

THE NEW CLASSICAL CANON

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THREE PLAYS by
ARISTOPHANES

Staging Women



Translated and Edited

by

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INTRODUCTION

1. *The Historical Context*

Lysistrata was produced at the Lenaia of 411, twenty years into the Peloponnesian War, a panhellenic struggle pitting Athens and her island empire against Sparta and her allies.¹ Athens and Sparta had emerged from the Persian invasions (490–478) as the two superpowers of Greece. Athens, relying on her navy, had turned a defensive alliance against Persia into a tribute-paying empire composed mainly of small subject states with democratic governments controlled by the Athenian demos. Sparta, the chief city of the Peloponnese (the lower half of mainland Greece) and the greatest land power in Greece, feared the growing power of Athens and disapproved of its imperialism and its democratic government. Although Perikles, the major proponent of the war, had predicted a quick victory, the war lasted for 27 years, ending in 404 with Athens' loss of her navy, her empire and even (for a time) her democracy.

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

only until 418, when Athens accused Sparta of violating its terms and embarked on aggressive new campaigns.

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

But in spite of their political housecleaning and their renewed hope of achieving an honorable peace, the Athenians at the time of *Lysistrata* (the Lenaia festival of 411) were still in a bad way, once again surrounded by a Spartan army of occupation, unsure of their remaining allies, financially straitened and politically volatile. And the audience that watched *Lysistrata* did not yet know the worst: that officers of the main Athenian naval base at Samos had entered into talks with the exiled Athenian aristocrat, Alkibiades, who promised to bring Persia into alliance with Athens if the Athenians would arrange his recall and agree to "a more moderate constitution with a rather smaller number eligible to hold office."² The general Peisandros—the only politician singled out by name for abuse in the play—had recently returned from Samos to engineer the acceptance of Alkibiades' demands but had not yet put them before the people in Assembly. The following months would see the formation of an antidemocratic conspiracy complete with a campaign of propaganda, intimidation and assassination. Although Alkibiades was ultimately unable to deliver Persian support for Athens, the conspirators moved ahead with their plans anyway, and by summer they had succeeded in installing (temporarily) an oligarchic government.

2. The Play

Although *Lysistrata* has a heroine, portrays a battle of the sexes and has much to say about men and women, sex and gender, its main theme is peace—politi-

cal peace at home and an end to the great war between Greeks—and its characterizations are constructed to develop that theme.

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

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

cally involving food, wine, sex and festivity) in which only the hero(ine)'s supporters and converts participate, for those who do not accept the new order have been discredited and expelled.

Although the hero(ine) typically represents views likely to be held by members of a politically powerless class, whom the hero(ine) typifies, and although the scheme bypasses, undermines or discredits the powers currently enforcing the status quo, the hero(ine)'s goal is one likely to be shared by most spectators because the arguments (s)he uses to defend it appeal to their interests and their sense of justice. The powers that be are portrayed unsympathetically as self-interested, corrupt and misguided, and the status quo as unjustly burdensome for ordinary, decent people. In *Lysistrata*, the old politicians (represented by the Magistrate) and their supporters in the Assembly (represented by the Chorus of Old Men) are portrayed as prosecuting the war out of irrational anger and making a profit at the expense of ordinary citizens and soldiers. Their claim that there is no alternative to war is exposed as false: conjugal love (or, more precisely, sex) can conquer all. Once the evil old Magistrate is discredited and eliminated, peace and reconciliation can be easily achieved, and all will be happy once again.

Within this combination of a populist appeal and a utopian scenario, the harsh and intractable realities of life, politics and international aggression are transformed so that wives manage to overcome husbands, love conquers war, insignificant citizens manage to discredit powerful ones, Athens obtains a peace that allows her to keep her empire intact, and the Spartans turn out to be good friends after all. This transformation, impossible in the real world, Aristophanes makes quite plausible by constructing a logical, though fantastic, plot and by appealing to the spectators' wish for a better world—the world as it presumably was in the good old days before the war, when all would be happy and prosperous and where there would be no more violence. He also appeals to the feeling of average citizens that their wishes would be more likely to come true were there no authorities in the way, constantly imposing burdensome duties and reminding them of unpleasant realities.

The dreamlike achievement of regressive wish-fulfillment and oedipal rebellion allowed a communal release of tensions. Insofar as the release was motivated by acceptable civic ideals (peace and solidarity) and achieved in humorous fantasy (wives determining policy), it was safe and festive, cohesive rather than divisive. But insofar as it was a valid expression of people's real war-weariness and an expression of social discontent that had no other public outlet, it was also fair warning to the people's leaders that public patience might not last indefinitely. As a vehicle for such expressions comedy, like tragedy in its own ways, allowed the people to look at their situation from vantage-points not available in other communal assemblies; from those assemblies that determined

military actions, women—and therefore the vantage-point of the family—were excluded. In this role comedy was a form of experimental politics.³

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

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

The utopian fantasy of *Lysistrata* also differs from the other comedies in being more practical. Its characters' actions are not fundamentally outside the realm of human possibility, nor do they alter their characteristic situations or

adopt uncharacteristic ones. That women might occupy and barricade the Akropolis is of course highly unlikely in fifth-century Athens, but it is not unthinkable: after all, women, not men, normally had business on the Akropolis, which belonged to Athena and not to the male government, and the women are more or less in asylum there; the theme of helpless people taking refuge from malevolent men was a familiar one in epic and tragedy. And tactical dereliction of domestic duties has always been a wife's chief weapon under patriarchal systems. By continuing the war the men (warrior-husbands, politicians and their supporters) have threatened the survival of the polis, and the women stop them simply by withholding their services as wives and mothers and by transferring their skills as managers of the household and its finances temporarily to the Akropolis. Though *Lysistrata* protests women's exclusion from policy-making that affects women's lives, the women do not question their ordinary roles or seek in any way to change them; they merely want to force the men to listen to their good advice, then return to their ordinary lives, which the war has disrupted. Unlike the gynocracy of *Assemblywomen*, where the women adopt exclusively masculine roles, usurp public functions reserved for men and effect fundamental and permanent changes in Athenian society, the women's rebellion in *Lysistrata* aims only to restore pre-war normality. The women do not take power from the men and become rulers, but only obstruct the men in order to safeguard the state's money until the men come to their senses; their conspiracy is unselfish and temporary and relies not on magical or supernatural mechanisms but only on the traditional skills, attributes and prerogatives peculiar to their gender: domestic management, care of kin, procreation.⁵

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

acy designed to save the men and the polis, and so the women and their typical roles are portrayed in a largely positive light that is unusual in comedy but continuous with such traditional figures as the Andromache of epic and the self-sacrificing heroines of Euripides' recent tragedies.⁶

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

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

with their comic caricatures in the play but that allows Aristophanes to have his cake and eat it too.

It is not the young warrior-husbands but the older men—the Magistrate and the men's chorus—who are eager to continue the war and who oppose the women's defiance on principle, and their characterization leaves no room for spectator sympathy. Unlike the satire of husbands and wives, which is light and innocuous, the satire of the Magistrate and the choristers is rough and politically pointed. The old choristers are irascible veterans of earlier wars who make a miserable living at the city's expense by serving on juries. Their champion, the Magistrate, is a bureaucrat recently drawn out of retirement to serve on an emergency board that had usurped some of the functions of the citizen Assembly. Both the men's chorus and the Magistrate are motivated by misogyny and greed, and their defeat at the hands of the women is intended to be both just and humiliating. Their antagonists, the older women of the chorus and Lysistrata's older helpers onstage, are indifferent to sexual temptation (and thus more disciplined than the young wives); display the wisdom, forthrightness, independence and bold temper characteristic of their age-group; and boast of lifelong service in the city's most venerable religious institutions.⁷ Because they work for a righteous cause, Aristophanes portrays both older women and wives as belonging to the respectable, perhaps even upper-class stratum of Athenian society, and he associates them with the city's most venerable religious cults, while the old men are clearly aligned with the vulgar strata of jurymen and popular politicians.⁸

Only Lysistrata is extraordinary. She is identified neither as a young housewife nor as an older woman. She is the master-strategist, commander and spokesman, while the other women are her agents. She understands and uses her helpers' talents but does not herself share in them; in fact she pointedly differentiates herself from the other women, especially the ludicrous young wives. She champions not only the interests of her own sex but also the traditional values of all Greeks male and female, and she possesses a degree of intelligence, will and eloquence that would have been considered extraordinary in a citizen of either sex. In her possession of the most admired attributes of power, wisdom and statesmanship, in her dual role as defender of home and of polis, in her acquaintance with both domestic and martial arts, in her panhellenic outlook, in her advocacy of internal solidarity, in her self-discipline and immunity to sexual temptation,⁹ in her appeal to young and old and in her close connection with the Akropolis, Lysistrata finds her closest analogue in Athena herself.

The Akropolis-cult of Athena Polias, patron-goddess and citadel-protectress of Athens, was the city's oldest and most revered religious institution. Its priestess, who served for life, came always from the ancient and aristocratic

family of the Eteoboutadai and had an official residence on the Akropolis, where she managed the cult and its female personnel, and where she discharged many ritual functions on behalf of the polis (including the guardianship of Athena's treasuries). Since Athena's temple on the Akropolis symbolized the ideal Athenian household, and her priestly personnel epitomized every household's female managers, the Polias priestess—the highest public position a woman could hold in Athens—was in effect the First Lady of the polis. She had a public visibility and authority unavailable to any other woman.¹⁰

In 411 the Polias priestess was Lysimache, who held office for sixty-four years and who appears to have been known, or thought, to be opposed to the war.¹¹ Since her name is very close to our heroine's (Lysimache means "Disbander of Battles," Lysistrata "Disbander of Armies")¹² and may be specifically alluded to in the play itself (in lines 572–73 Lysistrata says "all Greece will one day call us Disbanders of Battles [*Lysimachas*]"), it is not unlikely that Aristophanes intended to assimilate Lysistrata to Lysimache in order to invest his heroine with some of the priestess' authority, thus further strengthening her association with the goddess. We should not, however, imagine that Lysistrata represents Lysimache in any thoroughgoing way. The priestess, like the goddess, was but one associative element that went into the making of a unique heroine, who in the course of the play achieves a stature that no woman (Lysimache included) could ever actually have attained.¹³ That said, the apparent assimilation of a comic heroine to an actual woman who was prominent and respected in civic-religious life suggests that (at least in *Lysistrata*) Aristophanes represents the views not merely of the theatrical construct "women" but of real women.

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

(1) Dionysos' maenads ("mad women"), who desert their homes and live together in the wild, following the god. In myths like the one treated in Euripides' play *Bakchai*, produced six years after *Lysistrata*, the women and the god (disguised as a mortal) combat a king, whom they kill or expel after dressing him in women's clothing; the Magistrate in our play is an obvious analogue.¹⁴ Related to Dionysian maenadism proper were the many festivals of the

Agrionia/Agriana type, where the maidens and wives banded together in rebellion against the men during a ritual period of social dissolution.¹⁵

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

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

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

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

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

CHARACTERS

LYSISTRATA, *an Athenian woman*

KALONIKE, *Lysistrata's friend*

MYRRHINE, *an Athenian wife*

LAMPITO, *a Spartan wife*

MAGISTRATE, *one of the ten Probouloi*

OLD WOMEN (three), *allies of Lysistrata*

WIVES (four), *Lysistrata's conspirators*

KINESIAS, *Myrrhine's husband*

BABY, *son of Kinesias and Myrrhine*

SPARTAN HERALD

SPARTAN AMBASSADOR

ATHENIAN AMBASSADORS (two)

Mute Characters

ATHENIAN WOMEN

ISMENIA, *a Theban woman*

KORINTHIAN WOMAN

SPARTAN WOMEN

SKYTHIAN GIRL, *Lysistrata's slave*

MAGISTRATE'S SLAVES

SKYTHIAN POLICEMEN

OLD WOMEN, *allies of Lysistrata*

MANES, *Kinesias' slave*

SPARTAN DELEGATES

SPARTAN SLAVES, *with the Spartan delegation*

ATHENIAN DELEGATES

RECONCILIATION

DOORKEEPER

Chorus

OLD ATHENIAN MEN (twelve)

OLD ATHENIAN WOMEN (twelve)

PROLOGUE

SCENE: *A neighborhood street in Athens, after dawn. The stage-building has a large central door and two smaller, flanking doors. From one of these Lysistrata emerges and looks expectantly up and down the street.*

LYSISTRATA: Now if someone had invited the women to a revel for Bacchos,²¹ or to Pan's shrine,²² or to Genetyllis's at Kolias,²³ they'd be jamming the streets with their tambourines.²⁴ But now there's not a single woman here.²⁵ [*The far door opens.*] Except for my own neighbor there. Good morning, Kalonike.²⁶

KALONIKE: You too, Lysistrata.²⁷ What's bothering you? Don't frown, child.²⁸ Knitted brows are no good for your looks.

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

KALONIKE: And that we are, by Zeus!

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

KALONIKE: Honey, they'll be along. For wives to get out of the house is a lot of trouble,²⁹ you know: we've got to look after the husband or wake up a slave or put the baby to bed, or give it a bath or feed it a snack.

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

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

LYSISTRATA: Big!

KALONIKE: Not hard as well?

LYSISTRATA: It's big *and* hard, by Zeus.

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

LYSISTRATA: That's not what I meant! If it were, we'd all have shown up fast enough.³⁰ No, it's something I've been thinking hard *about*, kicking it around, night after sleepless night.

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

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

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

LYSISTRATA: It's true: our country's future depends on *us*: whether the Peloponnesians³¹ become extinct—

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

LYSISTRATA: and all the Boiotians get annihilated—

KALONIKE: Not *all* of them, though: please spare the eels!³²

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

KALONIKE: But what can mere *women* do that's intelligent or noble? We sit around the house looking pretty, wearing saffron dresses and make-up and Kimberic gowns³³ and canoe-sized slippers.³⁴

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

KALONIKE: How do you mean? I'm lost.

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

KALONIKE: Then, by the Two Goddesses,³⁵ I'd better get my party dress dyed saffron!

LYSISTRATA: nor hoist his shield—

KALONIKE: I'll wear a Kimberic gown!

LYSISTRATA: nor even pull a knife!

KALONIKE: I've got to buy some slippers!

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

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

LYSISTRATA: My friend, you'll see that they're typically Athenian: everything they do, they do too late. There isn't even a single woman here from the Paralia, nor from Salamis.³⁶

KALONIKE: Oh, them: I just *know* they've been up since dawn, straddling their mounts.³⁷

LYSISTRATA: And the women I reckoned would be here first, and counted on, the women from Acharnai, they're not here either.

KALONIKE: Well, Theogenes' wife, for one, was set to make a fast get-away. [*Groups of women begin to enter from both sides.*] But look, here come some of your women now!

LYSISTRATA: And here come some others, over there!

KALONIKE: Phew! Where are *they* from? 70

LYSISTRATA: From Dungstown.

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

MYRRHINE:³⁸ I hope we're not too late, Lysistrata. What do you say? Why don't you say something?

LYSISTRATA: Myrrhine, I've got no medal for anyone who shows up late for important business. 75

MYRRHINE: Look, I couldn't find my girdle;³⁹ it was dark. But now we're here, so tell us what's so important.

LYSISTRATA: No, let's wait a little while, until the women from Boiotia and the Peloponnesos come. 80

MYRRHINE: That's a much better plan. And look, there's Lampito⁴⁰ coming now!

[*Enter Lampito, accompanied by a group of other Spartan women, a Theban woman (Ismenia) and a Korinthian woman.*]⁴¹

LYSISTRATA: Greetings, my very dear Spartan Lampito! My darling, how dazzling is your beauty! What rosy cheeks, what firmness of physique! You could choke a bull!⁴² 85

LAMPITO:⁴³ Is true, I think, by Twain Gods.⁴⁴ Much exercise, much leaping to harden buttocks.

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

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

LYSISTRATA: And this other young lady here, where's *she* from? 90

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

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

KALONIKE: Yes indeed, her bush has been most elegantly pruned.⁴⁵

LYSISTRATA: And who's this other girl? 95

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

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

LAMPITO: Who convenes this assembly of women here?

LYSISTRATA: I'm the one.

LAMPITO: Then please to tell what you want of us. 100

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

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

KALONIKE: Ask away. 105

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

KALONIKE: My husband's been away five months, my dear, at the Thracian front; he's guarding Eukrates.⁴⁶

MYRRHINE: And *mine's* been at Pylos *seven* whole months. 110

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

KALONIKE: Even *lovers* have disappeared without a trace,⁴⁷ and ever since the Milesians revolted from us, I haven't even seen a six-inch dildo, which might have been a consolation, however small.⁴⁸ 115

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

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

MYRRHINE: And *I* think I would even cut myself in two like a flounder and donate half to the cause! 120

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

LYSISTRATA: Here goes then; no need to beat around the bush. Ladies, if we're going to force the men to make peace, we're going to have to give up— 125

KALONIKE: Give up what? Tell us.

LYSISTRATA: You'll do it, then?

KALONIKE: We'll do it, even if it means our death!

LYSISTRATA: All right. We're going to have to give up—cock.⁴⁹ Why are you turning away from me? Where are you going? Why are you all pursing your lips and shaking your heads? What means thine altered color and tearful droppings? Will you do it or not? What are you waiting for?⁵⁰ 130

KALONIKE: Count me out; let the war drag on. 135

MYRRHINE: Me too, by Zeus; let the war drag on.

LYSISTRATA: This from you, Ms. Flounder? Weren't you saying just a moment ago that you'd cut yourself in half?

KALONIKE: Anything else you want, anything at all! I'm even ready to walk through fire; *that* rather than give up cock. There's nothing like it, Lysistrata dear. 140

LYSISTRATA: And what about you?

WOMAN: I'm ready to walk through fire too.

LYSISTRATA: Oh what a low and horny race are we! No wonder men write tragedies about us: we're nothing but Poseidon and a bucket.⁵¹ Dear Spartan, if you alone would side with me we might still salvage the plan; give me your vote! 145

LAMPITO: By Twain Gods, is difficult for females to sleep alone without the hard-on. But anyway, I assent; is need for peace.

LYSISTRATA: You're an absolute dear, and the only real woman here!⁵² 150

KALONIKE: Well, what if we *did* abstain from, uh, what you say, which heaven forbid: would peace be likelier to come on account of *that*?

LYSISTRATA: Absolutely, by the Two Goddesses. If we sat around at home all made up, and walked past them wearing only our see-through underwear and with our pubes plucked in a neat triangle, and our husbands got hard and hankered to ball us, but we didn't go near them and kept away, they'd sue for peace, and pretty quick, you can count on that! 155

LAMPITO: Like Menelaos! Soon as he peek at Helen's bare melons, he throw his sword away, I think.⁵³ 160

KALONIKE: But what if our husbands pay us no attention?

LYSISTRATA: As Pherekrates said, skin the skinned dog.⁵⁴

KALONIKE: Facsimiles are nothing but poppy-cock. And what if they grab us and drag us into the bedroom by force?⁵⁵

LYSISTRATA: Hold onto the door. 165

KALONIKE: And what if they beat us up?

LYSISTRATA: Submit, but disagreeably: men get no pleasure in sex when they have to force you.⁵⁶ And make them suffer in other ways as well. Don't worry, they'll soon give in. No husband can have a happy life if his wife doesn't want him to. 170

KALONIKE: Well, if the two of you agree to this, then we agree as well.

LAMPITO: And we shall bring *our* menfolk round to making everyway fair and honest peace. But how do you keep Athenian rabble from acting like lunatics?⁵⁷

LYSISTRATA: Don't worry, we'll handle the persuasion on *our* side. 175

LAMPITO: Not so, as long as your battleships are afoot and your Goddess' temple⁵⁸ have bottomless fund of money.

LYSISTRATA: In fact, that's also been well provided for: we're going to occupy the Akropolis this very day. The older women⁵⁹ are assigned that part: while we're working out our agreement down here, they'll occupy the Akropolis, pretending to be up there for a sacrifice. 180

LAMPITO: Sounds perfect, like rest of your proposals.

LYSISTRATA: Then why not ratify them immediately by taking an oath, Lampito, so that the terms will be binding?⁶⁰

LAMPITO: Reveal an oath, then, and we all swear to it. 185

LYSISTRATA: Well said. Where's the Skythian girl?⁶¹ [*A slave-girl comes out of the stage-building with a shield.*] What are you gawking at? Put that shield down in front of us—no, the other way—and someone give me the severings.

KALONIKE: Lysistrata, what kind of oath are you planning to make us swear? 190

LYSISTRATA: What kind? The kind they say Aischylos once had people swear: slaughtering an animal over a shield.⁶²

KALONIKE: Lysistrata, you don't take an oath about peace over a shield!

LYSISTRATA: Then what kind of oath will it be? 195

KALONIKE: What if we got a white stallion somewhere and cut a piece off
him?⁶³

LYSISTRATA: White stallion? Get serious.

KALONIKE: Well, how *are* we going to swear the oath?

LYSISTRATA: By Zeus, if you'd like to know, I can tell you. We put a big
black wine-bowl hollow-up right here, we slaughter a magnum of 200
Thasian wine into it, and we swear not to pour any water into the bowl!⁶⁴

LAMPITO: Oh da, I cannot find words to praise that oath!

LYSISTRATA: Somebody go inside and fetch a bowl and a magnum. [*The
slave-girl takes the shield inside and returns with a large wine-bowl
and a large cup.*]

MYRRHINE: Dearest ladies, what a conglomeration of pottery! 205

KALONIKE [*Grabbing at the bowl*]: Just touching this could make a per-
son glad!

LYSISTRATA: Put it down! And join me in laying hands upon this boar.
[*All the women put a hand on the magnum.*] Mistress Persuasion and
Bowl of Fellowship, graciously receive this sacrifice from the women. 210
[*She opens the magnum and pours wine into the bowl.*]

KALONIKE: The blood's a good color and spurts out nicely.

LAMPITO: It smell good too, By Kastor!

MYRRHINE: Ladies, let me be the first to take the oath!

KALONIKE: Hold on, by Aphrodite! Not unless you draw the first lot!⁶⁵

LYSISTRATA: *All* of you lay your hands upon the bowl; you too Lampito. 215
Now one of you, on behalf of you all, must repeat after me the terms
of the oath, and the rest of you will then swear to abide by them. No
man of any kind, lover or husband—

KALONIKE: No man of any kind, lover or husband—

LYSISTRATA: shall approach me with a hard-on. I can't hear you! 220

KALONIKE: shall approach me with a hard-on. Oh god, my knees are
buckling, Lysistrata!

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

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

LYSISTRATA: wearing a party-dress and makeup— 225

KALONIKE: wearing a party-dress and makeup—

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

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

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

KALONIKE: but never willingly shall I surrender to my husband. 230

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

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

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

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

LYSISTRATA: I will not raise my oriental slippers toward the ceiling. 235

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

LYSISTRATA: I won't crouch down like the lioness on a cheese grater.⁶⁶

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

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

KALONIKE: If I live up to these vows, may I drink from this bowl. 240

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

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

LYSISTRATA: So swear you one and all?

ALL: So swear we all!

LYSISTRATA: All right, then, I'll consecrate the bowl. [*She takes a long
drink.*] 245

KALONIKE: Only your share, my friend; lets make sure we're all on
friendly terms right from the start.⁶⁷

[*After they drink, a women's joyful cry is heard offstage.*]

LAMPITO: What's that hurrah?⁶⁸

LYSISTRATA: It's just what I was telling you before: the women have
occupied the Akropolis and the Goddess' temple. Now, Lampito: you 250

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

KALONIKE: But don't you think the men will launch a concerted attack on us, and very soon? 255

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

KALONIKE: No they can't, by Aphrodite!⁶⁹ Otherwise we women wouldn't deserve to be called rascals you can't win a fight with! 260

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

PARODOS

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

MEN'S LEADER: Onward, Drakes,⁷⁰ lead the way, even if your shoulder is sore; you've got to keep toting that load of green olivewood, no matter how heavy it is.

MEN: (*strophe*).
If you live long enough you'll get many surprises, yes sir!
Strymodoros: who in the world ever thought we'd hear 265
that women, the very creatures we've kept in our homes,
an obvious nuisance, now control the Sacred Image⁷¹
and occupy *my* Akropolis, and not only that,
they've locked the citadel gates with bolts and bars!⁷²

MEN'S LEADER: Let's hurry to the Akropolis, Philourgos, full speed 270
ahead, so we can lay these logs in a circle all around them, around all
the women who have instigated or abetted this business! We'll erect a
single pyre and condemn them all with a single vote, then throw them
on top with our own hands, starting with Lykon's wife!⁷³

MEN: (*antistrophe*)
By Demeter, while I still live they'll never laugh at me!
Not even Kleomenes,⁷⁴ the first to occupy this place, 275
left here intact. No, for all he breathed the Spartan spirit,

he left without his weapons—surrendered to *me!*⁷⁵—
with only a little bitty jacket on his back, starving,
filthy, unshaven and unwashed for six whole years. 280

MEN'S LEADER: That's the way I laid siege to *that* fellow—savagely! We
kept watch on these gates in ranks seventeen deep. So: am I to stand
by *now* and do nothing to put down the effrontery of these *women*,
enemies of all the gods and of Euripides?⁷⁶ If so, take down my trophy
that stands at Marathon!⁷⁷ 285

MEN: (*strophe*)
I'm almost at the end of my trek;
all that remains is the steep stretch
up to the Akropolis; can't wait to get there!
How in the world are we going to haul
these loads up there without a donkey? 290
This pair of logs is utterly crushing my shoulder!
But I've got to soldier on,
and keep my fire alight.

It mustn't go out on me before I've reached my goal.
[*They blow into their buckets of coals.*]
Ouch, ugh! The smoke! 295

(*antistrophe*)
How terribly, Lord Heraldes, this smoke
jumped from the bucket and attacked me!
It bit both my eyes like a rabid bitch!
And as for this fire, it's Lemnian⁷⁸
in every possible way; otherwise 300
it wouldn't have buried its teeth in my eyeballs that way!
Hurry forth to the citadel,
run to the Goddess' rescue!
If this isn't the time to help her, Laches, when will that time be?
[*They blow on their buckets of coals again.*]
Ouch, ugh! The smoke! 305

MEN'S LEADER: Praise the gods, this fire's awake and plenty lively too.
Let's place our logs right here, then dip our torches into the buckets,
and when they're lighted we'll charge the gates like rams. If the
women don't unbolt the gates when we invite their surrender, we'll set
the portals afire and smoke them into submission. Very well, let's put 310
the logs down. Phew, that smoke! Damn! Would any of the generals at
Samos care to help us with this wood? [*He laboriously wrestles his pair*

of logs to the ground.] They've finally stopped crushing my back! Now it's your job, bucket, to rouse your coals to flame and thus supply me, first of all, with a lighted torch! Lady Victory,⁷⁹ be our ally, help us win a trophy over the women on the Akropolis and their present audacity! 315

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

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

WOMEN: (*strophe*)

Fly, fly, Nikodike,⁸⁰
before Kalyke and Kritylla are incinerated,
blown from all directions 320
by nasty winds and old men who mean death!
I'm filled with dread: am I too late to help?
I've just come from the well with my pitcher;⁸¹
it was hard to fill by the light of dawn,
in the throng and crash and clatter of pots,
fighting the elbows of housemaids and branded slaves.⁸² 325
I hoisted it onto my head with zeal, and carry the water here
to assist the women, my fellow citizens faced with burning.

(*antistrophe*)

I've heard that some frantic old men 330
are on the loose with three talents⁸³ of logs,
like furnace-men at the public bathhouse.
They're coming to the Akropolis, screaming
the direst threats, that they mean to use their fire
"to turn these abominable women into charcoal." 335
Goddess, may I never see these women in flames;
instead let them rescue Greece and her citizens from war and madness!
O golden-crested Guardian of the citadel, that is why
they occupy your shrine. I invite thee to be our ally, Tritogeneia,⁸⁴ 340
defending it with water, should any man set it afire.

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

MEN'S LEADER: This here's a complication we didn't count on facing:
this swarm of women outside the gates is here to help the others! 345

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

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

WOMEN'S LEADER: Let's ground our pitchers then; if anyone attacks us they won't get in our way. 350

MEN'S LEADER: By Zeus, if someone had socked them in the mouth a couple of times, like Boupalos,⁸⁵ they wouldn't still be talking!

WOMEN'S LEADER: OK, here's my mouth; someone take a sock at it; I'll stand here and take it. But then I'm the bitch who gets to grab you by the balls! 355

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

WOMEN'S LEADER: Come over here and just touch Stratyllis with the tip of your finger. 360

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

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

MEN'S LEADER: There isn't a wiser poet than Euripides: no beast exists so shameless as women!⁸⁶ 365

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

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

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

MEN'S LEADER: *I'm* here to build a pyre and burn up your friends. 370

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

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

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

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

WOMEN'S LEADER: Got any soap with you? I'll give you a bath. 375

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

WOMEN'S LEADER: A bath fit for a bridegroom!

MEN'S LEADER: What insolence!

WOMEN'S LEADER: I'm a free woman!⁸⁷

MEN'S LEADER: I'll put a stop to your bellowing.

WOMEN'S LEADER: You're not on a jury now, you know.⁸⁸

MEN'S LEADER: Torch her hair! [*The men advance.*]

WOMEN'S LEADER: Acheloos, do your thing!⁸⁹ [*The women douse them.*]

MEN'S LEADER: Oh! Damn!

WOMEN'S LEADER: It wasn't too hot, was it?

MEN'S LEADER: Hot? Stop it! What do you think you're doing?

WOMEN'S LEADER: I'm watering you, so you'll bloom.

MEN'S LEADER: But I'm already dried out from shivering!

WOMEN'S LEADER: You've got fire there; why not sit by it and get warm?

EPISODE

[*Enter the Magistrate, an irascible old man, accompanied by two slaves carrying crowbars and four Skythian⁹⁰ policemen.*]

MAGISTRATE:⁹¹ So the women's depravity bursts into flame again: beating drums, chanting "Sabazios!",⁹² worshipping Adonis on the rooftops.⁹³ I heard it all once-before while sitting in Assembly. Demonstratos (bad luck to him!) was moving that we send an armada to Sicily,⁹⁴ while his wife was dancing and yelling "Poor young Adonis!"⁹⁵ Then Demonstratos⁹⁶ moved that we sign up some Zakynthian infantry, but his wife up on the roof was getting drunk and going "Beat your breast for Adonis!" But he just went on making his motions, that godforsaken, disgusting Baron Bluster! From women, I say, you get this kind of riotous extravagance!⁹⁷

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

MAGISTRATE: By the salty sea-god it serves us right! When we ourselves are accomplices in our wives' misbehavior and teach them profligacy, these are the sort of schemes they bring to flower! Aren't *we* the ones who go to the shops and say stuff like, "Goldsmith, about that necklace you made me: my wife was having a ball the other night, and now the prong's slipped out of its hole. Me, I've got to cruise over to Salamis."⁹⁸

So if you've got time, by all means visit her in the evening and fit a prong in her hole." Another husband says this to a teenage shoemaker with a very grown-up cock, "Shoemaker, my wife's pinky-toe hurts. It seems the top-strap is cramping the bottom, where she's tender. So why don't you drop in on her some lunchtime and loosen it up so there's more play down there?" That's the sort of thing that's led to *this*, when I, a Magistrate, have lined up timber for oars and now come to get the necessary funds, and find myself standing at the gate, locked out by women! But I'm not going to stand around. [*To the two slaves*] Bring the crowbars; I'll put a stop to their arrogance. What are *you* gaping at, you sorry fool? And where are *you* staring? I said crowbar, not winebar!⁹⁹ Come on, put those crowbars under the gates and start jimmying on that side; I'll help out on this side.

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

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

LYSISTRATA: If he so much as touches me with his fingertip, by Artemis¹⁰⁰ he'll go home crying, public servant or not! [*The policeman retreats.*]

MAGISTRATE: What, are you scared? [*To a second policeman*] You there, help him out; grab her around the waist and tie her up, on the double! [*A large old woman emerges from the gates.*]

FIRST OLD WOMAN: If you so much as lay a hand on her, by Pandrosos¹⁰¹ I'll beat the shit out of you! [*Both policemen retreat.*]

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

[*A second old woman emerges from the gates.*]

SECOND OLD WOMAN: If you raise your fingertip to her, by our Lady of Light¹⁰² you'll be begging for an eye-cup! [*The third archer retreats.*]

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

[*A third old woman emerges from the gates.*]

THIRD OLD WOMAN: If you come near her, by Eastern Artemis I'll rip out your hair till it screams! [*The fourth policeman retreats.*]

MAGISTRATE: What a terrible setback! I'm out of policemen. But men must never, ever be worsted by women! Skythians, let's charge them *en masse*; form up ranks! 445

[*The four policemen prepare to charge.*]

LYSISTRATA: By the Two Goddesses, you'll soon discover that we also have four squadrons of fully armed combat-women,¹⁰³ waiting inside!

MAGISTRATE: Skythians, twist their arms behind their backs!

[*The policemen advance.*]

LYSISTRATA [*Calling into the Akropolis like a military commander*]:
Women of the reserve, come out double-time! Forward, you spawn of the marketplace,¹⁰⁴ you soup and vegetable mongers! Forward, you landladies, you hawkers of garlic and bread! [*Four squadrons of tough old market-women rush out of the Akropolis and, together with the women already onstage, attack the four policemen.*] Tackle them! Hit them! Smash them! Call them names, the nastier the better! [*The policemen run away howling.*] That's enough! Withdraw! Don't strip the bodies! 450

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

MAGISTRATE: Terrible! What a calamity for my men!

LYSISTRATA: Well, what did you expect? Did you think you were going up against a bunch of slave-girls? Or did you think women lack gall? 460

MAGISTRATE: They've got it aplenty, by Apollo, provided there's a wine-shop nearby.

MEN'S LEADER: You've little to show for all your talk, Magistrate of this country! What's the point of fighting a battle of words with these beasts? Don't you comprehend the kind of bath they've given us just now—when we were still in our clothes, and without soap to boot? 465

WOMEN'S LEADER: Well, sir, you shouldn't lift your hand against your neighbors just anytime you feel like it. If you do, you're going to end up with a black eye. I'd rather be sitting at home like a virtuous maiden, making no trouble for anyone here, stirring not a single blade of grass. But if anyone annoys me and rifles my nest, they'll find a wasp inside! 470

ONSTAGE DEBATE

MEN: (*strophe*)

Zeus, how in the world are we going to deal with these monsters? They've gone beyond what I can bear! Now it's time for a trial: together let's find out 475
what they thought they were doing
when they occupied Kranaos' citadel¹⁰⁵
and the great crag of the Akropolis,
a restricted, holy place.

MEN'S LEADER: Question her and don't give in; cross-examine what she says. It's scandalous to let this sort of behavior go unchallenged.¹⁰⁶ 480

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

LYSISTRATA: To keep the money safe and to keep *you* from using it to finance the war. 485

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

LYSISTRATA: Yes, and the money's why everything else got messed up too. Peisandros¹⁰⁷ and the others aiming to hold office were always fomenting some kind of commotion so that they'd be able to steal it. So let them keep fomenting to their hearts' content: they'll be withdrawing no more money from *this* place. 490

MAGISTRATE: But what do you plan to do?

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

MAGISTRATE: *You'll* manage the money?

LYSISTRATA: What's so strange in that? Don't we manage the household finances for you already?¹⁰⁸ 495

MAGISTRATE: That's different!

LYSISTRATA: How so?

MAGISTRATE: These are *war* funds!

LYSISTRATA: But there shouldn't even *be* a war. 500

MAGISTRATE: How else are we to protect ourselves?

LYSISTRATA: We'll protect you.

MAGISTRATE: *You?*

LYSISTRATA: Yes, us.

MAGISTRATE: What brass! 505

LYSISTRATA: You'll be protected whether you like it or not!

MAGISTRATE: You're going too far!

LYSISTRATA: Angry, are you? We've got to do it anyway.

MAGISTRATE: By Demeter,¹⁰⁹ you've got no right!

LYSISTRATA: You must be saved, dear fellow. 510

MAGISTRATE: Even if I don't ask to be?

LYSISTRATA: All the more so!

MAGISTRATE: And where do *you* get off taking an interest in war and peace?

LYSISTRATA: We'll tell you. 515

MAGISTRATE: Well, make it snappy, unless you want to get hurt.

LYSISTRATA: Listen then, and try to control your fists.

MAGISTRATE: I can't; I'm so angry I can't keep my hands to myself.¹¹⁰

FIRST OLD WOMAN: Then *you're* the one'll get hurt!

MAGISTRATE: Croak those curses at yourself, old bag! [*To Lysistrata*] 520
Start talking.

LYSISTRATA: Gladly.¹¹¹ All along, being proper women, we used to suffer in silence no matter what you men did, because you wouldn't let us make a sound. But you weren't exactly all we could ask for. No, we knew only too well what you were up to, and too many times we'd hear in our homes about a bad decision you'd made on some great issue of state. Then, masking the pain in our hearts, we'd put on a smile and ask you, "How did the Assembly go today? Any decision about a rider to the peace treaty?" And my husband would say, "What's that to you? Shut up!" And I'd shut up. 525
530

FIRST OLD WOMAN: I wouldn't have shut up!

MAGISTRATE: If you hadn't shut up you'd have got a beating!

LYSISTRATA: Well, that's why I *did* shut up. Later on we began to hear about even worse decisions you'd made, and then we would ask, "Husband, how come you're handling this so stupidly?" And right away he'd glare at me and tell me to get back to my sewing if I didn't want major damage to my head: "War shall be the business of menfolk," unquote.¹¹² 535

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

LYSISTRATA: How could he be right, you sorry fool, when we were forbidden to offer advice even when your policy was *wrong*? But *then*—when we began to hear you in the streets openly crying, "There isn't a man left in the land," and someone else saying, "No, by Zeus, not a one"—after *that* we women decided to lose no more time and to band together to save Greece. What was the point of waiting any longer? So, if you're ready to take your turn at listening, we have some good advice, and if you shut up, as we used to, we can put you back on the right track. 540
545

MAGISTRATE: *You* put *us*—outrageous! I won't stand for it!

LYSISTRATA: Shut up!

MAGISTRATE: *Me* shut up for *you*? A damned woman, with a veil on your face too?¹¹³ I'd rather die! 550

LYSISTRATA: If the veil's an obstacle, here, take mine, it's yours, put it on *your* face [*she removes her veil and puts it on the Magistrate's head*], and *then* shut up!

FIRST OLD WOMAN: And take this sewing-basket too. 555

LYSISTRATA: Now hitch up your clothes and start sewing; chew some beans while you work.¹¹⁴ War shall be the business of womenfolk!¹¹⁵

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

WOMEN: (*antistrophe*)

Oh yes! I'll dance with unflagging energy;
the effort won't weary my knees. 560
I'm ready to face anything
with women courageous as these:
they've got character, charm and guts,
they've got intelligence and heart 565
that's both patriotic and smart!¹¹⁶

WOMEN'S LEADER: Now, most valiant of prickly mommies and spikey grannies,¹¹⁷ attack furiously and don't let up: you're still running with the wind!

LYSISTRATA: If Eros of the sweet soul and Cyprian Aphrodite imbue our thighs and breasts with desire, and infect the men with sensuous rigidity and club-cock, then I believe all Greece will one day call us Disbanders of Battles.¹¹⁸ 570

MAGISTRATE: What's your plan?

LYSISTRATA: First of all, we can stop people going to the market fully armed and acting crazy. 575

FIRST OLD WOMAN: Paphian Aphrodite be praised!

LYSISTRATA: At this very moment, all around the market, in the pottery shops and the grocery stalls, they're walking around in arms like Korybantes!¹¹⁹ 580

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

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

FIRST OLD WOMAN: Yes, by Zeus, I saw a long-haired fellow,¹²⁰ a cavalry captain, on horseback, getting porridge from an old women and sticking it into his brass hat. Another one, a Thracian, was shaking his shield and spear like Tereus;¹²¹ he scared the fig-lady out of her wits and gulped down all the ripe ones! 585

MAGISTRATE: So how will you women be able to put a stop to such a complicated international mess, and sort it all out? 590

LYSISTRATA: Very easily.

MAGISTRATE: How? Show me.

[*Lysistrata uses the contents of the basket which the Magistrate was given to illustrate her demonstration.*]¹²²

LYSISTRATA: It's rather like a ball of yarn when it gets tangled up. We hold it this way, and carefully wind out the strands on our spindles, not this way, now that way. That's how we'll wind up this war, if allowed, unsnarling it by sending embassies, now this way, now that way. 595

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

LYSISTRATA: I do think so, and if *you* had any brains you'd handle *all* the polis' business the way we handle our wool!¹²³ 600

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

LYSISTRATA: Imagine the polis as fleece just shorn. First, put it in a bath and wash out all the sheep-dung; spread it on a pallet and beat out the riff-raff with a stick and pluck out the thorns; as for those who clump and knot themselves together to snag government positions, card them out and pluck off their heads.¹²⁴ Next, card the wool into a basket of unity and goodwill, mixing in everyone. The resident aliens and any other foreigner who's your friend, and anyone who owes money to the 605

people's treasury, mix them in there too. And by Zeus, don't forget the cities that are colonies of this land: they're like flocks of your fleece, each one separated from the others. So take all these flocks and bring them together here, joining them all and making one big bobbin. And from this weave a fine new cloak for the people! 610

MAGISTRATE: Isn't it awful how these women go like this with their sticks and like this with their bobbins, when they share none of the war's burdens! 615

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

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

LYSISTRATA: Then, when we ought to be having fun and enjoying our bloom of youth, we sleep alone because of the campaigns. And to say no more about *our* case,¹²⁶ it pains me to think of the maidens growing old in their rooms.¹²⁷ 620

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

LYSISTRATA: That's quite a different story. When a man comes home he can quickly find a girl to marry, even if he's a greybeard. But a woman's prime is brief; if she doesn't seize it no one wants to marry her, and she sits at home looking for good omens.¹²⁸ 625

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

LYSISTRATA: Why don't you just drop dead? Here's a grave-site; buy a coffin; I'll start kneading you a honeycake.¹³⁰ [*Taking off her garland.*] Use these as a wreath. 630

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

SECOND OLD WOMAN: And this garland from me.

LYSISTRATA: All set? Need anything else? Get on the boat, then. Charon is calling your name and you're holding him up!¹³¹ 635

MAGISTRATE: Isn't it shocking that I'm being treated like this?¹³² By Zeus, I'm going straight to the other magistrates to display myself just as I am!

LYSISTRATA [*As Magistrate exits with his slaves*]: I hope you won't complain about the funeral we gave you. I tell you what: the day after tomorrow, first thing in the morning, we'll perform the third-day offerings at your grave! [*The women exit into the Akropolis.*] 640

CHORAL DEBATE

MEN'S LEADER: No free man should be asleep now! Let's strip for
action, men, and meet this emergency! [*The men remove their jackets.*] 645

MEN: (*strophe a*)

I think I smell much bigger trouble in this,
a definite whiff of Hippias' tyranny!¹³³
I'm terrified that certain men from Sparta
have gathered at the house of Kleisthenes¹³⁴
and scheme to stir up our godforsaken women
to seize the Treasury and my jury-pay,
my very livelihood.¹³⁵ 650

MEN'S LEADER: It's shocking, you know, that they're lecturing the citi-
zens now, and running their mouths—mere women!—about brazen
shields. And to top it all off they're trying to make peace between us
and the men of Sparta, who are no more trustworthy than a starving
wolf. Actually, this plot they weave against us, gentlemen, aims at
tyranny! Well, they'll never tyrannize over *me*: from now on I'll be on
my guard, I'll "carry my sword in a myrtle-branch"¹³⁶ and go to market
fully armed right up beside Aristogeiton.¹³⁷ I'll stand beside him like
this [*assuming the posture of Aristogeiton's statue*]: that way I'll be
ready to smack this godforsaken old hag right in the jaw! [*He advances
on the Women's Leader with fist raised.*] 660

WOMEN'S LEADER: Just try it, and your own mommy won't recognize
you when you get home! Come on, fellow hags, let's start by putting
our jackets on the ground. [*The women remove their jackets.*] 665

WOMEN: (*antistrophe a*)

Citizens of Athens, we want to start
by offering the polis some good advice,
and rightly, for she raised me in splendid luxury.¹³⁸
As soon as I turned seven I was an Arrephoros;¹³⁹
then I was a Grinder;¹⁴⁰ when I was ten I shed
my saffron robe for the Foundress¹⁴¹ at the Brauronia.¹⁴²
And once, when I was a beautiful girl, I carried the Basket,
wearing a necklace of dried figs.¹⁴³ 670

WOMEN'S LEADER: Thus I *owe* it to the polis to offer some good advice. 675
And even if I *was* born a woman, don't hold it against me if I manage to
suggest something better than what we've got now. I have a stake in our
community: my contribution is *men*. You miserable geezers have *no*
stake, since you've squandered your paternal inheritance, won in the

Persian Wars, and now pay no taxes in return. On the contrary, we're all
headed for bankruptcy on account of you! Have you anything to grunt
in rebuttal? Any more trouble from you and I'll clobber you with this
rawhide boot right in the jaw! [*She raises her foot at the Men's Leader.*] 680

MEN: (*strophe b*)

This behavior of theirs amounts to extreme hubris,¹⁴⁴
and I do believe it's getting aggravated. 685
No man with any balls can let it pass.

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

MEN:

Come on, Whitefeet!¹⁴⁶
We went against Leipsydriion¹⁴⁷
when we still were something; 690
now we've got to rejuvenate, grow wings
all over, shake off these old skins of ours!

MEN'S LEADER:¹⁴⁸ If any man among us gives these women the tiniest
thing to grab on to, there's no limit to what their nimble hands will do. 695
Why, they'll even be building frigates and launching naval attacks,
cruising against us like Artemisia.¹⁴⁹ And if they turn to horsemanship,
you can scratch our cavalry: there's nothing like a woman when it
comes to mounting and riding; even riding hard she won't slip off.¹⁵⁰
Just look at the Amazons in Mikon's painting, riding chargers in battle
against men.¹⁵¹ Our duty is clear: grab each woman's neck and lock it in
the wooden stocks! [*He moves toward the Women's Leader.*] 700

WOMEN: (*antistrophe b*)

By the Two Goddesses, if you fire me up
I'll come at you like a wild sow and clip you bare,
and this very day you'll go bleating to your friends for help! 705

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

WOMEN:

All right now, someone attack me!
He'll eat no more garlic
and chew no more beans. 710
If you so much as curse at me, I boil over with such rage,
I'll be the beetle-midwife to your eagle's eggs.¹⁵³

WOMEN'S LEADER: You men don't worry me a bit, not while my Lampito's around and my Ismenia, the noble Theban girl. You'll have no power to do anything about us, not even if you pass seven decrees: that's how much everyone hates you, you good-for-nothing, and especially our neighbors. Why, just yesterday I threw a party for the girls in honor of Hekate,¹⁵⁴ and I invited my friend from next door, a fine girl who's very special to me: an eel from Boiotia.¹⁵⁵ But they said she couldn't come because of *your* decrees. And you'll *never* stop passing these decrees until someone grabs you by the leg and throws you away and breaks your neck! [*She makes a grab for the Men's Leader's leg.*]

EPISODE

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

WOMEN'S LEADER:¹⁵⁶

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

LYSISTRATA:

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

WOMEN'S LEADER:

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

LYSISTRATA:

'Tis true, too true!

WOMEN'S LEADER:

What dire thing? Pray tell it to thy friends.

LYSISTRATA:

'Twere shame to say and grief to leave unsaid.

WOMEN'S LEADER:

Hide not from me the damage we have taken.

LYSISTRATA:

The story in briefest compass: we need to fuck!¹⁵⁷

WOMEN'S LEADER:

Ah, Zeus!

LYSISTRATA:

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

over there by Pan's Grotto,¹⁵⁸ digging at her hole, and another was trying to escape by clambering down a pulley-cable. And yesterday another one mounted a sparrow¹⁵⁹ and was about to fly off to Orsilochos' house¹⁶⁰ when I pulled her off by her hair. They're coming up with every kind of excuse to go home. [*A wife comes out of the Akropolis, looks around, and begins to run offstage.*] Hey you! What's your hurry?

FIRST WIFE: I want to go home. I've got some Milesian wool in the house, and the moths are chomping it all up.

LYSISTRATA: Moths! Get back inside.

FIRST WIFE: By the Two Goddesses, I'll be right back; just let me spread it on the bed!

LYSISTRATA: You won't be spreading anything, nor be going anywhere.

FIRST WIFE: So I'm supposed to let my wool go to waste?

LYSISTRATA: If that's what it takes. [*As the first wife walks back toward Lysistrata a second runs out of the Akropolis.*]

SECOND WIFE: Oh my god, my god, the flax! I forgot to shuck it when I left the house!

LYSISTRATA: Here's another one off to shuck her flax. March right back here.

SECOND WIFE: By our Lady of Light, I'll be back in a flash; just let me do a little shucking.

LYSISTRATA: No! No shucking! If *you* start doing it, some other wife will want to do the same. [*While the second wife walks back toward Lysistrata a third runs out of the Akropolis, holding her bulging belly.*]

THIRD WIFE: O Lady of Childbirth, hold back the baby till I can get to a more profane spot!¹⁶¹

LYSISTRATA: What are you raving about?

THIRD WIFE: I'm about to deliver a child!

LYSISTRATA: But you weren't pregnant yesterday.

THIRD WIFE: But today I am. Please, Lysistrata, send me home to the midwife, and right away!

LYSISTRATA: What's the story? [*She feels the wife's belly.*] What's this? It's hard.

THIRD WIFE: It's a boy.

LYSISTRATA [*knocking on it*]: By Aphrodite, it's obvious you've got something metallic and hollow in there. Let's have a look. [*She lifts up the wife's dress, exposing a large bronze helmet.*] Ridiculous girl! You're big with the sacred helmet, not with child!¹⁶² 770

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

LYSISTRATA: Then what were you doing with this?

THIRD WIFE: Well, if I began to deliver here in the citadel, I could get into the helmet and have my baby there, like a pigeon. 775

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

THIRD WIFE: But I can't even *sleep* on the Akropolis, ever since I saw the snake that guards the temple. 780

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

LYSISTRATA: You nutty girls, enough of your horror stories! I guess you do miss your husbands; but do you think they don't miss *you*? They're spending some very rough nights, I assure you. Just be patient, good ladies, and put up with this, just a little bit longer. There's an oracle predicting victory for us, *if* we stick together. Here's the oracle right here. [*She produces a scroll.*]¹⁶³ 785

THIRD WIFE: Tell us what it says.

LYSISTRATA: Be quiet, then. 790
Yea, when the swallows hole up in a single home, fleeing the hoopoes¹⁶⁴ and leaving the penis alone, then are their problems solved, what's high is low: so says high-thundering Zeus—

THIRD WIFE: You mean *we'll* be lying on top? 795

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

THIRD WIFE: A pretty explicit oracle. Ye gods! 800

LYSISTRATA: So let's hear no more talk of caving in. Let's go inside. Dear comrades, it would be a real shame if we betray the oracle. [*All enter the Akropolis.*]

CHORAL SONGS

MEN: (strophe)

I want to tell you all a tale
that once I heard when but a lad.
In olden times there lived a young man, 805
his name was Melanion.¹⁶⁵
He fled from marriage until
he got to the wilderness.
And he lived in the mountains
and he had a dog, 810
and he wove traps and hunted rabbits,
but never went home again
because of his hatred.
That's how much *he* loathed women.
And, being wise, *we* loathe them just 815
as much as Melanion did.

MEN'S LEADER: How about a kiss, old bag?

WOMEN'S LEADER: Try it, and you've eaten your last onion!

MEN'S LEADER: How about I haul off and kick you? [*He kicks up his leg.*]

WOMEN'S LEADER [*laughing*]: That's quite a bush you've got down there! 820

MEN'S LEADER:

Well, Myronides too was rough down there,
and hairy-assed to all his enemies;
so too was Phormion.¹⁶⁶

WOMEN: (*antistrophe*)

I also want to tell you all a tale,
a reply to your Melanion. 825
There once was a drifter named Timon,¹⁶⁷
who fenced himself off with impregnable thorns,
as implacable as a Fury.
So this Timon too
left home because of his hatred 830
<and lived in the mountains,>
constantly cursing and railing
against the wickedness of men.
That's how much *he* loathed *you*,
wicked men, ever and always. 835
But he was a dear friend to women.

WOMEN'S LEADER: How would you like a punch in the mouth?

MEN'S LEADER: No way! You're really scaring me!

WOMEN'S LEADER: Then how about a good swift kick?

MEN'S LEADER: If you do you'll be flashing your twat!

840

WOMEN'S LEADER:

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

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

EPISODE

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

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

845

[Myrrhine and several other wives join Lysistrata.]

WIFE: What is it? What's all the shouting?

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

850

WIFE: Where is he, whoever he is?

LYSISTRATA: He's by Chloe's shrine.

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

LYSISTRATA: Take a good look. Anyone recognize him?

MYRRHINE: Oh God, I do. He's my own husband Kinesias!

855

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

MYRRHINE: Don't you worry, I'll do it!

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

860

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

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

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

865

KINESIAS: Me.

LYSISTRATA: A man?

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

LYSISTRATA: In that case please depart.

KINESIAS: And who are *you* to throw me out?

870

LYSISTRATA: The daytime guard.

KINESIAS: Then in the gods' name call Myrrhine out here to me.

LYSISTRATA: Listen to him, "call Myrrhine"! And who might *you* be?

KINESIAS: Her husband, Kinesias, from Paionidai.¹⁷⁰

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

875

KINESIAS: Oh gods!

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

880

KINESIAS: Come on now, call her out!

LYSISTRATA: Well? Got anything for me?

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

885

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

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

890

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

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

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

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

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

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

MYRRHINE: I'm leaving.

KINESIAS: No, wait! At least listen to the baby! [*He grabs the baby from the slave and holds it up towards Myrrhine.*] Come on you, yell for mommy! 900

BABY: Mommy! Mommy! Mommy!

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

MYRRHINE: *Him* I feel sorry for. Too bad his father doesn't care about him! 905

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

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

KINESIAS: <Absence really does make the heart grow fonder!>¹⁷³ She seems much younger than I remember, and she has a sexier look in her eyes. She acted prickly and very stuck-up too, but that just makes me want her even more! 910

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

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

KINESIAS [*To Myrrhine's back*]: What do you think you're doing, you naughty girl, listening to those other women and giving me a hard time and hurting yourself as well? [*He puts a hand on her shoulder.*] 915

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

KINESIAS: You know you've let our house, your things and mine, become an utter mess? 920

MYRRHINE: It doesn't bother me.

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

MYRRHINE: Not a bit.

KINESIAS: And what a long time it's been since you've celebrated Aphrodite's holy mysteries.¹⁷⁴ Won't you come home? 925

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

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

MYRRHINE: Well, if that's what's decided, I'll be going home. But for the time being I've sworn to stay here. 930

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

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

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

MYRRHINE: Right here in front of the baby? You must be joking! 935

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

MYRRHINE: Lie down *where*, you silly man?

KINESIAS [*Looking around*]: Where? Pan's Grotto¹⁷⁵ will do fine.

MYRRHINE: But I need to be pure before I can go back up to the Akropolis.¹⁷⁶ 940

KINESIAS: Very easily done: just wash off in the Klepsydra.¹⁷⁷

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

KINESIAS: Don't worry about any oath; let me take the consequences.¹⁷⁸ 945

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

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

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

KINESIAS: She really loves me, that's quite obvious! 950

MYRRHINE [*returning with a cot*]: There you are! Lie right down while I undress. [*Kinesias lies on the cot.*] But wait, I forgot, what is it, yes, a mattress! Got to get one.

KINESIAS: A mattress? Not for me, thanks.

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

955

KINESIAS: Well, give me a kiss.

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

KINESIAS: Oh lordy! Get the mattress quick!

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

960

KINESIAS: I don't need a pillow!

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

KINESIAS: Is this cock of mine supposed to be Herakles waiting for his dinner?¹⁷⁹

965

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

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

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

970

KINESIAS: May lightning strike me, by Zeus!

MYRRHINE: You don't have a blanket.

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

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

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

975

MYRRHINE [*returning with a blanket*]: Get up.

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

MYRRHINE: Want some scent?

KINESIAS: Apollo no, none for me.

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

980

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

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

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

985

MYRRHINE: Oh silly me, I brought the Rhodian brand!¹⁸⁰

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

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

KINESIAS: Goddamn the man who first decocted scent!

990

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

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

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

995

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

[*During the ensuing duet both semichoruses return to the center of the orchestra; the women carry the shirts that the men had removed earlier.*]¹⁸¹

Now what shall I do? Whom shall I screw?

I'm cheated of the sexiest girl I knew!

1000

How will I raise and rear this orphaned cock?

Is Fox Dog¹⁸² out there anywhere?

I need to rent a practical nurse!

MEN'S LEADER:

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

1005

Sure I do feel for thee, alack!

What kidney could bear it,

what soul, what balls,

what loins, what crotch,

thus stretched on the rack

1010

and deprived of a morning fuck?¹⁸³

KINESIAS:

Ah Zeus! The cramps attack anew!

MEN'S LEADER:

And *this* is what she's done to you,
the detestable, revolting shrew!

WOMEN'S LEADER:

No, she's totally sweet and dear!

1015

MEN'S LEADER:

Sweet, you say! She's wicked, wicked!

KINESIAS:

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

1020

1025

EPISODE

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

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

KINESIAS: And what might you be? Are you human? Or a Konisalos?¹⁸⁴

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

1030

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

HERALD: Not I, by Zeus, no spear!

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

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

1035

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

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

KINESIAS: Then what do you call *that*?

HERALD: Is Spartan walking-stick.

KINESIAS [pointing to his own phallus]: Then *this* is a Spartan walking-
stick too. Listen, I know what's up; you can level with me. How are
things going in Sparta?

1040

HERALD: All Sparta rise, also allies. All have hard-on. Need Pellana.¹⁸⁵

KINESIAS: What caused this calamity to hit you? Was it Pan?¹⁸⁶

HERALD: Oh no. Was Lampito started it, yes, and then other women in
Sparta, they all start together like in footrace, keep men away from
their hair-pies.

1045

KINESIAS: So how are you faring?

HERALD: Hard! Walk around town bent over, like men carrying oil-lamp
in wind. The women won't permit even to touch the pussy till all of us
unanimously agree to make peace-treaty with rest of Greeks.

1050

KINESIAS: So this business is a global conspiracy by all the women! Now
I get it! OK, get back to Sparta as quick as you can and arrange to send
ambassadors here with full powers to negotiate a treaty. And I'll
arrange for *our* Council to choose their own ambassadors; this cock of
mine will be Exhibit A.

1055

HERALD: I fly away. You offer capital advice. [He exits by the way he
entered; Kinesias exits in the opposite direction.]

MEN'S LEADER:

A woman's harder to conquer than any beast,
than fire, and no panther is quite so ferocious.

WOMEN'S LEADER:

You understand that, but then you still resist us?
It's possible, you rascal, to have our lasting friendship.

1060

MEN'S LEADER:

I'll never cease to loathe women!

WOMEN'S LEADER:

Well, whenever you like. But meanwhile I'll not stand
for you to be undressed like that. Just look how ridiculous you are!
I'm coming over to put your shirt back on.

1065

[She walks over and replaces his shirt, and the other women each follow suit
for one of the men.]

MEN'S LEADER:

By god, that's no mean thing you've done for us.
And now I'm sorry I got mad and took it off.

WOMEN'S LEADER:

And now you look like a man again, not so ridiculous.

And if you weren't so hostile I'd have removed
that bug in your eye, that's still in there, I see.

1070

MEN'S LEADER:

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

WOMEN'S LEADER:

All right, I will, though you're a grumpy man.
Great gods, what a humongous gnat you've got in there!
There, take a look. Isn't it positively Trikorsian?¹⁸⁷

1075

MEN'S LEADER:

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

WOMEN'S LEADER:

Then I'll wipe them away, though you're a genuine rascal,
and kiss you.

1080

MEN'S LEADER:

Don't kiss me!

WOMEN'S LEADER:

I'll kiss you whether you like it or not!

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

MEN'S LEADER:

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

1085

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

CHORUS: (*strophe*)

We don't intend to say anything
the least bit slanderous about
any citizen,¹⁸⁸ you gentlemen out there,
but quite the opposite: to say and do

1090

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

So let every man and woman¹⁸⁹ tell us
if they need to have a little cash,
say two or three minas;¹⁹⁰ we've got it at home
and we've got some purses for it too.

And if peace should ever break out,
everyone that we lent money to
can forget to repay—if they got anything!

1100

(*antistrophe*)

We're getting set to entertain
some visitors from Karystos today;¹⁹¹
they're fine and handsome gentlemen.
There'll be a special soup, and that piglet
of mine, I've sacrificed it on the grill,
and it's turning out to be fine and tender meat.
So come on over to my house today:
get up early and take a bath,
and bathe the kids, and walk right in.
You needn't ask anyone's permission,
just go straight on inside like it was yours,
because the door will be locked!

1105

1110

EPISODE

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

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

1115

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

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

1120

SPARTAN AMBASSADOR: Unspeakable! What can one say? We wish for
someone to come, make peace for us on any terms he like.

[*Athenian Ambassadors enter from the opposite direction, with cloaks bulging.*]

CHORUS-LEADER: Look, I see a party of native sons approaching, like men wrestling, holding their clothes away from their bellies like that! Looks like a bad case of prickly heat.¹⁹² 1125

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

CHORUS-LEADER: *Their syndrome seems to be the same as theirs.* These spasms: do they seize you in the wee hours? 1130

FIRST ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR: Yes, and what's worse, we're worn totally raw by being in this condition! If someone doesn't get us a treaty pretty soon, there's no way we won't be fucking Kleisthenes!¹⁹³

CHORUS-LEADER: If you've got any sense, you'll cover up there: you don't want one of the Herm-Dockers to see you like this.¹⁹⁴ 1135

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

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

FIRST ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR: Greetings, Spartans! We've had an awful time. 1140

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

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

SPARTAN AMBASSADOR: Are ambassadors, for settlement. 1145

FIRST ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR: That's very good; us too. So why not invite Lysistrata to our meeting, since she's the only one who can settle our differences?²¹⁰⁵

SPARTAN AMBASSADOR: Sure, by the Twain Gods, Lysistrata, and Lysistratos too if ye like!¹¹⁵⁰

[*Lysistrata emerges from the Akropolis gate.*]

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

CHORUS-LEADER: Hail, manliest of all women!¹⁹⁷ Now is your time: be forceful and flexible, high-class and vulgar, haughty and sweet, a

woman for all seasons; because the head men of Greece, caught by your charms, have gathered together with all their mutual complaints and are turning them over to you for settlement. 1155

LYSISTRATA: Well, it's an easy thing to do if you get them when they're hot for it and not testing each other for weaknesses. I'll soon know how ready they are. Where's Reconciliation? [*A naked girl¹⁹⁸ comes out of the Akropolis.*] Take hold of the Spartans first and bring them here; don't handle them with a rough or mean hand, or crudely, the way our husbands used to handle us, but use a wife's touch, like home sweet home. [*The Spartan ambassador refuses to give his hand.*] If he won't give you his hand, lead him by his weenie. [*The Spartan ambassador complies, and she leads him and his colleagues to Lysistrata, where they stand to her left.*] Now go and fetch those Athenians too; take hold of whatever they give you and bring them here. [*Reconciliation escorts the Athenians to Lysistrata's right.*] Spartans, move in closer to me, and you Athenians too; I want you to listen to what I have to say. I am a woman, but still I've got a mind: I'm pretty intelligent in my own right, and because I've listened many a time to the conversations of my father and the older men I'm pretty well educated too.¹⁹⁹ Now that you're a captive audience I'm ready to give you the tongue-lashing you deserve—both of you.²⁰⁰ 1175

Don't both of you sprinkle altars from the same cup like kinsmen, at the Olympic Games, at Thermopylai, at Delphi, and so many other places I could mention if I had to make a long list? Yet with plenty of enemies available with their barbarian armies, it's *Greek* men and *Greek* cities you're determined to destroy! That's the first point I wanted to make. 1180

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

LYSISTRATA: Next I'm going to turn to *you*, Spartans. Don't you remember the time when Perikleidas the Spartan came here on bended knee and sat at Athenian altars, white-faced in his scarlet uniform, begging for a military contingent? That time when Messenia was up in arms against you and the god was shaking you with an earthquake? And Kimon came with four thousand infantrymen and rescued all Lakedaimon? And after that sort of treatment from the Athenians, you're now out to ravage their country, who've treated you so well?²⁰¹ 1190

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

SPARTAN AMBASSADOR: We're guilty—[*looking at Reconciliation*] but what an unspeakably fine ass!

Karata-Spencer

- LYSISTRATA: Do you Athenians think I'm going to let *you* off? Don't you remember the time when you were dressed in slaves' rags and the Spartans came in force and wiped out many Thessalian fighters, many friends and allies of Hippias? That day when they were the only ones helping you to drive him out? How they liberated you, and replaced your slaves' rags with a warm cloak, as suits a free people?²⁰² 1195
- SPARTAN AMBASSADOR [*still gazing at Reconciliation*]: I never saw such a classy woman! 1200
- FIRST ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR: *I've* never seen a lovelier cunt!
- LYSISTRATA: So after so many good deeds done, why are you at war? Why not stop this terrible behavior? Why not make peace? Come on, what's in the way? 1205
- [*During the following negotiations Reconciliation's body serves as a map of Greece.*]²⁰³
- SPARTAN AMBASSADOR: We are ready, if they ready to return to us this abutment.²⁰⁴
- LYSISTRATA: Which one, sir?
- SPARTAN AMBASSADOR: Back Door²⁰⁵ here, that we for long time count on having, and grope for. 1210
- FIRST ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR: By Poseidon, that you *won't* get!
- LYSISTRATA: Give it to them, good sir.
- FIRST ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR: Then who will *we* be able to harrass?
- LYSISTRATA: Just ask for some other place in return for that one.
- FIRST ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR: Well, let's see now. First of all give us Echinous here and the Malian Gulf behind it and both Legs.²⁰⁶ 1215
- SPARTAN AMBASSADOR: By Twain Gods, we will not give *everything*, dear fellow!
- LYSISTRATA: Let it go: don't be squabbling about legs.
- FIRST ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR: Now I'm ready to strip down and do some ploughing! 1220
- SPARTAN AMBASSADOR: Me first, by Twain Gods: before one ploughs one spreads manure!
- LYSISTRATA: You may do that when you've ratified the settlement. If, after due deliberation, you do decide to settle, go back and confer with your allies. 1225

- FIRST ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR: *Allies*, dear lady? We're too hard up for that! Won't our allies, all of them, come to the same decision *we* have, namely, to fuck?
- SPARTAN AMBASSADOR: *Ours* will, by Twain Gods! 1230
- FIRST ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR: And so will the Karystians, by Zeus!
- LYSISTRATA: You make a strong case. For the time being see to it you remain pure,²⁰⁷ so that we women can host you on the Akropolis with what we brought in our boxes. There you may exchange pledges of mutual trust, and after that each of you may reclaim his wife and go home.²⁰⁸ 1235
- FIRST ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR: What are we waiting for?
- SPARTAN AMBASSADOR [*To Lysistrata*]: Lead on wherever you wish.
- FIRST ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR: By Zeus yes, as quick as you can!
- [*Lysistrata escorts Reconciliation inside, followed by the Spartan and Athenian ambassadors; the Spartans' slaves sit down outside the door, which is attended by a doorkeeper.*]
- CHORUS:²⁰⁹ (*strophe*)
- Intricate tapestries,
nice clothes and fine gowns
and gold jewellery: all that I own
is yours for the asking
for your sons and for your daughter too,
when she's picked to march with the basket.²¹⁰
I declare my home open to everyone
to take anything you want.
Nothing is sealed up so tight
that you won't be able to break the seals
and take away what you find inside.
But you won't see anything
unless your eyes are sharper than mine. 1240
- (*antistrophe*)
- If anyone's out of bread
but has slaves and lots of little kids to feed,
you can get flour from my house:
puny grains, but a pound of them
grow up to be a loaf
that looks very hearty.
Any of you poor people are welcome
to come to my house with sacks and bags 1255

to carry the flour away; my houseboy will load them up. 1260
 A warning though: don't knock at my door—
 beware of the watchdog there!

EPISODE

FIRST ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR [*still inside, knocking at the door and yelling to the doorkeeper*]: Open the door, you! [*He bursts through the door, sending the doorkeeper tumbling down the steps. He wears a garland and carries a torch, as from a drinking-party.*] You should 1265
 have got out of the way. [*Other Athenians emerge, similarly equipped. To the slaves*] You there, why are you sitting around? Want me to singe you with this torch?

What a stale routine! I refuse to do it. [*Encouragement from the spectators.*] Well, if it's absolutely necessary we'll go the extra mile, to do you all a favor. [*He begins to chase the slaves with his torch.*] 1270

SECOND ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR [*joining the First*]: And we'll help you go that extra mile! [*To the slaves*] Get lost! You'll cry for your hair if you don't! 1275

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

SECOND ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR: I've never been at a better party! The Spartans were really great guys, and we made wonderful company ourselves over the drinks. 1280

FIRST ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR: Stands to reason: when we're sober we're not ourselves. If the Athenians will take my advice, from now on we'll do all our ambassadorial business drunk. As it is, whenever we go to Sparta sober, we start right in looking for ways to stir up trouble. When they say something we don't hear it, and when they don't say something we're convinced that they did say it, and we each return with completely different reports. But this time everything turned out fine. When somebody sang the Telamon Song when he should have been singing the Kleitagora Song,²¹¹ everybody would applaud and even swear up and down what a fine choice it was. [*Some of the slaves approach the door again.*] Hey, those slaves are back! Get lost, you whip-fodder! [*They chase the slaves away.*] 1285

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

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

nies the Spartans]: Take pipes, my good man, and I dance two-step and sing nice song for Athenians and ourselves. 1295

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

SPARTAN AMBASSADOR:

Memory, speed to this lad
 your own Muse, who knows
 about us and the Athenians, 1300
 about that day at Artemision²¹²
 when they spread sail like gods
 against the armada

and whipped the Medes, 1305
 while Leonidas led us,²¹³
 like wild boars we were, yes,
 gnashing our tusks, our jaws running
 streams of foam, and our legs too.

The enemy, the Persians, 1310
 outnumbered the sand on the shore.

Goddess of the Wilds, Virgin Beast-Killer,²¹⁴
 come this way, this way to the treaty,
 and keep us together for a long long while.

Now let friendship in abundance 1315
 attend our agreement always,
 and may we ever abandon
 foxy strategems.

Come this way, this way,
 Virgin Huntress! 1320

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

FIRST ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR: Well! Now that everything else has been wrapped up so nicely, it's time for you Spartans to reclaim these wives of yours; and you Athenians, these here. Let's have husband stand by wife and wife by husband; then to celebrate our great good fortune let's have a dance for the gods. And let's be sure never again to make the same mistakes! [*The couples descend into the orchestra to dance to the Ambassador's song; around them dance the members of the chorus, who are also paired in couples.*]²¹⁵ 1325

Bring on the dance, include the Graces,²¹⁶
 and invite Artemis, 1330
 and her twin brother, the benign Healer,²¹⁷

and the Nysian whose eyes flash
 bacchic among his maenads,²¹⁸
 and Zeus alight with flame
 and the thriving Lady his consort;²¹⁹ 1335
 and invite the divine powers
 we would have as witnesses
 to remember always
 this humane peace,
 which the goddess Kypri²²⁰ has fashioned. 1340

CHORUS:

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

FIRST ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR: Now, my dear Spartan, *you* give us 1345
 some music: a new song to match the last one!

SPARTAN AMBASSADOR:

Come back again from fair Taygetos,
 Spartan Muse, and distinguish this occasion
 with a hymn to the God of Amyklai²²¹
 and Athena of the Brazen House²²² 1350
 and Tyndareos' fine sons,²²³
 who gallop beside the Eurotas.
 Ho there, hop!
 Hey there, jump!
 Let's sing a hymn to Sparta, 1355
 home of dance divine
 and stomping feet,
 where by the Eurotas' banks
 young girls frisk like fillies,
 raising dust-clouds underfoot 1360
 and tossing their tresses
 like maenads waving their wands and playing,
 led by Leda's daughter,
 their chorus-leader pure and pretty.²²⁴

[*To the chorus*] Come on now, hold your hair in your hand, get your 1365
 feet hopping like a deer and start making some noise to spur the
 dance! And sing for the goddess who's won a total victory, Athena of
 the Brazen House!

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

89-
14

WOMEN AT THE THESMOPHORIA



- see Goldhill 1994. I find Goldhill's attempt to discredit the Platonic testimony unconvincing (the principal texts are *Gorgias* 502b–d and *Laws* 658a–d).
16. See Goldhill 1994.
 17. See MacDowell 1995:257–58. For a critique of the attempt by Taafe 1993 to find comic rupture of this illusion see Gilbert 1995.
 18. Thus Taafe's employment of approaches from film-criticism, with its emphasis on close-ups and directorial shaping of the viewer's gaze, to analyze Aristophanic comedy is largely inappropriate.
 19. See Schaps 1977, Sommerstein 1980. For the important dichotomy of public and private in Athenian life see IV, below.
 20. See Thucydides 2.45.2 (Perikles' plea for public decorum to the war-bereaved women), with Kallet-Marx 1993.
 21. Taking the advice of a woman could indeed be cited in court to prove an opponent's incompetence (Demosthenes 46.16, Isokrates 2.20).
 22. In general see Stone 1981.
 23. The phallos, in addition to being a traditional element of comic and satyric costumes, was a traditional symbol of fertility and masculine power, and it was especially associated with the worship of Dionysos; on the *phallogoria* see II, above.
 24. There was no ancient counterpart to the "choral speaking" often heard in modern performances of Greek drama.
 25. For a selection of epitaphs see Lattimore 1942, and for cult-records see Turner 1983.
 26. The archaic period, by contrast, did produce female poets, notably Sappho of Lesbos, who flourished around the turn of the sixth century BCE.
 27. Schaps 1977, Sommerstein 1980; for women's conventional invisibility in the theatrical audience see III, above.
 28. Euripides' violation of this protocol motivates the women's conspiracy against him in *Women at the Thesmophoria*.
 29. The women of tragedy often protest their lot too, but they are significantly distanced by their confinement to the heroic age and mostly to places other than Athens.
 30. For more detailed overviews of the material background see Blok and Mason 1987; Cohen 1989, 1991; Dover 1974:95–102; Foxhall 1989; Gould 1980; Henderson 1988; Just 1989; McClees 1920; Schaps 1979, 1982; Turner 1983; Versnel 1987; Winkler 1990; for dramatic portrayals see Assael 1985; Foley 1982 a,b; Gardner 1989; Henderson 1987a, 1991a; Muecke 1982; Said 1979; Shaw 1975; Sommerstein 1980; Taafe 1993; Zeitlin 1985; Blundell 1995:130–49.
 31. Athenian cults, festivals and religious societies at both the local and national levels offered many opportunities for citizen women to serve the community outside the household. As priestesses women could even have a public identity and some public influence, since they were public officials subject to official scrutiny and review; see further *Lysistrata*, Introduction 2, Blundell 1995:160–69.
 32. For the ways in which women's corporate public esteem was managed according to proper gender-norms see Kallet-Marx 1993.
 33. Wives who came with a large dowry (dowries remained with a wife during her lifetime

- and would be passed on to her male children after her death) could have considerable influence over a husband.
34. See Henderson 1987a:121–26.
 35. For the prominence of women at the local (deme) level see Whitehead 1986:77–81; for the heroines worshipped in local communities see Larson 1995.
 36. See n. 31, above.
 37. Hitherto women had appeared in comedy only sporadically and as minor characters, representing disreputable types like prostitutes, market-women and the female relatives of "demagogues."
 38. See further the Introduction to *Women at the Thesmophoria*; the character Agathon (a follower of Euripides) would not be so concerned to turn himself into a woman if the verisimilitude of his female characters were not actually characteristic. For the question of verisimilitude as it involves male actors portraying women, see III, above.
 39. For drama's often critical stance toward civic ideology see Goldhill 1990.
 40. Cohen 1991:166.
 41. See above, Introduction III.
 42. For the age-distinction see Henderson 1987a.
 43. Euripides' *Alkestis* (produced in 438) is the only extant tragedy that portrays a loving relationship between a husband and a wife.
 44. The emphasis on this motif in comedy suggests that in real life women may not have been fed as much as men (they did not typically take meals with the men, but with the children and slaves) and that their access to wine was strictly regulated—presumably to deter its potential interference with their household work and their sexual propriety. In classical Athens, drinking occurred in occasional religious festivities but as an everyday activity was confined to bars (public) and symposia (all-male), so that respectable women would normally have no licit opportunities to drink.
 45. Unless the wine-drinking in *Women at the Thesmophoria* counts as misbehavior.
 46. See Blundell 1995:143–44.
 47. See *Lysistrata*, Introduction 2.
 48. This view has been most systematically advanced by Zeitlin, cf. esp. Zeitlin 1985.
 49. This may have been a consideration in Aristophanes' choice of women to argue against continuing the war in 411; see *Lysistrata*, Introduction 1.
 50. See Halperin 1990:145–47.

Lysistrata

1. The principal historical source for the Peloponnesian War is Thucydides' *History*; book 8 records the events of 411.
2. Thucydides 8.53.
3. See further Introduction II.
4. It would not be surprising if, in the course of the long war and in the aftermath of such a great loss of men as in 413, normal male supervision of women was relaxed,

- allowing women greater scope for independent action and expression than was usual in normal times.
5. On these see further Introduction IV.
 6. For the dramatic typology of a household's women taking public action to save it from the men see Shaw 1975, Foley 1982a, Bowie 1993:199–200; for historical examples see Schaps 1982.
 7. For the characterization of older women in comedy generally see Henderson 1987a.
 8. Ordinary Athenians (like their counterparts in modern democracies) envied but also admired the rich and privileged, and tended to identify with people higher in the social hierarchy than lower.
 9. But not (like Artemis) chastity, despite Loraux 1993:147–83: Athena was the patron of both girls and married women, and her Akropolis cult was the polis' symbolic household.
 10. For more details see Vaio 1973, Henderson 1987:xxxviii–xl; for the special social, economic and legal benefits that priestesses enjoyed see Gould 1980, Turner 1983:383 ff.; and for the importance of religion in connecting women with the polis see Introduction IV. Modern readers should bear in mind that in classical Greece priestesses were not, like nuns, expected to devote their whole lives to religion; except when performing their offices for a particular divinity (usually only on certain days of the year), they lived the same sort of lives as other women.
 11. She is apparently appealed to by name in the cause of peace in Aristophanes' *Peace* (991–92).
 12. The name Lysistrata was in fact borne by more than one Polias priestess in later times, and perhaps in earlier times too, since Lysimache is the first identifiable incumbent.
 13. Some scholars have suggested that the other wives in the play also represent priestly personnel, since they seem to be familiar with one another and with the Akropolis; in particular, the Athenian wife Myrrhine is given the same (admittedly common) name as a woman known to have served in the latter fifth century as the priestess of Athena Nike ("Victory"), whose bastion was at the entrance to the Akropolis (see MacDowell 1995:241–42, and *Lysistrata* n. 79). But even if this is so, none of the other women in the play is so strongly characterized in terms of the Akropolis cult as Lysistrata.
 14. See *Lysistrata*, n. 116.
 15. For a survey see Burkert 1983:168–79 (including the Skira festival, p. 170).
 16. See Bowie 1993:184–85.
 17. See Martin 1987, Bowie 1993:186–94.
 18. Dillon 1987 points out that the threat to fertility represented by the Spartan occupation of the Attic countryside (see section 1, above) is an element underlying the idea of the women's conjugal strike (a threat to human fertility that is equally "abnormal").
 19. See n. 6, above.
 20. The central text for this role of Athena is Aeschylus' *Eumenides*.
 21. The wine-god Dionysos (here referred to by his epithet Bacchos) was worshipped by private groups of men, women or (if disreputable women were involved) both together; respectable women, whose access to wine was ordinarily restricted (Minieri 1982),

- were in comedy typically portrayed as bibulous and thus as being fond of "Bacchic" religion.
22. Pan was especially associated with "wild" music and dancing, activities that for women could be enjoyed only in the context of religious festivals; he also had erotic associations; embodying the power of animal procreation.
 23. The Genetyllides were goddesses of procreation who also had erotic associations.
 24. These *tympana* were used (mainly by women) in ecstatic worship of Dionysos and such Asiatic deities as Sabazios (below, n. 92) and the Great Mother.
 25. Comic poets often refer to women's religious activities as being mere excuses for drinking, dancing and illicit sex. In *Lysistrata* the young wives conform to this stereotype, but from the start the heroine herself is exempted.
 26. The name means "Fair Victory."
 27. The name means "Disbander of Armies."
 28. Kalonike seems to be older than Lysistrata, but not very much older, since she aligns herself with the other housewives.
 29. Meaning "difficult" but also implying that wives who go out are likely to cause mischief. Note that the wives' freedom to leave their houses is assumed, but at the same time they must be sure that their husbands have no reason to deny permission.
 30. Young women are conventionally portrayed as incapable of controlling their sexual appetites, just as men were supposed to be capable of disciplining their own. In *Lysistrata* these gender-roles are to be comically reversed, with the wives resisting sexual temptation and the husbands succumbing.
 31. The Peloponnesians (headed by Sparta) and the Boiotians (headed by Thebes) were Athens' chief enemies in the war.
 32. Eels from Lake Kopais in Boiotia were a great delicacy, now contraband.
 33. An expensive import from a place (probably in Asia Minor) no longer identifiable.
 34. Kalonike represents the stereotypical wife of a prosperous husband: a frivolous and spoiled spendthrift.
 35. The chief deities of the Eleusinian Mysteries, Demeter and Kore (Persephone), whose worship was intimately associated with human and agricultural fertility and thus with women.
 36. Two regions of Attika that evoke the names of Athens' two fastest ships, the *Paralos* and the *Salaminia*.
 37. An allusion to the "equestrian" mode of sexual intercourse (woman on top), apparently a risqué posture, since it was a favor for which a prostitute might charge extra.
 38. The name (meaning "Myrtle") was a very common one in life and in comedy, but it is particularly appropriate for the character in *Lysistrata* because it was a slang term for the vulva ("Pussy" would be a rough modern equivalent), was associated with Aphrodite and was used in bridal garlands.
 39. The *zone* was a waistband worn just above the hips.
 40. Lampito was an actual royal name in Sparta, but no contemporary of that name is known.

41. In the following introduction of the foreigners the women show physical interest in one another, which may have erotic overtones (for female homoeroticism see Dover 1978:171–84); at the same time we must remember that the scene was played by men for a notional audience of men.
42. Spartan girls, unlike their Athenian counterparts, took outdoor physical training, so that Spartan women were stereotypically portrayed as “masculine”: see Cartledge 1981.
43. In *Lysistrata* the Spartans speak a caricatured version of their local dialect of Greek (Lakonian).
44. The Dioskouroi, Kastor and Pollux, brothers of Helen and special patrons of the Spartans.
45. For women, partial or total pubic depilation (by plucking or singeing) was considered to be a necessary element of good grooming; for the Greek male’s preference for the sexually immature female see Kilmer 1982.
46. Humorously substituting the name of an Athenian commander for the name of a city that the Athenians were besieging; comedy routinely assumes that all military commanders are cowardly, incompetent or corrupt.
47. Though adultery was in reality a very serious offense at Athens, comic wives are typically portrayed as ready to take lovers.
48. The Ionian city of Miletos, Athens’ former ally, was famous for its leather dildoes, either as a major exporter or because Milesian women were thought to be sexually insatiable. Six inches (literally “eight fingers”) was a comparatively short size for a dildo.
49. Lysistrata uses the Greek “four-letter word” for the penis, *peos*, which would have been shocking on the lips of a respectable woman, but which here emphasizes the shocking nature of Lysistrata’s proposal.
50. Here and elsewhere in comedy, characters often speak in “paratragedy,” either quoting from or mimicking the general style of tragedy.
51. Comparing the women to the mythical Tyro, who was seduced by the god Poseidon disguised as her lover (the river-god Enipeus) and who exposed the twin boys born of that union in a tub or trough by the riverbank; the myth had been twice dramatized by Sophokles. Lysistrata’s point is that young women cannot rise above sex and procreation.
52. Comically adapting the typical male compliment, “real man.”
53. After the fall of Troy Menelaos (the King of Sparta) intended to kill his unfaithful wife Helen, but at the sight of her beauty dropped his sword; apparently Euripides in his play *Andromache* had added the detail about Helen’s breasts.
54. In Attic slang “skinning” meant “causing an erection” and “skinned dog” meant “dildo.” Pherekrates was a contemporary comic poet, but the context of the phrase quoted is unknown.
55. The Greek word *bia*, here translated “force,” is commonly used to denote sexual assault, but Athenian men would probably not think of forced sex with a spouse as being rape because they considered sexual compliance to be a wifely duty that they could choose to command. Nevertheless, men who beat their wives were considered

- brutes (see below, nn. 110–11), and later in the play *Kinesias*, though desperate, never thinks of forcing his wife Myrrhine to sleep with him.
56. She means sexual unresponsiveness in a spouse, not rape, which comic males typically enjoy when an opportunity presents itself.
57. Playing on the contrast (and conflict) between the authoritarian Spartan monarchy and the Athenian direct democracy (“mob rule,” according to its critics).
58. The temple of the citadel-goddess, Athena, on the Akropolis, was Athens’ main treasury; for the importance of Athena to the play’s symbolism, see Introduction 2.
59. That is, the women who are too old to participate in the sex-strike; they are the counterparts of the older men of the “home guard” who are too old to serve on military expeditions.
60. What follows is a parody of an old-fashioned oath-ceremony, in which a black sacrificial animal was slaughtered and its testicles severed; participants stood on the severed parts while taking the solemn oath. The principal humor lies in the spectacle of women performing such a ceremony, which was ordinarily the prerogative of men.
61. The Athenians used slave-archers, mostly from western Asia, as policemen and security-guards for officials (like the Magistrate later in the play); the slave-girl here, apparently dressed like such a policeman (hence her possession of the shield), increases our impression of Lysistrata’s ability to challenge males on their own ground (cf. Stone 1980:306). We are not to ask where Lysistrata came by a Skythian warrior-girl.
62. Lysistrata seems more warlike than her comrades. The reference is to Aischylos’ *Seven Against Thebes* 42–48, where the Seven vow to take Thebes or die trying.
63. A “white horse” made a rare and costly sacrifice normally associated with myths (e.g., the oath of Helen’s suitors, taken over a severed white horse) and with the fabulous east; its appropriateness here is as a slang term for the erect penis or as an allusion to the Amazons (a mythical, eastern race of women who rejected and battled with men: see below, n. 151).
64. The Greeks typically mixed their wine with water; a liking for *neat* wine—which more quickly intoxicates and was therefore considered excessive—was a comic stereotype about women. Wine from Thasos was exceptionally fine. The vessels used in this scene are the *kylix*, the standard drinking bowl, and a *stamnon*, a large jar more appropriate for festive cult than private drinking. The women violate the protocol of an oath-ceremony, in which nothing was eaten or drunk.
65. Alluding to the practice at male drinking-parties (*symposia*, from which respectable women were barred) of determining the drinking-order by drawing lots.
66. That is, on all fours, to be penetrated (vaginally or anally) from behind. The handles of household utensils were often made in the form of crouching animals.
67. For the importance of the women’s solidarity see Konstan 1993.
68. The Greek word *ololyge* designated (1) women’s ritual shouts at the completion of a sacrifice (here, the old women’s pretext for being on the Akropolis) and (2) any victory-cry.
69. The favor of the goddess of sexual enjoyment is of course crucial for the conspiracy’s success.
70. Chorus members in comedy (but not in tragedy) are often given personal names; the men’s names here seem to be generic for old men.

71. The ancient olive-wood image of Athena Polias was both a venerable symbol of Athens and an important guarantor of the goddess' goodwill toward the polis.
72. Since the Akropolis was in actuality open to the public at large, both men and women, and since virtually every Athenian participated in some way in its many sacred activities, the men's proprietary and exclusive attitude toward it is unwarranted.
73. The men imagine (wrongly) that the ringleader of the conspiracy must be Lykon's wife, a citizen woman who had a reputation for promiscuity in Athens at the time.
74. A Spartan king (c. 520–490) who in 508 had occupied the Akropolis for two days on the invitation of Athenian oligarchs and was allowed to leave under truce, paving the way for the restoration of the democratic leader Kleisthenes.
75. The men speak of Athens and of the Akropolis in a proprietary way, since they boast of having personally taken part in glorious actions of the past that would make them about 120 years old!
76. Euripides' reputation as a misogynist—based on his unprecedentedly vivid portrayals of female deviousness (e.g. Phaidra) and even criminality (e.g. Medeia)—underlies the plot of Aristophanes' play *Women at the Thesmophoria*.
77. The stone monument that commemorated the great Athenian victory over the Persians in 490.
78. For the myth of the Lemnian women and its significance for the plot of *Lysistrata* see Introduction 2.
79. I.e., Athena Nike, whose temple stands on your right as you face the Propylaea (the main entrance to the Akropolis).
80. The women's names, like the men's, are apparently generic for old women, but Nikodike ("Victory for Right") probably has additional significance in immediately following the men's appeal to Lady Victory.
81. Drawing water from a well was a typical morning chore for women.
82. Branding was meted out to slaves who had run away or committed some other serious offense. The women emphasize the toughness of the competition at the well (to match the men's martial exploits).
83. Around 175 pounds (an exaggeration).
84. An ancient epithet of Athena thought to recall her birth near a mythical river or lake and thus suited to the women's task of dousing the men's fire.
85. A Chian sculptor vilified by the sixth-century iambic poet Hipponax.
86. For Euripides' reputation for misogyny see *Women at the Thesmophoria*, Introduction.
87. I.e., not a slave or foreigner but a citizen entitled to the Athenian right of free speech.
88. Jury-service, for which a small stipend was paid by the polis, was popular with impecunious old men and with others unfit for more remunerative occupations.
89. Acheloos, a river in NW Greece, was metonymic for "water," especially in ritual contexts—suggesting that the women are countering an impious action by the men.
90. For these slave archers see n. 61, above.
91. Exemplifying the typical male assumptions about women's business (and echoing Lysistrata's first words), though this time these assumptions are wrong.

92. A Phrygian (and therefore barbarian) god similar to Dionysos, whose worship had recently become popular at Athens, especially among women and slaves; but the women in the play associate themselves only with the major polis gods.
93. Adonis (in myth, the mortal youth whom Aphrodite loved) was another eastern (Semitic) import who was not officially recognized by the city. His cult was celebrated by women in the heat of midsummer on rooftops: the women planted quickly flowering and quickly withering gardens and lamented the death of the young god.
94. That is, in the summer of 415; for the disastrous Sicilian expedition, see Introduction.
95. A very bad omen, considering that the Athenians were moving to send the flower of their youth to Sicily, and one that proved only too accurate.
96. Still a prominent politician at the time of the play.
97. Note that the Magistrate's anecdote actually demonstrates the recklessness of Demostratos and the male assemblymen rather than any ill-effects resulting from the women's festival.
98. An overnight voyage. In addition, "sailing" and "Salamis" can connote sexual intercourse.
99. Like women, slaves were stereotypically bibulous.
100. Artemis, sister of Apollo, was a fearsome maiden huntress associated with wild places and untamed beasts.
101. One of the daughters of the mythical King Kekrops; along with her sister Aglauros she was worshipped as a heroine on the Akropolis, and their myth may well be commemorated in the ritual of the Arrhephoria (see n. 139, below).
102. A title of Hekate, a popular women's goddess associated with the moon and with the birth and rearing of children; her epithet here puns on "eye" or "eye-salve".
103. An impossibility in actual life, but we are reminded of Athena, who was imagined as bearing arms in her capacity as polis-guardian.
104. Market-women were (conventionally) older women of the lower citizen or slave classes and (proverbially) bold, tough and abusive, so that they make perfect "combat troops" for Lysistrata.
105. Emphasizing the sanctity of the Akropolis by invoking the name of a mythical king of Athens.
106. In the typical comic *agon* (contest) both contestants state and argue a case as if in a lawcourt; in this one, the Magistrate is given no argument in favor of continuing the war but merely challenges Lysistrata's arguments against it.
107. See Introduction 1.
108. For women and domestic management, see Introduction IV.
109. A common male oath.
110. It was illegal (because undemocratic) to strike any male citizen, and in terms of democratic ideology physical violence against women was disapproved behavior as well, being attributed in all our sources only to drunks and scoundrels. Violence against wives is stressed in this play as one element of its portrayal of males as intemperate and ill-behaved (though the husbands who appear later on are not at all violent).
111. The following account of dispute between husbands and wives about the war is modelled on the famous conversation between Hektor and Andromache in the sixth book

- of Homer's *Iliad*. There Andromache gives Hektor sound tactical advice (to defend Troy from the walls) that he refuses to follow, preferring the more masculine path of honor (to confront Achilles in single combat), with results disastrous for himself, his city and his wife and small son. But even in refusing his wife's advice Hektor, in contrast with Lysistrata's husband, nevertheless treats her with tact, sympathy and compassion—traditional marks of the civilized man: see also *Iliad* 19.287 ff., 24.762 ff., *Odyssey* 20.105 ff. By echoing this scene Aristophanes not only evokes the ideal (heroic) models of husband and wife, but also singles out the one episode in the heroic tradition when a leader would have done well to heed a woman's advice.
112. Quoting Hektor's words (previous note); proper gender-roles were conventionally epitomized by the antithesis weaving/fighting.
 113. Respectable women normally veiled their faces when they went outside the house.
 114. The ancient equivalent of gum-chewing, and associated with menial tasks.
 115. The feminization and (thus) disempowerment of the Magistrate by dressing him as a housewife scenically underlines the play's wholesale gender-reversals, and it recalls such mythical prototypes as Pentheus in Euripides' *Bacchae*; see Zeitlin 1985, Levine 1987.
 116. The list combines conventionally male and female attributes.
 117. Not necessarily indicating that Lysistrata is old, for she is here addressed in her role as leader of the occupying (older) women.
 118. In Greek *Lysimachai*, possibly alluding to Lysimache, the current priestess of Athena Polias; see *Lysistrata*, Introduction.
 119. Eastern divinities associated with ecstatic dancing, and a popular way to refer to lunatics.
 120. During the war many wealthy young men had taken to wearing their hair long and affecting other "Spartan" mannerisms, to the disgust of older, more conventional Athenians.
 121. Thracian mercenaries struck Athenians as wild and uncivilized. Tereus was the mythical Thracian king who raped and mutilated Philomela, the sister of his wife Prokne, daughter of the Athenian King Pandion; when Prokne found out, she killed their son Itys and served him to Tereus for dinner. In the end, Tereus was transformed into a hoopoe, Prokne into a nightingale and Philomela into a swallow. The myth was dramatized by Sophokles.
 122. Lysistrata's polis-as-ball-of-wool metaphor appeals to the item of domestic management most characteristic of wives, and is thus a central illustration of Lysistrata's main argument, that female skills are a better model for running the polis than the male predilection for aggression.
 123. Here Aristophanes signals a departure from the comic plot: his heroine is about to give advice about how the *men* ought to govern the *actual* polis; that is why her following metaphor does not include women in its list of useful citizens to be included in a newly constituted polis: see MacDowell 1995:238–39.
 124. Referring both to open political cliques and to antidemocratic conspiracies (cf. Thucydides 8.54).
 125. She was about to add, "never to see them again:" an indication of the intended serious-

- ness of Lysistrata's words; the men in the audience are being asked to see the situation through women's eyes.
126. I.e., wives and widows.
 127. In the Greek world, every woman was expected to marry and bear children, and it was considered her right to have a husband. Those women who for some reason did not marry faced social isolation, were both an embarrassment and an unwelcome expense to their families, and represented for the community a horrible and ill-omened wastage that called the basic social order into question. The recent destruction of the Sicilian expedition had in fact significantly reduced the number of young citizen men and created real fear that many young women might go without husbands. The future dearth of citizen males was of course an additional consideration if the marriage-rate dropped.
 128. That is, omens foretelling marriage.
 129. The Magistrate might have continued "has a perfect right to take the most attractive woman he chooses as a wife" (crudely disregarding the right of *every* woman to have a husband: see n. 127, above).
 130. Lysistrata and her comrades playfully enact one of the traditional duties of older women, managing funerals.
 131. Charon ferries dead souls across the river Styx into the underworld.
 132. That is, dressed first as a housewife and then as a corpse.
 133. This last Athenian tyrant was expelled in 510, but a public curse against anyone aiming to be or to abet a tyrant was still solemnly pronounced on important civic occasions. Since Hippias' name is based on *hippos* "horse," there is an allusion here to the "equestrian" position in sexual intercourse (woman on top).
 134. A beardless man teased for effeminacy and for taking the woman's role in sexual intercourse in eight of Aristophanes' eleven extant plays; in *Women at the Thesmophoria* he is the intermediary between the women and the polis. Here he would be a suitable intermediary between the women and the Spartans, since the latter were thought by the Athenians to be especially fond of performing anal intercourse: see Dover 1978:185–96.
 135. Pay for jury-service, introduced by Perikles, enabled the poorer classes of citizens to serve and was especially attractive to older men with nothing better to do with their time. Many conservative Athenians regarded this pay as a needless expense and even as a danger to democracy, since it tended to introduce a class imbalance between litigants (mostly wealthy) and jurors that demagogues might exploit for their own political purposes.
 136. Quoting from a patriotic drinking-song about the tyrant-slayers (see next note); the phrase could also have a slang double-meaning referring to male sexual penetration of women.
 137. In the marketplace stood bronze statues of Harmodios and Aristogeiton, the young men who killed Hipparchos, the brother of the tyrant Hippias, in 514; they and their descendants were subsequently revered as "tyrant-slayers" and freedom-fighters. (Thucydides' account [6.53–59], that the two were merely lovers avenging a personal insult, is unlikely to have been common knowledge at the time of the play.) Here the Old Men pose incongruously as the young and handsome Harmodios.

138. Aristophanes further develops the contrast between the well-born and well-trained old women and the poor, ignorant old men. The resumé of religious distinctions offered by the old women here is the most prestigious that any Athenian woman could boast. For the importance of service in the public cults for women's status in the polis see Introduction IV and Gould 1980:50–51.
139. The Arrhephoroi were two girls who spent a year living on the Akropolis in ritual service to the cult of Athena Polias and under her Priestess' supervision. Among their other duties, they began the weaving of Athena's Panathenaic robe and marched in the procession at the Panathenaia, a great festival honoring Athena and held every four years. The girls had to be at least seven and no more than eleven years old and came only from the noblest Athenian families; their selection was made by the people's assembly and the King Archon, the polis' chief religious magistrate. The Arrhephoroi ritually represented all Athenian girls' preparation for their married lives as domestic managers, and their service helped assure the goddess' favor toward the polis itself. In general see Burkert 1983:150–4, Simon 1983:38–46, 66–69, Sourvinou-Inwood 1988:58–59, 73–74.
140. Well-born girls who served a goddess—probably Demeter at Eleusis—by grinding ritual cakes; see Sourvinou-Inwood 1988:142–46.
141. That is, Artemis (see n. 100, above), the patron deity of the Brauronia.
142. The Brauronia, an elaborate ritual sequence celebrated every four years, was open to select girls five to ten years old (criteria for eligibility are unknown). Its climax was the Arkteia (Ritual of the Bears), in which the girls donned various costumes representing their passage from girlhood to adulthood (eligibility for marriage); at one point they removed a saffron-dyed robe and performed naked. See in general Burkert 1985:263, Simon 1983:83–88, Sourvinou-Inwood 1988. Here the old women, who shed their jackets, thus reenact their youthful Arkteia, producing a humorous incongruity to match the old men's imitation of the young tyrannicides.
143. Maiden basket-bearers were a feature of many processions, and figs symbolized fertility; see Simon 1983:77–78. The climactic placement of basket-bearing here perhaps suggests the most prestigious of all processions, in the Panathenaia.
144. The word *hubris* ranges in significance from "outrageous conduct" to "assault" to "behaving as if more than human."
145. Leaving them "naked," i.e. wearing only their theatrical skin (leotards and phallos).
146. A military nickname of unknown (but evidently patriotic) significance.
147. In the hills of northern Attika where rebels battled the tyrant Hippias after his brother's assassination (see n. 137, above).
148. The following items of martial activity have double-meanings suggesting fear that the women will take command in sexual relations—an idea dramatized in *Assemblywomen*.
149. A queen of Halikarnassos who commanded naval actions against the Greeks during the Persian invasion of 480.
150. Yet another allusion to the equestrian (woman-on-top) mode of sexual intercourse.
151. According to legend the Amazons, a mythical race of women who shunned men, once invaded Attika and occupied the Akropolis in order to rescue an Amazon princess who had been captured by Herakles and given to the Attic king Theseus as a prize; but they were routed by the Athenians in battle. See in general DuBois 1982, Tyrrell 1984, Bowie 1993:184–85.

152. They will be "naked" like the old men—something that in actual life no respectable woman would ever do except as a performer in the Ritual of the Bears (see n. 142). But now the need to match the men's aggression overrides concern for their own dignity.
153. Alluding to an Aesopic fable, the beetle avenges a wrong done it by an eagle by breaking the eagle's eggs; these had been placed in Zeus' lap for safekeeping, but when the beetle dropped its dung-ball into Zeus' lap, he unthinkingly jumped up and spilled the eggs. Here the eggs seem to indicate the men's testicles.
154. See n. 102.
155. See n. 32. The women liken the Greek world at war to a neighborhood disrupted by a troublemaker.
156. The elevated style incongruously parodies tragedy, in which the stage building typically represents a troubled palace.
157. The (obscene) word she uses, being grammatically in the active voice, would typically be used by horny men.
158. For Pan see n. 22, above. This grotto, on the northern slope of the Akropolis, was where Apollo raped Kreousa; later in the play it serves as a trysting-place for Kinesias and Myrrhine.
159. Sparrows were emblematic of sexual appetite and eaten as aphrodisiacs, and "sparrow" was a slang term for both "penis" and "vagina"; thus the sparrow was sacred to Aphrodite.
160. Evidently a "ladies' man." For a wife to visit her lover's house is a sign of sexual desperation because it was normal for an adulterer to visit the wife at her own house.
161. Birth and death were forbidden in sanctuaries like the Akropolis.
162. That is, the helmet from the great bronze statue of Athena Promachos on the Akropolis.
163. Like omens and even dreams, oracles were frequently used in political persuasion and deliberation, but Aristophanes, like many educated people, considered those who believed in them to be gullible; here the gullible wives are being treated to the sort of "demagogic" tactics that were familiar to their husbands in Assembly.
164. An allusion to the myth of Tereus (see above, n. 121).
165. The mythical Melanion is best known for using the trick of the golden apples to win a footrace against the huntress-maiden Atalante and thus her hand in marriage; here the old men seem to be thinking of an earlier phase of the myth, in which Melanion was celibate and Atalante was his divine companion (compare Hippolytos and Artemis in Euripides' play *Hippolytos*).
166. Two Athenian generals, now dead, who were remembered for their toughness and bravery. Hairy hindquarters were a sign of strength and courage in men.
167. A legendary misanthrope who (despite the old women's claim in this song) reportedly hated *both* men and women. He was a main character in several Greek comedies and in Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens*.
168. Just as body-hair was a sign of virility, so its absence was a sign of femininity; see above, n. 45.
169. The ensuing scene, which illustrates the sex-strike in action, reverses the Greek norm of seduction, in which the male takes the lead. But it also takes off on such well-known

- precedents of female seducers as Hera in book 14 of Homer's *Iliad*; for an analysis see Taafe 1993:67–69.
170. Kinesias was an actual (though uncommon) name that was borne by a contemporary poet whom Aristophanes had caricatured in *Birds* three years earlier; if Aristophanes is caricaturing him here, then it is possible that Myrrhine represents his actual wife, perhaps the priestess of Athena Nike (see *Lysistrata*, Introduction, n. 13). But the name alone suits the role of the representative husband in this play, since it reminds us of the verb *kinein* “screw (a woman)”; the deme-name Paionidai similarly reminds us of *paiein* “bang”—we might translate “Roger Balling from Bangor.” Myrrhine’s name (“myrtle” = “pussy,” see above, n. 38) is similarly significant.
 171. The typical toast for an absent loved one, except that here Myrrhine is represented as toasting with food rather than with drink, which would be inappropriate for a respectable wife.
 172. Although Kinesias is bribing a “sentry” here, the audience will think of the usual association of men and purses: negotiation with prostitutes; see Keuls 1985:153–203.
 173. A line of text has been lost here, but its gist must be as indicated by the supplement offered here.
 174. That is, “had sex with me,” which Kinesias tries to portray as a sacred duty.
 175. See above, n. 158.
 176. No one who had had sex was allowed to enter a sanctuary until (s)he had bathed; for this and other taboos involving sex see Parker 1983:74–103.
 177. It was in this spring, in a cave below the NW side of the Akropolis, that Zeus’ wife Hera was said to have recovered her virginity; in Aristophanes’ time the image of Aphrodite Peitho (“The Persuader”) was ritually bathed there.
 178. Women, being legally incompetent to swear an oath, were popularly regarded as being too untrustworthy to live up to one.
 179. The he-man hero Herakles was portrayed in myths as having a huge appetite for food and sex; various kinds of trouble about meals is a typical feature of his comic persona.
 180. Apparently an inferior brand.
 181. This duet parodies scenes in tragedy where a stricken hero is consoled by the chorus (-leader).
 182. The nickname of the pimp or brothel-keeper Philostratos.
 183. Early morning is often mentioned as a conventional time for conjugal sex.
 184. A demon or divinity associated with ithyphallic dances.
 185. Significance obscure: either a place-name with a sexual significance now lost, or a pun on an unattested word meaning vagina or anus.
 186. Pan (above, n. 22) was frequently portrayed as ithyphallic and thus able to inflict ithyphallism.
 187. The deme Trikorythos abutted a large marsh on the Bay of Marathon.
 188. Choral songs in the latter parts of an Old Comedy often ridiculed or abused specific members of the audience; here, by contrast, Aristophanes wants to underline the theme of general reconciliation, so that the chorus merely teases the spectators by making comically insincere promises; this routine is continued in another pair of songs after the following Episode.

189. The only passage in surviving Greek comedy that explicitly recognizes the presence of women in the audience (see further Introduction); note that the women are thought of as having a need for money of their own.
190. A substantial amount of money.
191. Troops from this ally were stationed in Athens and were (to judge from this passage) attractive to Athenian women.
192. The Greek puns on *asketikon* (“pertaining to athletic training”) and *askitikon* (“suffering from abdominal swelling”).
193. See above, n. 134. This was not, of course, the only available outlet for an Athenian husband denied access to his wife: masturbation was considered slavish, and no free man would admit to resorting to it, but slaves and prostitutes were in reality freely available. But so as not to complicate his plot (which emphasizes the supreme desirability of marital love) Aristophanes avoids mentioning any alternative outlet save for this one (a joke he could not resist).
194. In 415, just before the departure of the Sicilian expedition, the faces and phalli of the pillar-images of Hermes, which stood in the streets throughout Athens, had been mutilated. Since not all of the perpetrators had been identified, Aristophanes suggests that some were among the spectators.
195. The men’s references to Lysistrata by name in these final scenes are the only exceptions in extant comedy and oratory to the rule of Athenian etiquette that a free man does not publicly refer by name to a respectable woman not holding a public office: see Sommerstein 1980. This exception may have to do with the heroine’s assimilation to the Polias priestess Lysimache (see Introduction 2), but in any case it is significant that Lysistrata is not so named until her victory (and thus her extraordinary status) is assured.
196. Either the Spartan (who can know nothing of Lysistrata) does not care whether the mediator is male or female, or Aristophanes is poking fun at an effeminate Lysistratos.
197. Humorous oxymoron (because “manly” was an inappropriate epithet for a woman), but also calling attention to the fact that Lysistrata has done, in the fantasy of the play, what no man has been able to do in reality.
198. That is, a man (or boy) wearing a girlish mask and a leotard to which false breasts and genitalia were attached; similar “naked girls” appear in most of Aristophanes’ plays. Aristophanes typically portrays peace concretely and in terms of sensory enjoyments (food, drink, sex and festivals).
199. Intelligence and knowledge of the world were attributes not conventionally associated with women (cf. Dover 1974:99); that Lysistrata has paid attention to her father plausibly explains her possession of these masculine attributes and is yet another detail linking her with Athena (see Introduction 2).
200. Some scholars think that the following appeals cannot have been intended seriously: the context is ludicrous and salacious, and the appeals themselves are both historically dubious and impracticable (see MacDowell 1995:244–46). Yet the context can be explained as Aristophanes’ way of defusing a potentially outrageous moment (sympathetic portrayal of Spartans), and the appeals as more in tune with popular sentiment and wish-fulfillment than with expert analysis. Evidently, some of the same arguments were in fact made in actual debate at the time.

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.