whereas in *Women at the Thesmophoria* both sexes transgress gender-boundaries, especially the men: all the play's characters, except for the barbaric slave-policeman who appears late in the play, are either women with power over men or men who at some point impersonate women.

The two plays differ also in their portrayal of women's character. *Lysistrata* had featured an admirable heroine whose conspiracy was unselfish and sympathetic: under Athena's aegis Lysistrata saves all of Greece from its misguided men by forcing them to resolve their differences and negotiate a lasting peace. The young wives, it is true, are given stereotypically feminine foibles and weaknesses, but they overcome these, so that the heroine may remind the Athenians how essential to the safety and well-being of the polis were the women's roles as spouses, mothers and managers of the household. In the end, the women of *Lysistrata* seem superior to the men both in their civic priorities and in their ethical dispositions. *Women at the Thesmophoria*, by contrast, has no admirable heroine, virtually ignores the Athenians' darkening military and political situation<sup>3</sup> and portrays the matrons in at best a very suspect light: save for wanting Euripides and the Kinsman dead, they have no ambition higher than continuing to live the life of the stereotypical Athenian wife—a category that in this play Aristophanes exploits to the fullest. In fact, *Women at the Thesmophoria* contains more jokes about wives' misbehavior than *Lysistrata* and *Assemblywomen* combined. Drinking and adultery get the most attention, but theft and baby-swapping are thrown in for good measure. The women are made the butts of both Euripidean "slander" and comic satire.

Although the matrons resent Euripides' portrayals and the Kinsman's speech, and although we never *see* them seriously misbehaving—drinking wine

at their festival being only a minor dereliction—they never actually refute or even deny Euripides' or the Kinsman's charges; in fact, the particulars of the oath they swear at the beginning of their assembly virtually confirm the worst male suspicions. And so the matrons turn out to be not righteously indignant victims of slander but deceivers of their husbands angrily conspiring to avoid exposure. By contrast with the other two "women's" plays, *Women at the Thesmophoria* nowhere invites the audience to feel the slightest admiration, or even sympathy, for women either as individuals or as a gender.

The differences between the two plays do not mean that Aristophanes had suddenly changed his mind about women; rather, he emphasized positive female stereotypes in *Lysistrata* and negative ones in *Women at the Thesmophoria* because each play has a different thematic focus. In *Lysistrata* Aristophanes focused on what he saw as perverse civic and military policies in the public world of men. In order to discredit these, he compared the polis (which was male-run) unfavorably with the traditional, stable world of the private household (which was female-run), and that comparison required a favorable—or at least a benign—portrayal of the wives. By overcoming their stereotyped weaknesses, the wives live up to their *ideal* roles as defenders of the household and therefore of the polis. In *Women at the Thesmophoria* Aristophanes focuses instead on husbands' anxiety about the private conduct of wives, as an element in a larger exploration of the nature of fictive illusion.<sup>4</sup> In a society like fifth-century Athens, where the honor and even the survival of a man's household depended on the unassailable propriety of its women,<sup>5</sup> male suspicions about female misconduct were inevitable and always easy to inflame. Was the wives' *apparent* propriety a mere facade that concealed *secret* misbehavior, and if so, how could the men find out? The deceitful and even scandalous behavior of mythical wives in tragedies by Euripides offered a peek through the window, but were Euripides' portrayals true to life, as some men were all too willing to believe, or outright slander, as the wives (at least officially) claim? In *Women at the Thesmophoria* Aristophanes explores the often ludicrous plasticity of that social construct known as gender and the public media by which a society seeks to define it; in particular, he inquires into the relative capacity of the chief dramatic media—the male-written genres of comedy and tragedy—to capture and reveal its elusive reality.<sup>6</sup> In the end, the play satirizes not so much women as male attempts to understand them. This is a play about male fantasies, and it makes no attempt to incorporate a vision of women separate from those fantasies.

## 2. Gender Transgression and Thesmophoria

In this play Aristophanes sets his women in the context of one of the oldest and most widespread women's festivals in Greece. At Athens Thesmophoria was one



segment of a series of interlocking women's festivals, held in the autumn sowing-season, that variously celebrated the ancient association of women with agriculture and with fertility generally.<sup>7</sup> During its three days the matrons (lawfully married citizen women) of Athens abandoned their homes and lived by themselves in a sacred precinct, all other categories of women, and all men, being strictly excluded. During the festival the matrons constituted their own society, which their husbands had to finance and which had its own "leaders" (*archousai*), two being elected by the matrons of each deme (local community), for a total of about 300 "leaders." There the matrons enacted immemorially ancient rituals, including the uttering of ritual obscenity and the performance of sacrificial slaughter, which was normally the exclusive prerogative of men.<sup>8</sup> Since the purpose of the ritual could not have been more important for the entire community—to ensure the continuity of plant and animal life through the winter to come—the men had no choice but to stay at home while their wives met in assembly: a reversal of the normal pattern. Thus the Thesmophoria provided Aristophanes with a ready-made setting for a gender-satire featuring role-reversal.

But the festival may have contained more than transgression of gender-roles. In the play, the women refer to their meeting-place (the Thesmophorion) as being on the Pnyx Hill, where the Athenian assembly (composed exclusively of adult citizen men) normally met. If that was the case in actual life, then this women's assembly displaced the men's, so that the transgression of gender-boundaries, which the wives of *Lysistrata* accomplish only in comic fantasy (by leaving their homes, occupying the Akropolis and excluding the men), was actually institutionalized in the festival of Thesmophoria.

Some scholars question this on the grounds that there is no other testimony for the location of the Thesmophorion and little archaeological support for a suitable structure on the Pnyx, which in any case would be a surprising venue for such an ancient cult. Since one element of the play's fantasy is the women's imitation of male political assemblies, the women may merely be *calling* their meeting-place the Pnyx, while everyone knew that in real life the women met elsewhere, most likely in the Eleusinion, located on the Akropolis slope abutting the SW Agora and the principal precinct of Demeter and Kore in Athens.

But there are good reasons to prefer the Pnyx as the real-life venue for the Thesmophoria. The Eleusinion is never explicitly referred to as, or said to contain, a Thesmophorion, nor do its archaeological remains provide room enough for all the matrons of Athens to meet in assembly. If the Thesmophoria festival was held there, at most only the 300-odd "leaders" could have attended, and the idea of an assembly of "the demos of women" paralleling the men's would be mere comic fantasy. But if that was the case, it is very strange that Aristophanes did not highlight this fantastic idea, as he did with the women's fantastic transgressions of male space in *Lysistrata* and *Assemblywomen*. As it

is, the play takes the matrons' assembly and its location on the Pnyx for granted, giving no hint that this was abnormal procedure. There are two other pieces of suggestive, if not decisive, evidence in favor of the Pnyx. An inscription shows that on the only attested occasion when the Athenian assembly met during the Thesmophoria, it met in the theater, not on the Pnyx—presumably because the women were meeting there.<sup>9</sup> This inscription dates from 122 BCE, nearly 300 years later than our play. But if the Thesmophoria was held on the Pnyx in the second century, there is no reason why it should not have been held there in the fifth century too. Second, a cult-statue from Mylasa in Karia (from the third century BCE) stipulates that the rites of Demeter Thesmophoros should be carried out "as the women have decreed" (*hos edoxe tais gynaixi*), using the standard formula for assembly-decisions.<sup>10</sup> Now Karia was far from Athens, but the Thesmophorian assembly there was apparently no comic fantasy.

On balance, then, Aristophanes seems to have chosen an actual occasion for ritual female transgression as the basis for his fantasy about the matrons of Athens enacting legislation against a tragic poet. Moreover, the occasion he chose was distinct from other female rituals in being more closely associated with the continuity of the polis: unlike the cults of ritual rebellion (separation from and violation of communal controls) with which the women of *Lysistrata* and *Assemblywomen* are aligned, the Thesmophoria dramatizes the roles that women played in the *maintenance* of the community; hence its orderly and pseudo-civic protocols. Naturally, Aristophanes emphasizes (and exaggerates) the parallels between the matrons' assembly and the assemblies familiar to his male audience, and is not much interested in other details of the Thesmophorian ritual, if indeed he even knew what they were. Nevertheless, the myths and procedures associated with the Thesmophorian festival are thematically relevant to the general theme of gender transgression and thus to an understanding of Aristophanes' comic fantasy.

The principal deities of Thesmophoria were the archetypal mother Demeter, goddess of both cereal crops and human fertility, and her daughter Kore (also known as Pherephatta or Persephone). Their myth told how Hades, god of the underworld, kidnapped and raped Kore and forced her to be his queen, and of Demeter's angry search for her raped daughter, her blighting of the land in retaliation and her final compromise with Hades: Demeter would provide crops for half the year but withhold them during the other half, when Kore lived with her infernal husband. This myth provided a coherent explanation of the festival's rituals, mysteries and sexual symbolism; of the power, solidarity and self-sufficiency of its celebrants; and of its pervasive atmosphere of hostility toward men.<sup>11</sup>

The sexual polarities and inversions of Thesmophoria reflected the social tensions surrounding procreative sexuality itself. On the one hand, the matrons



demonstrated intimacy with the awesome secrets of life and death: they handled snakes, phalloi and other sexual symbols, slaughtered animals, indulged in ritual obscenity and abuse, and perhaps even flagellation. On the other hand, the matrons were expected to be pure and pious: they abstained from sex during the festival and for a preparatory period before it, and during the festival they wore the plainest garments and sat, fasting, on mats made from antaphrodisiac plants. The exclusion of men was absolute: legends told of the repulse, capture or even castration of male intruders, for any contact with men would pollute the matrons and imperil the efficacy of their fertility-magic. In the end, purity and sexuality were perceived as polar aspects of the same complex: like the sex-strike in *Lysistrata*, the pointedly asexual aspect of the Thesmophoria "focuses attention on the idea of productive sexual union by a paradoxical temporary insistence upon its opposite."<sup>12</sup> At the same time, the wives' dual aspect of purity and sexuality opens a satirical avenue for the comic poet to play with the tension between positive norms of chastity and negative stereotypes of licentiousness. As in the festival and its myth, the play ends on a positive note of reconciliation and a return to normality.

Although Aristophanes chose Thesmophoria as an appropriate dramatic venue for a women's assembly and a confrontation between the genders, he avoids satirizing its ritual activities *per se*, choosing only a few superficial details as the basis for a comic fantasy: the female festive community parodies the male civic polis and the women's assembly parodies the men's assembly, including the ability to condemn an enemy. The play is set on the second day of Thesmophoria, a gloomy fast in which the women reverted to "the ancient way of life"—appropriate to the irritability and spirit of vengefulness with which they attack Euripides.<sup>13</sup> The capture of a male spy (the Kinsman) recalls not merely Euripides' play *Telephos* but also episodes from Thesmophorian legends,<sup>14</sup> much as the fate of the Magistrate in *Lysistrata* recalls the mythical victims of Dionysos' maenads.<sup>15</sup> And Euripides, in his attempts to rescue the Kinsman from death and in his final compromise with the women, lightly suggests Demeter herself.

### 3. Genre Transgression and the Theater

Euripides' reputation as a "misogynist"—in the sense that in his plays he portrayed women as being capable of what Athenian audiences would consider the worst sorts of misbehavior—is first attested in the plays of 411.<sup>16</sup> This reputation was evidently based both on the unprecedented intensity and vividness of Euripides' female characters and on the predilection of so many of them for criminal misconduct: in the extant plays alone there are seven heroines who

commit or plot murder (Medeia, Phaidra in *Hippolytos*, Hermione in *Andromache*, Hekabe, Elektra, Kreousa in *Ion*, Agave in *Bakchai*), and the adulterous schemes of two heroines from lost plays (Phaidra in the first *Hippolytos* and Stheneboia) are known to have outraged Athenian standards of propriety.<sup>17</sup> It is true that these characters were already present in the traditional heroic myths and that other tragic poets had created dangerous female characters too (for example, Aischylos' Klytimestra, in his *Oresteia*, and Sophokles' Elektra). But Euripides frequently embellished the myths, making bad characters (male and female) even worse; invited the audience at least to empathize with bad characters; and in his general use of language, characterization, "realism" and romantic sensationalism made the old mythical plots and characters seem closer to everyday experience than was customary in tragedy. In Aristophanes' play *Frogs* Euripides boasts that he created roles "for slaves no less than wives, mothers, maidens and old women" in order to be "democratic," to which Aischylos (the spokesman for tradition) replies that such novelty deserves the death-penalty (948–50).

Thus Euripides' portrayal of women could be thought relevant to the women who inhabited the spectators' own households. The negative responses seem to have been various. Artistic traditionalists thought such portrayals simply too sordid for tragedy: in *Frogs* Aischylos says to Euripides, "I never used to create cheap whores (*pornas*) like Phaidra and Stheneboia, nor can anybody point to any love-struck woman I ever created" (1043–44). Conservative Athenian men, who frowned on any public reference to respectable women whether for praise or blame,<sup>18</sup> will have thought that Euripides' portrayals hit too close to home: his *femmes fatales* might compromise the respectable public image of Athenian womanhood, and worse, might make men wonder about the propriety of their *own* wives. The Aischylos of *Frogs* claims that characters like Euripides' Phaidra and Stheneboia "have moved noble spouses of noble men to drink poison out of shame" (1050–51), implying either that such spouses thought the honor of their gender irretrievably besmirched or that they had been emboldened to commit adultery, then committed suicide when spurned or detected. The women in our play, who are supposed to represent the respectable matrons of Athens, voice the same complaints, and (comically) add that, because their husbands have become more watchful and suspicious, they no longer enjoy the same freedoms as before (implying that Euripides' portrayals were not entirely false).<sup>19</sup>

But do Aristophanes' matrons really reflect the attitudes of their actual counterparts, or was this too merely a comic fantasy? Aristophanes is certainly being funny when he has the wives try to silence Euripides for revealing their secrets, but the idea would not have been *very* funny had it not been based on an actual public perception of Euripides' art, nor would Aischylos' charges in



*Frogs* have sounded very cogent. If women did attend performances of tragedy, as I believe they did,<sup>20</sup> they will have witnessed Euripides' shocking portrayals for themselves; if not, they would certainly have heard about them secondhand. In either case, it would be surprising if Euripides' controversial women elicited no reaction from their real-life counterparts. Needless to say, any women who had been angered about Euripides' portrayals would have been made even angrier if she watched *Women at the Thesmophoria*.

The creation of convincing female portrayals demanded authorial empathy on the part of a tragedian, and Aristophanes' comic idea was to take the idea of empathy literally: like the effeminate Agathon, who represents the second generation of tragedy in the Euripidean mode, Euripides had literally turned himself into a woman in order to create his "realistic" female roles. That is why they are not only believable but true, and why the wives try not to refute Euripides but to silence him. If the wives *qua* celebrants of Thesmophoria cross gender-boundaries to attack Euripides, it is because Euripides *qua* tragic poet has done the same to them.

Thus Euripides has crossed not only gender-boundaries but also genre-boundaries. Even mythical drama, if it seems believable in terms of life as lived by the spectators, can be called topical, but realism and topicality were traditionally hallmarks not of tragedy but of comedy.<sup>21</sup> In *Women at the Thesmophoria* Aristophanes decided to put Euripidean "realism" to the test of real life, or at any rate, real life as fabricated by comedy: can the Kinsman bring off his role as a matron at the Thesmophoria, and when that fails, can Euripides rescue the Kinsman by restaging his escape-scenes? In the end, Euripidean tragedy is exposed as being just as artificial as the female costumes worn by Agathon, Euripides and the Kinsman, and just as inadequate in the face of real-life danger and real-life "women." Meanwhile, comedy reveals its own superiority at depicting the real world: the Kinsman's speech on the misbehavior of women is more "realistic" (according to the motive stereotypes) than Euripides' plays, and, when Euripides' own stratagems have failed, he is forced to resort to a comic gimmick to rescue himself and the Kinsman. We feel that the comic poet has exposed and punished Euripides' genre-transgression just as effectively as the women his gender-transgression. On the dramatic stage as in the women's world, normality is restored: Euripides will continue to write plays, but not about "real" women, and the rebellious matrons will go back to being (or at least seeming to be) model wives.

Comedy's on-stage representative is the earthy and irrepressible Kinsman, who is unintentionally thrust into the alien worlds of tragic mimesis and women's festival, and whose reactions guide our laughter at Euripides, Agathon, women and the archer-policeman. Alongside the Kinsman's plain language, forthright honesty, conventional attitudes and sheer masculinity—in

short, his comic manhood—the language, characters and plot-contrivances of Euripidean tragedy are constantly exposed as precious and artificial, pale imitations of true feminine artificiality.<sup>22</sup> Euripides' disguising of the Kinsman may be adequate for the purposes of tragic illusion but it cannot fool the women who are past masters of illusion and deception. Nor do the rescue-stratagems which had been so successful on the tragic stage, prove effective before an audience of the tough Kritylla and the barbaric policeman; against *him* a real dancing-girl (not a disguised man or a tragic "heroine") must ultimately be deployed. It would seem that Euripidean realism is effective only when the audience suspends its disbelief and cooperates with the artifice. Not so comedy: "as the tragedies are falling apart under the assault of the non-believers, the comedy is succeeding brilliantly."<sup>23</sup> Comedy, while (like the Kinsman) it maintains its own generic integrity, can incorporate tragedy and also (at least in the case of Euripides) go it one better.

In the end, Euripides promises the wives that he will never again reveal their secrets in his plays. But the husbands will not be left in the dark: as the Kinsman's defense-speech has graphically shown, Euripides had never revealed even the smallest fraction of what the wives were *really* up to. Revelation of *those* secrets is after all the prerogative not of effeminate tragic illusion but of manly comic satire.

## CHARACTERS

KINSMAN *of Euripides*

EURIPIDES, *the tragic poet*

SLAVE *of Agathon*

AGATHON, *the tragic poet*

HERALD *of the women's assembly*

MIKA *assembly speaker*

WOMAN *assembly speaker*

KLEISTHENES, *an effeminate Athenian*

KRITYLLA, *a priestess*

MARSHAL

POLICEMAN

Chorus

WOMEN *celebrating the Thesmophoria*

Mute Characters

ATHENIAN WOMEN

MANIA, *slave of Mika*



POLICEMAN

ELAPHION, *a dancing girl*TEREDON, *a boy piper*

## PROLOGUE

SCENE: *A street in Athens, after dawn on a late October morning. Two elderly men, one hurrying and the other lagging, enter along the parodos and make their way toward the stage.*

KINSMAN [*stopping and clutching his side*]: Zeus! Will the swallow-time of spring ever come? This guy's going to kill me, plodding along since daybreak like a mill-ox. [*Calling loudly to Euripides' hurrying back*] Might it be possible, before I puke out my guts, to find out where you're taking me, Euripides? 5

EURIPIDES: No; no need to hear the whole of what you presently will see.

KINSMAN: What? Say again? I don't need to hear . . .

EURIPIDES: No, not what you're going to see.

KINSMAN: And I don't need to see . . .

EURIPIDES: No, not what you should hear. 10

KINSMAN: What are you telling me? It's pretty subtle. Do you say I shouldn't either hear or see?

EURIPIDES: These two are by nature mutually distinct.

KINSMAN: What, not hearing and not seeing?

EURIPIDES: To be sure. 15

KINSMAN: How "distinct"?

EURIPIDES: Thus were they sundered in time afore. Aether,<sup>24</sup> you see, when in primordial time he began to separate from Earth and with her begat within himself living things astir, first fashioned for sight the eye, counter-image of the solar disc, and for hearing drilled that funnel, the ear. 20

KINSMAN: On account of this funnel, then, I'm not to hear or see? By Zeus, I'm delighted to have this additional lesson! Deep colloquies are such a dandy thing!

EURIPIDES: You could learn many other such lessons from me.

KINSMAN: As a matter of fact I'd love another fine lesson: learning how to be lame in both legs. 25

EURIPIDES [*crossly*]: Come along here and pay attention.

KINSMAN: OK, OK.

[*They mount the stage and move toward the central door of the stage-building.*]

EURIPIDES: Do you see that little door?

KINSMAN: By Herakles, I think I do! 30

EURIPIDES: Be quiet now.

KINSMAN: Quiet about the little door?

EURIPIDES: Listen.

KINSMAN: I'm listening and being quiet about the door.

EURIPIDES: This happens to be the dwelling of the renowned tragic poet, Agathon.<sup>25</sup> 35

KINSMAN: What Agathon do you mean?

EURIPIDES: There is an Agathon . . .

KINSMAN: You mean the suntanned one, strong guy?<sup>26</sup>

EURIPIDES: No, a different one. You've never seen him? 40

KINSMAN: The one with the full beard?<sup>27</sup>

EURIPIDES: You've never seen him?

KINSMAN: By Zeus, never, as far as I can recall.

EURIPIDES: Well, you must have *fucked* him, though you might not know it.<sup>28</sup> [*The door of Agathon's house begins to open.*] But let's hunker out of the way: one of his slaves is coming out the door with brazier and myrtle-sprigs, probably off to a make a sacrifice for success in poetic composition. 45

[*They crouch down to one side of the door. Enter Agathon's slave, a beardless and effeminate young man; holding the smoking brazier and a sprig of myrtle, he begins to sing in Agathonian fashion.*]<sup>29</sup>

SLAVE:

Let the folk keep holy silence,  
gating the mouth, for here sojourns 50

the holy company of Muses  
within the suzerain's halls,  
fashioning song.  
Aether windless hold thy breath  
and whelming brine thy boom,  
gray—

KINSMAN [*fidgeting*]: Blah!<sup>30</sup>

EURIPIDES [*listening attentively*]: Shhh! What's he say?

SLAVE:

Lay down, feathered tribes, in rest,  
paws of wild beasts run not  
through the timber—

KINSMAN: Blah blah blah!

SLAVE:

For that craftsman of poesy, Agathon  
our helmsman, prepares—

KINSMAN: to get fucked?

SLAVE [*looking around*]: Who uttered that?

KINSMAN [*in a fruity voice*]: Windless Aether.

SLAVE [*satisfied*]: —prepares to position  
the keel-braces of his inchoate drama.  
He's warping fresh strakes for his verses;  
some he planes down, others he couples,  
minting aphorisms, swapping meanings,  
channeling wax and rounding the mold  
and funneling metal—

KINSMAN: and giving blow-jobs.

SLAVE [*looking around*]: What savage draws nigh the portals?

KINSMAN [*mimicking the Slave*]:

One who's ready, for you  
and your craftsman of poesy too,  
to fashion and mold  
and funnel this cock of mine  
into your back portals.<sup>31</sup>

SLAVE [*spinning around and glaring at the Kinsman*]: I can't imagine  
what a rapist you were when you were a boy, old man.

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EURIPIDES [*to the Slave*]: My good fellow, forget about him! Just sum-  
mon Agathon here to me; its urgent.

SLAVE: Supplicate not; the master shall soon emerge. In fact he's begin-  
ning to fashion a song, and in wintertime he's hard put to bend his riffs  
without coming outside into the sun.<sup>32</sup>

EURIPIDES: And what am I supposed to do?

SLAVE: Wait around; he's coming out. [*Exit Slave.*]

EURIPIDES: O Zeus, what meanest thou to do to me today?

KINSMAN: I would like to know what's going on here. What's all this  
groaning? What's the trouble? You shouldn't be hiding anything from  
me: I'm your *kinsman*.

EURIPIDES: Some rather nasty trouble's been cooked up for me.

KINSMAN: What kind?

EURIPIDES: This very day it will be adjudged: shall Euripides live or shall  
he die?

KINSMAN: How could that be? The courts aren't in session today and the  
Council isn't sitting. It's the middle day of Thesmophoria!<sup>33</sup>

EURIPIDES: And that's *exactly* why I think I'm done for. The women, you  
see, have devised a plot against me, and in the sanctuary of the  
Thesmophoroi<sup>34</sup> they're going to call an assembly<sup>35</sup> and vote for my  
destruction.

KINSMAN: Whatever for?

EURIPIDES: Because I write tragedies about them and slander them.<sup>36</sup>

KINSMAN: Well, it would serve you right, by Poseidon! But what's your  
strategy against the women?

EURIPIDES: To persuade the tragic producer Agathon to attend the  
Thesmophoria.

KINSMAN [*after a pause*]: To do what? Tell me.

EURIPIDES: To go to the women's assembly and say whatever's necessary  
on my behalf!

KINSMAN: Openly or in disguise?

EURIPIDES [*impatiently*]: In disguise, dressed up like a woman.

KINSMAN: A pretty cute bit; just your style. You guys take the cake for  
craftiness!

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EURIPIDES: Shh!

KINSMAN: What?

EURIPIDES: Agathon's coming out. 120

[Agathon, reclining on a chaise longue, is wheeled out of the house on the ekkyklema; he is a languid, beardless young man, dressed in sexually ambivalent fashion and surrounded by feminine paraphernalia.]

KINSMAN: Where is he?

EURIPIDES [Puzzled]: Where? There, the man who's being rolled out!

KINSMAN: I must be blind; I can't see any man there at all, only the whore Kyrene!

[Agathon begins to tune up his voice.]

EURIPIDES: Shh! He's getting ready to sing an aria. 125

KINSMAN: Is that ant-tracks<sup>37</sup> or some kind of vocalizing?AGATHON [singing the parts both of a chorus of Trojan maidens and their leader]:<sup>38</sup>

[as leader]

Maidens, receive the torch of the Nether Twain<sup>39</sup>  
and in your freedom dance with ancestral cries!

[as chorus]

For which deity hold we our revel?  
O say! I'm a very soft touch  
when it comes to adoring the gods. 130

[as leader]

Come now, Muses,<sup>40</sup> venerate  
him who draws arrows golden,  
Phoibos, who based our country's vales  
in the land of the Simois.<sup>41</sup> 135

[as chorus]

Take joy in our song most fair,  
Phoibos, the first to accept the holy gift  
of our musical tribute.

[as leader]

Hymn too the maiden born  
in the oak-engendering mountains,  
Artemis of the wild.<sup>42</sup> 140

[as chorus]

In turn I invoke in praise  
the holy spawn of Leto,  
Artemis untried in bed!

[as leader]

Yes Leto, and the chords of the Asian lyre,  
beating nicely against the beat,  
with the Phrygian Graces nodding time! 145

[as chorus]

I venerate Lady Leto  
and the kithara, mother of hymns,  
renowned for its masculine clangor. 150

[as leader]

Because of thee, kithara, and by virtue  
of thy startling vociferation  
did the light of joy whisk  
from the eyes of the gods.  
Wherefore glorify Lord Phoibos! 155

[as chorus]

Hail, happy scion of Leto!

KINSMAN: Holy Genetyllides,<sup>43</sup> what a pretty song! How feministic and deep-kissed and tongue-ticked! Just hearing it brought a tingle to my very butt!<sup>44</sup> And you, young lad—if that's what you are—I want to ask you a question out of Aischylos' *Lykourgos Trilogy*.<sup>45</sup> Whence comes this femme? What's its homeland? What its dress? What this confoundment of nature? What does the lute have to chat about with the party-dress? Or the lyre with the hairnet? Here's a bottle of aftershave—and a brassiere! How un—fitting! And what's this community of mirror and sword? And you yourself, child: are you being raised male? Then where's your dick? Your suit? Your Spartan shoes? All right, say you're a woman. Then where are your tits? Well? Why don't you answer? Must I find you out from your song, since you yourself refuse to speak? 160 165

AGATHON: Old man, old man! I hear thy envious mockery, yet feel no pain thereat. My clothing always matches my thoughts. To be a poet a man must suit his *fashions* to the requirements of his *plays*. If, say, he's writing plays about women, his body must partake of women's ways. 170

KINSMAN: So, if you're writing about Phaidra, you straddle your boyfriend?<sup>46</sup>



AGATHON: If one writes of manly matters, *that* element of the body is at hand. But qualities we do not have must be sought by mimicry. 175

KINSMAN: Well, let me know when you're writing about satyrs:<sup>47</sup> I'll get behind you with my hard-on and show you how.

AGATHON: Besides, 'tis uncultivated for a poet to look loutish and shaggy. Observe that the renowned Ibykos and Anakreon of Teos and Alkaios,<sup>48</sup> who seasoned their harmonies like chefs, used to wear bonnets and disport themselves in Ionian style. [*The Kinsman scratches his head in puzzlement.*] And Phrynichos<sup>49</sup>—you *must* have heard of him—was both beautiful and beautifully dressed. And that's why his plays are also beautiful. For as we are made, so must we compose. 180 185

KINSMAN: That must be why the revolting Philokles writes so revoltingly, and the base Xenokles so basely, or the frigid Theognis so frigidly!

AGATHON: By absolute necessity. And recognizing this, I doctored myself.

KINSMAN [*alarmed*]: How, for heaven's sake? 190

EURIPIDES: Stop your barking! I was the same way at his age, when I began to write.

KINSMAN: God, I don't envy you your rearing!

EURIPIDES [*to Agathon*]: All right, let me tell you why I've come.

AGATHON: Do say. 195

EURIPIDES: Agathon, the wise man knows how to say much in a few well-trimmed words. Smitten by fresh misfortune, I am come a suppliant to thy door.

AGATHON: What is thy need?

EURIPIDES: The women at the Thesmophoria are preparing to destroy me this very day, because I slander them. 200

AGATHON: What way, then, can we be of aid to thee?

EURIPIDES: *Every* way! If you sit in on the women's meeting covertly—since you'll pass as a woman—and rebut their accusations against me, you'll surely be my salvation. For you alone could speak in a manner worthy of me. 205

AGATHON: Then why don't you go and make your own defense?

EURIPIDES: I'll tell you. First, I'm well known. Second, I'm an old grey-beard. You, by contrast, are good-looking, pale, clean-shaven, soft, presentable, and you sound like a woman. 210

AGATHON: Euripides—

EURIPIDES: Well?

AGATHON: —you yourself once wrote, "You love life, son: you think your father doesn't?"<sup>50</sup>

EURIPIDES: I did. 215

AGATHON: Then hope not that I shall bear thy trouble for thee. I'd have to be crazy!<sup>51</sup> No, you yourself must see to your own affairs. Misfortune should by rights be confronted not with tricky contrivances but in a spirit of submission.

KINSMAN: You certainly got *your* wide asshole, you faggot, not with words but in the "spirit of submission"! 220

EURIPIDES: What is it that makes you afraid to go to *that* particular place?

AGATHON: I would perish more wretchedly than you!

EURIPIDES: Why?

AGATHON: Why, you ask? I'd look to be stealing the nocturnal doings of women and absconding with the female Kypris.<sup>52</sup> 225

KINSMAN: "Stealing" he says! Getting fucked is more like it, by Zeus! Still, his excuse is pretty plausible.

EURIPIDES [*to Agathon*]: Well, then? Will you do it?

AGATHON: Don't count on it. 230

EURIPIDES [*with one forearm over his eyes*]: Thrice-wretched me, oh, thus to perish!

KINSMAN: Euripides! Dearest fellow! Kinsman! Don't give up on yourself!

EURIPIDES [*sobbing*]: But what will I *do*? 235

KINSMAN: Well, tell *this* guy to go to hell, and put *me* to use however you want.

EURIPIDES [*dropping his forearm*]: Well, now! You've signed yourself over to me, so take off your clothes.<sup>53</sup>



KINSMAN [*complying*]: OK, they're on the ground. But what do you mean to *do* to me? 240

EURIPIDES [*pointing to the Kinsman's beard*]: To shave this off, and [*pointing to the Kinsman's lower trunk*] singe you down below.

KINSMAN [*visibly shaken*]: Well, if that's your decision, go ahead; if I say no I shouldn't have promised my services in the first place. 245

EURIPIDES: Agathon, you've always got razors with you; how about lending us one?

AGATHON: Take one yourself—they're right there in the razor-case.

EURIPIDES: You're a true gentleman. [*After opening a large box which sits by Agathon's chaise and selecting a long razor and a strop, he takes a small chair from under Agathon's dressing-table and turns to the Kinsman.*] Sit down. [*Stropping the razor*] Blow out your cheek. The right one. [*He shaves off the beard on the Kinsman's right cheek.*] 250

KINSMAN [*whimpering*]: Oh no!

EURIPIDES [*crossly*]: What's this bellyaching? If you don't quiet down I'll have to stick a peg in your mouth! [*He prepares to shave the other cheek.*] 255

KINSMAN [*getting up and running away*]: Ayeeee!

EURIPIDES: Hey! Where are you running off to?

KINSMAN: To the shrine of the Venerable Goddesses!<sup>54</sup> 'Cause, by Demeter, I'm not about to sit here getting cut up! 260

EURIPIDES: Then won't *you* look ridiculous, walking around with one side of your face shaved!

KINSMAN: I don't care!

EURIPIDES: In the name of heaven, don't let me down! Come back here!

KINSMAN [*walking resignedly back and resuming his seat*]: What a fix I'm in! 265

EURIPIDES: Now hold still and tilt your head back. [*He shaves the other cheek.*] Don't squirm!

KINSMAN [*squealing through closed lips*]: Mmmmmmmmm.

EURIPIDES: What are you mmmmmmmmm-ing for? It's done, and you look fine! 270

KINSMAN: Damn it all, when I rejoin my regiment I'll literally be a leatherneck!

EURIPIDES: Don't worry about it: you'll be so good-looking! [*Taking a mirror from Agathon's box*] Want to see yourself? 275

KINSMAN: OK, if you like. [*He takes the mirror and peers into it.*]

EURIPIDES: You see yourself?

KINSMAN [*horrified*]: God no! I see Kleisthenes!<sup>55</sup>

EURIPIDES: Get up now. I've got to singe you, so bend over.<sup>56</sup>

KINSMAN: Oh me oh my, I'm going to be a roast pig!<sup>57</sup> 280

EURIPIDES [*calling to the open door of Agathon's house*]: Somebody bring out a torch or a lamp! [*A slave brings out a lighted torch and hands it to Euripides. To the Kinsman*] Bend over. Now watch out for the tip of your dick.

KINSMAN: I'll watch out, by Zeus—[*Euripides applies the torch to his backside*] except that I'm on fire! Oh no, no! [*To the audience*] Water! Water, neighbors, before somebody *else's* asshole catches fire! 285

EURIPIDES: Be brave!

KINSMAN: How am I supposed to be brave when I'm being turbo-vulcanized? 290

EURIPIDES: There's nothing much left; you've suffered through the worst part.

KINSMAN: Phew! [*Running his hand along his backside and then looking at it*] Oh, the soot! All around my crotch I'm charred!

EURIPIDES [*pointing to the audience*]: Don't worry, somebody *else* will sponge it off. 295

KINSMAN: Anyone tries to wipe *my* ass for me, he'll be sorry!

EURIPIDES: Agathon, since you refuse to offer yourself, at least loan us a dress for this fellow here, and a brassiere; you can't deny you've got them. 300

AGATHON: Take them and use them; I don't mind.

KINSMAN [*rummaging through Agathon's box*]: Which one should I take?

EURIPIDES [*joining him*]: Hmm. This party-dress here; try it on first.

KINSMAN: By Aphrodite,<sup>58</sup> it smells good—like little pricks. Help me belt it up. 305



EURIPIDES: Now pass me the brassiere.

AGATHON: Here.

KINSMAN: Come on, arrange the pleats around my legs.

EURIPIDES: We need a hairnet and a hat.

AGATHON: Even better, this wig I wear at night!

EURIPIDES: By god, that's just the thing!

KINSMAN [*putting it on and primping*]: Well, how do I look?

EURIPIDES: Perfect! [*To Agathon*] Let's have a wrap.

AGATHON: There's one on the couch here.

EURIPIDES: He needs pumps.

AGATHON [*removing his own*]: Take mine.

KINSMAN: Will they fit me? [*Puts them on.*] You obviously like a loose fit.

AGATHON: Settle that for yourself; now you have what you need. [*He claps his hands.*] Someone roll me back inside, on the double!

[*The ekkyklema rolls back inside the house, the door closing behind it.*]

EURIPIDES: Our gentleman here is a real lady, at least in looks. But when you talk, be sure your voice sounds feminine, and be convincing!

KINSMAN: I'll try.<sup>59</sup>

EURIPIDES: Off with you now! [*He begins to walk off toward the wings.*]

KINSMAN [*following him*]: Apollo, no!<sup>60</sup> First you've got to promise me—

EURIPIDES: Promise what?

KINSMAN: that you'll use any and all means to help save me if anything bad befalls me.

EURIPIDES: I swear then by Aether, Abode of Zeus!<sup>61</sup>

KINSMAN [*disdainfully*]: Why not swear instead by Hippokrates' apartment building?

EURIPIDES: I swear then by all the gods bar none!

KINSMAN: Well then, remember that thy heart hath sworn and not merely thy tongue, and I didn't get the promise only from your tongue!<sup>62</sup>

EURIPIDES: Will you please get going! There's the signal for the assembly over at the Thesmophorion! As for me, I'm off.

[*Euripides exits through the wings. Stage-hands transform the scene-building to represent the Assembly Room of the Thesmophorion and set up a dais and chairs at center-stage. Meanwhile, women (the Herald, Mika, Second Woman, Mania holding Mika's baby) enter from one wing and move toward the chairs. The Kinsman heads for center stage too, talking in falsetto to an imaginary maid.*]<sup>63</sup>

KINSMAN:<sup>64</sup> Come along *this* way, Thraitta. Oh Thraitta, look! The torches are *burning*, and such a lot of *smoke* rises toward the sanctuary! Thesmophorian Goddesses, surpassingly lovely, grant that good luck attend me both coming here and going home again! Thraitta, put down the box and take out the cake, so I can make an offering to the Twain Goddesses. [*Miming an offering*] Demeter, reverend Mistress mine, and Pherephatta,<sup>65</sup> grant me plenty for plenty of sacrifices to you, and if not, grant at least that I get away with *this*! And may my daughter Pussy<sup>66</sup> meet a man who's rich but childishly stupid, and may my son Dick have a mind and a heart!<sup>67</sup> [*Reaching the chairs at center stage*] Now *where* do I find a good seat for hearing everything the speakers say? You go away from here, Thraitta; no slaves are allowed to listen to the speeches.

[*The Kinsman takes a seat among the women, who begin to chatter excitedly.*]<sup>68</sup>

*The Kinsman represents the PARODOS male audience! IS SPYING ON THE*

[*The Chorus, carrying torches,<sup>69</sup> enter the orchestra; as they arrange themselves, the woman dressed like the Herald of an assembly mounts the dais in front to the stage-building.*]

HERALD:<sup>70</sup> Observe ritual silence; ritual silence please! Offer your prayers to the Twain Thesmophorian Goddesses, to Wealth, to Kalligeneia, to Kourotrophos, to Hermes and to the Graces,<sup>71</sup> that this assembly and today's convocation be conducted in the finest and most excellent manner, a great benefit to the Athenian polis and fortunate for us ourselves. And may victory in the debate go to her whose actions and whose counsel best serve the sovereign people of the Athenians and the sovereign people of the women.<sup>72</sup> Be this your prayer, and for yourselves all good things. Ié Paion, ié Paion, ié Paion! Let's have a grand time!

CHORUS:

We say amen to that and ask  
the race of gods to signal  
their pleasure at our prayers.

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Zeus of the grand name and you,  
 god of the golden lyre  
 who live on holy Delos,<sup>73</sup>  
 and you, almighty Maiden 365  
 with the gleaming eyes and golden spearpoint,<sup>74</sup>  
 who dwell in a polis you fought for,<sup>75</sup>  
 come this way!  
 And you, goddess of many names,  
 slayer of beasts, 370  
 seed of Leto with the golden eyes,<sup>76</sup>  
 and you, august master Poseidon,  
 who rule the brine,  
 quit now the fishy deep  
 so lashable to frenzy, 375  
 and you, daughters of marine Nereus,  
 and you nymphs who range the mountains!  
 May Apollo's golden lyre resound  
 in harmony with our prayers,  
 and may we well-born women of Athens 380  
 hold a faultless meeting!

*Oath*

HERALD:<sup>77</sup> Pray to the Olympian gods and to the Olympian goddesses, to  
 the Pythian gods and Pythian goddesses, to the Delian gods and  
 Delian goddesses, and to the other gods as well. If anyone conspires in  
 any way to harm the people of the women; or negotiates secretly with 385  
 Euripides and the Medes<sup>78</sup> in any way to the women's harm; or con-  
 templates either becoming a tyrant or abetting a tyrant's installation; or  
 denounces a woman who has passed off another's child as her own;<sup>79</sup> or  
 is a mistress' go-between slave who spills the beans to the master or  
 when sent with a message delivers it wrong; or is a lover who deceives 390  
 a woman with lies or reneges on promised gifts; or is an old woman  
 who gives gifts to a young lover;<sup>80</sup> or is a courtesan who takes gifts from  
 her lover and then betrays him; or is a barman or barmaid who sells  
 short pints or litres:<sup>81</sup> put a curse on every such person, that they perish  
 wretchedly and their families along with them! As for the rest of you, 395  
 ask the gods to give you every blessing!

CHORUS:

Our prayers are like yours:  
 that what we pray for will be fully accomplished  
 for the polis and for the people as well;  
 and that she who advises best, deserving 400

to prevail, will prevail.  
 But she who deceives us  
 and breaks her solemn oaths for profit;  
 or tries to substitute decrees for laws;  
 or reveals our secrets to our enemies;  
 or to make money invites the Medes in, 405  
 to our harm: all such are impious  
 and culpable in the city's eyes.<sup>82</sup>  
 O Zeus all-powerful, ratify these prayers,  
 array the gods on our side,  
 although we are but women! 410

### EPISODE

HERALD: Attention everyone! The Women's Assembly—Timokleia pre-  
 siding, Lysilla being secretary, Sostrate proposing<sup>83</sup>—has passed the  
 following motion: an Assembly will be held on the morning of the sec-  
 ond day of Thesmophoria, when we have the most free time,<sup>84</sup> its 415  
 principal agendum being deliberation about the punishment of  
 Euripides, who in the view of us all is a criminal. Now who wishes to  
 speak to this question?<sup>85</sup>

MIKA [*rising from her chair and approaching the platform*]: I do.

HERALD [*handing her a garland*]: Put this on first, then speak. 420

CHORUS-LEADER: Quiet! Silence! Pay attention, because she's clearing  
 her throat just as the politicians do. It's likely she'll deliver a long  
 speech.

MIKA [*assuming an oratorical posture*]: By the Twain, I have not risen to →  
 speak, fellow women, out of any personal ambition; no, but because I 425  
 have for a long time unhappily endured seeing you dragged through  
 the mire by Euripides,<sup>86</sup> that son of a woman who sells wild herbs<sup>87</sup> and  
 whose own reputation is everyway and everywhere bad. With what evil  
 has this fellow not besmirched us? Where, on any occasion where  
 there are spectators, tragic actors and choruses, has he spared us his 430  
 disparagement, that we are lover-bangers, nymphos, wine-oglers, dis-  
 loyal, chattery, unwholesome, the bane of men's lives? It's gotten so  
 that as soon as our men get home from the grandstand they start right  
 in giving us suspicious looks and searching the house for a concealed  
 lover. We can no longer do anything that we used to do before, so ter- 435



rible are the things this man has taught our husbands about us.<sup>88</sup> So if a wife so much as weaves a garland, she's suspected of having a lover, and if she drops some utensil as she moves around the house, the husband asks, "Who's the pot being broken for? 'Tis sure in honor of thy Korinthian guest!"<sup>89</sup> A girl gets sick, and right away her brother says, "This maiden's hue doth please me not at all!"<sup>90</sup> There's more. A childless wife wants to pass off another's baby as her own and can't even get away with *that*, because now our husbands plant themselves nearby. He's slandered us to the *old* men too, who used to marry young girls; now no old man wants to get married because of the line, "The elderly bridegroom takes himself a boss."<sup>91</sup> Then, because of this man, men put locks and bolts on their women's doors to guard them, and not only that, they raise Molossic hounds as scarecrows to repel lovers. Even that stuff might be forgiven. But not when we're no longer allowed even to do what used to be our own jobs: keeping household inventory and removing supplies on our own, flour, oil, wine,<sup>92</sup> because our husbands now carry the housekeys with them—complicated, nasty things with triple teeth, imported from Sparta. Before, we had no trouble opening the door just by getting a signet ring made for three obols.<sup>93</sup> But now their household spy, Euripides, has taught them to use little seals made of complex wormholes, which they carry around fastened to their clothes. Accordingly, I propose that one way or another we brew up some kind of destruction for this man, either poisons or some particular technique whereby he gets destroyed. This then is the argument of my speech; the rest I will enter into the draft of my resolution with the Secretary's assistance. [*She returns the garland to the Herald and returns to her chair.*]

## CHORUS:

I've never heard a woman  
more intricate of mind  
or more impressive as a speaker.  
Everything she says is right.  
She's reviewed all sides of the case;  
she's considered everything intelligently;  
she's sagaciously found a whole spectrum  
of well-chosen arguments.  
So if Xenokles, Karkinos' son,<sup>94</sup>  
should vie with her at speaking,  
I think that all of you would find him  
absolutely overmatched.

[*Another woman rises from her chair, takes the garland from the Herald and mounts the platform.*]

WOMAN: I take my turn before you to make but a few remarks, since I have little to add to the previous speaker's cogent indictment. But I do want to share with you my own personal sufferings. My husband died in Cyprus, leaving me with five small children that I've had a struggle to feed by weaving garlands in the myrtle-market. Still, until recently I managed to make do, but now this man who composes poetry in the tragedy-market<sup>95</sup> has persuaded the men that gods don't exist, so that my sales are down more than 50%.<sup>96</sup> I therefore urge and advise all women to punish this man for his many crimes, for wild are his attacks upon us, since he himself was raised among wild herbs.<sup>97</sup> But I must be going to the market: some men have ordered twenty garlands. [*She steps down, hands her garland to the Herald and exits.*]

## CHORUS:

This second courageous testimony  
turns out to be even classier than the first!  
The stuff she prattled about wasn't irrelevant,  
owned good sense and close-woven thought,  
wasn't silly but altogether convincing!  
For this outrage the man must pay us the penalty  
in no uncertain terms!

[*The Kinsman rises from his chair, takes the garland from the Herald and mounts the platform.*]

KINSMAN:<sup>98</sup> That you are so enraged at Euripides, ladies, when he slanders you this way, is hardly surprising, nor that your bile is aboil. Why, let me have no profit in my children if I myself don't hate the man; I'd have to be crazy not to! Still, we should permit open discussion: we're by ourselves and no one will divulge what we say. Why do we bring the man up on these charges and get so angry with him for telling two or three things *he* knows we do, out of the *thousands* of other things we *actually* do? I myself—not to mention anyone else—have a lot of awful things on my conscience. I'll tell you maybe the worst. I'd been married only three days, and my husband was sleeping beside me. But I had a boyfriend, who'd deflowered me when I was seven and still had the hots for me. He came scratching at the door and I knew right away who it was. I start to steal downstairs, and my husband asks, "Why are you going downstairs?" "Why? My stomach's paining me, husband, and aching. So I'm going to the toilet." "Go on then." And he starts grind-



ing up juniper berries, dillweed and sage,<sup>99</sup> while I oil the door-hinges and go out to meet my lover. Then I bend over, holding onto the laurel tree by Apollo's Pillar,<sup>100</sup> and get my humping. You see, Euripides never said anything about *that*. Nor does he talk about how we get 510  
banged by slaves and mule-grooms when no other man's available, nor how, whenever we spend the night getting thoroughly balled by somebody, we chew garlic in the morning so the husband won't smell anything when he gets home from guard-duty and suspect that we've 515  
been doing something nasty. *That*, you see, he's never spoken about. If he abuses Phaidra,<sup>101</sup> what do *we* care? Nor has he ever told the one about how the wife showed her husband her robe to look at against the light, so her lover can scamper all muffled up out of the house; he's never told about that. And I know another wife who pretended to be in labor for ten days, until she could buy a baby.<sup>102</sup> Meanwhile her husband was running all over town buying medicine to quicken birth, 520  
while an old woman brought it in a pot—the baby, I mean—with a honeycomb in its mouth so it wouldn't cry. Then the old woman gives the signal and the wife yells, "Out you go, out, husband: this time I seem to be giving birth!"<sup>103</sup> The baby, you see, had kicked the pot's belly! Then the dirty old woman who'd brought the baby runs out to the husband, smiling and saying, "You've got a lion, sir, a lion, the very image of yourself, sir, with everything a perfect match, little weenie too, shaped like an acorn!"<sup>104</sup> Aren't these the bad things we do? [*The women gasp in astonishment.*] By Artemis, we do too! And then we get 530  
mad at Euripides, though we suffer less than our deeds deserve! [*He hands the garland to the Herald and returns to his seat.*]

## CHORUS:

This is really astonishing!  
Where was *she* dug up?  
What land brought forth  
a woman so audacious? 535  
I'd never have imagined  
she'd unscrupulously say  
this kind of thing among us  
so openly and brazenly—  
what unheard-of nerve!  
Now I've seen it all;  
the old proverb is true:  
you've got to look under every rock,  
or you might be bitten by a politician.<sup>105</sup> 540

CHORUS-LEADER: No, there's nothing worse in every way than women 545  
born shameless<sup>106</sup>—save the rest of women!<sup>107</sup>

MIKA [*standing up*]: No, by Aglauros!<sup>108</sup> Women, you're not thinking straight; you've been bewitched, or something else is wrong with you, if you let this pest get away with slandering all of us so outrageously! 550  
[*Surveying the spectators.*] Is there anyone out there who'll . . . well, if not [*appealing to the women*], we ourselves, with our slave-girls, will get a hot coal somewhere and singe the hair off this woman's pussy—that'll teach her never again to badmouth her fellow women!

KINSMAN [*standing and backing up against the platform*]: No, ladies, please, not my pussy! If all of us who are citizen women are allowed to speak freely,<sup>109</sup> and if I merely spoke on Euripides' behalf what I know to be fair, is that a reason why you should punish me by depilation? 555

MIKA: So you shouldn't be punished? You, the only woman with the effrontery to contradict us about a man who's done us such wrong by purposely finding stories where a woman turns out bad, by creating Melanippes<sup>110</sup> and Phaidras.<sup>111</sup> But he's never created a Penelope,<sup>112</sup> because she was a woman famous for her virtue. 560

KINSMAN: Well, I can tell you why: you can't cite me a single Penelope among all the women now alive; absolutely all of us are Phaidras!

MIKA: Women, hear how the hussy insults us all, again and again! 565

KINSMAN: By god, I haven't yet told everything I know: you want to hear more?

MIKA: You can't have anything else to say: you've poured out every drop of what you know.

KINSMAN: Not even the ten-thousandth part of what we do. For example, I haven't mentioned, you know, how we use bath-scrapers as straws to siphon off grain— 570

MIKA: You should be whipped for that remark!

KINSMAN: —or how we give cutlets from the Apatouria Feast<sup>113</sup> to our go-betweens and then say the cat took them— 575

MIKA: Oh me oh my, what nonsense!

KINSMAN: —or how another woman bashed her husband with an axe, I haven't mentioned that; or how another woman drugged her husband



and made him insane; or how one time an Acharnian woman buried under the tub—

MIKA: I hope you die!

KINSMAN: —her own father—

MIKA: *Must* we listen to this?

KINSMAN: —or how *your* slave-girl had a baby boy and *you* passed it off as your own, and gave your own baby girl to the slave?

MIKA: By the Twain, you won't get away with saying this—I'll pluck out your short and curlies with my own hands!

KINSMAN: Don't you lay a hand on me!

MIKA [*marching menacingly toward him*]: Just watch me!

KINSMAN [*rolling up his sleeves*]: Just watch *me*!

MIKA [*removing her jacket*]: Hold my jacket, Philiste.

KINSMAN: So much as touch me and by Artemis I'll—

MIKA: You'll what?

KINSMAN: That sesame-cake you gulped down, I'll make you shit it out!

HERALD: Stop abusing each other! A woman is running toward the meeting in a hurry. Before this gets to be a brawl I want you quiet, so we can hear what she has to say in an orderly fashion.

[*Enter Kleisthenes, a beardless and effeminately dressed man.*]<sup>114</sup>

KLEISTHENES: Dear women, my kindred in lifestyle, my devotion to you is evident from my clean jowls. For I am crazy about women and represent your interests always.<sup>115</sup> This time, I've heard of a grave business concerning you that's being chattered about in the marketplace, and I am here to apprise you of it and to inform you, so that you may consider and take steps to forestall a great and terrible trouble that threatens to befall you while your guard's down.

HERALD: What is it, my boy?—and I may fittingly call you boy, since your jowls are not armored with a beard.

KLEISTHENES: I'm told that Euripides has sent a kinsman of his, an old man, up here this very day.

HERALD: To do what, and for what reason?

KLEISTHENES: To be a spy, eavesdropping on whatever you women discuss and plan to do.

HERALD: And just how could a man go unnoticed in the women's assembly?

KLEISTHENES: Euripides singed him and plucked him, and decked him out exactly like a woman.

KINSMAN [*rising from his seat*]: Do you believe what he says? What man would be fool enough to stand still for a plucking? I for one doubt it, ye Two Honorable Goddesses!

KLEISTHENES: Rubbish! I wouldn't have come here with this news if I hadn't heard it from knowledgeable sources.

HERALD: It's a terrible business that's reported. Well, women, we mustn't sit around doing nothing! We've got to look for this man and find out where he's been sitting unnoticed in his disguise. [*To Kleisthenes*] And you, our representative, help us in the search: you'll double our debt of gratitude to you!

KLEISTHENES: Then you've all got to be questioned!

KINSMAN [*aside*]: What terrible luck!

KLEISTHENES [*to Mika*]: Let's see, you first: who are you?

KINSMAN [*aside*]: How do I get out of here?

MIKA: You want to know who *I* am? I'm Kleonymos' wife.<sup>116</sup>

KLEISTHENES: Do all of you recognize this woman?

HERALD: Yes, we know her; question the others.

KLEISTHENES: This one: who is she? The one with the baby?

MIKA: She's my *wetnurse*.

KINSMAN [*aside*]: I'm done for! [*He begins to sneak away toward the stage-door.*]

KLEISTHENES [*to the Kinsman*]: You there! Where are you going? Stay where you are! [*The Kinsman begins to writhe uncomfortably.*] What's the matter?

KINSMAN: Let me go piss. [*Kleisthenes offers his arm.*] You're a pretty rude fellow!

KLEISTHENES: All right, then, go ahead; I'll wait for you here. [*The Kinsman enters the stage-building.*]

HERALD: Yes, wait for her, and watch her closely. She's the only woman, sir, that we don't recognize.

KLEISTHENES [*to the door*]: You're certainly taking a long time to piss!



KINSMAN [*from within*]: Yes, my good man, I am: I'm retaining water;  
ate cress-seeds yesterday. 645

KLEISTHENES: Cress-seeds? Come out here, I want to talk to you!

[*The Kinsman comes out, and Kleisthenes takes him by the arm.*]

KINSMAN [*shaking off Kleisthenes' hand*]: Why are you pulling me about  
when I'm not feeling well?

KLEISTHENES: Tell me, who is your husband?

KINSMAN: You want to know who my husband is? Well, you know him;  
guy from Kothokidai?<sup>117</sup> 650

KLEISTHENES: Guy? Who?

KINSMAN: He's a guy, who once, a guy who was the son of a guy—

KLEISTHENES: I think you're babbling. Have you been here before?

KINSMAN: Sure, every year. 655

KLEISTHENES: And who's your roommate here?

KINSMAN: Mine? A gal.

KLEISTHENES: Damn it all, you're making no sense!

MIKA [*to Kleisthenes*]: Step aside; I'll give this gal a good grilling about  
last year's festivities. Come on, stand well away, so you won't overhear  
what a man mustn't know about. [*To the Kinsman*] Now, you: tell me  
which of the holy things was revealed to us first. 660

KINSMAN: Let's see now, what was the first thing? We had a drink.

MIKA: And what was the second?

KINSMAN: We drank a toast.<sup>118</sup> 665

MIKA: Somebody told you! And what was the third?

KINSMAN: Xenylla asked for a potty because there wasn't a urinal.<sup>119</sup>

MIKA: Wrong! Come here, Kleisthenes: this is the man you're after!

KLEISTHENES: Well, what do I do now?

MIKA: Strip him: his story's fishy. [*Kleisthenes removes the Kinsman's  
dress; the Kinsman hides his phallus between his legs.*] 670

KINSMAN: So you'd actually strip a mother of nine?

KLEISTHENES: Get that brassiere off, quickly, you shamelessness you!

[*The Kinsman complies.*]

MIKA: She's really stocky and looks strong. And by Zeus, her tits aren't  
like ours!

KINSMAN: That's because I'm sterile—never been pregnant. 675

MIKA: Really! Just now you were the mother of nine!

KLEISTHENES: Stand up straight! Where are you hiding your cock down  
there?

MIKA [*running behind the Kinsman*]: Here it is! Its head is sticking out—  
nice color, too, deary! 680

KLEISTHENES [*joining Mika*]: Where?

[*The Kinsman pulls his phallus from between his legs.*]

MIKA: Now it's gone back in front!

[*Kleisthenes runs to the front, and the Kinsman pushes the phallus back  
between his legs.*]

KLEISTHENES: It's not up here!

MIKA: No, it's back here again!

KLEISTHENES: That's some isthmus you've got there, buddy! You drag  
your cock back and forth more than the Corinthians drag their ships! 685

MIKA: What a degenerate! That's why he spoke up for Euripides and  
insulted us!

KINSMAN: I'm done for! What a mess I've tumbled into!

MIKA [*to Kleisthenes*]: All right, what now? 690

KLEISTHENES: Put him under close guard, and see that he doesn't  
escape. I'll go and report this to the authorities. [*Exit Kleisthenes; the  
Herald and other women enter the stage house (i.e. the sanctuary);  
Mika and Mania, holding the baby, stand guard over the Kinsman.*]

CHORUS-LEADER: Well, after *this* our job is to light these torches, take  
off our jackets and gird up right manfully to find out if any other man  
has managed to get in here; to go over every inch of the Pnyx;<sup>120</sup> to  
search the tents and alleyways of our encampment. So forward march! 695  
First launch your feet lightly and inspect everything thoroughly and  
silently. Just don't take too long: now is the time for decisive action! I'll  
lead the foray: on the run now, as quick as we can, all around the area!

CHORUS [*as they dance about the orchestra searching*]:

Move out then! If still another man



lurks about the place without our knowledge,  
track him down and search him out!

Cast your eyes in all directions,  
up and down, here and there;  
give everything a good examination!

705

If we catch him in such sacrilege,  
he'll be punished, and more than that:  
to other men he'll be an example  
of violence, injustice and impiety!  
He'll have to admit the gods clearly exist;  
he'll be a lesson to all other men  
to revere the gods and justly perform  
what divine and human law require,  
taking care to do what's good.

710

And here's what happens if they don't:  
any man caught in an impious act  
will burn and rage in rabid insanity,  
his every act a manifest proof  
for women and mortals to see  
that lawlessness and sacrilege  
are punished on the spot by god!

715

720

CHORUS-LEADER: Well, we seem to have given everything a thorough  
inspection. In any case, there's no sign of any other man lurking here-  
abouts.

[*The Kinsman suddenly grabs Mika's baby and runs with it to the altar in the  
orchestra.*]<sup>121</sup>

MIKA: Hey! Hey! Where do you think you're going? Stop, you! Stop! Oh  
my god! He's gone and snatched the baby right from the tit!

725

KINSMAN: Scream away! You'll never feed it again if you don't let me go!  
Nay, right here and now, smitten to his crimson veins by this bodkin  
midst the thigh-bones, shall he begore the altar!

MIKA: Heavens me! [*To the chorus*] Women, help! Raise a great war-cry  
and rout the foeman, nor overlook me bereft of mine only child!

730

CHORUS:

Ah! Ah! August Fates, what novel horror do I behold?

CHORUS-LEADER: The whole world is full of impudence and brass! What  
a deed he's done this time, fellow women, what a deed!

KINSMAN: A deed that'll knock the stuffing out of your arrogance!

735

CHORUS-LEADER: Isn't this an awful business, and worse than awful?

MIKA: Awful indeed! He's gone and snatched my baby from me!

CHORUS:

What can we say of a deed like this,  
when deeds like this cause him no shame?

KINSMAN: And you've yet to see my worst!

740

CHORUS:

Well, wherever you came from,  
you won't be getting back there so easily  
and boasting that you did such a deed,  
then gave us the slip. No, you'll get yours!

KINSMAN: I pray to god that never ever happens!

745

CHORUS:

Who, I say, who of the immortal gods  
would come to the aid of a wrongdoer?

KINSMAN: Your point is moot anyway. [*Holding up the baby.*] I'll never  
give up this baby girl!

CHORUS:

But mayhap soon, by the Twain Goddesses,  
your outrage will bring you no joy,  
nor your unholy speech!  
For we shall pay you back  
for these boasts of yours  
with godless deeds, as is fitting.  
Your luck has suddenly turned around  
and aims disaster at you!

750

755

CHORUS-LEADER [*to Mika and Mania*]: Come on, you should take these  
torches and fetch some wood, and then burn the bastard down and  
incinerate him at once!

760

MIKA: Let's go get the firewood, Mania!<sup>122</sup> [*To the Kinsman*] In a minute  
I'll turn you into a shower of sparks! [*Mika and Mania go into the  
scene-building.*]

KINSMAN: Light me up and burn me down! [*To the baby*] And you, get  
this Cretan swaddling off. For your death, child, blame but a single  
woman: your mother! [*He removes the swaddling.*] What's this? The

765



baby girl's turned into a skin full of wine, and wearing Persian booties to boot!<sup>123</sup> Women, ye overheated dipsomaniacs, never passing up a chance to wangle a drink, a great boon to bartenders but a bane to us—not to mention our dishes and our woollens!

[*Mika and Mania reenter with arms full of firewood.*]

MIKA: Pile them up nice and high, Mania. [*They begin to lay the wood around the altar.*] 770

KINSMAN: Go ahead, pile them. But tell me one thing [*pointing to the baby*]: do you claim to have given birth to this?

MIKA: Carried it all nine months myself.

KINSMAN: You carried it?

MIKA: I swear by Artemis! 775

KINSMAN: How big was it? [*He holds up the wineskin.*] A magnum, perhaps?

MIKA: How dare you? You've undressed my child—disgusting!—a tiny baby!

KINSMAN: Tiny? It is pretty small, by Zeus. How many years old? Three Wine-Jug Festivals or four?<sup>124</sup> 780

MIKA: That's about right, plus a Dionysia. Give her back to me.

KINSMAN [*laying his hand on the altar*]: No, by Apollo here!<sup>125</sup>

MIKA: We'll have to incinerate you, then.

KINSMAN: By all means. Incinerate away. [*He produces a long knife.*] But this little girl will get sacrificed on the spot! 785

MIKA: Don't do it, I beseech you! Do what you want with *me*, but spare *her*!

KINSMAN: You've a good mother's instincts. But nonetheless this girl's going to get her throat cut.

MIKA: Ah my baby! Give me the slaughter-bowl, Mania, so I can at least catch my own child's blood! [*Mika passes her the bowl.*] 790

KINSMAN: Hold it under there—I'll do you this one favor. [*The Kinsman slashes the wineskin with a sacrificer's stroke, letting the wine flow into the bowl.*]

MIKA: Damn you to hell! You're hateful and cruel!

KINSMAN [*holding up the empty wineskin*]: The hide here goes to the priestess.<sup>126</sup> 795

[*Enter Kritylla, an old woman whose dress indicates that she is a priestess.*]

KRITYLLA: What goes to the priestess?

KINSMAN: This—catch! [*Tosses the skin to Kritylla.*]

KRITYLLA: Poor, poor Mika! Who's ungirdled you? Who's drained out your only lass?

MIKA: This criminal here! But since you're here, stand guard over him, so I can get hold of Kleisthenes and tell the authorities what this man has done. [*Mika and Mania exit through the wings, leaving Kritylla in charge of the Kinsman.*]<sup>127</sup> 800

KINSMAN: Now what's my plan for saving myself? What move? What scheme? The man who got me involved in this mess in the first place is nowhere to be seen. Let's see—whom could I send to him with a message? [*He ponders.*] I know! The way it was done in *Palamedes*!<sup>128</sup> I'll write *my* message on oar-blades too, and throw them into the sea! But I haven't got those oar-blades here. Where could I get some? [*He looks around at the scenery.*] Aha! What if instead of oar-blades I wrote on these votive tablets and then tossed them in all directions! [*He plucks several tablets off the wall of the scene-building.*] That's much better! They're wooden too, just like oar-blades! [*He picks up the tablets and the knife.*] 805

Hands of mine,  
now's the time  
to put your hand  
to the work of my salvation! 815

[*carving on the tablets*]

Tablets of planed board,  
accept the knife's scratchings,  
harbingers of my troubles!  
Damn! This R is a troublemaker!  
There we go, there we go!  
What a scratch!

[*tossing the tablets in all directions*]

Be off then, travel every road,  
this way and that.

You've got to come quickly!

[*He sits down to wait for Euripides.*] 825



PARABASIS<sup>129</sup>

CHORUS-LEADER [*to the spectators*]: Well, let's step forward and sing our own praises!<sup>130</sup> We'd better, because every single man blames the female race for a host of evils, claiming that we're entirely bad for humanity and the source of all ills: disputes, quarrels, bitter factionalism, distress, war. But really, if we're that bad, why do you marry us? If we're really so bad, why do you forbid us to leave the house or even get caught peeking out the window?<sup>131</sup> Why do you want to keep such a careful eye on something so bad? If the little woman goes out somewhere and you find her outdoors, you have an apoplectic fit instead of toasting the gods and giving thanks, which you would do if you'd really found the bane of your household missing and couldn't find her anywhere in the house. If we fall asleep at a friend's house, tired out from enjoying ourselves,<sup>132</sup> every husband makes the rounds of the couches looking for what's bad for him. If we peek out of our bedroom windows you all try to get a good look at what's bad; and if we duck back in from embarrassment, you're even more eager to catch a glimpse of what's bad when it peeks out again. Thus it's pretty clear that we're far superior to you, and I've got a way to prove it. Here's a test to see which sex is worse, for we say *you* are and you say *we* are. Let's look at the question, then, by juxtaposing any man and any woman and comparing their names. Take Charminos: he's worse than Nausimache<sup>133</sup>—it goes without saying. And then Kleophon is of course worse in every way than Salabakcho.<sup>134</sup> And it's been a long time since any of you has even tried to measure up to Aristomache—I mean the one at Marathon—and Stratonike.<sup>135</sup> Well? Is a certain one of last year's Councillors, who handed over his powers to someone else, better than Euboule?<sup>136</sup> [*Pointing to him in the audience*] Not even you yourself would say that! And so we claim to be much better than men. You'll never see a woman drive up to the Akropolis in a chariot after stealing about 50 talents from the public treasury! The most a woman will filch is a cup of flour from her husband, and then she'll pay him back the same day.<sup>137</sup>

[*Indicating the spectators*] We could point out many men here who do these very things and worse, who are more likely than we are to be potbellies, muggers, spongers, slave-drivers! And when it comes to their patrimony, they're less able to preserve it than we are.<sup>138</sup> We've still got our looms and weaving rods, our wool-baskets and parasols. Contrast these husbands of ours: most have let their spear-shafts disappear from their houses, points and all, and many others have cast from their shoulders, in the heat of battle, their parasols!<sup>139</sup>

Yes, we women have plenty of justified complaints to lodge against our husbands, one of which is most monstrous. If a woman bears a son who's useful to the polis—a taxiarch or a commander—she ought to be honored in some way and to be given front-row seating at the Stenia and the Skira and any other festivals we women might celebrate.<sup>140</sup> But if a woman bears a son who's a coward and a rascal—a bad trierarch or an incompetent pilot—she ought to sit behind the hero's mother with her hair cropped off. By what logic, o polis, should Hyperbolos' mother,<sup>141</sup> dressed in white and wearing her hair long, get to sit near Lamachos'<sup>142</sup> mother and make loans?<sup>143</sup> If she lends money at interest, no borrower in the world should pay her back but should grab her money by force and tell her, "You're a fine one to be charging points after discharging such a disappointing son!"

## EPISODE

KINSMAN: I've gone cross-eyed looking for him! But he's never come. What could be keeping him? No doubt he's ashamed that his *Palamedes* was a flop. So: which of his plays could I use to entice him? I've got it! I'll do a take-off on his recent *Helen*:<sup>144</sup> I'm certainly *dressed* for that role!

[*He puts on a veil.*]

KRITYLLA: What are you cooking up *now*? Why are you rubbernecking around? You'll see one hell of a Helen if you don't behave yourself till a cop gets here!

KINSMAN [*singing as Helen*]:<sup>145</sup>  
These are the fair-maidened currents of the Nile,  
that in lieu of heavenly distillment floods the flats  
of bright Egypt for a people much given to laxatives.

KRITYLLA: By Hekate Torch-Bearer, you're a villain!

KINSMAN:  
The land of my fathers is not without a name:  
'tis Sparta, and my sire is Tyndareus.

KRITYLLA: He's *your* father, you disaster? More likely it was Phrynonidas.<sup>146</sup>

KINSMAN:  
And Helen was I named.



KRITYLLA: You're turning into a woman *again*, before you've been punished for your *first* drag-show? 895

KINSMAN:  
Many a soul on my account by Scamander's streams hath perished.

KRITYLLA: You should have been one of them!

KINSMAN:  
And I am here, but my own ill-starrèd husband, Menelaos, has never come for me. So why do I still live? 900

KRITYLLA: Because the vultures are lazy!

KINSMAN:  
Yet something, as 'twere, tickles at my heart: deceive me not, o Zeus, in my nascent hope! 905

[Enter Euripides, disguised as Menelaos.]

EURIPIDES:  
Who, wielding power in this doughty manse, would welcome strangers sore beset in the briny deep midst tempest and shipwrecks?

KINSMAN:  
These are the halls of Proteus.

KRITYLLA: *Proteus*, you sorry wretch? [To Euripides] By the Twain Goddesses, he's lying: Proteas<sup>147</sup> has been dead for ten years! 910

EURIPIDES:  
What land have we put into with our hull?

KINSMAN:  
Egypt.

EURIPIDES:  
Ah wretched, to have made for such a port!

KRITYLLA: Do you believe the ravings of this awful man, condemned to an awful death? This is the Thesmophorion! 915

EURIPIDES:  
Is lord Proteus within, or out of doors?

KRITYLLA: You've got to be still seasick, stranger, if you ask if Proteas is within or out of doors, when you just heard that he's dead!

EURIPIDES:  
Alas, he is dead! Where was he duly entombed? 920

KINSMAN:  
This is his very tomb whereon I sit.

KRITYLLA: Well, die and go to hell—and you *will* die for daring to call this altar a tomb!

EURIPIDES:  
Why dost thou sit upon this sepulchral seat, veiled in a shroud, strange lady? 925

KINSMAN:  
Against my will am I to serve the bed of Proteus' son in marriage.

KRITYLLA: You villain, why do you keep lying to the stranger? This criminal came here to the women's meeting, stranger, to snatch their baubles!

KINSMAN:  
Bark thou at my person, pelt me with abuse! 930

EURIPIDES:  
Strange lady, what old woman vilifies thee?

KINSMAN:  
'Tis Proteus' daughter, Theonoe.

KRITYLLA: No, by the Twain Goddesses, I'm Kritylla, daughter of Antitheos, from Gargettos!<sup>148</sup> [To the Kinsman] And you're a villain!

KINSMAN:  
Say what you will, for never shall I wed your brother and so betray Menelaos, my husband at Troy. 935

[Euripides approaches the Kinsman.]

EURIPIDES:  
What said'st thou, lady? Return my pupils' gaze!

KINSMAN:  
I feel shame—for the violation of my jowls.

EURIPIDES:  
What can this be? A speechlessness holds me fast! 940

[He removes the Kinsman's veil.]  
O gods, what sight do I see? Who *art* thou, lady?



KINSMAN:

And who art thou? The same thought strikes us both.

EURIPIDES:

Are you Greek, or a native woman?

KINSMAN:

Greek. But I now would learn *your* story.

EURIPIDES:

I cannot help but see Helen in you, lady!

945

KINSMAN:

And I Menelaos in you—to judge from your rags!

EURIPIDES:

You have recognized aright the unluckiest of men!

[*Euripides embraces the Kinsman.*]

KINSMAN:

O timely come into your own wife's charms!<sup>149</sup>  
O hold me, hold me, husband, in your arms!  
Come, let me kiss you! Take, oh take, oh take  
me away posthaste!

950

[*Euripides takes the Kinsman by the hand and begins to lead him from the altar.*]

KRITYLLA [*blocking their path*]: By the Twain Goddesses, whoever tries to take you away is going to be sorry, after he gets pummeled with this torch!

EURIPIDES:

Wouldst thou prevent me my very own wife, the daughter  
of Tyndareus, to take to Sparta?

955

KRITYLLA: Oh my, you strike me as being a villain yourself, and some kind of ally of this other one! No wonder you kept acting like Egyptians!<sup>150</sup> But this man is going to pay the price: here comes the marshal and a policeman.

960

EURIPIDES: This is bad. I've got to mosey on out of here.

[*He moves to the wings.*]

KINSMAN: But what about *me*? What am I going to do?

EURIPIDES: Stay calm. I'll never desert you, as long as I draw breath, or until I exhaust my vast supply of stratagems! [*Exit Euripides.*]

KINSMAN: Well, *this* particular fishing-line didn't catch much!

965

[*Enter Marshal and a Policeman armed with a whip, bow and quiver.*]

MARSHAL: So this is the villain that Kleisthenes told us about! [*To the Kinsman*] You! What are you skulking for? [*To the Policeman*] Archer, take him inside and bind him on the plank,<sup>151</sup> then set him up right here and keep an eye on him. Don't let anybody get near him. If anybody tries to, take your whip and hit him!

970

KRITYLLA: Do that, by god, because just a minute ago a man *did* try to make off with him—a sail-stitcher!

KINSMAN [*kneeling before the Marshal*]: Marshal, by this right hand of yours—which you're so fond of cupping in the direction of anyone who might put silver in it—do me a small favor even though I'm condemned to death!

975

MARSHAL: What favor?

KINSMAN: Tell the policeman he's got to strip me naked before he ties me to the plank: I'm an old man and I don't want to be left dressed in scarves and petticoats when the crows eat me—they'd laugh!

980

MARSHAL: The Council has decreed that you must die wearing these,<sup>152</sup> so that everyone who sees you will know what kind of criminal you are!

KINSMAN: Aieeee! O dresses, what ye have wrought! There's no chance I'll be saved now!

[*The Policeman takes the Kinsman inside; Kritylla and the Marshal exit.*]

### CHORAL INTERLUDE

CHORUS-LEADER: All right, now, let's do a cheerful dance, as is the women's custom here, when in the holy season we celebrate our solemn mysteries for the Twain Goddesses—the very ones Pauson,<sup>153</sup> too, honors by fasting, as he joins in our prayer to them that from year to year many more such celebrations may come his way!

985

CHORUS:

Let's start our number: go light on your feet,  
form up a circle and all join hands;  
everyone mark the beat of our holy dance  
with an agile foot!  
Let every dancer arrange herself

990



so she can look this way and that, 995  
 as you celebrate in song and dance  
 the race of Olympian gods.  
 Let everyone lift her voice,  
 transported by the dance!

If people expect that we, as women, 1000  
 will in this sanctuary utter abuse against men,  
 they are wrong!<sup>154</sup>  
 But now we should rather halt  
 the graceful steps of our circle-dance  
 and go on to our next number! 1005

Step out singing for the God with the Lyre<sup>155</sup>  
 and for Artemis with her Quiver,  
 the Chaste Lady.  
 Hail, Thou who work from afar,<sup>156</sup>  
 and grant us victory!<sup>157</sup> 1010  
 It's right that we also sing for Hera,  
 fulfiller of marriages,  
 who takes part in all our dances  
 and holds the passkey to wedlock.  
 We ask Hermes the Shepherd 1015  
 and Pan and his Nymphs  
 to smile heartily and enjoy  
 this dancing of ours!<sup>158</sup>  
 So begin the spirited double-time  
 in the cause of dancing well:  
 let's get into it, ladies,  
 in the customary fashion—  
 we're fasting anyway!

All right now, jump,  
 return with a solid beat, 1025  
 take the song in full voice!  
 Lord Bakchos crowned with ivy  
 please personally lead our dance:  
 we will hymn you in revels  
 that love the dance! 1030

Noisy Dionysos,  
 son of Zeus and Semele,  
 who enjoy the charming songs

of Nymphs as you ramble  
 over the mountains— 1035  
*evoi evoi evoi!*—  
 striking up the dances  
 all night long!  
 And all around you their cries  
 echo on Kithairon, 1040  
 and the mountains shady with dark leaves  
 and the rocky valleys resound.  
 And all round you ivy tendrils  
 twine in lovely bloom!

## EPISODE

[Enter Policeman,<sup>159</sup> dragging the Kinsman, who is now clamped to a plank,  
 feet-first. He props the Kinsman up against the altar.]

POLICEMAN: There, now: you can do your bellyachin' to the open air! 1045

KINSMAN: Officer, I beseech you—

POLICEMAN: Don't seech me!

KINSMAN: Loosen the clamps!

POLICEMAN: No, but I'll do *this*. [He tightens them.]

KINSMAN: Owww! Hey, you're *tightening* them! 1050

POLICEMAN: Want me to keep going?

KINSMAN: Owww! Ahhh! God damn you!

POLICEMAN: Shut up, you damn geezer! Well, I'm gonna go get a mat, so  
 I can get comfortable while I guard you. [He goes inside.]

KINSMAN: This is the reward I get for befriending Euripides! [Peering 1055  
 into the distance, as if catching sight of something.] Hey, my gods!  
 Savior Zeus, hope is not dead! It looks like the man's not given up: he's  
 sending me a signal by zipping by in the Perseus outfit! I'm supposed  
 to be Andromeda!<sup>160</sup> I'm certainly chained up like her! And he's obvi-  
 ously on his way to rescue me! Otherwise he wouldn't have shot by! 1060

[As Andromeda, singing]

Dear maidens, dear,  
 how might I escape  
 unseen by the cop?  
 Dost hear me,



thou who from the caverns 1065  
 singest in answer  
 to my cries?  
 Permit, allow me  
 to go home to my wife!  
 Pitiless he who enchained me, 1070  
 most sorely tested of mortal men!  
 I got free of a rotten old hag  
 only to die anyway!  
 For this barbarian guard,  
 my long-time watcher, 1075  
 has hung me out,  
 doomed and friendless,  
 as food for vultures!  
 You see, 'tis not to dance,  
 nor yet with girls my age 1080  
 to wield the voting-funnel<sup>161</sup>  
 that I am here;  
 nay rather enchained  
 in tight bondage  
 am I set out as fodder 1085  
 for the monster Glauketes!<sup>162</sup>  
 Mourn me, ladies, with a hymn  
 not of marriage but of jail,  
 for wretched do I suffer wretchedly  
 —alas alack, woe is me!— 1090  
 horrid sufferings too  
 at the hands of kin, and wrongly,  
 tho I implored a man,  
 igniting tearfullest Stygian groans  
 —ai ai!— 1095  
 the man who first shaved me,  
 who put on me this dress  
 and sent me on this errand  
 to this sanctuary  
 of the women! 1100  
 O force of destiny,  
 engendered by a god!  
 O me accursed!  
 Who would not behold my suffering,  
 in its drastic evils, as unenviable? 1105

Ah, would that a fiery bolt  
 from heaven abóve  
 would obliterate  
 the barbarian!  
 No more is it agreeable 1110  
 to look upon the sun's deathless flame,  
 for I am hung up,  
 damned by the gods  
 to cut-throat grief,  
 bound for a flashing trip 1115  
 to the grave!  
 EURIPIDES [*offstage, as Echo*]:<sup>163</sup> Greetings, dear girl; but may the gods  
 obliterate your father Kepheus for exposing you out there!  
 KINSMAN: And who are you, who takest pity on my suffering?  
 EURIPIDES: Echo, a comedienne who sings back what she hears, who 1120  
 just last year, in this very place, personally assisted Euripides in the  
 contest. But now, child, you must play your part: to wail piteously!  
 KINSMAN: And you'll wail in response!  
 EURIPIDES: I'll take care of that. But now start the script.  
 KINSMAN:  
 O holy night, 1125  
 how long is thy chariot's course  
 as thou drivest o'er the stellar back  
 of holy Aether!<sup>164</sup>  
 through Olympos most august!  
 EURIPIDES:  
 Through Olympos! 1130  
 KINSMAN:  
 Why o why has Andromeda had  
 so much more than her share of ills?  
 EURIPIDES:  
 Share of ills!  
 KINSMAN:  
 Unhappy in my death!  
 EURIPIDES:  
 Unhappy in my death! 1135



KINSMAN:

You're killing me, old bag, with your jabbering!

EURIPIDES:

Jabbering!

KINSMAN:

God, your interruptions are annoying—too much!

EURIPIDES:

Too much!

KINSMAN:

Dear fellow, please let me finish my song, thank you very much!

Stop!

1140

EURIPIDES:

Stop!

KINSMAN:

Go to hell!

EURIPIDES:

Go to hell!

KINSMAN:

What's wrong with you?

1145

EURIPIDES:

What's wrong with you?

KINSMAN:

You're babbling!

EURIPIDES:

You're babbling!

KINSMAN:

Suffer!

EURIPIDES:

Suffer!

1150

KINSMAN:

Drop dead!

EURIPIDES:

Drop dead!

POLICEMAN [*returning with a mat, which he places on a bench near the altar; to the Kinsman*]: Hey, you, what's all this talking?

EURIPIDES: All this talking?

POLICEMAN: I'll call the Marshals!

1155

EURIPIDES: I'll call the Marshals!

POLICEMAN: What's going on?

EURIPIDES: What's going on?

POLICEMAN: Where's that noise coming from?

EURIPIDES: Noise coming from!

1160

POLICEMAN [*to the Kinsman*]: Are you making all this racket?

EURIPIDES: This racket?

POLICEMAN: You're gonna be sorry!

EURIPIDES: Gonna be sorry!

POLICEMAN: You laughin' at me?

1165

EURIPIDES: Laughin' at me?

KINSMAN: God no, it's that woman, over there!

EURIPIDES: Over there!

POLICEMAN [*looking around*]: Where is the bitch?

EURIPIDES: The bitch!

1170

KINSMAN: She's getting away!

POLICEMAN [*running about*]: Where ya goin'?

EURIPIDES: Where ya goin'?

POLICEMAN: You won't get away with it!

EURIPIDES: Get away with it!

1175

POLICEMAN: Still yappin'?

EURIPIDES: Yappin'?

POLICEMAN: Grab the bitch!

EURIPIDES: Grab the bitch!

POLICEMAN: Yackety, confounded woman!

1180

[*Euripides, still disguised as Perseus, reappears on the crane and flies about the stage.*]

EURIPIDES:

Ye gods, to what barbaric land am I come  
on sandal swift? For through the empyrean  
cutting a swath I aim my wingéd foot



to Argos, and the cargo that I carry  
is the Gorgon's head!<sup>165</sup>

1185

POLICEMAN: Say what? You got the head of Gorgos, the secretary?<sup>166</sup>

EURIPIDES:

'Tis the Gorgon's, I say once more.

POLICEMAN: George's, yeah, that's what I said.

EURIPIDES: [*alighting from the crane onto the stage*]:

Oho, what crag is this I see? What maiden  
fair as a goddess moored like a boat thereto?

1190

KINSMAN:

O stranger, pity my misfortune cruel!  
O free me from my bonds!

POLICEMAN: You, button your lip! You slimeball, you've got the nerve to  
blab when you're about to be a *dead* maiden?

EURIPIDES:

O maiden, 'tis with pity I see you hang there!

1195

POLICEMAN: That's no maiden! That's a dirty old man, a crook and a creep!

EURIPIDES: Rubbish, you vulgarian! This is Kepheus' child, Andromeda.

POLICEMAN [*pointing to the Kinsman's phallus*]: Lookit that figgie:<sup>167</sup> it  
don't look little, do it now?

EURIPIDES: Give me her hand, that I might clasp the lass! [*The  
Policeman steps between them.*] Please, Skythian: all human flesh is  
weak. In my case, love for this girl has seized me.

1200

POLICEMAN: I don't envy you. But I tell you, if his asshole was turned  
around this way I wouldn't say nothin' if you was to screw it.

EURIPIDES: Why don't you let me untie her, officer, that I may couch  
her in the nuptial bower?

1205

POLICEMAN: If you're so hot to bugger the old guy, why don't you drill a  
hole in the backside of that there plank and buttfuck him that way?

EURIPIDES: Gods no, I'd rather untie the chains. [*He approaches the  
Kinsman.*]

POLICEMAN [*blocking his way*]: Try it—if you wanna get whipped.

1210

EURIPIDES: I shall do it anyway!

POLICEMAN [*drawing his sword*]: I'd have to chop off yer head with this  
here scimitar.

EURIPIDES [*aside*]:

Ah me, what action, what clever logic now?

All wit is lost upon this savage lout.

1215

For work a novel ruse upon a clod

and thou hast worked in vain. No, I must find  
a different stratagem, one suitable for *him*.

[*Exit Euripides.*]

POLICEMAN [*to the Kinsman*]: Lousy fox, the monkey-tricks he tried to  
pull on me!

1220

KINSMAN [*calling after Euripides*]: Remember, Perseus, what a wretched  
state you're leaving me in!

POLICEMAN: So you're still hungry for a taste of the whip, are ya?

[*The Policeman administers a few strokes with his whip, then stretches out on  
his mat and sleeps.*]

### CHORAL INTERLUDE

CHORUS:<sup>168</sup>

Pallas Athena, the dancers' friend,  
heed our customary invitation  
to the dance!

1225

Maiden girl unwedlocked,  
guardian of our country,  
sole manifest sovereign  
who is called keeper of the keys!

1230

Show yourself, you  
who loathe tyrants,  
as is fitting.<sup>169</sup>

The country's female people  
summon you: please come,  
bringing peace, comrade of festivity!

1235

Come, gracious happy sovereigns,<sup>170</sup>  
to your own precinct,  
where torchlight reveals

your divine rites,  
an immortal sight  
forbidden to men!

1240

O come, we pray,  
potent goddesses



of the Thesmophoria! 1245  
 If ever before you answered our call,  
 come now at our invitation,  
 we beseech you, here to us!

## EPISODE

[Enter Euripides, undisguised and carrying a small harp and a travel-bag, with Elaphion, a dancing girl, and Teredon, a boy piper.]<sup>171</sup>

EURIPIDES [to the Chorus]: Ladies, if you want to make a permanent peace-treaty with me, now's the time. I'll stipulate that in the future 1250  
 none of you women will ever again be slandered in any way by me. I'm making that my official offer.

CHORUS-LEADER: And what is your purpose in making this offer?

EURIPIDES: That one on the plank there is my kinsman. If I can take him 1255  
 away with me, you'll never hear another insult. But if you refuse, whatever you've been doing behind your husbands' backs while they're away at the front, I'll denounce to them when they return.

CHORUS-LEADER: We're happy to honor *our* part in this deal. But you've got to make your own deal with this barbarian [indicating the Policeman].

EURIPIDES: I'm ready for that job!<sup>172</sup> [He takes an old woman's dress out 1260  
 of his travel-bag, puts it on and veils his face.] And *your* job, Elaphion, is to remember to do what I told you on the way over here. All right, the first thing is to walk back and forth swinging your haunches. [She does so.] And you, Teredon, accompany her on your pipes with a Persian dance-tune. [He does so, while Euripides plays his harp.] 1265

POLICEMAN [awakening and sitting up on his bench]: What's all the noise for? Some partiers waking me up.

EURIPIDES: The girl wants to rehearse, officer. She's on her way to dance for some gentlemen.

POLICEMAN: Let her dance and rehearse; I won't stop her. She's pretty 1270  
 nimble: like a bug on a rug!

EURIPIDES [to Elaphion]: All right, girl, take off your dress and sit on the cop's lap. [She does so, with her back to the Policeman.] Now stick out your feet so I can take off your shoes.

POLICEMAN: Yeah, sit down, sit down, yeah, yeah, sweetie! [He reaches 1275  
 around and feels her breasts.] Wow, what firm titties—like turnips!

EURIPIDES: Piper, play faster. [To Elaphion] Still afraid of the cop?

POLICEMAN: What a fine butt! [Looks down at his trousers.] You'll be 1280  
 sorry if you don't stay inside my pants! [opening his trousers to reveal a huge phallus] There! That's better for my prick!

EURIPIDES [to Elaphion]: Well done. Grab your dress, it's time for us to be going.

POLICEMAN: Won't she give me a kiss first?

EURIPIDES: Sure. Kiss him. [She does so.]

POLICEMAN: Woo woo woo! Boyoboy! What a sweet tongue, like Attic 1285  
 honey! Why don't you sleep with me?

EURIPIDES: Goodbye, officer. That's impossible.

POLICEMAN: No, wait, my dear old lady, please do me this favor.

EURIPIDES: Got a drachma, then?<sup>173</sup>

POLICEMAN: Sure I do. 1290

EURIPIDES: Well, let's have it!

POLICEMAN: But I've got nothing on me! Wait, take my shaft-case. [He 1295  
 hands his quiver to Euripides.] And give it back after! [To Elaphion] You come with me! [To Euripides] And you watch the old man, grandma! What's your name?

EURIPIDES: Artemisia.<sup>174</sup>

POLICEMAN [as he exits with Elaphion]: Remember that name: Artamuxia.

EURIPIDES: Trickster Hermes, just keep on giving me this good luck! [To 1300  
 Teredon] You can run along now, kid; and take this stuff with you. [He hands him the harp, the women's clothing and the quiver.] And I'll release this one. [He begins to free the Kinsman.] As soon as you get loose you'd better get out of here fast and head back home to your wife and kids.

KINSMAN: I'll do that, as soon as I'm loose. 1305

EURIPIDES: There you are! It's up to you to escape before the policeman comes back and arrests you.



KINSMAN [*Putting on his dress*]: That's just what I'm going to do!

[*Euripides and the Kinsman exit on the run.*]

POLICEMAN [*returning with Elaphion, and wearing a limp phallus*]: Old lady, your girl is nice and easygoing, no trouble at all! [*Looking around*] Where's the old lady? Oh no, now I'm in for it! Where'd the old man get to? Old lady! Lady! I don't like this at all, old lady! Artamuxia! The old bag's tricked me! [*To Elaphion*] You, run after her as quick as you can! [*Elaphion runs off, the Policeman picks up his bow and realizes his quiver is gone.*] Justly is it called a case for shafts: I traded mine for a fuck and got shafted! Oh my, what am I gonna do? Where'd that old lady get to? Artamuxia!

1310

1315

CHORUS-LEADER: Are you asking for the lady with the harp?

POLICEMAN: Yeah, yeah! Seen her?

CHORUS-LEADER: She went that way [*pointing left*], and there was an old man with her.

1320

POLICEMAN: Was the old man wearing a yellow dress?

CHORUS-LEADER: That's right. You might still catch them if you go that way [*pointing right*].

POLICEMAN: The dirty old bag! Which way should I go again? [*He runs off to the right.*]

1325

CHORUS-LEADER: Right! Straight up that hill! Where are you going? No, run the other way! No, you're going the wrong way!

POLICEMAN [*winded*]: Damn! I've gotta run! Artamuxia! [*Exit.*]

CHORUS-LEADER: Run off now quick as you can—straight to hell!

CHORUS:

Well, we've had our share of fun.

Now it's time for every woman

to go on home.

May the Twain Gods of Thesmophoria

well reward each and every one of you

for your performance!

1330

1335

## ASSEMBLYWOMEN





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 guerilla 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 Taafe 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. Pylos ("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 (*malon* 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 Ambassador; compare Praxagora'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 1990:221–22.
209. A continuation of the chorus' previous song (see above, n. 188).
210. See above, n. 143.
211. The Telamon Song (Telamon was the father of the epic hero Ajax) was warlike, while the Kleitagora 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 Thermopylai, 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.

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 Polydeukes (Lat. Pollux).
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. Reckford 1987:299–300 suggests, however, that despite its apolitical focus, the play, with its irrepressible 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 horny wives as deceivers of their husbands—can coexist in the same culture, as they still do today.
5. See Introduction IV.
6. On the Aristophanic conception of gender and genre see Muecke 1982, Zeitlin 1981 and 1985 and Bowie 1993:217–27; on the themes and structure of the play as a whole see Hansen 1976, Taafe 1993:74–102.
7. Fuller descriptions and analyses of the Thesmophoria can be found in Brumfield 1981, Burkert 1985:242–46, Detienne 1989, Parke 1977:82–88, Parker 1983:81–83, Simon 1983:17–22, Zeitlin 1982a, MacDowell 1995:259–62. 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 *thesmoi*" (literally "things laid down"); in terms of the ritual the word *thesmoi*, 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 positing 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.
10. F. Sokolowski, *Lois sacrées de l'Asie Mineure* (Paris 1955), #61.5.
11. The principal text is the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, for which see Foley 1994.



12. Parker 1983:83; for similar ritual analogues to the action of *Lysistrata* see *Lysistrata*, Introduction 2.
13. Aristophanes' second *Women at the Thesmophoria* (produced a few years later: see Appendix) was set on the final day, when feasting and good spirits prevailed.
14. For examples see Bowie 1993:212–14.
15. See *Lysistrata*, Introduction 2.
16. Aristophanes' *Acharnians* (produced in 425) parodies and criticizes Euripides' portrayal of heroes reduced to beggary, but contains no mention of his female characters.
17. For detailed discussions see the essays in Powell 1990; for the fragmentary play *Stheneboia* see Collard et al. 1995:79–97.
18. See Introduction IV; Sommerstein 1980.
19. It is worth noting that the impact of fictional characters on the behavior and self-image of actual people—a question which Plato was later to take up systematically (especially in *Republic*)—is still a live issue today with regard to such media as novels, films, television and pornography, and that the response of men and women is often different.
20. See Henderson 1991a; Introduction III.
21. For the polarity of the dramatic genres see Taplin 1986, and for comic elements in Euripides see Seidensticker 1982.
22. It is significant that the Kinsman and the Policeman are the only characters in the play who display the comic phallos.
23. Bowie 1993:223.
24. Aether was a substance thought to lie between the air earthly beings breathe and the dome of the sky. Although Aether could be considered divine, it was not worshipped as a god: here Euripides invents a scientific or intellectualist cosmogony.
25. Agathon, who had won the first prize in his first competition five years earlier, was the most innovative tragic poet of the younger generation, incorporating the “new music” (n. 29, below), writing choruses unconnected with the action, and even inventing fictional plots. He was also very handsome, and in Plato's dialogues *Protagoras* and *Symposium* is represented as having maintained an erotic relationship with an older man, Pausanias, long into adulthood, and as championing homosexual relationships.
26. Paleness in men, suggesting the indoor life of women, was a sign of effeminacy.
27. Since most Athenian men wore beards, to be clean-shaven could be considered effeminate.
28. Implying that Agathon, like a (male or female) prostitute, has submitted sexually to every man in Athens; the Kinsman “might not know it” because he might have seen Agathon only from behind.
29. In the following songs, and throughout the Agathon-scene, Aristophanes parodies the “new music” of the later fifth century (see West 1992:356–66), with its novel instrumentation, complex rhythmic modulations and florid poeticism.
30. The Kinsman's expressions of hostility toward Agathon and his slave characterize him as holding conventionally macho views about what is appropriate for each gender in terms of manner, appearance and behavior. For normative distinctions between the manly *hoplite* (active) and the effeminate *kinaidos* (passive) see Winkler 1990:46–54.

31. The Kinsman brandishes his stage-phallos. His threat of anal rape reveals his own arousal at the sight of effeminate males, which in Greek terms is a conventionally masculine reaction.
32. In this year the Thesmophoria, which normally fell in October, had in fact fallen in November, after the start of the winter season.
33. The solemn day called *Nesteia* (“Fast”), when, in preparation for the rites of the joyful and climactic third day, the celebrants abstained from food and reverted (as one ancient source puts it) to “the ancient way of life.” For the Thesmophoria generally, see Introduction 2.
34. I.e., Demeter and Kore, the goddesses in whose honor the festival is held.
35. For the Thesmophoria women formed their own cultic organization under the leadership of their own elected leaders (*archousai*, the feminine equivalent of the polis' male *archontes*); here Aristophanes imagines the women turning their cult-gathering into a political assembly, as the men do on the Pnyx.
36. For Euripides' reputation as a misogynist see *Lysistrata*, n. 76.
37. Referring to the convoluted melodies characteristic of the “new music” (n. 29, above).
38. The following “chorus” imagines the maidens of Troy celebrating after the Greeks had lifted their siege, leaving behind the Trojan Horse. Its rhythm is largely ionic, suggesting Asiatic luxury and effeminacy.
39. Demeter and Kore.
40. The Muses, nine maiden daughters of Zeus, embodied and were thought to inspire poetry.
41. I.e. the god Apollo, who with Poseidon built the walls of Troy; the Simois was a river in the Trojan plain.
42. Artemis was Apollo's maiden sister.
43. See *Lysistrata*, n. 23.
44. The Kinsman attributes to Agathon's song (exemplifying “artsy” contemporary tragedy) the power to make men want to be sodomized, but his macho sarcasm shows that he himself is immune.
45. These lost plays by Aischylos (who is often portrayed by Aristophanes as the favorite playwright of older, more traditional Athenians) dramatized the confrontation between the hyper-masculine King Lykourgos and the sexually ambivalent god Dionysos; Euripides' extant play *Bacchai* was later to explore much the same kind of confrontation. In both cases the god humiliates and destroys his opponent: in *Bacchai* Dionysos persuades King Pentheus to dress as a woman and infiltrate the women's rites, where he is exposed and ripped to pieces. In addition, the Kinsman's allusion reminds the spectators of Agathon's resemblance to the theatrical image of Dionysos.
46. The second wife of the Attic hero, Theseus, who, when her stepson Hippolytos rejected her advances, committed suicide after writing a note that accused Hippolytos of attempted rape and so led to his death. Euripides' dramatization of this story in *Hippolytos* of 431 had alarmed the more straitlaced Athenians, since it depicted Phaidra propositioning Hippolytos. Despite a second (and our extant) version of the play produced in 428, which omitted the propositioning-scene and treated Phaidra more sympathetically, she became a byword for the wanton wife; shameless enjoyment



- of sex is here epitomized by reference to the "equestrian position" (with a possible allusion to Euripides' play, lines 228-31, where Phaidra imagines herself riding with Hippolytos).
47. Dionysiac creatures, half man and half beast, who symbolized sexuality unrestrained by the norms of civilization.
  48. All these were lyric poets of the previous century, known for their love songs.
  49. A tragic poet of the Aeschylean period, noted for the sweetness of his poetry.
  50. From *Alkestis* (produced in 438), where Pheres rejects his son's request to die in his place.
  51. Male intrusion on the rites of Thesmophoria was a very serious crime, and legends told of the mutilation and/or murder of intruders at the hands of the women.
  52. I.e., Aphrodite = "sexual enjoyment"; Agathon fears that he would make a more attractive woman than the women themselves, and so provoke their hatred.
  53. Euripides, the tragic director, must now "direct" a comic actor in a comic plot.
  54. The Eumenides ("Kindly Ones"), who defended justice (especially when crimes against kin were at issue) and gave sanctuary; for a dramatization see Aischylos' *Eumenides*.
  55. For this man see *Lysistrata*, n. 134, and below, where he appears as a character.
  56. The removal of body hair (by singeing or plucking) was an essential feature of female grooming; see *Lysistrata*, n. 45.
  57. Perhaps with a secondary allusion to the metaphorical sense of pig = woman.
  58. A woman's oath.
  59. Unlike Agathon, the Kinsman feels degraded by adopting a feminine appearance, and he does not succeed in losing his true male identity, though for a while he hides it under female clothing.
  60. A man's oath.
  61. A "scientific" entity (n. 24, above) and so useless in an oath.
  62. Paraphrasing a notorious line from Euripides' *Hippolytos* (see n. 46, above), "It was my tongue that swore, but my heart remains unsworn," spoken by Hippolytos of the oath of silence Phaidra had made him swear before he knew what her secret was. Taken out of context, the line was criticized as encouraging dishonesty.
  63. For the first time in the play we see male actors playing women who are supposed to be real women.
  64. The Kinsman's monologue is in effect the prologue-speech of the "play" being staged by Euripides, whose starring role the Kinsman has reluctantly agreed to play.
  65. Demeter and her daughter Pherephatta (elsewhere called Persephone, or Kore ["Maiden"]) were the principal deities of the Thesmophoria.
  66. Literally "piglet," an animal sacred to Demeter but also Greek slang for vulva.
  67. The Kinsman satirizes the sort of prayer for the success of one's children that would be characteristic of actual matrons.
  68. Now the Kinsman plays the role of spectator, but as a spy at a meeting he is not entitled to attend. In this he resembles the play's male spectators.

69. Torches played a prominent part in actual rites for Demeter and Kore.
70. This invocation and the other procedures to follow parody those of male political assemblies. The disguised Kinsman has gained entrance to a "polis" of women forbidden to men, much as disguised women gain forbidden entrance to the men's assembly in *Assemblywomen*.
71. The Herald invokes deities appropriate to the Thesmophoria rather than to a political assembly.
72. This last category is, of course, a comic invention.
73. Apollo.
74. Athena.
75. In a contest with Poseidon over the possession of Attika, Athena prevailed by her gift of the olive tree (Herodotos 8.55).
76. Artemis.
77. The parody begins by echoing fairly closely the curses uttered at political assemblies against enemies of the polis. But the Herald's list of *female* "enemies of women" comically confirms male stereotypes of the secret misbehavior of wives—or, put another way, the accuracy of Euripides' "misogynistic" portrayals (and Aristophanes' too, of course).
78. I.e. the Persian Empire, the traditional barbarian enemy of the Greeks; the Herald inserts Euripides into the familiar curse.
79. A wife who failed in her principal duty—to produce a male heir for her husband—might be tempted to try such a trick. Such babies were purchased from slave-women whose masters refused to pay for the babies' rearing.
80. Apparently the women on stage are young wives; older women looking for lovers (a comic stereotype exploited in *Assemblywomen* and *Wealth*) would be widows, who had greater control over their money and their movements; see Henderson 1987a:117-19.
81. Alluding to the stereotype that women are overfond of alcohol.
82. When applied to the current political situation (see *Lysistrata*, Introduction) these provisions have a serious ring, even though when applied to the wives' enemies (particularly their husbands) they are comic.
83. Typical women's names.
84. Because this was a day of fasting and relative inactivity (see above, n. 33). In addition, Aristophanes perhaps did not want to imply that his comic portrayal bore any resemblance to the actual rituals of the Thesmophoria.
85. The following debate is conducted like an assembly-meeting, no mention being made of the Thesmophoria.
86. Note that women's attendance at the dramatic festivals is taken for granted.
87. For some reason Aristophanes habitually refers to Euripides' mother as a seller of wild herbs—a disreputable social category, implying both poverty and public visibility (see Henderson 1987a:121-26)—even though in reality she was well-born (though the jibe could refer to a younger woman, a stepmother otherwise unknown).
88. As we have begun to suspect, the women are angry at Euripides not for lying about them but for revealing the truth!



89. Alluding to Euripides' play *Stheneboia*, whose adulterous heroine constantly pines for her husband's young "Korinthian guest" Bellerophon.
90. The (Euripidean) source is unknown.
91. From Euripides' play *Phoinix*.
92. This last item is the most significant one.
93. To duplicate the husband's seal on the door.
94. The tragic poet earlier referred to as "base."
95. Just as purists today might charge an artist with "commercialism" or "selling out," so Aristophanes frequently charged Euripides with lowering the tragic art to suit low mass tastes.
96. Euripides' plays often reflect ideas of contemporary intellectuals (Sokrates, for example) that could strike conventional people as immoral or sacrilegious.
97. See above, n. 87.
98. The Kinsman's speech, like Dikaiopolis' in *Acharnians* (497–566), is modelled on the one made by the hero of Euripides' lost play *Telephos*, produced in 438 (for fragments of this play and discussion see Collard et al. 1995:17–52). Telephos was the Greek king of barbarian Mysia, whose land was mistakenly attacked by the Greeks on their way to Troy. During the attack Telephos was wounded by Achilleus, who alone could cure the wound. Telephos disguised himself as a beggar in order to enter Agamemnon's palace and plead his own (and the Trojans') case. When his disguise was exposed and he was threatened with death, he seized the baby Orestes, Agamemnon's son, and took refuge at an altar: this scene is also parodied in *Acharnians* (325–51) and later in our play.
99. As medicine for his wife's indigestion.
100. I.e. the pillar and statue of Apollo Agyieus in the street before the house (and also part of the permanent decor of the theatrical stage-house: thus the Kinsman might illustrate his account before our eyes); this wife's act was both shameless and sacrilegious (intercourse at any shrine was forbidden).
101. See above, n. 46.
102. See above, n. 79.
103. Women did not allow husbands to be in the room when a baby was born.
104. We are apparently to imagine that the old woman had been the father's nanny. For the criteria applied by Athenians to penile beauty (small and with shapely foreskin, as here) and ugliness (large and circumcized) see Dover 1978:125–32.
105. I.e. the Kinsman, like a politician, only pretends to work for the public good, while secretly working against it.
106. A quote from Euripides' play *Melanippe In Chains*.
107. Comic characters often say of themselves, or accept from others, what would shame or anger a real-life counterpart; but here, where the theme is gender-disguise and deception, the male actor may momentarily drop his role to make an aside.
108. Aglauros and Pandrosos, daughters of the mythical Attic King, Kekrops, had sanctuaries on the Akropolis whose cults, celebrated by girls and women, were among the polis' most ancient and important; see Simon 1983:43–46.

109. As in a male assembly.
110. Why the maiden Melanippe is singled out as a "bad" woman is unclear: the subject of two plays by Euripides, she was raped by Poseidon and bore twin sons, then was accused by her father of unchastity; for fragments and discussion see Collard et al. 1995:240–80.
111. See above, n. 46.
112. Odysseus' virtuous wife in Homer's *Odyssey*. Note, however, that the two recent Euripidean plays that are parodied in the second half of our play—*Helen* and *Andromeda*—do feature virtuous heroines.
113. The Apatouria was a kinship festival for men and boys from which women were excluded.
114. For Kleisthenes see *Lysistrata*, n. 134. Of this scene Taafe 1993:92 remarks that Kleisthenes, as a male whose gender identity is female, "speaks for women and . . . takes their place in a different sort of theater, in the *ecclesia*."
115. Literally "I am your *proxenos*" (a foreign citizen recognized by a polis and empowered to represent the interests of fellow countrymen before it). This relationship explains why the women do not resent Kleisthenes' intrusion on their meeting.
116. Kleonymos was a grossly fat politician frequently ridiculed in comedy for cowardice, because he is said to have dropped his shield in battle, probably in the general Athenian retreat at Delion in 424. It is unclear why Mika is supposed to be his wife; perhaps (as Sommerstein 1994:194 suggests) she is fat too.
117. A real deme, chosen perhaps because the first syllable suggests a word meaning "penis."
118. The Kinsman makes two safe guesses, since (according to stereotype) women will take any opportunity to drink wine, their access to it being normally restricted.
119. The *hamis* (urinal), used at male drinking parties, was a jug with a narrow opening at the top and thus unusable by women.
120. The hill on which both Athenian assemblies and the Thesmophoria were held.
121. The hostage-taking is a parody of Euripides' play *Telephos* (see n. 98, above).
122. The feminine equivalent of the masculine name Manes, frequently given to Asiatic slaves at Athens.
123. This scene is portrayed on an Apulian bell-krater in the Martin von Wagner Museum at the University of Würzburg (H5697) and is the frontispiece in Sommerstein 1994.
124. Referring to the spring festival of Anthesteria, which honored Dionysos and where, in addition to adult wine-drinking, small children were garlanded and given small jugs and toys as presents.
125. See n. 46, above.
126. Priestly personnel at a sacrifice normally received some portion of the victim.
127. Aristophanes introduces Kritylla as the Kinsman's new guard because older women were stereotypically tougher than younger women and because she suits the later parody of Euripides' *Helen*.
128. In Euripides' lost play *Palamedes* (produced, like the extant *Trojan Women*, in 415) the hero, the inventor of writing and a Greek fighting against Troy, was framed for



- treason and executed; his brother Oiax got a message through to their father by writing it on oar-blades and floating them back to Greece. For details see Rau 1967:51–53.
129. For this Old Comic structure (the self-revelation of the chorus and its leader, who “step aside” from the plot) see in general Dover 1972:49–53 and Hubbard 1991, who (pp. 182–99) finds in this parabasis a resumption of some of the themes and concerns addressed in *Lysistrata*.
130. As in Aristophanes’ *Birds* (produced in 414), this chorus speaks on its own, rather than the poet’s, behalf.
131. For the workings of this criterion of female modesty see Cohen 1991:133–70.
132. I.e. at an all-night women’s festival, a wedding or a betrothal.
133. Charminos was an Athenian naval commander defeated the previous year, whereas the woman’s name Nausimache—a typical name, like the other women’s names to follow except for Salabakcho—means “victory at sea.”
134. Kleophon was a politician, Salabakcho a courtesan: as often in his plays, Aristophanes insinuates that successful politicians gained their success by submitting to sexual penetration by influential men.
135. The names mean “Excellence in Battle” and “Military Victory,” here understood as feminine personifications of the Athenian triumph over the Persians at Marathon in 490. The Athenians, the premier naval power in Greece, had not won a major land battle in the past 46 years, and are chided here for not daring to dislodge the Spartan army that had invested their territory two years earlier.
136. The name means “Good Counsel.”
137. With sex, presumably.
138. The idea that women manage their households more prudently than men manage the public treasury—a biting charge in a time of fiscal distress caused by failure in the war—is central to *Lysistrata*.
139. A surprise for “shields.” The women accuse the men not only of fiscal recklessness and dishonesty but also of cowardice in battle, referring to the current Athenian situation in the war.
140. These two festivals, like the Thesmophoria, honored Demeter and were celebrated only by women; they also seem to have been run by a women’s “government.” See in general Brumfield 1981:156–81, Simon 1983:19–24, Burkert 1985:230. The Chorus-Leader’s complaint here implies that women’s seating at their own festivals was normally determined by (the status of?) their husbands.
141. Hyperbolos was a popular politician who had been ostracized (voted into exile by the Assembly) c. 417 and was to be assassinated shortly after the production of this play. He had been the frequent object of comic ridicule and attack during his political heyday in the 420s, along with his mother, who had been caricatured in at least one play as an alien, a whore and a drunk. She would now have been in her fifties.
142. This Athenian commander, ridiculed in Aristophanes’ *Acharnians* in 425, had died a hero’s death in the Sicilian expedition; his mother would now be in her seventies.
143. Although women could not make a legally binding contract for more than a small amount of money, they could lend any amount of money if the loan was underwritten by a man; but any public business activity by a citizen woman, let alone moneylending,

- could be considered disreputable (Henderson 1987a:121–26). In this case, Hyperbolos’ mother may merely have been seeing to her son’s business interests during his exile.
144. In Euripides’ (extant) play, produced a year earlier, in 412, the Helen whose abduction to Troy “launched a thousand ships” turns out to have been a phantom, while the real Helen spent the war in Egypt as a prisoner in the palace of Proteus, who has decreed that she marry his son Theoklymenos. After the war, her estranged husband Menelaos goes there, discovers the truth and (with the help of an Egyptian prophetess Theonoe) escapes with Helen. This play, with its novel and romantic plot, its emphasis on exotic adventure and its happy ending, marked a new departure for Euripides, perhaps (as the Kinsman seems to suggest) to change his luck in the tragic competition.
145. In the following scene, the Kinsman and Euripides speak exclusively in tragic style (except for a few comic touches), with about half the lines being quoted or adapted from *Helen* and the rest composed by Aristophanes in paratragic style. Meanwhile Kritylla, being ignorant of myth and tragic theater, cannot enter into, and thus be deceived by, the “tragic” performance being staged for her. For details of the parody see Rau 1967:53–65.
146. A proverbial villain.
147. An Athenian commander.
148. An ordinary-sounding name, patronymic and deme, though an old woman named Kritylla is mentioned by the chorus of women in *Lysistrata*.
149. For the original *es cheras* (into my arms) Aristophanes has substituted *escharas* (“bra-zier,” a slang word for vulva).
150. Who were, according to the Greeks, dishonest people. Ironically, Kritylla will have reminded the audience of the old Egyptian prophetess, Theonoe, who in Euripides’ play had helped Menelaos and Helen escape.
151. A length of planking on which criminals were executed by suspension, as on the cross.
152. In reality, no citizen could be summarily punished without a hearing.
153. Pauson is elsewhere mocked for being poor; for the fasting see above, n. 33.
154. For the chorus’ avoidance of mockery of individual spectators, which typically occurs in the second half of a comedy, see also *Lysistrata*, n. 188.
155. Apollo.
156. This epithet usually refers to Apollo, but here seems to refer to his sister Artemis; both use the bow.
157. That is, in the dramatic competition, and also perhaps in the war.
158. Since these are gods associated with the countryside, the chorus may be acknowledging the Athenians’ hope for an end to the Spartan occupation.
159. This Policeman, like those who accompany the Magistrate in *Lysistrata*, is a Skythian archer and public slave, and so speaks broken Greek.
160. In Euripides’ lost play *Andromeda*, produced together with *Helen* in 412, the flying hero Perseus, equipped by Hermes with winged cap and sandals (for the costume see Stone 1981:325–27), rescues the maiden Andromeda, whose father Kepheus, the king of Ethiopia, had chained her to a rock to be eaten by a sea-monster, hoping thus to appease the angry sea-god Poseidon. As the play opens, the desolate Andromeda



speaks with the echo of her own voice from the caves on the shore, then is joined by a chorus of sympathetic maidens; Aristophanes reverses these scenes in his parody. The songs closely imitate Euripides' arioso style, while both songs and dialogue are a pastiche of tragic quotations and comic bathos; for details see Rau 1967:65–89.

161. The maiden Andromeda had enjoyed dancing, while the Kinsman (as was stereotypical of Athenian old men) had enjoyed jury-service.
162. An Athenian elsewhere mocked for his passion for gourmet seafood.
163. The nymph Echo had foiled Hera's attempt to punish other nymphs with whom Zeus had been having affairs; in revenge Hera made her able to say only what she had just heard. In Euripides' play Echo lived in the cave where Andromeda was chained. In this parody Aristophanes spoofs Euripides' use of an invisible character.
164. See n. 24, above.
165. Before spotting Andromeda Perseus had beheaded Medousa, one of three sister Gorgons, whose gaze turned anyone who saw it to stone; he kept Medousa's head in a leather bag and used it to petrify his own enemies before finally turning it over to Athena.
166. Confusing the mythological character with an otherwise unknown public official (not the famous orator Gorgias of Leontinoi). The Policeman is no more knowledgeable or sympathetic a spectator than Kritylla was.
167. "Fig" (*sukon*) was a common Attic slang term for the female genitals, "fig-tree" (*suke*) for the male; the Policeman uses the former sarcastically.
168. This hymn to the city's most august deities—Athena, Demeter and Persephone—has, in spite of its farcical dramatic environment, an earnest and patriotic tone.
169. By contrast with the jocular references to tyranny in *Lysistrata* a few months earlier, this is a more earnest-sounding reference to the current climate of political and military instability at Athens, which a few months later did indeed succumb to a right-wing coup d'état and changes in the democratic constitution.
170. Demeter and Persephone.
171. Elaphion's name means "Fawn" and Teredon's "Woodworm." Like all "naked women" in Old Comedy (a frequent feature of its final scenes), Elaphion is played by a male actor wearing a leotard to which false breasts and genitalia were attached.
172. Euripides finally transforms himself into a woman (as had Agathon), but into the most degraded one yet, and his winning stratagem turns out to be the staging not of a tragic, but of a typical comic, scene.
173. A very high price (see Halperin 1990:107–12); probably Euripides is counting on the slave-policeman's not having so much money, so that he will offer his quiver as surety (and thus facilitate escape).
174. See *Lysistrata*, n. 149.

### Assemblywomen

1. For the date see MacDowell 1995:302–3.
2. The heroine of *Assemblywomen* claims to have been with the exiles.
3. For jury-pay see *Lysistrata*, n. 135.

4. In *Acharnians* of 425 Aristophanes had complained that assemblies were poorly attended and that ordinary citizens were discouraged from speaking up.
5. On the postwar period generally see Sommerstein 1984, Strauss 1986.
6. See Pembroke 1967 (matriarchy), Tyrrell 1984 (Amazons).
7. Pherekrates, for example, had written a play entitled *Woman Tyrant* and Theopompos had written *Women on Campaign*.
8. Note that Sokrates, too, reportedly believed in the natural equality of women (Xenophon, *Symposion* 2.9).
9. Herodotos, for example, notes the absence of monogamy in some non-Greek cultures of Africa and central Europe (4.104, 180).
10. Scholars have long debated whether Plato or Aristophanes derived from the other the idea of a communist state with women participating in rule. But the absence in either text of explicit allusions or references to a specific predecessor suggests that theoretical discussions along these lines were in general circulation, with Aristophanes and Plato each developing his own particular responses. In general see Ussher 1973:xv–xx, Halliwell 1993:224–25, MacDowell 1995:314–15.
11. See Rothwell 1990:22, 35–36, 92–95, 103; for philosophical thinking about women's potential for participation in polis governance see Blundell 1995:181–87; for the Diotima of Plato's *Symposion* and the traditions surrounding Sokrates' philosophical relationships with women see Halperin 1990:113–51, 190–211.
12. See Aristophanes' *Acharnians* 524–33, *Peace* 605–9; for Thucydides' "earsplitting silence" about Aspasia see Cartledge 1993; for Aspasia generally see Henry 1995.
13. See *Lysistrata*, n. 127.
14. For prejudices about women's work in public spaces see Demosthenes 57 (*Against Euboulides*), Henderson 1987a:121–26.
15. For Praxagora's success in terms of her possession of both erotic and political persuasiveness see Rothwell 1990.
16. Two contemporary politicians, Neokleides and Euaion, are later reported as having spoken at the meeting.
17. For typical features of Aristophanes' "heroic" plots see *Lysistrata*, Introduction 2.
18. The men never do find out that the women had packed the assembly.
19. For the dramatic dynamics see Taafe 1991, and for cross-dressing generally Said 1987.
20. See *Lysistrata*, Introduction 2.
21. Some scholars interpret Blepyros' lack of clothing as indicating general impoverishment in Athens, but ordinary Athenians would normally possess only one suit of clothes at a time.
22. Rothwell 1990:53 thinks that the constipation symbolizes "individualistic hoarding of material possessions," but that is an issue taken up only in a later scene.
23. See Bowie 1993:258–59, MacDowell 1995:311.
24. As in *Lysistrata* there is no real "contest" (agon); instead, Praxagora gives a kind of news conference, expounding her policies and answering Blepyros' objections or questions.