

DIDASKALIA 

The Journal for Ancient Performance



photo: P. Winters/Theater of War

Didaskalia is an electronic journal dedicated to the study of all aspects of ancient Greek and Roman performance.

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About Didaskalia

Didaskalia (διδασκαλία) is the term used since ancient times to describe the work a playwright did to teach his chorus and actors the play. The official records of the dramatic festivals in Athens were the διδασκαλῖαι. *Didaskalia* now furthers the scholarship of the ancient performance.

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Note

Didaskalia is an online journal. This print representation of Volume 8 is an inadequate approximation of the web publication at didaskalia.net, which includes sound, video, and live hyperlinks.

Staging the Reconciliation Scene of Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*

John Given

East Carolina University

This paper describes an innovative staging of the Reconciliation scene from Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* (Ar. *Lys.* 1108–88), as I directed it at East Carolina University in March 2010, using an unpublished translation by Peter Green.¹ With minimal alterations to the script but a radical rethinking of the characters' actions, my cast and I aimed to communicate to our audience what we took to be the dramatic and thematic functions of the Aristophanic original, namely the restabilization of the comedy's political world and its gender roles. In Aristophanes' play, Lysistrata emerges from the Acropolis and greets the Athenian and Spartan

Ambassadors who have come to negotiate a peace settlement. She summons a personified Reconciliation, who appears as a naked woman.² While Lysistrata rebukes each Ambassador and reminds them of their common Greek heritage, the Ambassadors flirt with Reconciliation,³ distracting attention from Lysistrata's arguments. They then—under Lysistrata's direction and using multiple *double entendres*—negotiate peace by using Reconciliation's body as a map on which they stake their claims to land. Agreement reached, they all retire to the Acropolis for a feast.

To accomplish our purposes, we decided to have Lysistrata summon Reconciliation, as in Aristophanes' script, but played by a male actor, wearing a body suit padded and decorated to suggest a nude female body. About halfway through the negotiations over Reconciliation's body, Lysistrata becomes irritated at the presence of the mock-female Reconciliation. She orders him offstage with an invented line, "If we're going to build our peace on the body of a woman, it has to be a real woman." After removing her own robe to reveal a modest slip, she takes over the role herself, allowing the Athenian and Spartan Ambassadors to restart their negotiations using her body as their map. Whereas they reluctantly poked at Reconciliation's body, they now violently grope and prod the real woman, Lysistrata.

This scene was re-created at the *Ancient Drama in Performance* conference on October 9, 2010. A video of that performance is included here for the reader's reference. It featured Randolph College students Kate Allen as Lysistrata, Jose Lorenzo Alvarez as the Athenian Ambassador, and Conrad Bailey as the Spartan Ambassador; I myself played the Chorus Leader and Reconciliation, although I was—sadly—not able to wear the body suit, as I am larger than the actor who originated the role.⁴

[video: youtube.com/watch?v=_MTpxap_Eds]

In this article, I briefly explore how *Lysistrata* destabilizes the status quo and then re-establishes it in the Reconciliation scene. I then describe several challenges that the modern director must face in staging this scene. Finally, I explain how the staging shown above met those challenges while remaining true to my reading of the play.

Lysistrata creates a topsy-turvy, "women-on-top" world in which, as is well known, the women of Greece enact a double plot, under the leadership of Lysistrata, to end the Peloponnesian War.⁵ First, they pledge to deprive their husbands of sex so as to divert the men's desire for making war to a desire for making love. Second, they capture the Acropolis and its treasures in order to starve the warmongers of their funds. The second plan climaxes in the play's *agôn*, the contest between Lysistrata and the Commissioner



Conference Presentation
video: Randolph College
youtube.com/watch?v=JpvoVImSW0M

(*Proboulos*). In that scene, Lysistrata famously defeats the Commissioner by expanding the domestic sphere to embrace the political world,⁶ so that women, with their experience of the domestic economy, can govern, can “treat the body politic like a freshly sheared fleece” by “put[ting] it in a bath and wash[ing] out all the bullshit” (πρωτον μὲν ἐχρήν ὥσπερ πόκου ἐν βαλανείῳ ἐκπλύναντας τὴν οἰσπώτην ἐκ τῆς πόλεως, 574–75).⁷ With the city’s political establishment defeated, the sex-strike plot returns. After Lysistrata prevents some of her women from escaping the Acropolis for libidinous adventure, a man is spotted approaching: Cinesias, hailing (in our production) from Cockowinity, a toponym derived from the nearby North Carolina town of Chocowinity. Lysistrata sends his wife Myrrhine to him with instructions to “roast him, torture him, tease him, love him and don’t love him, give him everything—except what you swore not to!” (τοῦτον ὀπτᾶν καὶ στρέφειν κάξηπεροπεύειν καὶ φιλεῖν καὶ μὴ φιλεῖν καὶ πάνθ’ ὑπέχειν πλήν ὧν σύνοιδεν ἡ κύλιξ, 839–841). Under Lysistrata’s behind-the-scenes direction, Myrrhine performs a striptease for him and then deserts him and his erection. As a direct result, Cinesias convinces a newly arrived Spartan Herald to summon the Ambassadors, who soon arrive at the Acropolis for reconciliation / Reconciliation.

Once the Ambassadors agree to a peace settlement, though, Lysistrata, her women, and their plans virtually disappear. The final scene is a celebration in which someone, probably Lysistrata herself but perhaps one of the Ambassadors,⁸ instructs the men to take their wives home and to “take care that in future we *never* make the same mistake again” (εὐλαβώμεθα τὸ λοιπὸν αὐθις μὴ ξαμαρτάνειν ἔτι, 1277–78). There is no new political establishment, no new expansion of domestic efficiency into the political realm. The hope is expressed that mistakes will not be repeated, but it is merely a hope. Likewise, the women cede the control they have gained over their husband’s desires. The purpose of their oath has been achieved and they return silently home under their husbands’ auspices. The war is over; otherwise, the world is back to normal.

The return to the status quo hinges on the Reconciliation scene, which shows—quite shockingly, at least to a modern audience—the extent to which male civilization is built on the bodies of women.⁹ As Christopher Faraone has shown, Aristophanes makes possible this gendered construction of peace by tapping into multiple, ideologically fabricated models of female virtue and vice throughout the play. The old women of the Women’s Chorus are consistently depicted as the saviors of the city. They are especially associated with the religious duties assigned to Athenian women. They keep aloof from sexual desire, and their sparring with the Men’s Chorus is an education in good citizenship.¹⁰ The younger Athenian wives such as Kalonike and Myrrhine, in contrast, perform the Old Comic stereotype of women as bibulous and libidinous. They agree to Lysistrata’s plans only reluctantly and then attempt to escape when peace is not achieved at once. Myrrhine’s striptease comes perilously close to becoming Myrrhine’s betrayal of her oath, only avoided by Lysistrata’s presence and calls for restraint. Indeed, lack of restraint is the most salient characteristic of the young wives, a fact that has led several scholars to describe the young wives, like most comic female characters that predate them, as belonging to the ideologically charged category of *hetaerae* (professional escorts, we might say, rather than low-class prostitutes).¹¹

Lysistrata herself does not fit easily into either category, virtuous woman or unrestrained *hetaera*; rather, she partakes of both types. Her association with Athena Polias, protector of the city, has been well studied, and her identification with Lysimache, the historical priestess of Athena Polias, is probably right.¹² She never shows any sign of unrestrained passion. It is not even clear that she will go home to a husband.¹³ Rather, she stands as the clear intellectual and political leader of the young women. She successfully persuades the Spartan Lampito to join in the conspiracy, a move which causes all the other young women to follow suit. She handily defeats the Commissioner, not with the demagogic rhetoric or roguish ingenuity typical of male comic heroes, but with reasoned (if fantastic) arguments and trenchantly humiliating scorn.¹⁴ At the same time, though, Lysistrata more closely resembles the typical courtesan of the comic stage, or even a madam running a brothel. This is nowhere clearer than when

Cinesias approaches the Acropolis seeking Myrrhine. Lysistrata promises to fetch her but only after she asks Cinesias for a “little present for me” (τί οὖν; δώσεεις τί μοι; 861) She is looking to skim some profit off the top of her *hetaera*'s fee. She abandons the plan when Cinesias offers her his erect phallus as payment, but the ambivalence of her character has come through.¹⁵

Reconciliation is unique in the play. Her nudity and silence set her apart from the play's other women. Even after Myrrhine's striptease scene, Reconciliation's hypersexualized presence indicates that she is no high-class *hetaera*; rather, she falls into a lower ideological category: a lower-class (and lower-priced) prostitute, a *pornē*.¹⁶ She is a woman utterly devoid of agency, an object to be used and abused by the other characters, not only the Ambassadors but also Lysistrata, who summons her forth and oversees the negotiations. In short, Reconciliation's presence brings *Lysistrata* into the realm of pornography.¹⁷

Through Reconciliation's pornographic presence Aristophanes is able to bring to an end the play's gynocracy and restore the androcratic status quo. Lysistrata's plans had made the women equal to the men by reducing the power differential between them. The young wives had increased their power over the men's libidinal desires. The old women had seized the Acropolis and thereby eliminated the men's financial advantage over the city's women. The women of the chorus had leveled the playing field of social interaction with their male counterparts. Lysistrata herself had not only overseen all these developments but had also surpassed the power of the city's magistrate, the Commissioner. Her final defeat of him by dressing him as a corpse prepared for burial strongly marked the death of the city's traditional male power. The introduction of the *pornē* Reconciliation, though, reintroduces the normative power differential between the play's men and women. Reconciliation teases the Ambassadors but never controls them. Her low-class status and concomitant powerlessness allow Aristophanes to put men in charge again.

The challenges facing modern directors, then, are numerous. From a purely practical standpoint, they must decide whether Reconciliation will be played by a male or female actor and how that actor will be dressed, if at all. To my recollection, I had seen two productions of *Lysistrata* before I directed my own. In one, Reconciliation was played by a woman; in the other, a man took the role, though he wore a woman's wig and substantial make-up. Both wore body suits that suggested maps rather than nudity, so that the punning identification of a woman's body with landmasses was evident at Reconciliation's first entrance, long before the Ambassadors began deploying their *double entendres*. The decision of how to cast and costume Reconciliation, then, must take into account more than the director's available personnel and their comfort levels. It encompasses how the scene's humor can be played.

More to the point, directors need to decide if they will preserve the pornographic spirit Reconciliation introduces to the stage. It is easy, during the course of *Lysistrata*, to lose sight of the different representations of women in the play. It is easy to present the young wives as reluctant to participate in the sex strike and desirous to escape its restrictions, but still essentially virtuous. Unlike their ancient Athenian counterparts, many members of a modern American audience, especially an audience comprising college students and faculty, will not assume that a woman's expression of her sexual desire and her taking pleasure in sex are signs of her promiscuity. If anything, the open expression of female desire in the play may bring to the forefront the protofeminist strain that is already present in the text,¹⁸ making it easier to identify Lysistrata, Kalonike, Myrrhine and the others as a coherent and cohesive group, with Lysistrata merely having a stronger commitment to the cause than her followers. In this case, Reconciliation becomes an anomaly and can be treated as such. If the entire Reconciliation scene is performed playfully, with Reconciliation inviting the men's advances, she can even come to represent the culmination of the women's taking pleasure in their sexuality. Such staging is possible using the unaltered text, and it leaves the modern audience very comfortable and happy. Presumably, Aristophanes' original audience too, at least its men (whether women were present or not), was

comfortable and happy after this scene since the pornographic depiction of women in Old Comedy was hardly anomalous.¹⁹ Such staging, then, might eliminate some of Aristophanes' gender politics, but it preserves the play's comic spirit, a goal not to be dismissed even by "serious" scholars.

In my staging, I wanted to preserve the humor as much as possible, but the gender politics also mattered. *Lysistrata* has been often used in recent years as an antiwar play, especially in the run-up to the American invasion of Iraq in 2003. In 2010, although the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were dragging on, the antiwar message of the play might have seemed stagnant. The possibility that the play contained a subtle reflection on how patriarchy was constructed, therefore, seemed to be a good animating force.

To allow that subtlety to be seen, I needed to preserve Aristophanes' distinctions among the female characters. The Women's Chorus had to be eminently likeable but also dominant in their battle with the Men's Chorus. I was blessed to find a Women's Chorus Leader, Alexandria White, whose beauty and small stature were counterbalanced by a fire hot enough to burn any man's ego.²⁰ The young wives also needed to be sympathetic, but also to communicate to the audience that sex filled their minds as much as the men's. Our Myrrhine, Amber Moore, projected such a sweet demeanor that it was quite a surprise when she threw herself at Cinesias (Darrell Purcell) so eagerly that Lysistrata needed to restrain her ardor from within the Acropolis. Meanwhile, Kalonike (Jennifer Latham) set up camp in a corner of the stage so that she could participate in Myrrhine and Cinesias's liaison as a voyeur, at least until Lysistrata ordered her back into the Acropolis. Danielle Bryan's Lysistrata, like White's Women's Chorus Leader, possessed both beauty and fire, but whereas White's fire was shrill and confrontational, Bryan burned with a desire always focused on a higher goal, with a sense of justice and righteousness. In addition, she projected supreme self-confidence. The only moment she showed doubt was during the prologue, when she begged for cooperation from Lampito (Leigh Wagner). Thereafter, she controlled the stage like a leader who had earned complete respect. We admittedly lost some of the ambivalence of Lysistrata's character. For audience members who read the expression of female desire as normative, Lysistrata's courtesan-like actions and words seemed consistent with her overall characterization. We did succeed, though, in distinguishing her from the rest of the women onstage, not only through behavior but also through costuming. Lysistrata wore black while the other women wore brighter colors (Myrrhine blue, Kalonike red, etc.).

In contrast to the other women, Reconciliation needed to be shown as an object of desire and/or an object of political wrangling. Her objectification could be shown through a pornographic setting or some other way, but it had to be done without losing the audience's attention and sympathy. The decision to begin the Reconciliation scene with a man dressed in a faux-naked body suit, only to be replaced by a self-degrading Lysistrata, was born of several factors: practical concerns about how to portray nudity onstage, attention to the audience's response to the arc of scenes in the play's second half, and especially the need to have Reconciliation meaningfully differentiated from the play's other women. Practical concerns arose because I was a Classical Studies professor who would be working with a cast of students generally possessing little theatrical experience. I was already concerned that my student actors would be uncomfortable with the play's sexuality and obscenity. Asking one of them to appear naked would have been beyond the pale. Moreover, even though I already had tenure, I did not feel like I possessed the sanction that would have allowed me to put anything starkly pornographic onstage, especially on a temporary stage erected in a large student-union meeting room. Such sanction might belong to a theater professor working within a recognized theater program, but probably not to other faculty. These may not be considerations scholars typically imagine when studying performance, but we must be aware of the limitations in all performance settings. Having Lysistrata dressed in a modest slip after replacing the faux-naked woman-man made possible the representation of nudity without actual nakedness. The audience had no doubt as to how they ought to "see" Lysistrata after she dropped her robe.

Once the Ambassadors began groping the disrobed Lysistrata, we knew that the audience would stop laughing, although a few nervous chuckles were heard each night of our three-performance run. We therefore carefully anticipated the arc of the last few scenes, and talked about it repeatedly during the rehearsal process. Although the first two-thirds of the play would have plenty of laughs, it was clear that the audience would be won over completely by the Cinesias-and-Myrrhine scene and that its momentum would need to be preserved. We aimed to have an ebb and flow of laughter from then until the end of the play, with each “ebb” allowing the audience to catch their breath (though without surrendering the laughter altogether) and each “flow” ratcheting up the laughter even higher than the time before. After Myrrhine’s departure, Cinesias converses with the Men’s Chorus Leader and the Spartan Herald. Here we had some lowbrow fun comparing Cinesias’s large erection to the Men’s Leader’s flaccid phallus and the Herald’s “Spartan walking-stick” (σκυτάλα Λακωνικά, 991). The laughter began growing again in the next scene, as the Semichoruses reconciled with one another, joined ranks, and delivered the parabasis. *Lysistrata* does not have a proper parabasis, but this section of the play (1043–71) contains a choral interlude directly addressed to the audience. The Chorus playfully offers the audience gifts, only to rescind the offers at the end of each stanza. Knowing these stanzas would be uninteresting to our audience, I rewrote the scene, with input from my chorus actors, as a critique of behavior on our campus.²¹ The scene stopped the show every night and thus succeeded in our goal of topping the striptease scene’s laughter. With the pattern established, we allowed the laughter to subside somewhat as Reconciliation was called forth and began teasing the Ambassadors. The audience’s expectation of another raucous scene, however, never materialized. Instead, as we prepared them to laugh again with the beginning of the peace negotiations and its *double entendres*, Lysistrata pulled off her *coup de théâtre* by inserting her own body into the negotiations and thereby plummeting the audience into almost total silence. After that scene, we were careful to bring the audience back into a good mood with the finale, although it was planned so as not to reach the comic heights of the striptease scene and the parabasis. This seemed right because, even if Lysistrata does speak in the final scene, she does not end the play triumphantly. With the restored status quo, she is now subordinate to the Athenian and Spartan men. It seemed that a slightly muted celebration of the peace was in order.

The primary factor in our staging of the Reconciliation scene, though, was gender politics, as shown in Aristophanes’ differentiation of female types. Although we could not use a naked woman as Reconciliation, we still did find a way to add an air of pornography to the scene, albeit with violence rather than explicit sexuality. The final shape of the scene resulted from a true collaboration between myself and Danielle Bryan (Lysistrata). I brought to her the idea of having Lysistrata replace a male Reconciliation, thinking that the substitution was sufficient degradation to make the point that Lysistrata had become an object of male desire. In our ensuing discussion and in rehearsals, however, it became clear to us that the substitution was not sufficient. If the Ambassadors played the negotiation sequence once with the faux-female Reconciliation and then merely jocularly repeated the scene with Lysistrata, the substitution would have had little effect. Their treatment of Lysistrata needed to be markedly different in tone, and Bryan encouraged me to have it be more violent. It became clear that, if we were going to make the substitution, only a complete degradation of Lysistrata would subvert the power dynamics we had constructed thus far. As Foley (1982, 10) notes, the power of Aristophanes’ play “derives precisely from the way Lysistrata dissipates the standard comic and even tragic expectations about the behavior of women and particularly about ‘female intruders.’” For our modern audience, who might less readily recognize Lysistrata’s abnormality and more readily accept her as a strong leader, we aimed to “dissipate” their expectations by reducing the strong woman to a passive object. Without the violence, with the men merely touching Lysistrata instead of groping her, the scene was flat, a mere curiosity at the end of an otherwise excellent performance. When we got the violence right, the Ambassadors were seen to conspire with one another across and around our heroine’s body with its shockingly passive face. It became a tense and sobering moment in which the price to be paid for political peace was eerily etched on the body’s breasts and buttocks. When Lysistrata reasserted herself and declared that the men could

not enjoy sex until they signed an armistice (1175), it was a great relief, a sign that it was permissible to laugh again, if only a little.

The scene, then, was an attempt to show Lysistrata herself winning the war by sacrificing herself in the battle. It goes beyond the Aristophanic text (though only slightly) and subverts the Aristophanic characterization of Lysistrata, but I think it brings out a critical theme that is present but risks being lost. Lysistrata becomes not the flirtatious Myrrhine of the striptease scene, but the low-class prostitute who surrenders even her own body and thereby allows the men to regain power. We see not a generic nude woman standing as the men's new toy, as in Aristophanes' original; instead we see a character with whom we have come to sympathize turned into an anonymous plaything. It was important that the Ambassadors act conspiratorially with one another as they replayed the scene. They are in collusion to regain control of the situation, to reassert their common masculinity. The scene thus introduces a concept of self-sacrifice that is admittedly more Christian than Athenian, but one that thereby communicates to the audience the gendered paradox that lies at the heart of this comedy: namely, that the women effectively seize power with the sole purpose of surrendering it to the men again, in the probably vain hope that the men will not make the same mistakes again.

notes

¹ Green's translation was largely based on the text of Henderson 1987, with occasional reference to Sommerstein 1990. The Greek I quote is from Henderson's edition. Please note that the interpolations in our production are to be attributed to me, not the translator.

² It is uncertain whether Reconciliation (and the other nude female characters in Old Comedy) was played by a real woman or a man in a padded costume. For a review of the evidence, with differing conclusions, see Henderson 1987, ad 1106–27; Stone 1984, 147–50; Zweig 1992, 78–80.

³ This stage action is, surprisingly, overlooked by some scholars, to the point that Heath (1987, 15) needs to argue for it. The Ambassadors' comments about Reconciliation's body (1136, 1148, 1158) seem to guarantee it. More to the point, even the simplest blocking of the scene would place Lysistrata and one Ambassador on one part of the stage and Reconciliation and the other Ambassador on another. Given that Reconciliation is the most eye-catching thing on stage, where else would the audience be looking and what else would Reconciliation and her Ambassador be doing?

⁴ Let me express here my gratitude to these brave student actors who played this scene before their peers and a panel of scholars with barely thirty minutes of rehearsal the day before. In the original production at East Carolina, the cast included: Danielle Bryan as Lysistrata, Tony Lewis as the Spartan Ambassador, Collin Jones as the Athenian Ambassador, and Marshall Bren Woodard as Reconciliation. The Chorus Leader's lines were delivered alternately by the Men's and Women's Chorus Leaders, played by Kelly Hunnings and Alexandria White, respectively.

⁵ On the double plot structure of *Lys.*, see Henderson 1987, xxvi–xxvii; Hulton 1972; Vaio 1973.

⁶ Foley (1982) importantly argued, contra Shaw 1975, that we ought not to interpret Lysistrata's (or *Ecclesiazusae's* Praxagora's) movement as a departure from a private, domestic, female sphere into a public, political, male sphere, as if these two spheres were mutually exclusive realms: "The structure of these comedies [*Lysistrata* and *Ecclesiazusae*] confirms the usefulness of the oikos–polis polarity in analyzing the sexual dialectic of Greek drama, provided that one sees these terms as a contradictory unity and not, as does Shaw, as a simple structural opposition" (1982, 4).

⁷ All translations are from Green's script.

⁸ I am persuaded by the arguments advanced by Sommerstein (1990, *ad* 1273–90) that Lysistrata delivers this speech, not the Athenian Ambassador. Green’s translation also gives the speech to Lysistrata.

⁹ Numerous scholars have recognized various aspects of *Lysistrata*’s return to normative political and social roles. See Fletcher 1999, 120: “In the Reconciliation scene [Lysistrata] performs another transformative act by presenting a naked woman and making her represent Greece. . . . Lysistrata performs this theatrical tour de force in order to restore the conceptual system which aligns women with the body and men with the formative principle. Certainly in this case the focus on the body of [Reconciliation] re-establishes women in the sphere of the material, while men’s organisation of her body into discrete areas that they can occupy and regulate means that they are now restored to their controlling roles.” Cf. Jay–Robert 2006, 36–41; Konstan 1995, 45–60; Saxonhouse 1980, 69–27; Scholtz 2007, 83; Stroup 2004, 62.

¹⁰ On the character of the women’s semichorus, see Faraone 2006, 209–11.

¹¹ On the character of the young wives, see Faraone 2006, 209–11; Stroup 2004.

¹² The identification was first suggested by Lewis 1955, 1–7. On Lysistrata’s virtuous and religious character, see also Anderson, 1995, 53; Foley 1982, 9–10; Henderson 1987, xxxviii–xli; Newiger 1980, 235–36.

¹³ This fact led our translator to recommend costuming her as a widow.

¹⁴ At Given 2009, 125–26, I argue that Aristophanes, by painting the Commissioner as an incompetent bumbler, is able to depict Lysistrata as an expert politician with superb intelligence.

¹⁵ On Lysistrata’s ambivalent character, see Faraone 2006, 214–19.

¹⁶ On Reconciliation as a *pornē*, see Stroup 2004, 63–66.

¹⁷ Zweig (1992) argues, from a carefully historicized perspective, that we ought to read this scene and similar scenes in the Aristophanic corpus as pornographic.

¹⁸ This was a view that we encouraged in our newly written parabasis. See n. 21, below.

¹⁹ Several Aristophanic plays contain silent and/or naked women portrayed pornographically, including *Acharnians*, *Wasps*, *Peace*, *Birds*, and *Thesmophoriazusae*. See Zweig 1992 for complete discussion.

²⁰ I want to note and even emphasize the irony of taking into account the actors’ beauty during the casting process in order to prevent the audience from objectifying the female characters until the Reconciliation scene. Am I not objectifying the women by using their physical beauty as a means to convey character? Yes, that is true, and these were issues to which I was particularly sensitive as a male director. I acknowledge the counterpurposes at play here, but this was one place where the practice of theatrical production needed to win out over the theory of academic criticism. If I had cast an unattractive woman as the Women’s Chorus Leader, it would have been too easy for the audience—men and women—to write her off as a mean, old, unsympathetic bitch. So, yes, it is true that for a play partly about critiquing stereotypes of women, I cast the play by taking into account the audience’s presumed stereotypes of women, offensive as they can be, namely that attractive women are inherently likeable and unattractive women mean. It is certainly possible, of course, to use the stage to critique the beauty myth, but *Lysistrata* would be a poor vehicle for that critique. If one chooses to produce a particular play, one must accept the limitations imposed by its script.

²¹ The theme of the new parabasis was gender relations on campus, and particularly women's self-presentation. I need to note that the entire chorus—both the Men's Semichorus and the Women's Semichorus—was played by female actors, a decision motivated primarily by the fact that we lacked a sufficient number of men. We drew attention to the abandonment of character by having one of the "men" make reference to their being "saddled with felt penises." The parabasis proceeded as follows: The women said that, in a play about sex, they wanted to talk about sex. They admitted that they liked sex, "all sorts of sex," at which point the eight women rattled off the names of sixteen sex positions and then eight slang terms for female body parts. They then transitioned to a new topic with, "We like sex. We love our bodies. We think our bodies are sexy and we love to show them off. But enough is enough, ladies." They criticized their peers on campus who seem to value sex more than learning. "There's nothing wrong with being hot and smart," they said. And they concluded with some advice for the men in the audience: "We still want the screw. But we want it when we say, where we say, and how we say." In the final line, they obscenely told the men what they could go do to themselves.

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