

**THE SOCIO-POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE PORTRAYAL OF  
WOMEN IN ARISTOPHANES' 'WOMEN PLAYS'**

**BY**

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**JUNE 2012**

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**THIS THESIS IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON IN  
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## DECLARATIONS

I declare that this thesis *The Socio–Political Implications of the Portrayal of Women in Aristophanes’ ‘Women Plays’* is my own originality, ideas, thoughts and that acknowledgment has been given to all references and quotations.

I submit that this thesis has not been presented to any Institution or examining board nor credited to anyone for an award of a degree.

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## ABSTRACT

Literary records representing women in the ancient Athenian society are heavily dependant on the writings of men and that has influenced the portrayal of women. However, the ancient Athenian society has some outstanding similarities and differences in areas such as: the performance of rituals, family life and shared values in the society. The positions of women in the Athenian society are characterized by male domination. From childhood the girl comes under the authority of her father and upon marriage that of her husband. Throughout a woman's life she remains under the subordination of a man and she is expected to work without complaint.

The objective of this work is: to collect passages from Aristophanes' three 'women plays' namely *Lysistrata*, *Thesmophoriazusae* and *Ecclesiazusae* because these plays are deemed to represent Aristophanes' detailed portrayal of Athenian women. The depiction of women in the plays reflects the general view of women during the fourth and fifth centuries BC. Then there would be analyses of the implications that arose from their portrayal such as their roles as wives, mothers and intruding into the public sphere of men (assembly) that comes to the fore in the plays. It is pertinent to remember that the representation of women on stage is the representation of a male's interpretation of women, since men played all parts in the play.

I conclude that Aristophanes' portrayal of Athenian women should be accepted with some caution since not all of his portrayal can be said to have truly represented women.

## **DEDICATION**

I humbly dedicate this work to my parents Mr. and Mrs. Owusu-Asiamah whose care and support have sustained me up to this day.



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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.0 Background of the Study

In recent years a variety of distinctive literary works examining the role and status of women in the field of literature has become abundant; however, questions still arise about how women were represented in literature, especially in ancient Greek literature. This thesis takes a look at how ancient Greek women, especially in the Athenian society, were portrayed socially, that is, in terms of their roles in the *oikos*, which encompass domestic and cultural duties. Stewardess of the house, caring for husband and children, spinning and weaving, performance of religious rituals such as *Thesmophoria*, *Skira* and also participating in the Eleusinian Mysteries. There were no political roles attributed to women in the ancient Greek society, but there were a few exceptions of women who held political positions in the Greek society; one of such was Phrygia, a government official in her city–state of Sparta. (Plutarch *Moralia III 257e*). Aristophanes' three 'women plays' namely, *Lysistrata*, *Thesmophoriazusae* and the *Ecclesiazusae* (*Assemblywomen*) represent character portrayal of women in the Athenian society during the fourth and fifth centuries BC. Then there would be analyses of the implications that arose from their portrayal such as their roles as wives, mothers and intruding into the public sphere of men (assembly) that comes to the fore in the plays.

The Classical world and literature in particular have portrayed womenfolk in various lights: authoritative, dominating and subservient. Herodotus, Polybius, Livy and Tacitus are some early Classical historians who have written about women. Women have also been the subject matter of the writings of comedians such as Aristophanes and Terence and a few satirists like Semonides, Juvenal and Horace. However, it was not until very recently that

there was an awakening directed towards the study of women in Classical scholarship and many Classical scholars have done a re-assessment of the biases and the prejudices against women in Classical literature. Some of these scholars include: J. Peradotto, J. Sullivan, Mary R. Lefkowitz, Sarah Pomeroy, Amy Richlin, Eva Canterella, and Lesly Dean-Jones.

Thus, 'Women in Classical Antiquity' has now become a fully established area of specialization in Classical scholarship. It dates from the spring of 1973 when the journal *Arethusa* under the editorship of John Peradotto and J. Sullivan put out the first special issue of a learned periodical expressly dedicated to that area of study. In the light of this, other special journals, books and essays soon emerged. Four decades later, the anthology of expert studies remains the most widely utilized vehicle for advancing the parameters of research on the subject, and study of women in Classical antiquity has grown from a subfield of Classical scholarship into a legitimate and dignified subject of inquiry based on its own merits.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century has witnessed an ever emerging trend in literary and gender studies that led many critics to take different interest in explaining character portrayal of women in various literary works. These interests subsequently paved the way for conceptualizing of theories to explain the implications of an actor's role.

Hence, I have selected the three 'women plays' of Aristophanes as basis for assessing women's role because the plays provide a concrete contextual interpretation of women's portrayal in comedy during the fourth and fifth centuries BC and also the plays were deemed to represent Athenian women during the period under consideration.

Many writers over the years have treated issues related to women in Classical drama under the guise that women in Greek drama are exceptions to the rules of what the Athenian society expected of female behaviours. For instance, in *Lysistrata* and *Ecclesiazusae*, the plays center on female political revolt, whereas women in tragedy have been better represented as in the case of Medea who steps out of the standard social roles to become a

tragic heroine. Euripides composed a speech in which Medea passionately presented the wrongs done to women. (*Me.*214–220)

Medea: Women of Corinth, I would not have you censure me. So I have come. Many, I know, are proud at heart, indoors or out; but others are ill spoken of as supercilious, just because their ways are quiet. There is no justice in the world's censorious eyes. They will not wait to learn a man's true character. Though no wrong has been done them, one look-and they hate. (Translated: Moses Hades)

The tragic plays of Euripides no doubt helped to form an unfavourable estimation of women. For example, women in the *Thesmophoriazusaie* are represented as being fond of alcohol (*Thesm.* 347–8). As a result of this, their husbands lock up the store house in order to prevent their wives from sneaking alcohol into the house. Women are also portrayed as cleverly deceiving their husbands with suspicious children. Euripides' estimation of women at the time shows that not only did men view women as having a low standard of morality, but women were also harshly and unfavourably judged by men. The views of Athenian men as depicted in the plays of Euripides made men not to trust their wives and to become suspicious of their wives as men search everywhere in the house for hidden lovers. Athenian women would like to be represented as virtuous as Melanippe, Phaedra and Penelope (*Thesm.* 545–549).

It is pertinent to remember that the representation of women on stage is the representation of a male's interpretation of women, since men played all parts in the play. Is it therefore possible by this construct to make any conclusive judgments that the males represented the women in their 'real world'? (Taaffe 1993:19).

## 1.1 Statement of Problem

A question that has not ceased to bother the minds of many people today more so in gender circles, is, “Has the conception and treatment of women today been any different from the past?” The experiences women go through today either at home (domestic) or at the work place or in the societies that women find themselves have resemblances to that of women in ancient Athens.

Critics have overlooked flute girls and courtesans who make occasional appearances in the plays and at the end offer sexual gratification to the hero to rejuvenate him. A close look at these female figures will offer new interpretations of each play. Questions occur such as: what roles do these female figures play in the comedy? Are there any evidences in the text available to point to males playing the role of females? Answers to these will help us appreciate the roles and importance of female characters in Aristophanic comedy.

The three plays will be interpreted in a way to demonstrate the social and political issues embedded in them. Whilst doing this, I will examine a number of related works on women and trace the origin of and the reason for the negative and positive images of women in ancient Greek literature and their socio-political implications. The plays of Aristophanes were influenced by the general perception that existed in the Athenian society and that affected the portrayal of women in his plays.

A number of studies have been done on Aristophanes’ portrayal of women by various scholars. Such include: Suzanne Said, *The Assemblywomen: Women, Economy and Politics* (1979); Sommerstein Alan H: *Lysistrata* (1990), Helene .P. Foley: *The “Female Intruder” Reconsidered: Women in Aristophanes’ Lysistrata and Ecclesiazusae* (1982) and Lauren K. Taaffe, *Aristophanes and Women* (1993).

## **1.2 Significance of Study**

The significance of this research is to extend the knowledge on gender studies and literary criticism. It is hoped that scholars, critics and students find this work useful because it will serve as a new material for further discussion in the field of women in ‘Classical Antiquity’. Scholars will gain an opportunity to look again at how the female gender has been constructed over the years by males and even females themselves.

## **1.3 Aims and Objectives**

The fundamental aim of the study is to interpret how Aristophanes uses themes such as sex–strike, women’s adulterous affairs, and effects of women’s religious rituals on the state in relation to addressing issues of war and the economy of the state. Further it will proceed to identify some setbacks or challenges that contributed to women’s socio–political portrayal in the ancient Athenian society.

## **1.4 Limitations and Delimitations**

The study is limited to Aristophanes’ three ‘women plays’ and it will offer a close contextual interpretation of the plays as a way of exploring the themes pertaining to women’s behaviour and a critical appreciation of the themes. Excerpts will be drawn from the selected plays to illustrate the extent to which the thematic issues in the work are shaped by the playwright. The plays assume that the women in the plays represent Athenian women.

## **1.5 Scope of Work**

This research is a literary exploration of Aristophanes’ three ‘women plays’. The plays are not an arbitrary selection, the reasons being that the plays provide a deep insight into the beginning of Aristophanes’ detail discussion of women’s portrayal. The plays also begin the development of stereotypical portrayal of women that were projected in the plots and themes of his plays as opposed to ‘real women’ in the Athenian society during the fourth

and fifth centuries BC. Hence, these three plays will afford all the opportunity to better appreciate and understand the socio-political as well as the cultural position of women in the Athenian society and by extension Greek society. The first two plays: *Lysistrata* and *Thesmophoriazusae* were performed within the same time, which is in 411BC, and even as such they each offer a unique representation of women's portrayal. In the *Lysistrata* there is a rebellion of female sex-strike as a plan to curtail the Peloponnesian War, whereas in the *Thesmophoriazusae*, Athenian women want to put Euripides on trial because he has tarnished women's behaviour in his plays. After a period of nine years, Aristophanes staged the *Ecclesiazusae*. In this play there is slight twist of events; women attend the next assembly in order to vote for the government to be handed over to them.

### **1.6 Research Methodology**

The study is a qualitative research because it is a library based study and it will use chronological approach to interpret thematic concerns, ideological orientation, and dramatic techniques in order to extrapolate ideas from the playwright that became apparent in his writing. Comedy has been chosen as the literary genre because there is a more graceful interaction between fiction and reality; the costume, mask and language address the audience directly. Aristotle in his *Poetics* (1449b24-8) says that 'comedy is the imitation of a serious action'. Comedy therefore, is able to create humour which in turn assists in performing various functions in the society in terms of bonding societal norms in a less rigid manner. The audiences are able to communicate visually with the characters on stage as essential societal values are taught through the performance of the plays. The primary sources particularly provide the socio-political portrayal of women in fifth century Athens. Articles, magazines and books will form part of the secondary datum. In interpreting the portrayal of women in Aristophanic comedy, I will provide evidence from the text supported with arguments from various scholars in the field under consideration.

## **1.7 Organization of Work**

The order of presenting this work is categorized into six chapters. The first is the introduction which will provide a brief summary of how the research will be conducted. Chapter Two will be the literature review. Chapters Three, Four and Five will interpret the three selected plays respectively under sub–titles such as synopsis of the play, social and political portrayal of women. Chapter Six will conclude and summarize the work on Aristophanes' portrayal of women.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.0 Introduction

This sub-section reviews scholarly works on the origin and evolution of comedy, life and works of Aristophanes, Aristophanes' representation of women in ancient Greece, and lastly the theoretical framework used in interpreting the plays. The study of women in ancient Greek literature reveals that the representations and images of women in works of art and history are all composed by men. This construction presented women from a male's point of view and so the issues of women should be treated with some caution.

#### 2.1 Origin and Evolution of Comedy

Comedy as an art form was performed in ancient Greek theatre under the auspices of the government at two official festivals: the City Dionysia (Great Dionysia) and the Lenaea.<sup>i</sup> These two festivals were in honour of Dionysus, the god of wine. Comedy is from the Greek word *komos* meaning revelling. The first recorded comedy at the City Dionysia was in 486BC and in 442BC performances of comedy began at the Lenaea. The City Dionysia was held during March or April. It was a religious celebration of spring and renewal and had attendants from all over Greece and the Mediterranean. The Lenaea was held in January and February and by contrast it was attended by only local Athenians. The location of the Lenaea is unknown but the City Dionysia was held in the Theatre of Dionysus on the south slope of the Acropolis which could have five consecutive days of dramatic performances, but during the Peloponnesian War it was reduced to three days (McLeish 1980:26–27).

In order for a playwright to have his plays performed at any of these festivals he had to present his plays to the city archons: for the City Dionysia *archon eponymos* and for the Lenaea *archon basileus* who will grant the playwright a chorus and also bear the cost of the

play. It was the responsibility of the playwright to teach his actors parts in the play and he was often referred to as *didaskalos*; that is a teacher. A sponsor, the *choregos*, will be assigned to the playwright. The sponsor was a rich Athenian citizen who increased his reputation and influence by taking responsibility of the play. The *choregos* selected men of his tribe for the chorus and also hired the chorus-trainer as well as musicians and arranged for the costume.

A *choregos* who became victorious would have a monument erected in his honour and a tripod would be presented to him. The tripod will be adorned with a monument.<sup>ii</sup> Judges were also appointed for the plays. They were picked by lot out of a large number of citizens selected by a council responsible for the performance of a play. Ten names will be called out and these will take the front seat reserved for them. These men also swear an oath to vote for the best performer.<sup>iii</sup>

All parts in comedy were played by men. Actors wore highly stylized costumes. The costumes were heavily padded because the actors had to disguise themselves. Costumes which had bottom layers of bodysuit were padded at the arms and legs with extra wrinkles at the waist and ankles. The comic masks were exaggerated depending on the nature of the character: Old man, Cook, Courtesan and so on. For the phalluses and the breast costumes of the chorus it has been suggested that they were derived from early ritual associations of fertility cults<sup>iv</sup>.

Female characters wore pads underneath their cloths and these pads were not conspicuous in Old Comedy. The chorus was normally made up of twenty four dancers. At a point in the play the chorus is divided into two (men and women) with each half defending some viewpoint and abusing the other half sometimes physically.<sup>v</sup>

The first audience address sets the stage for the play and the plot of the play proceeds. In the prologue the audience is addressed either directly or indirectly. As in the case of *Frogs*:

Xanthias: Boss, would you mind it if I started off with a good old gag  
that always get a laugh? (1)

In comedy the *parodos* marks the entry of the chorus which is often characterized by long songs and dance. The *agon* consists of various scenes which are interspersed with the chorus. It was a central scene in the play that establishes formal debate on every important issue in the play. It was speech against speech, song against song. The two characters often spoke in tetrameters; a poetic meter with four anapestic meter per line and a rhythm for comic verse.

A passage known as the *parabasis* is often delivered by a single chorus on subject that has little or no value to the play<sup>vi</sup>. This scene shows the result of the conclusion so far reached in the *agon*. A second *parabasis* which contains jibes is directed to an important personality in the audience. *Exodus*, the concluding scene of the revelry, ends with a short song. For instance in the *Frog* (1476–1479):

Xanthias: It's so long since the old man drank and heard. The pipe and  
he's enjoying it so much. That now he won't stop dancing.  
All night long he's been performing Thespsis' old dances  
He says he'll dance in competition with Modern tragedians  
and prove them fogeys!

Greek comedy had two epochs, Old Comedy with exponents such as Eupolis, Cratinus and Aristophanes, and New Comedy whose main exponent was Menander.<sup>vii</sup> Middle comedy was a later notion which refers to the plays that were composed between the fall of Athens and the Battle of Chaeronea. Murray (1933) draws a distinction between Old comedy with *res publica* and New Comedy with *res private*.<sup>viii</sup> Aristotle (*Poetics* 1449b24–8) believes that Crates is more worthy to be considered of a writer of New Comedy because Crates abandoned sheer raillery and composed orderly plots.

In his, *The Origin of Attic Comedy*, Conford observes that the fragments of Crates and Pherecrates are hardly distinguishable from the manner of New Comedy. The styles of Aristophanes could have been characteristic of his contemporaries much earlier. He however

had a comedy in the new style *Vita*– which is now lost. This comedy contains rape, recognition and all those other things Menander loved.

Above all, Old Comedy became the medium through which writers at the time used to teach Athenians the civic duties and at the same time entertaining the audience. Theatrical performance helped in shaping a central part of Athens' ideological personality Henderson (1991). Of all the writers of Old Comedy, it was Aristophanes who lived to write Old Comedy because his treatment of characters were taken from real and succinctly incorporated in his plots. His plays have become part of Western literature studied in various fields of literary criticism.

## 2.2 Life and Works of Aristophanes

The date of Aristophanes' birth is actually not known. He is however believed to have been born in Cydathenaeus, a deme in Athens in the year c.447BC. He was the son of Philippus. Among the forty plays that he wrote eleven are extant and these have remained a part of Western literature. His first play *The Banqueters*<sup>ix</sup> was performed in 427BC. and was ranked second in the contest. He was barely twenty years when he produced the play. Until his death in c.388 BC, Aristophanes remained the leading comic poet of Greece.

Moses Hadas wrote concerning Aristophanes:

If Aristophanes is without direct progeny, his influence on subsequent satire and farce is very great. But valuable as he may be as a commentary on a uniquely valuable area of human experience or as a begetter of art in others his true claim upon our attention is as the most brilliant and artistic and thoughtful which our world has ever known (Hadas 1962:1)

The following year his play *The Babylonians*, which was performed at the Dionysia in 426 BC, came first in the contest. The play is available in fragments. It endured a persecution by Cleon for anti–Athenian propaganda. Aristophanes' eleven extant plays include: *Acharnians* (425BC), *Knights* (424BC), *Clouds* (423BC), *Wasps* (422BC), *Peace* (421BC), *Birds* (414 BC), *Lysistrata* (411BC), *Thesmophoriazusae* (411BC), *Ecclesiazusae* (372BC) and *Wealth*

(358BC). Of these plays, *Acharnians*, *Knights* and *Frogs* took first positions and *Wasps* was defeated because Aristophanes presented another play *Preview* at the same festival. *Peace* and *Birds* took second positions and the original version of *Clouds* was given third place. Two more comedies were produced by his son Araros after the production of *Wealth*.

Modern readers will easily notice that Aristophanes' plays were highly topical: we may miss many points, be it comic or serious because we are ignorant of the circumstances of the time. By this we become limited in our understanding and appreciation of the likes and dislikes, the worries and pleasures of Aristophanes and his spectators. But we can discover his intentions in all his plays. The plays of Aristophanes have survived because of their intrinsic values. They offer both readers and critics a rich experience and have remained a favorite in Western literature. His main aim for writing his plays was to entertain his spectators. This assessment is also true of his other rivals whose comedies are now lost: Cratinus, Eupolis, Pherecrates, Phrynichus and others.

Literary critics have remarked that underneath the rhetoric of Aristophanes there is always a socio-political indictment of Athenians in his brand of comedies. Richard Hunter's (2000:271–272) comment on Aristophanes, argued persuasively that Aristophanes jumbled diction and frantic energy as he represent the unrest of fifth-century Athens while Menander a straight forward and instructive poet presents comedy in a civilized good order.

Scholars in Classical literature have raised questions about whether Aristophanes had any political outlook and the effect of his plays on the Athenian society.

Gomme's *Aristophanes and Politics* addressed some issues about Aristophanes political views. For him, Aristophanes was not just a comic poet but a dramatist, an artist, a man whose purpose is to give us a picture and not to advocate a policy. Some scholars also believe that his plays exerted socio-political influence. In a response to Gomme, Ste Croix says:

Aristophanes was a man of very vigorous political views of a conservative 'Cimonian' variety (not all untypical among the Athenian upper class), the general complexion of which is easily identifiable and remained consistent over the period of some forty years. Ste Croix (1972:45–46).

D.M. MacDowell says of Aristophanes:

His unique achievement was to give good advice to the Athenians while never ceasing to entertain. MacDowell (1995:356).

Scholars in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have often evaluated Aristophanes' plays based on the socio-political experiences of the time. Whereas some see him as an advisor to the city others also view him as an ineffectual entertainer. But whatever description that has been granted to Aristophanes the fact that his plays had political, social and even cultural undercurrents cannot be overruled.

Gilbert Murray in his *Aristophanes: A Study*, maintained that there are two parallel worlds: ancient and modern. His account illustrates the tendency of Aristophanes to project himself, his aspirations and his world based on the ancient subject which he dealt with. The Peloponnesian War according to Murray can be compared to a world war based on its own merit. It was a struggle between the principles of democracy and military command.

Discussions on Aristophanes' socio-political outlooks affirm his unfailing biases. Throughout his plays he understood that the primary purpose in comedy is to make clear his theme through the careful manipulation of images, jokes and fantasy. This brilliance of Aristophanes as a playwright has never been questioned, though many scholars over the years have criticized and argued about some details in his works. There is no doubt that of all the writers of Old Comedy Aristophanes is ranked as the finest dramatist and comic artist of the fifth century BC.

### **2.3 Women in Ancient Greece**

The search for historical information about the role and status of women in ancient Greek society has yielded discussions among many scholars. There however exist quite a

number of sources that one may want to investigate for more information about ancient Greek women: orators, philosophers, ancient historians, playwrights and poets. Other evidence may come from inscriptions on fine arts and religious archaeology based on material traces of religious rituals such as relics, buildings among others.

In *Reading Greek* (1987:95), the Joint Association of Classical Teachers emphasized that the Athenian society was male dominated and nearly all Greek literature was written by men. This affected how the men assessed the impact and importance of women in the Athenian society. Much of this information about women's lives emerged almost incidentally from literary sources and the 'tragic' stature of the great dramatic heroines. Euripides and Aristophanes enabled us to see the mythical heroine very much in terms of a fifth century Athenian woman in her concern for her husband, children and society.

Homer was one of the early writers to have provided information about Greek women.<sup>x</sup> Influential and very powerful women appear in the Homeric epics. These women include Helen, Clytemnestra and Penelope. Authors from varying backgrounds have different views about Helen in the *Iliad*: whilst some regard her as surpassing the traditional boundaries of Greek women, others see her as shameful and deceitful. There are still others who approve of her by disassociating her from shame for neglecting her husband for another man. She brought dishonour upon herself when she took a foreign husband and the entire nation had to suffer the effects of the ten year war. In the *Odyssey*, Penelope is different: no longer a mistress but linked with Artemis (goddess of chastity) who moves from a position of being a woman of passion to a virtuous wife (Suzuki 1989). Helen stands in stark contrast with Penelope. In the *Odyssey*, Penelope rejects many suitors who came her way, whereas Helen easily succumbs to Paris' passion. Both Helen and Penelope can be celebrated as Greek women who acted on their own will. Homer wrote at a time when Greeks valued honour and virtue and women were only passive characters in the world of the men.

The loyalty of a Greek woman was highly praised. Men could however be polygamous and have slave concubines. Women on the other hand generally stayed at home performing various household tasks. Archaeological evidence from some Mycenaean tablets provides evidence that food distribution for men at that time was two and a half times that of women.<sup>xi</sup> This trend clearly indicates that the position of women was inferior to that of the men.

The status and role of women in ancient Athens was more restricted as opposed to their counterparts in other city-states. For instance, women in Sparta were included in education and the political life of the state. There were definite role expectations for both men and women. However, these roles varied among the various class distinctions.<sup>xii</sup> Greek women had the basic right to marry and bear legitimate children in order for the family lineage to be perpetuated. Daughters inherited the family property if there were no sons. Women were obliged to marry their next of kin to facilitate the chance of maintaining a father's property and they could also receive eighteen percent of their dowry annually.<sup>xiii</sup> Few records exist to show that women initiated divorce. Children were considered the property of the husband and stayed with him. Women in the ancient Athenian society were considered not fit to receive any education because it would make them more dangerous to men.<sup>xiv</sup> Euripides portrayed women as being noble and self-sacrificing heroines.<sup>xv</sup>

Plato also described his ideal society in the *Republic*<sup>xvi</sup> where women could receive equal rights as men. Even there, he reiterated that the place of a woman was within the home.<sup>xvii</sup> Pericles in 430BC said that 'the best reputation a woman can have is not to be spoken of among men for good or evil.'<sup>xviii</sup> Plutarch in the first century AD made references to women poets and prophets.<sup>xix</sup> He praised women who possessed political wisdom. One of such was Phrygia, who was a government official of her city-state and performed her political duties with 'excellence.'<sup>xx</sup> In his *Moralia*, Plutarch portrayed women as having a

measure of political power in terms of state administration and this was a common trend in the Athenian society. Athena Polias, the patron goddess of Athens, was a very influential woman in the political life of the city.<sup>xxi</sup> During the annual feast of the Panathenaea, young virgin girls carried baskets containing sacrificial offerings.<sup>xxii</sup> Plutarch also referred to women priests of Dionysia, who took part in political demonstrations and even used the influence of the political authority of Elis.<sup>xxiii</sup> Women also exercised leadership roles in religion.<sup>xxiv</sup> The traditional religion of Greek women was restricted in the syncretic mystery cults. In the Eleusian Mysteries of Demeter, a priestess together with her male counterparts was rewarded with small coins as payment for every initiation rite they perform during festivals. There were some other priestesses who were married whereas others stayed in celibate communities.<sup>xxv</sup>

Women who were in the same social class with men did not perform roles equal to that of the men. One reason was that women did not have the freedom to determine their own lives. A Greek proverb expressly depicts this as: *for the woman, the part of wisdom is to act through men* (Euripides' *Suppliant Women*). Some sayings have also been attributed to Thales, Socrates and Plato in which men showed gratitude to the gods that they were not women, slaves or uncivilised.<sup>xxvi</sup>

#### **2.4 Aristophanes' Representation of Women**

Before 411BC Aristophanes produced six plays, which include *Acharnians*, *Knights*, *Clouds*, *Wasps*, *Peace* and *Birds*. The plays, although they do not exclusively focus on women, contain at least one female character each: Daughter of Dikaipolis, Baking Girl, Iris. Aristophanes uses females in these plays to represent important roles that women perform in helping their heroes. Female figures in Aristophanic comedy will reveal new interpretation but at least one can point to three categories of women in the plays. First, women who offer sexual gratification to their heroes (*Acharnians*, *Knights*, *Wasps*, *Peace* and *Birds*); secondly,

little girls appearing in parodies of rituals and tragedy (*Acharnians* and *Peace*); and lastly mythological females who help or warn a hero (*Clouds*, *Peace* and *Birds*) Taaffe (1993:23).

Sommertein's *Lysistrata* asserts that Aristophanes wrote at a time when Athens was going through social and political crises. In *Lysistrata* for instance, a band of women formulate plans to defeat the political establishment by seizing the funds of the Acropolis which was used to support the warfare. Scholars who investigate issues of women in Classical drama do so with the assumption that women in Greek drama were always exceptions to the rules. In *Lysistrata* the plot and all the theatrical illusions point to role-playing; that is women playing the roles of men. For Lysistrata's plan to work, she requires that the young wives support her.

Aristophanic plays have been given anthropological equation. Foley (1982:17) pointed out that this equation 'female is as nature and culture is as male', is woefully inadequate for one to better understand and appreciate Greek culture in relation to women. Foley sees the *oikos* (home) and *polis* (city) as female and male, nature and culture and these two complement each other. Aristophanes uses these women to represent an essential part of the *polis*.

P. Slater (1968) took a psychoanalytic view of comedy. His approach was based on the assumption that these women who were presented on stage were seen to be authoritative, dangerous and very powerful. Greek mothers did not always have a good relationship with their sons; they therefore became authoritative. These mothers often dominated the homes in the absence of their husbands. Clytemnestra and Medea in Euripides' *Electra* and *Medea* respectively and also Deineira in Sophocles' *Women of Trachis* epitomize these traits.

Many jokes have been made about female sexuality and this has led to an assessment of psychological and social relationships between the two sexes. This psychoanalytic paradigm has not been fully understood and as a result it has created an assumption that a

male protagonist will always have to desire a female object for his sexual rejuvenation. This was a general observation that existed in the Athenian society and Aristophanes capitalized on it in his representation of women in his plays.

In her work on the *Thesmophoriazusaie* Zeitlin explains the relationship between gender and genre and in that she intersects the ideas about comedy, feminine and mimesis. She argues that:

The mistress of mimesis, the heart and soul of the theater. The feminine instructs the other through her own example—that is, in her own name and under her own experience—but also through her ability to teach the other to impersonate her (Zeitlin 1985:80).

According to her, the feminine is an essential part in discovering and constructing the theatre. On the issue of cross-dressing and role reversal, the festivals of Dionysus offered a suitable platform for Athenian civic life to be taught. Rituals and dramatic conventions of male actors in female roles come to the fore. Female characters in Aristophanes' plays are not women who have been taken from real life, although they reflect real concerns about men and women, about sex and public life. Ancient actors performed these plays at ritual festivals that helped them in defining the Athenian identity and in general the Greek identity.

## **2.5 Theoretical Framework**

In this last section I will explain the theoretical concept that informs my interpretation of the plays. I have chosen the *Feminist Literary Criticism* as the theoretical framework. This theory is a literary theory that is based on discussions about the representation of women in literary works. As a literary theory, it plays an essential function in distinguishing between traditions and also questions the dominance of privilege positions in the male dominated society. Spencer (1982:158) argues that the theory 'attempts to set standards for a literature that is as free as possible from biased portraits of individuals because of class. Culture, social, political and economic perspectives should be differentiated on the basis of gender. By so

doing the roles of males and females can be fully explained in relation to gender rather than through collective experience.

Over the years writers such as Simone de Beauvoir, Mary Elleman, Kate Millett and Sue Ellen-Case have inquired into the history of women's portrayal in literature and have discussed the stereotyped images of female fictional characters. References can be made to St. Thomas Aquinas' 'an imperfect man' and Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, which are about how women achieved social change by withholding sexual favours from men. Women novelists systematically and extensively devote their efforts into the research about women characters in ancient literature by outlining the contribution of women's role in a play. Ellen-Case (2007:132) asserts that 'traditional scholarship has focused on evidence related to written texts; the absence of women playwrights became central to early feminist investigation'. Though, there were no female playwrights, critics have found alternative approach in interpreting the roles of women in ancient Greece and that has been made possible by contextually analyzing female characters in plays written by men in fourth and fifth centuries Athens. It is however important to observe that, character traits of women that were brought to bear by male playwrights have been exaggerated. Barry (1995:122) argues that it is important to analyze female characters that were created in male literature because it provides 'role models which indicated to women and men what constituted acceptable version of feminine and legitimate feminine goals and aspiration'. Thus by making a contextual interpretation of the roles of women within a written text, one can observe that the author does not only make an attribute of personal traits but also the kind of role women and men should occupy in relation to one another.

In the light of the foregoing, the *Feminist Literary Criticism Theory* will be used in interpreting Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, *Thesmophoriazusae* and *Ecclesiazusae*. One can examine the 'cultural mind set in men and women' which was prevalent at the time he wrote

the plays Barry (1995:122). The history of the theory seeks to address the representation of women's condition in literature. Its history dates back to the 1970s when authors like Margaret Fuller and George Eliot ventured into gender studies and women's studies during the first and second waves of feminism. The objective is to understand what constitutes gender inequality, women's social roles and life experiences in the areas of philosophy, literary criticism, communication and education among other subjects. The theory likewise focuses on women's right and interest. Other themes such as sexual objectification, patriarchy, oppression and stereotyping are frequently analyzed. It takes into consideration gender in terms of *Freudian* and *Lacanian* psychoanalysis, which posits that gender, is not biological but psycho-sexual development of the individual. These psychoanalysts also contend that, from an early age, men are taught to see themselves as masculine and women as feminine. *Feminist Literary Criticism* will be useful in interpreting the socio-political portrayal of women in Aristophanes' plays because it will elucidate the assumption about women that persist in a male dominated society. Additionally, we see in the representation of women in comic drama that character traits of women and men in these plays were not realistic, well-rounded female characters but imagination of women by men. In male-dominated society women had no political or social role or even little role to play except in traditional religious practices like the *Thesmophoria* and *Skira*. Ellen-Case outlines two ways in which women are represented in classical literature (a) positive roles, which depict women as independent, intelligent and even heroic (*Lysistrata* and *Praxagora*), (b) a surplus of misogynistic roles (*Thesmophoriazusae*).

Finally, the goal of this theory in the thesis is to provide a critique of social and political elements that existed in the Athenian society and how Aristophanes uses these elements to represent women vis `a vis the traditional roles of women in the society. Themes

such as sexual objectification, oppression, patriarchy and stereotyping, gender roles and conflicts will be contextually interpreted.

## END NOTES

### Chapter Two

<sup>i</sup>For more detailed discussion on these festivals see Pickard Cambridge. *The Dramatic Festivals of Athens*.

<sup>ii</sup>Pickard Cambridge, pgs. 86, 91

<sup>iii</sup>See note 1 pgs. 96-7

<sup>iv</sup>Stone, Laura M.J, 1984 provides full discussion and references

<sup>v</sup>As in *Lysistrata*, men threatened the women with the torches and women lower the spirit of the men by throwing contents of their water jars on them

<sup>vi</sup>The *Parabasis* consisted of a: short introductory sing (Kommotion) and a long speech usually in anapaestic tetrameter and ends in continuous speech (choker), then two songs and two speeches, corresponding in length and meter in the order: song, speech, song, speech ode, epirrhena, antode and antepirrhena.

<sup>vii</sup>D. Harvey, pgs78, 80.

<sup>viii</sup>For discussions on the fragments see Casio. Albio C.; Pisa, 1997.

<sup>ix</sup>Homer *Iliad* and *Odyssey* (trans). Robert Fagles. Penguin Group, U.S.A. 1991.

<sup>x</sup>Sarah B. Pomerory. *Goddess, Whores, Wives and Slaves*, New York, 1975, pg. 30.

<sup>xi</sup>Pomerory, op. cit., pg. 60.

<sup>xii</sup>Ibid. pg. 63.

<sup>xiii</sup>Arthur W. Gomme. pgs. 89-115.

<sup>xiv</sup>Menander, Fr. 702.

<sup>xv</sup>For example Alcestis and Polyxena in Euripides and also Antigone, Ismene and Deianira in Sophocles.

<sup>xvi</sup>Plato. *Republic V*, 453e-457e.

<sup>xvii</sup>Plato. *Republic IX*, 579b.

<sup>xviii</sup>Pericles. *Funeral Oration*.

<sup>xix</sup>Plutarch. *Bravery of Women, Moralia III* 257e.

<sup>xx</sup>Plutarch. *Bravery of Women*, 243a.

<sup>xxi</sup>Diogenes Laertius. *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, A. Oepke TDNT 1,777.

<sup>xxii</sup>Plutarch. *Advice* 138b (Contra Naera, cited in Lefkowitz-Fant, op. cit., pg. 37).

<sup>xxiii</sup>Pomerory. op. cit., pg. 75.

<sup>xxiv</sup>Plutarch. *Bravery of Women* 251e.

<sup>xxv</sup>Meeks. art.cit pg. 169.

<sup>xxvi</sup>Pomerory. op. cit., pg. 76-77.

## CHAPTER THREE

### *LYSISTRATA*

#### 3.0 Introduction

War-weary brides refuse sex with their husbands and an army of old women seize the city's treasury to force a peace treaty (Taaffe 1993:1).

The above quotation of Taaffe indicates the plots Aristophanes utilizes in staging the first 'women plays'. His audience will be quick to recognize the comical effect of sexual undertones that he incorporates into the comedy as a means of lightning the tension that war has caused the society. Thus, Aristophanes wrote the *Lysistrata* with women as central characters of the play and was produced in 411BC at the City Dionysia.

The play has two plots: younger women's sex-strike and older women's occupation of the Athenian treasury. There has not been any rational solution to the war against Sparta and peace was not forthcoming. In 413BC the fighting was renewed in mainland Greece and in the Aegean. Aristophanes' main concern was his sympathy for the women, whose lives the war was ruining. The talk of state policy in connection with sexual theme is quite a serious matter: politics in Athens is a subject on a high level. Aristophanes uses the plots of *Lysistrata* to advocate a Pan-Hellenic harmony that will save Greece from further destruction.

A question remains about how Aristophanes uses social and political issues with emphasis on women's role and status in the Athenian society to drive home his point. *Lysistrata* has remained a favourite play among scholars and students alike. The play has now been seen as a statement of feminine solidarity and universal truth about war, peace and of course a battle of the sexes. This play involved a lot of theatrical devices. The representation of women by men on the stage has a double edge. The female mask may be fastened tightly.

The text may slip to show the male underneath and this will show a mixture of gender and character.

Critics like Gruber have asked:

Does the fact that *Lysistrata* was a male in disguise have any bearing on the meaning of the comedy? We have every reason to think so. Humor at the expense of women is integral to the play and was unquestionably relevant for Aristophanes' patriarchal audience (Gruber 1986:3).

In examining dramatic illusions in Greek comedy, Gruber did not fully explain how a male playing the role of a female will influence the total performance of the play, there are however some humour in the representation of women in drama that parallels the social constructs of women in the Athenian society. Gruber addressed the phenomenon of role-playing in theater by arguing that: role-playing as a dramatic technique is essential to understanding the representation of women on stage vis `a vis their role in the Athenian society. The play affirms and lauds the roles that both male and female play in maintaining the *polis* and the *oikos* as well.

The chapter seeks to address how Aristophanes essentially uses the two plots of the play: younger wives make sex-strike at home to hurt their husbands who are at the battlefield and the older women's occupation of the Acropolis by taking control of the Athenian treasury as though it were the house-keeping money. Ultimately, as *Lysistrata* is examined in this chapter, readers will notice how the play offers an excellent piece of social and cultural evidence concerning the roles of women in the Athenian society. All translations of the text will be taken from George Theodoridis.

### 3.1 Synopsis of the Play

Lysistrata, an Athenian woman calls for a secret meeting with the intention of persuading both the wives of Athenian male citizens and other wives from neighbouring cities to swear an oath that they (wives) will deny sexual intercourse to their husbands or lovers until the men agree to end the war.<sup>xxvii</sup>

Lysistrata: We will go on strike!

Myrrhine : Me. I can't do it, Lysistrata. Not me. Let the war drag on.

Calonice : Yea, me, too, Lysistrata. Let the war continue. (125–127)

She succeeds with great difficulty in having the women agree to her proposal. When she first calls the women, none of them appears and she expresses her indignation:

Lysistrata: Tell me, please all of you: Do you not miss your husband's?  
Your son's fathers? I mean while they are away at war? I  
know very well that all of you have your husband's away  
at the moment. Not one of them is here with you? Isn't that  
so? (99–100).

The foreign wives depart to their home country and Lysistrata together with the other Athenian women occupy the Acropolis which is the state reserve of money without which the war cannot continue. The play has two choruses, each with twelve members. The first to arrive is the chorus of the men at the Propylaea (entrance to the Acropolis) carrying fire-pots and wood because the men have heard that the women have seized the Acropolis. So they (men) have come to smoke the women out.

Before the men could carry out their plans the chorus of old women arrives from the opposite direction with jar of water. After an altercation between the two choruses a further strife is directed to an unknown *proboulos* (a distinguished citizen appointed in 413 BC after the Sicilian expedition). His duty was to take care of the economy of the state. He was not much enthused about the sex-strike but rather the occupation of the Acropolis. Lysistrata together with other women confronts the *proboulos*. The *proboulos* on the other hand orders the police to arrest the women. Lysistrata was left alone to fight the *proboulos*.



The representation of Lysistrata in the play brought her close to Trygaeus in the *Peace* than to Dikaipolis in the *Acharnians*. She had concerns not for herself alone but for other women in the neighbouring towns. Lysistrata served as an example for the wives to bring their energies together in order to help restore peace and prosperity to all Greek, including slave-prostitutes, slave-concubines and women who made extra-marital sex easily available.

### 3.2 Social Implications

In examining the social implications of the portrayal of women in *Lysistrata*, issues such as sexual obsession, gender roles, the role of women in Athenian traditional religion and lastly their role in the *oikos* will form the basis of the discussion. The myths about the Lemnian and Amazonian women will also be incorporated in the discussion to draw out the resemblances that exist between the myths and the play.

#### 3.2.1 Sexual Obsession

Lysistrata: In that case, the job is yours, Myrrhine. Now this is what you will do: give him lots of love and submit to his every passion except the bit which only you know about.  
Myrrhine: All right! Have no fear, Lysistrata. I'll do everything you've said (727–728).

Aristophanes creates suspense in the play and not until 124 that Lysistrata reveals the first of her two schemes for calling the secret meeting, the sex-strike. The women began to invent all sorts of excuses to relinquish the plan. Lysistrata however persuades them to stay on course. *Lysistrata* deals with sex and sexuality in a comic fashion as a means of suggesting how a serious civil war can be brought to a halt. Aristophanes uses comic humour to produce sexual overtones and periodically charges his dialogues with sexual imagery to convey the solution on how to manage a serious social problem. Though the women from the onset refused the idea of the plan, they later accepted it as a means of seducing their husbands to coerce them (husbands) to stop the war (McDowell 1995:231). The regular use of sex

shows how prominent sex was in the Athenian society. Aristophanes uses his ingenuity to make sexual undertones and to colour his speeches with sexual metaphors and imagery. Myrrhine kept busy with activities that simply distracted her husband. After making series of attempt to enjoy conjugal bliss with his wife, Kinesias was left in an agony of sexual frustration which was evidently endured by men both in Athens and Sparta.

This scheme of sex–strike devised by the women did not have any ground in real life. The men were not affected in anyway by the absence of their wives in their (men) sexual life. Many forms of sexual activities were readily available for the men such as prostitution, pederasty and masturbation.<sup>xxx</sup> The women on the other hand consoled their lust with muleteers and slaves. Literature in ancient Athens shows a great deal of evidence for the anxiety that men had about female sexual behaviour. There are two assumptions: (a) women have an insatiable sexual desire, (b) men commit adultery to satisfy their sexual escapades (*Thesm* 491–492). Slaves were readily available as sexual partners for elite Athenian women whiles homosexuality among men was common in the Athenian society (Pomeroy 1975).

A man who denied his wife sex need not pay for a prostitute because Athens was a slave–owning society and men could easily reach out for a male youth with whom he could have sex. An important question then arises: what must have informed Aristophanes’ selection of such a theme in the development of the plots in a play whose main focus is to end war? Or could it be that in the *Lysistrata* Aristophanes was looking at real life from a different standpoint and adopted the experiences of women to suit his plays whiles addressing a serious problem at the time?

An Athenian man’s sexual life is very important and seizure of it will mean seizure of other opportunities in the *polis*. There was not so much importance attached to marriage as the few months in bed with pretty girl.<sup>xxxii</sup> Sexual relations among married couple were basically for procreation. Brian Arkins, in his *Sexuality in Fifth Century Athens* emphasized

that ‘an Athenian male could be held incompetent at law for being under the influence of a woman.’ He also asserted that Aristophanes incorporated a historical reality in the plot. Athenian men were under obligation to safeguard their public spheres because the intrusion of women into such places implied the usurpation of men’s power and Aristophanes craftily made a comic portrayal of this in the plot.

In his *Greek Comedy and Ideology* Konstan suggests that:

The sexual theme is just an attention grabber. The comedy neatly invent spaces and boundaries, the women turn the city into an extended household and seized the actual polis not as ‘intruders’ but as reconcilers and healers (Konstan 1995).

Konstan demonstrates the importance of women’s vision and concept of the *oikos* which surpasses the fractious politics and warfare of the men and how each of them affects the progress of the *oikos* and *polis*. The two: that is men and women must bring their corporate energies together for the survival of the state.

Comedy presented the fear of adultery and this anxiety engulfed innocent victims, for instance young wives who will lose their husbands because of the war. Thus, Cohen (1991) in comparing Athens to modern a ‘face to face’ society reiterated that, anxiety with strangers was a form of urbanization and because of this assertion the traditional fear of female sexuality becomes unreasonably connected with strangers. Adultery at the time of Aristophanes was high on the ascendance and because women were at home most of time it was assumed that women were imagined to be sleeping with every man. Sex was therefore used as comic cliché of romance where a man sees a woman and at once is seized by desire. He made this comment while criticizing the traditional fear of female sexuality. To him women became vulnerable victims as a result of their husbands’ promiscuous activities. The men were not affected by the sex–strike because various forms of sexual activities existed in the Athenian. Certainly in a society where women have been stereotyped as sexual objects, adultery was seen as a universal phenomenon. How cleverly adultery was practised, it was

much easier among those actually intimate within a household. Sex was used as an agency to solve a problem that seemed challenging. A woman's domestic activities included taking care of her husband and also to satisfy his sexual desire.

The sex-strike can be traced to the ancient story about the Lemnian women. In the story, Aphrodite's anger was directed towards the Lemnian women who were made to develop an offensive odor in order to repulse their husbands because the men have taken Thracian women as concubines (Burkert 1985:190–6). As revenge the Lemnian women killed all males on the island. However, Hypsipyle refused and rather disguised her father Thoas the king and set him to sail in a *larnax*. As she later assumed the position of the ruler of the island, she subsequently married her subjects to the Greek sailors and married Jason herself. The parallel between this story and *Lysistrata* is that, in the myth women coerce their men into a relationship that led to marriage whereas in the *Lysistrata* there was already a separation but the women want to create peace:

- Lysistrata: So, then! Would you like me to find some mechanism which we could use to end the war?  
 Myrrhine: if this were truly possible, Lysistrata, darling I'd start the celebration with drinks right now. Even if it meant I'd have to sell this gown to buy the wine.  
 Calonice: Me too! Even if...even if I'm torn in two like a fish on the grill and have half of me thrown away!  
 Lampito: And even I'd climb all the way to the top if Taygetus to be able to see our beloved Peace (107–111).

Though there is no 'killing' per se in the play, there is a hyperbole in the form of 'killing' where the women tease their husbands with sex and later refuse them as in the case of Kinesias and Myrrhine (952ff).

It should be remembered that in the ancient Greek society female sexual desire was not approved by men. Wives were condemned if they showed interest in sex (*Medea*.569) wives were only limited to sex for biological purpose-bearing of children. Xenophone's (*Mem*.2.2.4) contends that sexual satisfaction was not the aim of marriage: Athenian men only require their wives to perpetuate the family lineage and if a man wants to satisfy his

sexual urge slaves and brothels come in handy! In the *Lysistrata*, there is a twist in sexual relation. Kinesis who was in desperation persuades Myrrhine for sex; she refused because of the oath that was taken by all citizen wives to abstain from sex. *Lysistrata* 108–107 gives us the alternatives that women found a sexual outlet in masturbation as they complain about the effect of the war on their sexual lives (Sue 1995:102).

### 3.2.2 Gender Roles

Aristophanes' interpretation of gender roles likely affected his representation of women in the play. In the view of Stewart (1974), Aristophanes wrote at a time when almost every facet of morality and public life was under public scrutiny. One must however bear in mind that Aristophanes wrote for a male audience. His portrayal of women in the play was that: women were drunks, adulterous and obsessed with sex. The old women were characterized by their exaggerated drunken vulgarity whereas the younger women were reserved for the sexual element of the plot. In the light of the foregoing, we see a clear demonstration that Aristophanes predominantly represents that a young wife's role is sexual in nature. Though in the play the women enhanced their roles as sexual objects for a noble cause, later these women imposed on themselves a passive role than what was seen to be normal as demonstrated in the seizing of the Acropolis.

Aristophanes presents the two sides of a typical Athenian woman at the time: subservient and very influential at home. As a dominant character in the play, *Lysistrata* deviated from the traditional roles of typical Athenian women by detaching herself from the world of the other women becoming a 'man-like woman' who initiates a peace treaty. Her manipulation of her fellow women makes her act as men do when desiring a woman for sexual pleasure.

Lysistrata: Hello Lampito! Oh! My darling Spartan! You simply look ravishing! Such a blemishless complexion so clean, so out of doors! And look at that figure the pink of perfection! (76).

Pomeroy (1975) argues that, though in the play men are shown to be subjected to sexual pleasure, men are able to control themselves with other sexual alternatives they have; that is pederasty. On the other hand, Taaffe (1993) argues that males in *Lysistrata* assume the role of women that is; they are seen as desiring for sex thereby making them to surrender to any policy in order for them to return home.

Lysistrata's own role as a woman is not clearly defined; neither was she defined as a wife, a mother or as belonging to any female group. Her role as an organizer is a traditionally male one, that of calling a meeting. The significance of foreign women should not be over-estimated in Aristophanic comedy. Athenian women are not subjected to any physical scrutiny but foreign women were. As illustrated in the removal of their clothes in order for their physical attributes to be admired as we see in the case of Lampito:

Lysistrata: What lovely breast to own!

Lampito: Oo Your fingers assess them, with such tender chucks I feel  
as if I were an altar victim (86).

Throughout *Lysistrata*, Aristophanes acknowledges that with or without gender conflict war was painful for both men and women. Yet even with gender conflicts Aristophanes shows that women can be successful opposition to men. This fact stems from the response to the relaxation of men's traditional lifestyles during the Peloponnesian War as asserted by Pomeroy (1975). Not only can conflicts be found between different genders but also within the same gender. Lysistrata is biased even against her own kind; she flaunts their vices and lauds those women who join in the sex strike:

Lysistrata: if they were thirsting for a Bacchanal, a feast of Pan or Colias or Genetyliss, the tambourines would block the rowdy streets. But now there is not a single woman is here accept—ah, yes this neighbour of mine—Good day Calonice! (1–3).

This lack of respect coming from a woman against her own kind was easily accepted by the male audience. Lysistrata goes against the norms of females in a male dominant society which led to the creation of conflict within her own gender. She had no regard for her fellow women, describing them as sex-crazed and drunks. Lysistrata was likewise not surprised upon hearing the excuses that women gave in order to excuse themselves from her political ambition.

Calonice: Um...umm... I really need to go home, Lysistrata. I need to check my Milesian wool. I think the moths might eat it.  
 Lysistrata: What damned moths? Get back inside!  
 Calonice: I'll be right back, I swear by the god's, Lysistrata. Just let me Go and spread my wool on the bed.  
 Myrrhine: Oh! What a stupid fool I'm! I forgot my lovely flax at home.  
 Lysistrata: Here's another! Out to get her flax!  
 Myrrhine: Oh! But I swear Lysistrata, by the moon even, please. Do let me just go. I'll be right back! (729–32).

Gender conflict in Aristophanic comedy stems from frustration, ignorance, mistrust and fear. This fear comes about because of losing power or authority to an 'honorary woman'. Aristophanes quickly singles out for ridicule a group that could upset the Athenian man's peace or his home.

### 3.2.3 Religious Roles

Old Woman: Athenians! Let us begin our good work by giving some useful words to the citizens. For example when I was seven years I was made a temple attendant. Then when I turned ten, I was given the duty of grinding the sacred barley at Artemis' temple and also one of the bearers in the festival. Later, I carried the sting of sacred dried figs at Athena's procession. The greatest honor that can be bestowed upon an Athenian girl! (641–643).

Through the mouth of the old women Aristophanes uses another social concept: a religious ritual in his play to signify how important the roles of women are in the society and the effects of their religious roles in curtailing the war. Lysistrata herself is a representative of Athenian traditional religion. Girls who became *arrephoros* (bearer of secret things) between the ages of seven and eleven lived on the Acropolis and discharged many religious duties

under the priestess Athena Polias (patron goddess of Athens). The *aletris* (grinder) were girls who prepared the sacrificial cake for Athena. During the festival of Brauronia held in honor of Artemis, girls between the ages of five and ten called *arktoi* (servers) wore saffron dresses. Athena Polias was represented by olive-wood statue on the Acropolis. This office was held by members of the aristocratic family of Eteobouladai. During the fifth century a woman named Lysimakhe held it for sixty-four years. *Lysimakhe* (dissolving battle), *Lysistrata* (dissolving armies) and a certain Myrrhine also served at the temple of Athena Nike, the goddess of victory (Lewis 1955). These records suggest the identification of Lysistrata and Myrrhine in the play with regards to the two real-life priestess, Dover (1972:152). Women who served at the temple were not seen as living a consecrated life but rather they enjoyed the same lifestyle as other women who lived with their husbands and children. Thus the fact that women in the play had interest in sex does not conflict with their identity that with the priestess.

Many features of the play show how these priestesses played domestic roles. For instance, at the beginning of the play, Lysistrata was able to assemble ordinary women to a meeting. She was able to do this because she holds a distinguished position as a woman in Athens. Lysistrata leads the women to the Acropolis, the religious center at time of Aristophanes which was under the protection of Athena Polias. Aristophanes' real intent for making changes in the names from Lysimakhe to Lysistrata was to draw a correlation in their character portrayal as women who take the lead in religious ritual.

Therefore Lysistrata together with her other compatriots represents not just feminine attitude to war but also Athenian religious tradition. Lysistrata speaks not just for the women but for Athens as a whole. There is a close comparison between the character portrayal of Hypsipyle and Lysistrata in the play in discharging their religious duties. Hypsipyle is a

virgin who was devoted to her father and like Lysistrata throughout the play there was no mention of her as having a lover or husband in 1124–27:

Lysistrata: I am a woman and I have a brain. A brain that isn't too bad having listened to my father's speeches and the old elders and the Muse herself didn't do a bad job of educating me either. I'll tell you all you deserve to hear.

These words could be attributed to Athena the patron goddess herself, Athenian women and the goddesses were all father-devoted. There even exists a resemblance in the name Hypsipyle ('high gate') and Lysistrata ('dissolving battle'). The symbolic meaning of the phrases 'high gate' and 'dissolving battle' clearly describes Lysistrata's role in the play. Her position at the Propylaea represented a significant religious function that women play in Athenian civic life before the Acropolis assumed a political function. Athenian women hitherto undertook ritual activities on the Acropolis such as the Panathenaic procession and other cultic services. Lysistrata's position in the plot was in tune with the priestess Athena Polias. Myrrhine was also another priestess of Athena who belonged to the cult of Nike, Lewis (1955:1–13).

The story of the Lemnian women can be associated with a yearly ritual that Athenians celebrate to remember the atrocities of the women on the Lemnian Island. Fires on the island are extinguished for nine days and on the ninth day a boat with the name 'new fire' arrives on the island from Delos and that signifies a 'new life.' In the *Lysistrata* there is a battle that occurs between the choruses of old men having fire pot and wood and that of old women with water jar to quench the fire; this scene in the play later caused a separation between the sexes as suggested in 615–19.

Another social implication that is embedded in the play is the roles of women as married women. Marriage was very important in the Athenian society and because of that girls were given into marriage at an early age. Although a girl might be betrothed when she attained the age of four, she did not marry until she was fifteen years. Marriages were

arranged by parents with considerations of property in mind. Aristophanes invites the men to have sympathy for these young wives who marry at that early age. For some of them (girls) because of the war they are at risk of losing their husbands, others will also miss their chance of getting married to their betrothed husband's, while some of their sons will perish in battle.

Married women stayed indoors and delegated duties to their servants who work outside the house and others also supervise servants who work within the house. Nevertheless the women's lives were not confined to these activities alone. They participated in religious festivals and attended dramatic festivals, for instance the *Thesmophoria* and *Skira*. Athenian men cherished their wives, so being at the battlefield was a cause of worry for these men. Kinesias was ready to reconcile with his wife in order to bring the war to an end. He had no pleasure in life because he has left his wife at home and everything seemed empty to him. Kinesias' attempt was towards a political reconciliation. Two semi chorus, a man and a woman, speak on behalf of all of each group in 1035–37:

The old saying is true about you: You can't live with them and you can't live without them. But I'll still make peace with you and I'll even make a promise to you as well. I promise never to treat you badly or to accept any bad treatment from you! So let's get over our voices and sing!

This passage was an emotional approach that carried a solemn negotiation for a happy marriage. What followed was political reconciliation and lastly songs about Athens and Sparta recollecting their happy past. The personal and domestic theme harmonizes both men and women which at the end enhanced the quest of peace which formed the central theme of the play.

The socio-cultural parallels that exist in the story of the Lemnian women and the play explains Aristophanes' stereotype perception of women and these helped to shape the structure and style of his later plays on women. Like the 'Lemnian fire', *Lysistrata* acts like a ritual spark of flame that becomes a 'new life' for the *oikos*. Women used fire to cook food,

and warm the room when the weather is cold. In a pejorative sense the women use the fire to ‘roast’ and ‘turn’ their husbands, thus portraying an image of sex and the rejuvenating of older men in the play, which in effect symbolized the remarriage of husbands and wives. It also brings new life to the polis through the purification of the Acropolis.

### 3.3 Political Implications

Athens’ perilous external situation coincided with a domestic situation at home. The military failures of democratic administration have given way to oligarchs to restrict and eliminate democracy which since the death of Pericles had become more violent and radical. Athenian leaders had also become the driving force behind the continuous war. The thought of establishing a new government of Ten *Probouloi* (appearing in the first part of *Lysistrata*) represented the first restriction to democracy.

By extension the performance of this play took place at a time when Athens was experiencing severe political crisis. Aristophanes’ treatments of an old theme of war and peace clearly demonstrate that he did not tolerate any party because to him such support will prove dangerous to his career in 1053–1054:

And when there is Peace all the borrowers can keep that money! As well, we’ll be inviting some of our allies to our home this evening. These are all good, honest men. They are all our friends!

*Lysistrata* summons other married women from Athens, Sparta, Boeotia and Corinth in order to form a conspiracy to obtain peace by refraining from their conjugal duties and also to seize the Acropolis which was the state treasury and was also seen as a national symbol. The seizure of the Acropolis meant seizure of the state treasury. *Lysistrata*’s reason for this was that in 174, if Athenians have no money, then the war will end. However, Lampito the delegate from Sparta also asserted that ‘Athenians will not give up as long as abundant silvers are stored up with the goddess’. The Acropolis at the time of Aristophanes was not the center of democracy but rather a religious citadel under the protection of Athena. So the taking of

the Acropolis would mean that the women will prevent the men from getting direct access to the funds and as a result it will give a direct way to end the war.

Further, the Acropolis served as a religious symbol, and also stood for democracy and government in Athens. The chorus of old men climbing up the hill of the Acropolis sings about how Kleomenes seized the Acropolis:

Now they've gone and seized the Acropolis. Stolen the sacred statue of our protector, Athena and they've driven bars and padlocks into her gates. Remember Kleomenes. Even he didn't escape unpunished. (274)

Aristophanes wrote *Lysistrata*, a century after, but the event was memorable in the minds of all Athenian men. So Kleomenes, like the women of Athens, threatened to overthrow the government and democracy in Athens.

The invasion of the Acropolis by the women can be traced to the Amazonian myth. The Amazons are a tribe of women who lived near the coast of the Black Sea and were very aggressive to their male companions. These women were illustrious in the art of hunting and warfare. In order for them to acquire masculine looks, some parts of their bodies were mutilated especially around the chest. This was done to make the chest region more suitable for drawing bow during battles. In the Amazonian myth, there exist a contrast and inversion of gender roles. The myth is repeated in the *Lysistrata* where the choruses of old men force a separation of women who have taken over the Acropolis. Lysistrata and her fellow women act like their counterpart in the myth who attacks a foreign city of men.

Old Men: Don't let any of you give these women a slight grip on anything, because nothing escapes their greasy hands. And if they set their minds to take on horse riding, then we can forget about our cavalry! Just look at those paintings of Mikon, for example the Amazons! They're fighting men! So men our duty, is clearly this: It is grab them by their neck and place them firmly in the public pillory! (670–673).

Women in the *Lysistrata* likewise seized the Acropolis which at the time was purely a male domination. The army of women who appeared in 430–433 clearly resembles the warrior women in the myth.

Magistrate: I need to go in there now, to get some money to pay the city's rowers. How am I going to do that if these bloody women have bolted at the gate? But I won't stand for it! Bring me the crow bars, men. I'll make these women pay for their insolence!

The takeover of the Acropolis by women warriors threatened the stability of the men's position in the society in 175:

Lysistrata: We've thought of that, too, Lampito. No problem. Today we'll take over the Acropolis! While we're all getting this protest organized, the older women will be going up there under the pretence of conducting rituals and sacrifices and as soon as they get in there, they seize the place!

The control of the treasury created another political problem between the sexes. As the *proboulos* arrives, Lysistrata outspokenly tells him how the women will care for the money in the same way as they do with their domestic income. The central idea of Lysistrata's statement in having the women control the money is more connected with the internal politics as well as civic harmony which had to do with how to reconcile Athens than the external politics and war. Lysistrata looks back to the time when Athens and Sparta stood together even during times of difficulties and rightly referred to that period as the national unity of Greeks.

On the eve of the oligarchic *coup d'état*, Aristophanes recommended a civic harmony and true democratic settlement in the state, Newiger (1957). So both personal and domestic harmony between men and women enhance the theme of ending war, which apparently forms the main theme of the play—to attain peace. The exciting tone that characterized the rivalry between the chorus of men and women, the dressing of the *proboulos* in women clothes and the defeat of the *proboulos* with pots was apt to end the play. These actions show how

Aristophanes uses domestic or cultural settings to draw attention to how Athens can achieve peace.

Lysistrata explains to her captive (*proboulos*) about how Greece should be taken care of and repaired. Aristophanes uses the wool metaphor and described the city as the wool and Athenians as a body of citizens (577–830):

You simply wash the city just like you wash wool. First you put the wool into the tub and get the dirt bit all the crap around its bum. Then put it on the bed, take a rod in your hand and scratch and bonk all the burrs and spikes out of it. All those that have gathered themselves into tight knots and balls and are tearing and tangling the wool of the State well, you just tease them out of it. Rip their heads off! Then, off for combing. Put all the wool together into one basket. All of it! Friends, foreign or local allies—anyone who's good for the State. So, all those colonies joining the ball, you'll be able to weave a cloak big enough for the whole city.

Lysistrata is convinced that if the wool is thoroughly cleansed and all filth is removed then, like the city, all the bad men and corrupted leaders will equally be removed. She uses lump of knots that have become entangled or snarled together to illustrate that no matter how complicated events have turned out, Athens can still be relieved of those problems. Who are these lumps of knots? Aristophanes criticizes politicians in Athens who deliberately have each other elected. These politicians to Aristophanes threaten the foundation of democratic governance. MacDowell suggests that Aristophanes attacks men who want the oligarchic revolution:

Pesisandros went to all the conspiratorial groups<sup>xxxii</sup> which already existed in the city for trials and officers and urged them to draw together and make common plans for subversion of democracy (Thucydides 8.54–4).

After the removal of the lumps of knots Lysistrata then suggest that the good people of Athens should now be gathered into the baskets. She outlines the people she wants to be in the basket in 580. The *Metics* did military service, paid taxes and many of them have lived in Athens for many years. There were also debtors who have been disenfranchised because of their failure to pay their taxes. Their debt was subsequently passed on to their generation

upon their death. Lastly, cities that have been made colonies of Athens that Lysistrata regards as scattered flocks. Aristophanes meant all Ionian cities.<sup>xxxiii</sup> Lysistrata further imagines that the gathering of people as new will make Athens a strong city: a fine bobbin of yarn in 585ff. Alternatively, Lysistrata meant to create a state that will embrace all loyalists to Athens. Though, the old women claimed to have the right to advice the men on Athenian policies, not because they (women) contribute to the city but also because they participate in religious ritual.

The sentiments which galvanize Lysistrata's motives bring her close to Trygaeus of *Peace* more than to Dikaipolis of *Acharnians*. She was considerate of all women including those of the belligerent cities in general. The time of the play was however different from that of 421 BC After the Sicilian expedition in 413 BC a major part of the Athenian empire was in revolt. The Peloponnesians had taken advantage of the prospect of a decisive victory and had an alliance with the Persians and the Syracusans had also joined them in the Aegean. The political history of Athens justifies that with the passage of time Athenian chances of establishing an impasse and a compromise peace improved and that was the kind of peace that *Lysistrata* envisioned both at home and with Athens neighbors. Aristophanes' democratic and patriotic disposition, his concerns as a man and a citizen are nevertheless exceptional, because on the eve of oligarchic *coup d'état* he stood before the political factions and advocated for a civic harmony.

The main theme of the play is not women but peace however; Aristophanes uses character portrayal of women to demonstrate how to achieve peace. Many years after the *Acharnians* Aristophanes still advocates for peace as the goal which Athenians ought to attain. Aristophanes' practical proposal for achieving peace was: the women's sex-strike and their seizure of the Acropolis were just comic fantasies. The negotiations will not be possible in a real life situation. Athens has been weakened by the Sicilian expedition, the hope of

attaining favourable terms for peace even after the Peace of Nicias was far-fetched. But that will only happen when the Athenians and Spartans have become reconciled, that is to say, when the warring cities have achieved peace, then men will regain their sexual control over their wives and also take economic control over the Acropolis.

Readers of Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* will be quick to notice that Lysistrata for many reasons seems to be an outspoken character. Though she put faith in the women's diligence to the duties to help her, she lacks the will power to begin with her plans. Lysistrata had no recognition for other members of her gender, she thinks of them as being interested in a Bacchic revelling and a bunch of sex-crazed women. But anyway, this leads to a question about what Aristophanes' real intentions was in writing this play. Was he inviting his male audience to view the play as a farce or rather the play had some political undercurrents underneath? The wool metaphor that Aristophanes uses to drive a silent point was quite interesting. It was the first time that Lysistrata was seen dictating to the men as regards what they should do. This passage is clearly from Aristophanes through Lysistrata. Women were not given political powers in Athens and this indicates that Aristophanes was making a sermon proposal to his audience.

Though the seizure of the Acropolis was rather an exceptional event and only farcical the women were not included in Lysistrata's perfect vision of the city. The position of women in the *polis* is portrayed in a positive way; their contribution as wives and mothers are seen as valuable. The position of motherhood was not glorified though they helped to provide men for the battle. In all one fact remains; women helped change the affairs of the state for a short period and the world at least for a brief time; complex military negotiation for peace was at the time not needed to end the war. It worked in this play for the mere fact that women being involved in politics were utterly an absurd idea at least for a time to justify an equally farcical conclusion of the play.

## END NOTES

### Chapter Three

<sup>xxvii</sup>Adultery is meant, not pre-marital intercourse. All the women who have parts in *Lysistrata* are assumed to be married.

<sup>xxviii</sup>There is no reason for us to assume that this man Kinesias is the dithyrambic poet who appears in *Birds* and is mentioned also in comedy. The names *Kīnesias Paionides* are to remind us of *Kīnên* (move) and *péién* (strike) both are common slang words for sexual intercourse.

<sup>xxix</sup>The Acropolis suggests a symbol of chastity. The reaction of the men's chorus and the *Proboulos* do not support it. They are concerned respectively about the national shrine and the treasury. But if chastity was the main reason why the temple was occupied, then the temple of Artemis should have been occupied rather than that of Athena.

<sup>xxx</sup>Cf. Dover, *Ar. Comedy* pg.160.

<sup>xxxi</sup>It is very easy to go wrong about what was normal in Greek society and haul what Homer says of Odysseus' old nurse Eurykleia; Leates brought her with his wealth when she was in the flower of youth and honoured her with his own wife but never slept with her, for he wished to avoid his wife's anger. A Greek woman was no more than an instrument of pleasure.

<sup>xxxii</sup>These were groups of men who had sworn an oath to collaborate not with foreigners but with themselves

<sup>xxxiii</sup>Cf. MacDowell *Ar. and Athens* pgs.237-238.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### *THESMOPHORIAZUSAE*

#### 4.0 Introduction

A man disguised as a woman sneaks into a secret women's festival to save his relative from death (Taaffe 1993:1).

A characteristic feature of Aristophanes' plots is to provide his audience with delightful scenes that will forever be cherished by his audience; hence the above quotation from Taaffe's *Thesmophoriazusae: Men as Women*. Athenian women prepare to find a suitable punishment for Euripides because of his poor representation of women in his plays at the celebration of the forthcoming *Thesmophoria*. The *Thesmophoriazusae* is the second of Aristophanes' 'women plays' which employs comic device of role reversal and mimic worlds in which women are the main characters. The *Lysistrata* and *Ecclesiazusae* present women invading into the public spaces of Athens (Acropolis and Agora) which is respectively the intrusion into the political and economic life of the city, whereas the *Thesmophoriazusae* is a battle of the sexes in the theater. The play is considered as one of Aristophanes' excellent parodies of the Athenian society and like the *Lysistrata* it concentrates particularly on the subversive roles of women in a male dominated society.

War formed the main theme in Aristophanes' early plays. In his later plays, the roles of women and their status featured as his primary concern. Athens was now at the threshold of its final deathblow in the Peloponnesian War and to Aristophanes it seems he had admitted defeat for his anti-war plays.<sup>xxxiv</sup> Athenians now had to linger on the nostalgic past and realizing the poor decisions men have made in power, Aristophanes fiddles with the idea that women will be able to solve Athens' prevalent problems in comic fashion.

The *Thesmophoriazusae* literally means 'women celebrating the festival of the *Thesmophoria*'. It is also known by other titles such as: *The Poet and the Women* or *Ladies*

*Day*. The title of the play is derived from an exclusive women's festival in honour of Demeter and Persephone<sup>xxxv</sup> and is sacred to women. The play was first staged in 411BC (some few months after the *Lysistrata*) probably at the City Dionysia and has 1,231 lines. The prize it won in the competition is unknown. This play is considered as one of Aristophanes excellent parodies of Athenian society because of its comical portrayals of women in the home and like the *Lysistrata*, it focuses on the subversive roles of women in a male dominated society. The plot of the play follows the summoning of the Greek tragedian Euripides by Athenian women.

In the *Thesmophoriazusae* we see comedy turn inside out through complicated dramatizations which focus on how Euripides negatively represents women in his tragedies. The play displays skillful manipulation of costume to disguise and reveal the portrayal of women by men. As in the case of cross-dressing, the male sex cannot be concealed underneath a woman's skirt and the play authenticates this ironic representative power, which is exclusive to comedy. In effect, the men wear the theatrical sign of Dionysus, the comic phallus (Taaffe 1993:21).

Although Aristophanes did not intend to write a political play, there are political undercurrents that are embedded in the play as illustrated in 335 and 353. Women are presented as addressing the *demos* of women, a parody of the *arai* (curses) that characterized the opening session of the *Boule* (331–351) and also the parody of the minutes of the *Boule* (372–79) among others. Some social issues that existed in the Athenian society which likely affected Aristophanes' portrayal of women in the play include: women's attitude toward alcohol, adulterous affairs and duping of their husbands. The women initially condemn Euripides and then plan ways to punish him because they believe he perpetuates sexist stereotype about them in his plays.

The play further highlights the importance of women's role in the festival and the overall effect that comedy has on promoting and sustaining human life in the *polis*. An interpretive analysis of the context of the play will give critics the opportunity to rethink the socio-political parameters that existed in the Athenian society and how it affected the representation of women in the play both positively and negatively. George Theodoridis' translation will be used.

#### 4.1 Synopsis of the Play

Euripides is to be put on trial (74–82) during the festival of the *Thesmophoria*.

- Euripides: It's bad! Very bad, Mnesilochus! Very bad things are being cooked up for me today! Nasty stuff!  
A question will be asked this very day Mnesilochus my good mate!  
A judgment will be made: 'To kill or not to kill Euripides'?
- Mnesilochus: A judgment? How can a judgment be delivered today?  
The courts have been shut. No cases will be adjudicated today. The Parliament isn't sitting either. It's the holy day of the *Thesmophoria*. Fast day and Festival Day. Women's Day!

His tragic portrayal of the behaviours of women has aroused suspicion from their husbands and this has led to the disruption of the smooth management of the *oikos*. The principal theme of the play is a conflict between Euripides and Athenian women. He is not to be thought of as a misogynist in real life, he is said to have married twice (MacDowell1995:252). Athenian women want to silence Euripides because they do not want to be tragic heroines like Phaedra and Melanippe (545–547):

- Mika: This bastard Euripides has absolutely destroyed our reputation with all his stupid plays about whores and rape women like Melanippe and Phaedra. Why has he never written a play about women like Penelope? Such lovely and virtuous woman!

Euripides employs a fellow tragedian Agathon<sup>xxxvi</sup> the effeminate poet, to attend the festival on his behalf. Agathon, who belong to a new generation of tragedians, was over thirty years younger than Euripides. He refused to go because he was of the view that the women will be jealous of him. Mnesilochus offers to go on behalf of Euripides. He was shaved and

dressed in a woman's cloth that was borrowed from Agathon and was sent off by Euripides to attend the festival. During the *Thesmophoria*, the women are seen conducting a well organized and disciplined democratic assembly and carefully keeping records of the proceedings (372–80):

Kritylla: Now, please listen, Ladies. In the Women's General Assembly, the Chairwoman is Timocleia the Secretary Lysilla, Sostrate has moved the following motion which was duly passed. During this meeting the main item of discussion shall be the proper punishment of the man we women consider to be a criminal namely, Euripides. Now, is there anyone who wishes to speak on this matter?

First on the agenda is Euripides: two women summarize their grievances against him. Mika bemoans that Euripides has taught men not to trust women and for that reason they can no longer manage the household as they used to in the past. A myrtle vendor also complains that the plays of Euripides foster belief in atheism and owing to that her myrtle wreaths are not been purchased any longer (447–8):

Garland Seller: I am a single mother, a widow. I weave garland and sell them in Myrtle market. This tragedy writer is going around everywhere telling all the men that there are no gods! My income is now half.

Mnesilochus who attends the festival on behalf of Euripides openly announces that the behaviours of women are actually worse than what Euripides has outlined in his plays and recites his own plight as a 'married woman' (476–77):

Mnesilochus: Take for example this: the greatest of my mischief, three days after I got married, well, that night, my husband just turned his bum to me and began snoring. I heard the door scratch downstairs so I slowly got out. I oiled the door hinges a bit so they won't creek. Then I went out to see to see my boyfriend.

The entire assembly becomes enraged when Cleisthenes, the notorious homosexual, brings the news that a man disguised as a woman is spying for Euripides. The suspicion easily points to Mnesilochus, the only member in the group that nobody can identify. His cloths were removed and he was discovered (700–702):

Kritylla: Take his gear off. Something's not right with his story.  
 Mnesilochus: What? Are you going to strip naked a mother of nine?  
 Cleisthenes: Come on, come on get that girdle off and be quick about it.  
 Mnesilochus: My! What a shameless little boy, you are!

Aristophanes mocks at the women without providing any empowerment or even sympathy. The plot of the play portrays women in a negative light: women in Euripidean plays are seen to be sex-crazed, traitors, deceitful and drunkards. Taaffe (1993:89) writes that: the first woman declares how Euripides represents women as secretive, gossips, unclean and a great evil for men.' To save Mnesilochus, Euripides uses various scenes from his plays: the first was the *Telephus* Euripides tries to rescue his relative who has been held hostage by the women. As revenge Mnesilochus threatens to kill the 'baby'. He slits the throat of the 'baby' and the mother quickly moves to collect the 'blood' of the 'baby' (748–751):

Mnesilochus: Burn away, get this baby killed and sacrifice him to Apollo.  
 Mika: No! No! Please, I beg you! Do what you want to do with me. But let my little baby alive. My baby! Mania, go and get the sacrificial bowl so that I may catch my darling's blood!

In the *Telephus*, Euripides mocks women's obsession to alcohol. This description of women depicts that women are moved by emotion to act wrongly as in the case of Medea because jealousy and anger led her to kill Jason's new wife. This general description of Athenian women at the time was enough reason to make women regard Euripides as a traitor to their sex. Again, the women at the *Thesmophoria* are angry at Euripides for exposing other secrets about them. Aristophanes capitalizes on this characterization of women to poke fun at them because they (women) complain about how their husbands lock up the store houses where food and wine are kept.

The second scene which Euripides uses to free Mnesilochus was his *Palamedes*. In this play, Mnesilochus looks around for oars on which he could relay a message to Euripides. He fails to find one and instead writes his message on tablets and throws them randomly into

all directions. This rescue attempt was also not successful. *Helen* was the next rescue play to be reenacted though he could not save Mnesilochus. In the play, Euripides disguises himself as Menelaus and Mnesilochus as Helen (871–73):

Mnesilochus: And I? I am called Helen! Yet I am here! Alive! O, how  
I wish my poor husband Menelaus was also alive! O,  
why then, am I still alive?

*Andromeda* was the last Euripidean play that was used in the rescue plan of Mnesilochus. Mnesilochus responds to the rescue strategy by acting out as Andromeda and was heroically carried across the stage as *deus ex machina* on the theatrical crane. However, all these scenes were not able to save Mnesilochus, and Euripides decides to make an appearance himself and negotiate with the women. He secured for himself a simple promise not to tarnish the image of women in his plays. Finally, Mnesilochus was released by Euripides from prison disguised as an old lady being assisted by a dancing girl who charmed the police with the aid of the chorus.

The *Thesmophoriazusae* is distinct from other Aristophanic plays in that, not only is it Euripidean in terms of how Aristophanes employs device and technique that contains complicated plots which are unraveled only at the end of the play, but also because the dramatic milieu is strictly private (an exclusive women's festival: *Thesmophoria*). The form and structural elements are also unusual: a Euripidean drama full of intrigue and suspense; the landscape is also tragic, for example, the temple and altar; the parabasis is delivered in a form of political satire (965); long speeches that are delivered in trimeters and dispute in tetrameters.

## 4.2 Social Implications

In this sub-section one intends to look at the effects of social issues such as: gender disguise and role reversals, cultural roles of women in the *Thesmophoria* and portrayal of women's vices. These implications will be interpreted in a way to demonstrate the general

perception that existed at that time and how it influenced Aristophanes in his portrayal of the various characters in the play, especially women. Excerpts will be drawn from the text to support any argument that will be put forth.

#### 4.2.1 Gender Disguise and Role Reversals

The manipulation of costume, mask and language presented gender disguise thus suggesting various role portrayals of women by men. The men in the play adopted a disguise that became part of their new gender as they portrayed their new roles to suit their character. Taaffe (1993:21) outlines five categories where gender disguise is much evident: portrayal of women (Euripides), a man representing a man who dresses like a woman (Agathon), a man representing a man who is unwillingly disguised as a man (the Relative or Mnesilochus), men representing ‘real’ women (the women of Athens) and finally a man who conducts himself as a spokesman for women (Cleisthenes).

Aristophanes efficiently uses the brilliance of meta-dramatic device (plays within play) to show Euripides’ portrayal of women by making Mnesilochus and First Woman pretend to be mothers when in real sense they were not. In the various Euripidean plays that were re-enacted, Euripides casts himself in roles of his characters and Mnesilochus responds appropriately. For instance in the *Helen*, Mnesilochus acts out as Helen and Euripides as Menelaus.

Mnesilochus: And I? I am called Helen.

Kritylla: Another woman act!

Mnesilochus: O, how I wish my poor husband Menelaus were here  
alive (*Thesm.* 863).

Agathon is seen dressed up in women’s clothing with a collection of accessories to match his new identity in 146:

Agathon: I Agathon wear only the clothes that suit my inspiration. I am an author of poems and plays and an author must behave as his plays dictates.

However, in a reply to Mnesilochus as regards his gender, Agathon says in 150–52 that he dresses to suit his nature. This characterization of Agathon's gender should not be misconstrued as character impersonation. Agathon refused to go because according to him, he qualifies too well for the role as a spy among the women. He sees himself as a friend to the women so he cannot declare himself as the male imposter in a women's festival as he implies in 206.

The third gender disguise points to Mnesilochus who dresses in a woman's costume: his beard was shaved and wore a pale mask to exhibit his new sex. Aristophanes presents a new order of gender role and because of this new gender that Mnesilochus acquired he indirectly gave women a new gender role in the society: women have acquired a position to rule men and as such men must become women. Agathon's transfer of personality to Mnesilochus gives us a new dimension in the social strata: a break in social norms leading to the loss of power from men to women.

All female parts were played by men. Therefore men representing 'real' women must dress appropriately in order to depict the women accurately. This representation posed a problem for the actor playing that role: how will sensitive parts of the body be concealed for the 'real' Athenian woman to be seen? Great aesthetic success must be accomplished by the poet to make this disguise effective. A man dressed as a woman should be prepared to receive various forms of criticism from the audience.

Mnesilochus: Please, Your Honor, tell that police to strip me naked before tying me up at the executioners' plank. Have mercy on an old man. Your Honor, look at me! I'm clothed in veils and dresses. When the vultures come down to tear my flesh they'll laugh at me!

Cleisthenes represents the final category of Taaffe's gender disguise. As the women's representative among the men, he declares in 574–80:

Cleisthenes: Darlings! Darlings you know how much I love you! I do everything you do, behave just like a girl. Look how smooth my cheeks are; not the slightest shadow of beard! I'm your sister. I want to tell you something.

Kritylla: What is it, dear boy? I mean....yes since your cheeks are smooth.  
Cleisthenes: They say in the market place that Euripides has sent one of his relatives to this very meeting today.

Cleisthenes was excluded from the men as a search was conducted to verify the true identity of Mnesilochus in 626–35. Aristophanes through careful experimentation of cross-dressing skillfully developed his theme on gender disguise and role reversals. He directly and indirectly examines the significance of gender roles in the *Thesmophoriazusae*. He makes fun of the effeminate homosexual men in the play. The men, whether they appeared on stage or were heard in the audience, establish a different categorization within the male gender roles. Homosexuals were permitted to an extent in the ancient Athenian society and they were also considered to be natural so as long as a citizen male did not play the part of a ‘woman’ (MacDowell 1995:139).

Though homosexuality was used in the *Knights* as a form of accusation against politicians, Cleisthenes was seen as an ‘honorary woman’. The basis for this accusation was that a man was liable to losing his masculine identity, thus becoming ineffective in the discharge of his responsibilities in the *polis* as well as in the *oikos*. In consequence, by so doing the women assume the position of head of the family. In the *Wasps* Myrtia, the flute girl who appears at the end of the play reveals the significance of masculinity in the Greek society. In 1138ff she narrates how Philocleon assaults her with his torch. The effect of her witness canceled his seemingly effeminate nature. Aristophanes who wrote for a male dominated audience addressed his audience’s anxieties about what women do in the *oikos*.

Aristophanes’ usage of costume exposes the conflict that occurs as result of the intrusion of any gender into the sphere hitherto forbidden. Masculinity cannot be hidden underneath a woman’s skirt and the play throughout its development confirms this ironic representative power as exclusive to comedy. Taaffe (1993:21) commenting on the effect of cross-dressing as regards gender ambiguities said that ‘the play works to misrepresent

women and to make a joke of the male actor's attempt to portray female figures in tragedy and comedy'. By this, the likelihood of the audience to differentiate between group of men playing women as funny and another group as serious are all to produce a comical effect. Mnesilochus had to undergo many adjustments in his appearance in order for him to appear as a woman. After his discovery, he was made to remove his clothes and instead he looks for his phallus thereby creating a comical scene.

Since in Greek plays men acted out all parts, the costume and mask contributed to the theme on gender role reversals. These devices for the role reversals depict an exaggerated role for both genders. The mask provided a contrast between men and women (MacDowell 1995:258). A dark brown mask was worn by men when they were outside the house whereas women used a white mask because they were deemed to be pale. Men used a deep voice and their masculine physique to convey any message they want to give to the audience. Cross-dressing of men on stage situated them next to 'real' women. Zeitlin (1985:307) contents that the 'technical use of the word mimesis demonstrates a theory of art that is predominately based on aesthetic theories of Plato and Aristotle'. Hence through the various parodies of the Euripidean plays, Aristophanes impersonates characters that balance with body, soul and poetry contributing to the production of great comical effect.

#### **4.2.2 Cultural Roles of Women in the *Thesmophoria*.**

Chorus: Right, then Ladies! It's a Ladies Festival, the festival of our most reverend goddesses, the makers of law, and so we should now honour them with the customary celebratory dance! (947-49)

The *Thesmophoria* was a sacred festival celebrated throughout ancient Greece with the motive of promoting human fertility and agriculture. According to the Attic calendar the festival took place from 11 to 13 of Pyanopsion, a time for sowing in the month of October and lasted for three days (Brumfield 1981:960). The celebration was restricted to only citizen wives, whereas men took charge of the finances. Unmarried women, prostitutes and slaves

were not included in the celebration (Burkert 1985:242). Aristophanes like Mnesilochus encroaches on women's sacred space by staging the ritual performance of the *Thesmophoria* to his audience.

Chorus: Come, Demeter and Persephone, Gentle of heart and joyous of temper! Come to this, Ladies! To your very own fair precinct! Where men cannot enter! Where men cannot witness our sacred rites! They cannot take part in the rites which you shower with the light of torches (1145-1149).

Bowie (1993:227) says of the play that 'it has the right to give an accurate and fulsome account of female villainy'. Aristophanes, by his portrayal of women in the play, was able to skillfully bring to bear the religious role of women in the Athenian society as depicted in the ritual myth of the *Thesmophoria*.

Thrata: Now let me see.... I want to find a seat covered with leaves where I can sit and hear everything. (288).

As part of women's ritual role during the first and second day of the festival, they made tents and spent the night in a fellow woman's tent and also sat on an aphrodisiac plant. Women's chastity and the symbolic use of aphrodisiac plant suggested the reversal of their role as wives to virgins for the promotion of fertility. On sexual obscenity of women in the festival, Winkler (1990:209) argues that 'the women may have celebrated their sexual and procreative superiority over men through mockery of the male genitalia as inferior to those of women'. The festival gave women an exceptional social power, as citizen women take on a new role on the use of the aphrodisiac plant. This ritual practice gave the impression that women had the power to preside over their own fertility. The ritual myth of the festival has a direct resemblance with the framework of the plot of the play.

The comedy parodies women's ritual obscenity. Euripides' final rescue attempt plot adopts the use of sex device as it was used by the Scythian Archer to free Mnesilochus, which parodied Persephone's rescue from captivity.

Euripides: I am Persus and in this bag I am carrying the head of a Gorgon! There, beside it, who may this divine maiden, be, moored upon it like a fair boat ready for the virgin voyage?

Archer: She is no virgin! She is a dirty man! A naughty, naughty old man! She is a sneaky man.  
 Euripides: You're delirious! There is Andromeda. (1112-1114).

Scholars like Zeitlin have argued that the play is 'a dialogue between Demeter and Dionysus.' Dionysus being the patron god of wine and comedy, whereas Demeter is the goddess of agriculture. Demeter represented fertility because she was responsible for food production. The significance of Demeter's fertility in relation to women's fertility is that women are responsible for bringing forth child to perpetuate the family.

Demeter's association with grain translated into a closer relationship with human fertility as playing a crucial part in the continuity of human race. Her body representing the earth provides nourishment for humans, animal and plant life and by extension women were responsible for feeding their family. Therefore, the overall implication of the ritual myth in connection to women's portrayal in the festival is the recognition of the fundamental role women play in procreation, as it is central to the continuation of the family lineage. Non-citizen wives did not partake in the festival because like Elaphium they charge fees from men after offering sexual pleasure to men as suggested in 1194ff; hence they are more independent than citizen wives and as such cannot be held hostage:

Euripides: No, Mister Archer. Come on, we've got to go.  
 Archer: Ooooo, old lady wait! Please old lady... only one wish  
 Euripides: You've got lots of money for me? One drachma.  
 Archer: Sure! Sure! I'll give you lots of money.

In the performance of religious rituals, the participants engaged in role playing, coral dancing and the wearing of masks and costume. In the *Thesmophoriazusae* we see these aspects exemplified in the character portrayal of Agathon and the chorus of men and women. The audiences are able to see the parallels that exist between some of the ritual performance and theatrical element (Carter 1988:88–98).

### 4.2.3 Portrayal of Women's Vices

Throughout the play, Aristophanes offers no sympathy for women but rather there are exaggerations of some vices of women that Athenian men have attributed to women in the society. Athenian women are angry with Euripides for his negative portrayal of their race and this is the more reason why the women have assembled to find a suitable punishment for Euripides.

Mnesilochus: Hey! What is this? What's going on here? This isn't a wineskin with little Persian booties. Oh!, you...you...women! Bloody drunkards! That's all you ever think about, wine. Make the wine sellers happy and your men miserable! Destroy your households! (735–8).

Foremost of women's social vices that Aristophanes capitalizes on is that: women are desperate drunks. The scene highlights Mnesilochus threats to slit the wineskin. Aristophanes by this description shows how dependent women are on alcohol even to the extent of risking their lives to save the 'baby'. This scene was taken from Euripides *Telephus*. The abduction of the infant Oretes at the altar was substituted in the *Thesmophoriazusae* with the wineskin.

Mika: Hey! Stop! Where do you think you're going? Bloody hell! He snatched my baby right from her nurse.  
 Mnesilochus: I'm going to cut all the veins of her little thing! Splash the altar with her bright red blood!  
 Mika: Ahh! No! No! Women, please help me! My only child! Scream, women, scream blue murder! Stop him. A reward, a reward for his capture! He's got my only child! My baby! Mania, go and get the sacrificial bowl from the altar so that I may catch my darling blood! (688–695).

The argument on women's alcoholism continues in the play when Mnesilochus was later discovered as the only stranger in the mist of women who had no group affiliation. He was further interrogated on the proceedings of the previous year in 630–33:

Kritylla: Now, about last year's festival. Tell me about it. What was the first item of the epiphany?  
 Mnesilochus: Ahhh! Now, let me think, ah yes now I remember, the first was we had a drink.  
 Kritylla: Yes! Yes but what then? What came after that?  
 Mnesilochus: Then? Then we had a toast.

He immediately assumed that the women drunk at the festival. Through Mnesilochus, Aristophanes highlights a general assumption about women at the time. Athenian men locked up storehouse to prevent women from sneaking into the stores for alcohol.

Mika:                   And what do your houses look like these days, thanks to Euripides. I'll tell what they look like: They look like and feel like prisons! Locks and bolts everywhere, special women's quarters and mountainous bloody dogs at the front gate to keep our lovers away! We can't take care of the food supply anymore or even go to the pantry to get some flour or some wine or even oil! Our husbands have locked everything up with those Spartan keys! (415–18).

It was a standing joke among Athenian men that women drunk alcohol in secret. Though this was a general depiction of women at the time there is no proof that it was a popular belief among men (MacDowell 1995:263).

Further on women's social vices, Aristophanes focuses on another general assumption about Athenian women: they are sex-craze and deceptive. In 390ff Athenian women accuse Euripides for exposing their secrets about engaging in extra marital affairs with other men. Athenian men search everywhere within the house for secret lovers who visit their wives in their absence in 398:

Mika:                   They give us dirty and suspicious looks and they start searching every nook and cranny for hidden lovers!

This assertion of women keeping secret lovers becomes possible in a society where girls are betrothed at an early age to men older than them (women). Hence it was obvious that by the time these young girls are ready to marry their prospective husbands are dead or the women have lost affection for the men. Though women were stereotypically portrayed as engaging in adulterous affairs, Aristophanes overemphasized women's unfaithfulness in the play. Among the enemies of women, female servants are listed as fictitious informants who deliver messages to their husbands. Additionally, line 340 outlines other enemies including deceitful

lovers, old women who shortchange their lovers. Aristophanes exaggerated women's deceptive nature by narrating stories about how women smuggle children into their homes. Athenian men put premium on baby boys, so if a wife delivers a baby girl, a boy child of a slave was swapped for the wife in lines 567–70:

Mika:           And God help the childless woman who wants to shut  
                    her husband up by passing some other woman's child  
                    as her own! It can't happen! Her husband will insist on  
                    being right there, in the delivery room.  
Mnesilochus: What about you? Didn't you swap your baby girl with  
                    your slave baby boy?

Citizen wives were highly prized as the only women who could produce legitimate male children. Therefore husbands were in constant fear that the adulterous behaviour of their wives could produce a child that would later claim a legitimate family possession. Thus a wife who had both parents as Athenian was highly valued. That notwithstanding, wives of poor husbands were much freer and could go all out to undertake any housekeeping activity for themselves. An Athenian woman will do everything possible to secure her marriage even to the extent of deceiving her husband with a swapped baby. The bringing in of swapped children to the household posed treats to wealthy men because the tendency of passing on proprieties to these children was high. Women did not want to lose their husbands, hence a male child from a slave woman was passed on to citizen wives (Gardner1987:55–7). These depictions of women reflect men's conception that men have about women's behaviour. To them (men) women have to be carefully monitored because they (women) are always beaming with suspicious behaviour. In real life Athenian women were not to be thought of as being drunks or always scheming to have a lover. The motive for all these suspicion was that Athenian women were simply to conform to their husbands' requirements in everyday life. In the play women are depicted as superior to men, this portrayal was intended to mock women because Athenian men viewed women as inferior (MacDowell 1995:266).

### 4.3 Political Implication

The concentration of this sub-heading focuses attention on how Aristophanes uses significant relationships that exists between the setting of the Athenian assembly and the structural framework of the *Thesmophoria*. It should however be noted that women had little or no political roles to perform in the ancient Greece society. Therefore Aristophanes' adaptation of the Athenian assembly was to depict the celebration of an important women's festival to emphasize women's contribution to the *polis*. The celebration of the festival places premium on women's contribution to the fertility of the state<sup>xxxvii</sup> and also their role in comedy.<sup>xxxviii</sup>

#### 4.3.1 Parallels of the Athenian Assembly and the Structure of the *Thesmophoria*.

Tzanetou's article 'Something to Do with Demeter: Ritual and Performance in Aristophanes' *Women at the Thesmophoria*', argues that Athenian women are seen as cast participants in the assembly and they act out male roles. Bobrick (1997:177) argues differently, in her opinion women's representation in the entire play does not allow women to fully discharge their roles in the *oikos* as mothers and wives. To her, these women are not able to free themselves from the restrictions that accompany their roles as mothers and wives, thus she regards the play as a negative portrayal of women's roles. Contrary to her views, Bowie (1993:209) recounts some essential modules in the play that exemplifies that of the Athenian assembly. The first of such modules can be found in 78–80:

Mnesilochus: A judgment? How can a judgment be delivered today?  
The courts are shut. No cases will be adjudicated today.  
The Parliament isn't sitting either. It's the holy day of  
the *Thesmophoria*. Fasting Day! Mid Festival Day.  
Women's Day!

Regular assembly and court proceedings were suspended during the second day of the festival. Similarly *Nesteia* which took place on the second day of festival was dedicated to fasting and also the mourning of Demeter over her daughter Persephone hence no vigorous

activity was undertaken by the women. The women were less busy on the second day of the festival and that corresponds to Athenian assembly where there were no court proceedings during the second day of the women's festival. Citizen men attended the assembly hence; the representation of citizen women in the festival as is indicated in 293:

Thrata: Now let me see... I want to find a seat where I can hear everything. Slaves are not allowed in here. They are not allowed to listen to speeches.

The end of the sixth century witnessed a major development in the political administration in Athens. Aristocratic monopoly paved way to either oligarchic or democratic constitution. Adult male citizen had the privilege of participating in government and this made citizenship a highly prized privilege. Slaves, both males and females, had no rights at all except to be used for agricultural, domestic and industrial purpose. As part of a typical assembly, the speakers first address their audience. The women in the play are found doing a similar thing. Kritylla is the first to address the women's assembly:

Let us pray to the Divine pair of law protectors: Demeter and Persephone. Let us pray that our gathering here today is conducted well and all behave excellently and that we bring about wonderful achievement for the citizen of Athens and the greatest of luck for all of us. Let us also pray that the women amongst us whose words and deeds must help the State of Athens and the State of Women are adequately rewarded. Let this be our prayers (300–305).

Two major events characterize the Athenian *Boule*: *arai* (curses) and the reading of the agenda. Aristophanes skillfully incorporates this trend in the women's festival. In 331ff Kritylla outlines some of the curses that women utter to their enemies:

If any man schemes a plot with Euripides and with the Persians to cause harm or to overthrow the Women's Republic,  
If any man tries to establish himself or establish someone as tyrant of the Women's Republic,  
If any man dobs in a woman who has claimed another woman's child as her own,  
Pray too, that the gods give their every blessing you.

The agenda of the *Boule* was read out by Kritylla:

Now, please listen to me Ladies!  
In the Women's General Assembly, the Chairwoman is Timocleia and the Secretary is Lysilla, Sostrate has moved the following motion which was duly passed:

That a meeting be held at Dawn of the Middle Day of the *Thesmophoria* Festival, The day during which we have most time to ourselves, during which the main item of discussion shall be the proper punishment of the man, we women consider to be a criminal namely, Euripides.

Now is there anyone who wishes to speak on this matter?

The location of the Athenian assembly was also central to the play. The *Pnyx* was dedicated to the political decision making of the Athenian state. Though there is not enough evidence to determine the precise location of the *Thesmophoria*, taking the model of citizen Athenians in an assembly, the *Pnyx* easily comes to mind as the corresponding location of the women's assembly. Broneer (1942:250) suggests that on the basis of inscriptions that are found in the demes, the *Thesmophoria* in Attica might be held in *Pnyx*.

Chorus: Come girls, let's go and light up some lamps. Search around everywhere including the Assembly House. See if there's another man in among us (656-57).

Sommerstein (1994:295) sees the play as a political association of women which takes its framework from the structure of the *Thesmophoria*. Unlike the *Lysistrata* and the *Ecclesiazusae* where women usurped the roles of men, the women in the *Thesmophoriazusaie* invade the male domain or the *polis* to stop them (men) from interfering into their (women) own occupation of managing the household. The play lauds the status of women both in the *polis* and the *oikos*. Though the women accuse Euripides of defaming them in his plays, they insist that their share in the city's wealth should be accounted for and also their race should be recalled how some Athenian women of excellence have helped to shape the *polis*. Athenian men claim women are the cause of misery and war, yet they (men) marry them (789). There is however a contradiction of this claim on the part of the women who also claim that their roles in the *polis* should be recognized and appreciated by the giving of honors (Tzanetou 1993:337).

Chorus: There's lots of stuff that we women are angry about: One of the worse things is that we just don't get recognized for our good work! I mean, if a woman gives birth to a man who serves the State well, let's say he becomes a Brigadier, or a

General then she should be honored in some way. She should be given a seat at the Honors Row at the *Stenia* and the *Skira* as well as all the other women's festival (830–3)

In the climax of the play, Aristophanes underscores a very important portrayal of women: their role in influencing decisions in the *polis*. The women were able to influence Euripides decision to change his representation of women in his play. A young woman comes to the rescue of Euripides as he tries to negotiate peace treaty with the women not to slander them in his plays again.

Euripides: Ladies, ladies, ladies! I hereby give you this chance: Ladies if you wish to clinch a deal with me, to strike an everlasting bargain with me, now is the time! I will sign up a promise that no woman will ever be insulted by me again! Never will I insult you (1160–3).

The adaptation of the play's framework to the Athenian assembly contributes to the establishing of a positive portrayal of women roles in the Athenian society. In the play there exists a positive affirmation of women's roles in the home as well as the *polis*. The whole idea in the ritual myth of the *Thesmophoria* hinges on the celebration of women's fertility in two main ways: first in the *oikos* as mothers and wives invade the men's public sphere to call their (men) attention to put a stop to how the women discharge their duties in the home. Secondly women's role in the *polis*: through comedy women do not only appear as objects for audience mockery but play a part in teaching human values.

Athenian women celebrated the festival of the *Thesmophoria* to recall the abduction of Demeter and Persephone. In this particular celebration (as a comic fantasy) the women want to try Euripides for traducing their sex. Euripides becomes aware of the impending danger and after failing to compel Agathon to attend on his behalf, he pleads with Mnesilochus to attend the festival disguised as a woman to appeal for his defense. The play is highly remarkable for its highlights of sexual role reversals, gender disguise, deception of women's behaviours in the *oikos* and the political resonance it shares with the Athenian assembly as characterized by the women in the opening of their 'assembly'.

The stereotyping of women was a common feature in plays of Classical writers. Aristophanes for instance sometimes provides sympathy for these women as in his *Lysistrata* (99–100), whereas Euripides in his *Medea* (214–225) considers these women as being unreasonable in the protection of themselves as well as others. On a broader extension, this stereotypical portrayal underscores an important characterization in the depiction of the female assembly. The women in their chorus emphasized an important fact about their representation in the *polis*; they have been able to preserve some of their traditional heritage while the men have failed in their attempt to do so and the women allay their concerns in 818–22. The metaphorical description of the men by women in terms of their losing their war apparatus constituted slander in the Athenian society. It was offensive for an Athenian man to lose his shield and spear because it demeaned his status in the society. Athenian women want Euripides to stop misrepresenting them in his plays not because they (women) want to be on the same pedestal with the men, because Athenian men at the time of Aristophanes' career as poet did not conduct themselves well lest enough they should talk about women!

## END NOTES

### Chapter Four

<sup>xxxiv</sup> *Acharnians, Knights, Peace and Birds.*

<sup>xxxv</sup> Demeter was the goddess of earth, she is more connected with human control of the earth and Persephone her daughter who was held hostage by Hades.

<sup>xxxvi</sup> Agathon—see J. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, London, 1978, pg144.

<sup>xxxvii</sup> See sub-section 3.3.2

<sup>xxxviii</sup> *ibid.*

## CHAPTER FIVE

### *ECCLESIASUZAE*

#### 5.0 Introduction

A group of women dressed as men overthrow the government through a peaceful coup d'état (Taaffe 1993:1).

Taaffe perceives this portrayal of women as an illusion of gender disguise. In a fantasy of portraying women as taking over the government, Athenian women in effect cross the border that exists between male (*polis*) and female (*oikos*). Shaw (1975:22) argues that 'a society which ignores the female is sterile and lacks emotional foundations. One that ignores the male is plunged into interfamilial feuding. The male and female are exclusive and hostile; yet since Greek civilization is a unity of *oikos* and *polis*, the two must be kept in balance.' He further suggests that the structural equation of female: male as *oikos: polis* does not really hold. Shaw's assertion presents a conflict between the sexes and can be projected into a larger arena: public and private. In his view, both male and female should share in the preservation of the interest of the *oikos* and the *polis* as whole. Aristophanes' *Ecclesiazusae* was written with such intention.

The *Ecclesiazusae* was produced at a time of continuing trouble for a state that had endured a humiliating defeat and the loss of an empire. The play echoes a major historical reality; an impoverished state still reeling from the after-shocks of an oligarchic government following the defeat in 404 BC.<sup>xxxix</sup> Though oligarchy was overthrown and replaced with democracy, a strong sense of purpose was needed for the development of the plots of the play. It is against this background that Aristophanes wrote his final play with women as the main cast. In the *Ecclesiazusae*, women dress as men and decide to entrust the government of the day as well as the entire administration of all public affairs to women in a communism. In

comparing the communism of women to that of Plato, Praxagora the women's leader suggests that all citizens, women and children, will be available to all men:

Now I suggest that all things be owned by everyone in common and everyone should be able to draw and have an equal standard of living. They should all draw from the same funds (590–2).

On the other hand, Plato restricts his communist to the possession of goods, women and children to only guardians<sup>x1</sup>. Thus, it will be worthwhile to take a close look at the *Ecclesiazusae* and to contextually interpret the socio-political portrayal of women in the ancient Athenian society vis `a vis structures like power, property and marriage that were brought to bear in a comic utopia. Praxagora's communist project should not be treated without taking cognizance of both the meaning of gynaecocracy (rule of female) and idea of communism in a comic fantasy. The play creates gender disguise that was based on traditional categories of power which hinges on stereotype roles of men and women alike. Language and costume all form part of the elements in the play and make it possible for the gender disguise to take place effectively as the theme of the play develops.

Though no exact date has been given to the play, scholars have assumed that some political events such as the ones in 193–6 suggest that the play was probably written in 392 BC. The purpose of this chapter is to contextually interpret the symbolic representations of male and female in relation to their usual roles in the *oikos* and *polis*. Both have significant roles to play: in the *polis* men bring out their values by exercising control over the political affairs of the state whereas women focus their energies on domestic activities in the *oikos* and also in the exclusive religious festivals such as the *Thesmophoria* and the *Skira*. All these roles are geared towards the promotion of a stable state. The play is relevant today because it sheds light on some important aspects of human nature, the limits of government as well as the effects of laws on an imperfect state. The chapter further elucidate issues such as political

polices, gender roles, sharing of common property and the effect of sexual objectification of both men and women. George Theodoridis translation of the play will be used.

### 5.1 Synopsis of the Play

The *Ecclesiazusae* is known by other titles such as *The Assemblywomen*, *The Congresswomen* or *Women in Parliament*. It is one of the late comedies by the ancient Greek playwright Aristophanes dating from 392 BC and has 1,183 lines. The theme of the play is similar to the *Lysistrata*, where a major portion of the plots centers on women involving themselves in a political revolt. The play can be structured into three categories: (a) the planning and execution of the women's *coup d'état* by Praxagora and her fellow women (1–173), (b) conception and enactment of the new order of communism (174–581), (c) communism in action (581–1,183).

In the play, a band of women led by an astute woman by name Praxagora decides to convince Athenian men to give women chance to control the city because they (women) believe can do a better job. They plan on how to disguise themselves during the festival of *Skira*. This festival, like the *Thesmophoria*, is also exclusive to Athenian women. The name of the festival connotes a ritual of transsexual gender disguise. In the festival two boys dressed as girls make a procession to the Temple of Athena *Skira* (Parke 1967:77). As soon as power is handed over to the women, Praxagora formulates some radical proposals for the new state to take effect. Together with other citizen women, a communist-like government is instituted in which houses, women and sex will be held in common by all Athenian citizens. An idea of equality in sexual satisfaction was initiated; every man was allowed to sleep with every woman so long as he sleeps with the ugly woman first before sleeping with the pretty woman (1072–5):

Second Old Woman:	No way! This way boy!
Third Old Woman:	I'll never ever let you go!
Second Old Woman:	Nor will I.
Epigenes:	Stop! You'll break me in two, you evil Harpes!

Second Old Woman: According to the law you've got to follow me!  
Third Old Woman: Wrong! The law says that if the next woman is uglier,  
she gets him. That's for you to work out. Right now  
you've got this to attend to!

In the light of this new system of government in sex-rationing and shared property there was no need for prostitutes. As part of Praxagora's social reforms, slaves were to be owned publicly and they could live like everyone else a life of pleasure (593–594). Individual households were also to be publicized in order to create a form of communal dwelling where citizens will dine together at the expense of the public in the various jury courts that have been turned into dining halls (853–62).

*Ecclesiazusae* contains some traditional revolutionary technicalities that do not appear in the *Lysistrata* and *Thesmophoriazusae* as characterized in Praxagora's proposals. The action of the play moves steadily as the role of the Chorus occasionally reduces and humor begins to turn attention to some basic jokes (225,227,228 and 237–8). We find the longest word in Greek lexicon in this play in 1169–74, which, when translated, means: name of a dish compounded of all kinds of dainties, and fish, flesh and fowl and sauces.<sup>xli</sup> The *Ecclesiazusae* has been placed along with the *Birds* and *Peace* as a utopian play (Gruber 1986:14). The play likely reflects some problems during the time of Aristophanes in Athens; there was an urgent need for the creation of a utopia due to the crisis that occurred during the Peloponnesian War. The city was under terror, democracy in serious trouble and above all the wealth of the city was fueled into funding the Peloponnesian War. Both social and political instabilities that existed in the Athenian society contributed to the theme and style of writing the *Ecclesiazusae*.

It is however important to remember that Praxagora's conception of a utopia will require loyalty and love based on obedience on the part of all individual to defend the ideals of the city as well as the legislation governing the city. The play finally ends with several scenes on various social and political reforms and closes with a feast.

## 5.2 Social Implications

In his final 'women plays', Aristophanes transforms an unfavourable condition in the Athenian society into a comic utopia that beacons a ray of hope for all Athenian citizens no matter their position in the society. The play was written after the bitter defeat of Athenians in the Peloponnesian War. Although political structures were called into question for having been responsible for the war, there were other social factors such as the sharing of properties (material and sexual relation) and the reversal of roles of men and women suggested as the solution to the war and for Athenians to also reconcile their past. This subsection will explain how Aristophanes incorporates the portrayal of women's roles and status in the society into that of the play and the effect it had on his audience, Athenian men.

### 5.2.1 Sharing of Common Properties (Material and Sexual Relation)

Aristophanes clearly understood the relationship that exists between recognition of one's status and the distribution of properties. Fraser (2000:114) argues that the redistribution of properties in the *Ecclesiazusae* was geared 'not at valorizing group identity but at overcoming subordination.' Hence, Aristophanes chose women to represent the group that takes care of the redistribution of properties to emphasize their (women) recognition in the Athenian society. Aristophanes presents women as taking charge of the communal property redistribution to bridge the gap that has been created by class distribution (men and women; rich and poor). Foley (1982:17) disagrees with Shaw's model of female intrusion not because the men have failed to conduct themselves well in terms of Athens political affairs but rather on the economic failure of men in the *polis*. Praxagora wants to implement the tenets of managing the *oikos* into that of the *polis* because according to her women will be able to manage the affairs of the state by incorporating the knowledge of the household into that of the *polis*.

Yes, there is hope! There is hope if you listen to my proposal and it is this: I propose that we hand over the city to the women. Who better understand the city, than those who run our household? They are the managers and treasures of our house. (210–212).

All activities that take place in the house will be equally taken care of in the new big household. She assures her audience that if they have faith in her council then the city will be saved. Poverty level at the time of Aristophanes was on the ascendance because the treasury of the state was used in funding the war. Greedy politicians were using state money to take care of their individual needs neglecting the welfare of the state. Praxagora's utopian ideas came at a time when all in the society needed relief. No wonder her plan made equal provisions for everyone!

Praxagora: Good! Now, I suggest that all things be owned by everyone in common and everyone should be able to draw a pay and have an equal standard of living. My law says one law for everyone, one standard for all. (588–91)

Athenians who surrender their material properties into a common pool posed a challenge to the society in the sense that those who do not have any material wealth will benefit from the rich and that is the essence of communism.

The idea of communism was not new to Aristophanes' audience. Plato's *Republic* addressed the concept of communism before the *Ecclesiazusae* was written and as such Athenians were highly aware of the principles therein. Praxagora wants all men to bring their money and other material possessions together and in return enjoy the benefits that will be derived from the communist-like living. Foley (1982:17) asserts that 'Praxagora's model of household will not need money since women exchange through barter, production of commodities will be based on agricultural goods and the satisfaction of necessary needs will take over the accumulation of wealth'.

Blepyrus: By Dionysus! What helpful ideas! He added that our great grain mogul, Nausicydis and other grain deals should give away to the poor (441).

Praxagora: The first thing I'll do is to put common ownership to all the land. The same with the money and every other thing which is at the moment owned by individuals. And it is this

common wealth that we women will harvest with prudent saving and careful intelligence (600–603).

Slaves were tasked to take care of food production; women will manage the state budget by applying the principles of household management. Praxagora equated the domestic and civic management by the elimination of all foreign policy. All citizens in the society will be catered for in the new system. However the communism was threatened by selfish individuals who do not want give up their wealth. In the Athenian society the surrendering of individual properties for the promotion of the common good of both the household and the state was a functional ideal Foley (1982:18).

The second aspect of Praxagora's communal redistribution of property was a scheme designed for sexual relation. She proposed a plan where old women and men will have to be satisfied sexually first before the young pretty girl and handsome man in 610–12:

Praxagora: He'll be able to sleep with her for free. No charge. No price.  
All the ugly ones with the twisted noses will stand next to the cute ones and if the man wants the cute one, he'll have to sleep with the ugly ones first.

This plan however threatened the stability of the family union. MacDowell (1995:314) outlines the consequences that will result from the communal sex. Men were denied of having their wives as the only sexual partners. In Praxagora's utopian plan all women had equal access to all men in terms of sexual relations. The first move that was directed towards the fulfillment of this plan was when Praxagora suggests that men should go in for the ugly and older women first after which they (men) can turn their attention to the pretty women. MacDowell further highlights that the new system of sex-rationing will not allow children to know their biological fathers, so there should be a rule which will make a boy respect and treat every man as his father. Nevertheless, in the utopian society mothers of children can be identified.

Zumbrumen (2006:325) sees the *Ecclesiazusae* as suggesting a tension between status-based recognition and identity-based recognition (men and women, rich and poor). As in his other 'women plays' Aristophanes rarely shows any sympathy for women as individuals. He presents to his audience a general idea at the time. So, one should not be quick to interpret these scenes as stereotypes of women's behaviours, such as being greedy, deceptive, and always scheming mischievous ideas to meet selfish demands. MacDowell (1995:320) sees the tension differently; for him the two categories of recognition do not really have a necessary connection with one another. In his view, Aristophanes could have used the communal sex without the plot of women taking over the government. Dover (1972:200) also establishes a parallel link that connects the place of women as well as the nature of property distribution in the Greek society.

This aspect of communal redistribution of sexual pleasure was intended to emphasize equality in the social strata and to appraise the status of all who have been neglected as constituting a lower cultural, social and civic status in the Athenian society (Zumbrumen 2006:327). Praxagora's free sex for all had some flaws; female slaves did not have the privilege to sleep with citizen men and young girls who have been betrothed were not allowed to take part in the communal sex (Reeder 1996:14). The men on the other hand, preferred to have the young girls first, before attending to the older and ugly women. Auffarth (1991:49–50) asserts that 'Aristophanes adopted the Argive festival of *Hybristika* as the model for his comic representation of Praxagora's communal sexual utopia. He observes that the 'Argive reacted to political and military disaster by reversing some cultural traditions: if the only men to survive the war are the young men or non-citizens, patrilineal descent will not work anymore. Women will take over the responsibility of leading the family and community whilst citizenship is handed from mothers to sons<sup>xliii</sup>.

The evidence we have from Aristophanes as to the lifestyle of Athenians of his time should be analyzed with great caution. The urge he had to always produce a comical effect in his plays should equally be seen as part of the freedom of expression he had as an author of stage performance. In these scenes 520–729, 520, 49, 596 Praxagora's new status as the leader of the utopian regime gave her an exceptional prowess to speak with boldness. This further authenticates the status of men in the society, because it was only men who were allowed to speak in public. Women were excluded from all the affairs of the *polis* 110–20, 128, 132. Even women who were in the same social class with men did not fraternize together with the exception of those men in the same kin group as the women. A wife could not just leave the house without giving the husband tangible reasons for her actions (520–51). Praxagora's communist agenda was to satisfy all citizens in the society.

### 5.2.2 Reversal of Roles

The thrust of this discussion is to bring out from the play texts that bear direct effect on reversal of roles on the social and cultural position of women. Two pieces of evidence will be identified: the use of the cloaks and sexual transvestism (biological).

The first piece of evidence of role reversal can be found in the *gynaecocracy*. Compton-Engle (2005:163) suggests that 'the cloaks that women steal from their husbands in the play have thematic resonances that extend well beyond their use as part of the women's transvestite disguise'. She states further that 'Blepyrus' inference of the cloaks being portrayed as 'mugging' signifies not only gender reversal but the *oikos-polis* dialectic which Praxagora uses to address the socio-political parameters that are embedded in the play and in the Athenian society at large.

Blepyrus: Well, then why not wear your own cloaks? But no! You had to run off with my cloaks and throw your own shawl over me, looking like a dead corpse ready for the hearse.

Praxagora: It was freezing outside, darling and I'm thin and feeble of health. That was why I needed this to keep warm (535–38)

The stealing of cloaks in the Athenian society was a serious crime punishable by death. Taaffe (1993:108) highlights on the fact that the *himatia* that the women wore were stolen from their husbands and that was the reason why they delayed their attendance in the assembly.

Praxagora: Maybe they've found it difficult to run off with the husbands cloaks (26).

Said (1979:38) observes that the swapping of the *himatia* between Praxagora and her husband influenced the transvertism in the women's behaviour.

Blepyrus: Desperately struggling to find my cloaks and shoes in the dark searching everywhere. I couldn't find a thing. What could I do? I grabbed my wife's cute little shawl and her cute Persian slippers (313–15).

Blepyrus inquires in 535–38 why his wife took his cloak rather than her own. Praxagora's action signifies a mockery of her husband status. Blepyrus gender changes when he uses his wife's cloth to cover himself during the night. MacDowell (1995:311) remarks that 'the first man the audience sees has lost his clothes to his wife; and that, metaphorically, is what the play is about—men are losing their assets to women'. The assets here mean cloaks and staff which characterize the men as masters of the *polis*. Praxagora on the other hand, defends her action of taking her husband's cloaks—to protect the cloaks from being stolen; that is the protection of the *polis*. Men wore cloaks anytime they attended the assembly to deliberate on issues affecting the welfare of the state. The cloaks and the staff had political resonance hence Praxagora taking them invariably meant her usurpation of her husband's (and in fact all Athenian men) political power.

Further, Praxagora assures her husband that in the new system there will be no stealing of cloaks since all will benefit from communal property 667–71. The encounter between Praxagora and Blepyrus presents us with the real symbolic *oikos-polis* dialectic that Compton-Engle (2005:171) discusses in the *Ecclesiazusae*. She perceives 'that the

*Ecclesiazusae* can be seen as exemplifying the danger inherent in shattering the boundaries between *oikos-polis*; just as the women depart from the household to enter the public arena, a public crime enters persuasively in this *oikos-polis* dialectic.’ The stealing of cloaks meant the physical violation of a person and could have death as the penalty. Therefore women usurping the authority of men equally meant that women have taken something which does not belong to them.

On the contrary, as Shaw (1975:66) puts it, ‘Greek civilization is a unity of *oikos* and *polis* and these two must be kept in balance. The inversion of one for the other sphere will ‘plunge for interfamilial feuding.’ Both male and female have the responsibility of protecting the interest of the other. According to Compton-Engle’s argument, Praxagora’s interpretation of Blepyrus’ loss of cloak is a less emblematic inversion of male–female and public–private dichotomy than it is symptomatic of the societal problems that is plaguing Athens during the fifth century BC; loss of empire has failed the people. These problems among others have affected the social fabric of the society and therefore there was an urgent need to solve these problems. In 654 Praxagora proceeds to show how she will cure the state of all economic deficiencies that has befallen the state. Through the metaphorical representation of cloak stealing, Aristophanes was able to comically integrate a social problem that skillfully addresses the economic needs of his people. Various political policies have failed Athenians during the Peloponnesian War and owing to that prudent measures had to be put in place to curtail the problems. The *Ecclesiazusae* like previous plays outlines strategies that were rightly needed by Athenians of all classes.

The second category of role reversal has to do with sexual transvertism. By sexual transvertism, I mean the unusual practice of men giving birth. This comic sexual transvertism that Aristophanes employs has a symbolic meaning to the development of the theme of the play. Auffarth (1991:51) observes that ‘Aristophanes gives a social as well as biological

gender–role of giving birth in the play.’ Blepyrus comical reaction to his problem of constipation emphasis this assumption. In the darkness of the night, Blepyrus frantically looks for a quiet place where he could relieve himself from the stomach upset. All efforts fail him and he now appears in the full glare of his audience who mock at his plight. MacDowell say’s of him:

‘Nowhere else is constipation displayed, and the audience is expected to laugh in surprise at seeing something normally hidden from view. The passage reinforces the theme of the play, by showing a man preoccupied with a mundane or degrading activity while he is concerned with higher things.’ (1995:31).

In 389 ff Blepyrus calls on Eileithyia (goddess of birth) to aid him in his ‘delivery’. The hilarity in this scene is an obvious truth: men cannot give birth. So, why then did Aristophanes choose to use such a scene to address an important social problem? Athenian men have become selfish in their quest of pursuing wealth to the point of getting engulf with state problems without any solution to disentangle themselves from the mess that have been created. Aristophanes’ use of biological gender–role reversal shows how unqualified men are at handling challenges that face them. On the other hand, women have unselfish interest in finding ways to save both the *oikos* and the *polis*. For instance, Praxagora offers help to her neighbour in labour so that the neighbour provides the next generation of soldiers who will rescue Athens in the future.

Auffarth (1991:53) categorizes this type of reversal as *couvades*. He explains it as a ‘phenomenon involving husbands of new mothers staying in bed and wishing everyone to look after them as if they were the ones who had just given birth.’ Instead of the men helping their wives to care for the new born child, men live a life of drones in a world run by others Foley (1982:18). Athenian men have refused to take responsibility of caring for their families and state. The creation of communism posed a problem for male anxiety: men will no longer take up public duties such as attending courts, engaging in warfare and also farming. Their position as protectors and providers will eventually diminish.

### 5.3 Political Implications of Women's Portrayal

Many arguments have been attributed to Aristophanes' views on politics and the role of women in the political administration of Athens during the Peloponnesian War. One of such scholarly arguments can be traced to Zeitlin (1990:63–96), who postulates that 'Athenian drama was essentially stage with the intention of educating male citizens in a democratic state and because of that female characters in the theater must be analyzed based on the context of the play.' To Zeitlin, this analysis will inevitably reveal the truth about male identity. Women characters thus became the medium by which the effect of male actions comes to the fore. On the other hand, Aristophanes' *Ecclesiazusae* has been seen as women's interpretation of how they will use political power to bring salvation to a suffering state.

Chremes: What else but the fact that Chairman has placed in the agenda the question about how to save the city. And how dreadful it is that this person dares to lecture us on ways of saving our city when he cannot even save his own eyeballs? (396).

Conferring of political power to women follows the enactment of sharing all properties in a community. Fraser (2000:68) sees this redistribution of properties as a change in the status of women that ultimately diminishes the differences that exists between the rich and poor. The play juxtaposes fantasy and irony, as various perspectives on the possibilities of radical change are initiated by Athenian women Zumbumen (2006:324). Aristophanes uses the plots of the play to declare hope to Athenians that soon their woes will come to an end. At this point it will be useful to briefly look at the political background that existed in the Athenian society and the effect it had on the general political climate on the context of the *Ecclesiazusae*.

#### 5.3.1 Brief Political Background

The play obviously reflects problems that Athens had to endure at the time of Aristophanes. The desire to establish a utopian state was appropriate because of political

instability that existed in Athens during and after the Peloponnesian War. Changes that occurred were enormous: democracy was in serious trouble and the wealth of the city was gone. Douglass (1962:1) asserts on the apathy and poverty of the people when he said that ‘Agyrrhios payment for attendance at Athens popular assembly, the *ecclesia* had been taken over by the people’. Aristophanes considers the decline in democracy through the payment of wages for people to attend the assembly which in reality was part of their civic duty. From one obol for each meeting it was increased to two and later to three obols.

This new development inspired interest in attendance of the assembly. Douglass further reasons that the desire to shift from democratic rule to that of communism was evident in that ‘a totalitarian communistic welfare state’ will be suitable for the ordinary Athenian citizen. Thus we see in the *Ecclesiazusae* that power has been taken from government official and is given to people who are seldom thought to have any knowledge in governance—women. Spatz (1978:17,140) also attribute this trend of governance to the fact that ‘in the comic world the underdog realizes his wildest fantasies by often establishing a utopian society where he can satisfy his desires with impunity. The mild tone coupled with the universality of the character makes one feel that the *Ecclesiazusae* could take place almost anywhere not just the in fifth century Athens.’

However, Praxagora’s utopia had some pitfalls: it does not take into account the views of individuals in the society. Her concept for the new society is to ‘make one way of living common to all’ (80). To have shared values will be to share the same lifestyle, work the same and even eat the same meals. To Said (1979:301) Praxagora’s communism ‘is a community regime that would be a remedy for the individuals who threaten the civic spirit and the very existence of the city’. Though there may be some impediments militating against the success of the utopian regime such as greedy individuals using state funds for personal gains, the

success and failure of all people must be recognized for promoting the stability of the society. A society is made great through the cooperation of individual energies.

### 5.3.2 Political Gender–Role Playing

Praxagora's purpose in the play in which women mimic the roles of men by acting out parts of 'women' and women play the roles of 'men' can be categorized as a feature in the analysis of the political portrayal as gender–role playing. Aristophanes creates gender disguise here as in his *Thesmophoriazusae*. However, in the *Ecclesiazusae* Praxagora's utopian communism we see change in gender roles: women will take care of the political affairs of the state and additionally juxtapose it with other household activities.

- Blepyrus: Decree or no decree, he'd be sorry if he kissed me. But who'll be doing the farming, Praxagora?
- Praxagora: The farming will be done by the slaves. Your only concern will be to get all dressed up and around ten in the evening go off to your dinner party.
- Blepyrus: Ah! Another valid question, I think it concerns clothing. What of them? Where do we get them from?
- Praxagora: Make use of what you've got now. Later we'll weave you new ones (651ff).

Men will have no obligations to perform any longer but simply enjoy what the new order brings to them. In the *Ecclesiazusae*, Athenian women make a direct move into the political arena hitherto forbidden to them. This is to afford the women a more secured rule and for this to be achieved, Praxagora clearly outlines her strategy to enforce the values of the *oikos*:

Yes, there is hope! There is hope if you listen to my proposal and it is this: I propose that we hand over the city to the women. Who better understand the city, than those who run our household? They are the managers and treasures of our house (210–212).

All courts were to be publicized into dinning halls (676). Foreign policy, lawsuit and assemblies will not have any significance in the household. There will be no need for legal structures in the new state because it will not have any relevance in the household (447–8):

Chremes: And he also said that whilst we, men all cheat other and don't return borrowed things, the women help each other without the presence of witnesses and they return everything on time.

Punishment for failing to heed to any of the laws will be the reduction of one's daily ration.

Praxagora: Whoever is fined will have his bread rations reduced. That reduction will hit him hard in his belly! Next time he wants to assault anyone, he'll think twice about it! (665–66).

All basic needs will be met because citizens will become one big family. Davis (1995:36) said that 'during the fourth and fifth centuries, Athens' old political structures called into question various proposals for change.' A constitution for radical utopian state was likewise experimented with and this was portrayed in Praxagora's proposal for a utopian state. Her program is in consonance with Plato's ideal of communism in his book five of the *Republic*. Praxagora was seen as an eloquent public speaker who was able to appeal to the emotions of the majority. Rothwell sees the effect of Praxagora's political proposal as central to the development of the plot of the play. To him:

The play was an expression of the restored democracy. Aristophanes is sympathetic to the principle that the stability of the government must rely on the consent and obedience of the *demos* and while there is no greater defender of demagoguery he understands that the persuasions which win consent must depend on effective means. Praxagora is therefore not a deceptive manipulator, but a quick-thinking leader (Rothwell 1990:102).

As an important aspect of the gender role-playing, the women have to speak eloquently like their husbands in the assembly. Praxagora coaches the Second Woman on how to speak fluently (149):

Go on then, put the garland on. Now speak loudly like a man.  
Lean your body well over the stick.

On the Attic stage males playing female roles used a pure falsetto voice, which made it quite difficult for those at the back stage of the Theater of Dionysus to hear. However, as Praxagora trains the Second Woman to speak like a man, she instructs her on how to do it: by leaning on the walking stick as the men do and also assume a natural masculine vocal timbre

to aid her speak like a man. Her few lines of speech were directed towards the two goddesses, which was very characteristic of women to do during the celebration of their festivals. As the women try to master their acting skills on the stage, Praxagora observes various orators at assembly on the *Pnyx*, which she subsequently imitated during the women's assembly (243–45):

- Second Woman: What a sweet woman you are, my Praxagora. Where did you learn all this, darling?
- Praxagora: My husband and I lived near the *Pnyx* where Parliament met. I learnt by listening to the speeches of the other orators.
- First Woman: Ah! That's why you're so awesome, so brilliant! Well then if we pull this off and we get the leadership of the city then we shall elect you as General!

Praxagora and her fellow women had to put forth extra effort to enable them meet up with the plans in the proposal. As a result they adopted a number of measures to achieve their set targets and one of such was the adaptation of the myth about the Amazonian women.

Famous myths about male-control Greek cities can be traced to the Amazon: myths about the Amazonian society portray women's role in ending war or perhaps curtailing a politically related problem. Variety of plots exist in the *gynaecocracy* (reign of women) plays<sup>xliii</sup>. The myth depicts women as man-killers and child-haters. The Amazons are a well noted tribe of women who distinguish themselves in war craft particularly in riding and archery<sup>xliv</sup>. They offer an excellent example of gynaecocracy. Power among the Amazons is characterized by some masculine features. Military and political attributes continue to be the sole preserve of Greek men. Aristotle in his *Politics* said that 'men are by nature more apt to command than women.'<sup>xlv</sup> He further claims 'that the relationship between male and female is by nature that of the superior to the inferior and the governed.' Alternatively, for women to acquire power, they have to undergo body mutilation: the right breast of girls will have to be cut to make the chest region more suitable for drawing bows in times of war. This was to make women more composed to physically engage in activities such as war, hunting and

politics. According to Said (1979:290) ‘the *gynaecocracy* of the Amazons is a topsy-turvy world which only reproduces turned-down the structures of Greek society. To the Greek man, the domestic is an enclosure with a roof and has a feminine resemblance; anything outside it is for male domination’. In the Amazonian society there is a role-reversal; women go to war and men stay at home to attend to the needs of the household. This is emphasized in the play in 325 where women leave the home to attend the assembly. During the festival of the *Skira*, women divulge a plan to disguise themselves as men and while at the Athenian assembly they will impose their proposal on the Athenian citizen (121). In order for the women to be successful with their new scheme, like the Amazonian women, they have to undergo similar ‘body mutilation’. The women have to tan their skin in the sun (62).

First Woman: I’d get the oil out, slash it all over me and stand out in  
the sun all day to get my body all black.

Athenian women spent majority of their day indoors and because of this they were always pale in complexion and this was seen as sign of beauty.<sup>xlvi</sup> However, it is a symbol of effeminacy for the men to have a pale complexion.<sup>xlvii</sup> Women also have to acquire false beards (68–72) which were attached to the chin. In Greek society a hallmark of virility was for a man to be hairy.<sup>xlviii</sup> On the contrary women had smooth skin<sup>xlix</sup> with this in mind; to complete their manly looks the women need to provide for themselves hair to march their new personality.

Further on gender role-playing is the issue of cross-dressing which was illustrated by the usurpation of men’s cloaks and walking sticks by their wives. This symbolically exemplifies the dangers that exist in breaking the barriers between the *oikos* and *polis*. Women depart from the house and enter the public arena which in reality should not happen. In a confrontation that ensues between Blepyrus and his wife Praxagora, Blepyrus questions why she wore his cloak and as result he was made to take a humiliating trip to the outhouse (535–38).

- Blepyrus: Well then, why not wear your own cloak? But no! You had to run off with my cloak and throw your shawl over me, leaving me looking like a corpse ready for the hearse! A wreath and an urn and I'd be ready.
- Praxagora: It was freezing outside, darling and I'm thin and feeble of health that is why I needed this to keep warm, but you! I left you in your blankets all warm snug.

The significance of this encounter stresses an exaggerated depiction of the harmful effect on men when their wives usurp their political prominence. Aristophanes visually conveys a dramatic point by the use of this comic technique of cloak stealing to represent Athenian men losing their political status to women. Praxagora continues to advance her agenda of bringing an end to Athens' political instability with her utopian communism where all property will be held in common. She later explains that no theft will occur in the society and if even it should occur there would be no harm since a person can easily go in for a new cloak in the common store (667–671):

- Blepyrus: So you think no one will be a thief?
- Praxagora: Why would he? He'd be stealing from something he's a shareholder in.
- Blepyrus: No more stripping off in the middle of the night?
- Neighbor: Not if you sleep at home.

At the commencement of the assembly, some formalities will be required: a pig was sacrificed during the customary ritual; however, at the women's assembly a weasel was sacrificed. The weasel was very familiar to women (955).<sup>1</sup> It was the usual practice for the Athenian assembly to begin with reading the proceedings for the assembly but during the women's assembly a drink was requested before the leader could speak. She also betrayed their sex by swearing in honor of the two goddesses (155):

- Praxagora: No, of course you didn't ask for a drink but you swore by the two Goddesses. You're supposed to be a man, not a woman.

It was characteristic of women during the celebration of their festivals to address goddesses before speaking. Praxagora outlines her proposal which directs attention towards the salvation of the city. She is worried about how unqualified and corrupted men have been

selected to run the affairs of the state and the effect of their actions. According to Praxagora, women are able to manage housekeeping money so if the state is turned into big household then women will care for the city like the household (221–27).

Praxagora: Being the mothers of our soldiers, they'd want to protect them as best as they can and think how much bigger than the rations would be and how much faster they'd reach our soldiers when they're fighting! Then, so far as the treasury is concerned, women know all about money. They've learnt the game a long time ago. And women will never be diddled by anyone if women are the leaders. Women are the absolute masters at diddling.

Aristophanes hereby addresses a peculiar problem; that of corruption as a result of greedy individuals using state funds and also foreign threats on the Athenian society. Athenian men were criticized because they were no longer using state funds for the benefit of the public or in protecting Athenians from foreign invasion but rather greedy individuals use the money to satisfy their selfish ego (185 –88,206–8,304–10). The words of Evaeon show how he addresses the need of ordinary Athenians ahead of his own (408–21). Blepyrus constipation at 369 explains the greedy individualistic nature of Athenian men.

Praxagora's communism was to bring happiness and a lasting end to poverty to all Athenian citizens. She offers suggestions on how to make the utopian regime will work out. In her utopian constitution everyone will have equal opportunity (590), in sharing of property (597–8), possession to restore the morality of the society. Previous government created platforms of ill–feelings to breed between the rich and the poor (601–2). Private property under the new regime will soon turn into citizenship–owning because of collective possession of property. Spatz (1978:132) says of Praxagora that she persuades her audience by appealing not only to the needs of their soul but also to their bodies for idleness, luxury and sex.

Men have conducted themselves unfairly by disclosing the secrets of the *boule* and also refusing to repay the funds given them before standing as witnesses in court (446–50). New innovations in governance therefore have to be drawn up in order to curtail the corrupt system of government administration. Athenian citizens will be replaced by women who can

be compared with foreigners (*Thesm.*576). Praxagora makes two pronouncements in connection to the gynaeocracy. In 205 she accuses the men of causing the woes of the city and went ahead to offer the solution in 210–11. Chremes proposes the second solution in 430. The proposal was however not in favour of the men, who frown upon the idea of utopia. Praxagora assures her audience that the new state will bring happiness because government by women is the only solution to Athens political crises (456–7). This signifies the return to tradition when power is taken over by those who do everything as before. A taste of new innovation in administration was urgently needed.<sup>li</sup>

Considering the socio–political climate already discussed in the work as background of the play, Aristophanes' *Ecclesiazusae* seeks to achieve for all Athenians a society free of greedy individuals by making public the own all properties, a move which provides equal standard of living for everyone. The various texts in the play given as evidence shapes the context of the play and should not be quickly dismissed as fulfilling only comical representation of both males and females in the *oikos* and the *polis*. Aristophanes ably uses these scenes to put on board serious crisis that has beset Athenians and equally provides alternative means of solving the problems in a comical fashion. As a citizen of an impoverished state, he had every responsibility to address issues that affected a city he so loved. From the onset of the play, Aristophanes fiddles with the concept of gender disguise in various ways (cloaks and biological transvertism), the idea of communal sharing (material and sexual pleasure). The play lauds the importance of returning to the good old days. Praxagora was indeed the kind of astute leader Athenians needed to implement radical measures that sought to address the needs of all Athenians. As a literary genre comedy, has the task of questioning and figuratively explore ways to address social issues. This was the exact purpose that the *Ecclesiazusae* accomplish. Praxagora through her radical reform strategies was able to formulate programs and policies for the benefit of Athenians.

Finally, to recapitulate Zeitlin's views on women in the theater, she says that 'women characters in the play reveal truths about the identity of male. Athenian drama was essentially staged to educate male citizens in a democratic state.' Athenian men failed to live to expectation and as a result various alternatives of political programs were experimented with. Aristophanes capitalizes on this political experimentation of change in governance to stage his comic utopia the *Ecclesiazusae*.

## END NOTES

### Chapter Five

<sup>xxxix</sup>In 404B.C. Oligarchy could no longer meet the political demands of the people and because of that democracy was tried. Later other revolutionary measures were put in place.

<sup>xl</sup>Plato: *Republic* 5.

<sup>xli</sup>Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon* rev. H.Stuart Jones, Oxford 1968.

<sup>xlii</sup>F. Zeitlin, *Playing the other: theater, theatricality and the feminine in Greek drama*, Princeton, 1990.

<sup>xliii</sup>The Amazons of Thermodon.

<sup>xliv</sup>Bierl 2000:100.

<sup>xlv</sup>Aristotle *Politics* (1.12.1.1259<sup>b</sup>1-2.

<sup>xlvi</sup>*Birds* 667.

<sup>xlvii</sup>J. Henderson, *The Maculate Muse: Obscene Language in Attic Comedy*, London 1975.

<sup>xlviii</sup>*Thesm* 160, 190.

<sup>xlix</sup>*Thesm* 538-43.

<sup>l</sup>The women are compared with a weasel and this can be found in *Thes* 558-19, *Wasps* 363 and *Peace* 1151

<sup>li</sup>N. Loraux, *Arethusa* 1978, pg 53.

## CHAPTER SIX

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

#### 6.0 Introduction

Societies throughout history have always remained patriarchal and for the most part the role and status of women have been dictated by men. The ancient Athenian society is of no exception. This patriarchal ideal presents a tension whereby a woman is to be silent, always obedient and work in the home as a caregiver to both her husband and children. In his *Theogony* (589–92) Hesiod traces the rank of the ancient Greek goddesses and shows how the change of rulership from the goddesses to the prominent male god Zeus affected women. As soon as power was given to Zeus, the exploitation of goddesses and earthly women began.

During the eighth century BC, Homer in his epic poems presents us with many influential and powerful women among whom are Helen, Penelope and Clytemnestra. On the contrary, the position of women in classical Athens was different from the other city–states in Greece. They were excluded from the political life and had no form of education unlike their counterparts in Sparta. Literary records we have of the time portray women as inferior. In his *Politics* Aristotle says ‘man is by nature superior to the female and so the man should rule and the woman should be the rule.’ Also in his *Andromache* Euripides says ‘no cure has been found for a woman’s venom, worse than that of reptiles.’ There were definite role expectations for both males and females. Though women did not fully enjoy social and political freedom, they did to some extent obtain prominent role and had a voice in their respective societies. As exemplified in his *Republic IX*, 579b Plato highlights the concept of equality when he articulate his view of the ideal society. To him women should be educated for the benefit of the society; women of competence would become guardians and have a

position where they would rule over both men and women.’ This view was later put into a comedy by Aristophanes in his *Ecclesiazusae*.

In all of Aristophanes’ extant plays, three were exclusively dedicated to women. These female figures in the plays reveal the general perception of women at the time. Throughout the work I have shown with relevant references from Aristophanes three ‘women plays’ his popular estimation of women that shaped his depiction of women. We should bear in mind that he wrote purposely for a male audience and his reference to the behaviours of women should be accepted with some important allowances.

### **6.1 *Lysistrata***

The issue of sex–strike has slowly gained grounds as a form of political strategy. The first of such was presented in a comedy by Aristophanes in his *Lysistrata*. During the fifth century, Athenian women withheld sexual favours from their husbands and lovers, as a response to protest against the Peloponnesian War (125–127).

The women in the *Lysistrata* used this tactic of denying sexual pleasures to their husbands to coerce them to settle for peace (952–960).

In the traditional Athenian society, denial of sexual pleasures by a woman to her husband will mean the flaunting of her conjugal duty in caring for the husband’s emotional needs. It also poses a serious threat to the continuation of the family lineage. As in the case of *Lysistrata*, the Spartan and Athenian delegates were yearning to negotiate for peace talks (1102–1104).

The sexual theme that Aristophanes incorporates into the play was to demonstrate that women are not only concerned about the effects of wars but also about the plight of betrothed women who might lose their chances of getting married to their husbands. He at least showed sympathy for the women. Since men do not want to be denied sexual pleasures then

they will do all they can to help curtail the crisis as in the case of Kinesis. The strike did not only serve a comic purpose but also address a very sensitive issue: loss of live and mismanagement of state funds.

One fact still remains in the play; women helped change the affairs of the state for a short period and the world at least for a brief time; complex military negotiation for peace was at the time not needed to end the war. It worked in this play for the mere fact that women being involved in politics were utterly an absurd idea at least for a time to justify an equally farcical conclusion of the play.

## **6.2 *Thesmophoriazusae***

In his second 'women plays', Aristophanes satirizes an exclusive women's ritual experience the *Thesmophoria*. It was a festival celebrated for the promotion of human fertility and agriculture. The *Thesmophoria* was commemorated by married Athenian women and it lasted for three days. Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae* employs comic device of role reversal and mimic worlds in which women are the main characters. The play is about the battle of sexes in the theater. The women initially condemn Euripides and then plan ways to punish him because they believe he perpetuates sexist stereotype about them in his plays.

Although Aristophanes did not intend to write a political play, there are political undercurrents that are embedded in the play as illustrated in 335 and 353. Women are presented as addressing the *demos* of women, a parody of the *arai* (curses) that characterized the opening session of the *Boule* (331–351) and also the parody of the minutes of the *Boule* (372–79) among others. Some social issues that existed in the Athenian society which likely affected Aristophanes' portrayal of women in the play include: women's attitude toward alcohol, adulterous affairs and duping of their husbands.

The festival gave women an exceptional social power, as citizen women take on a new role on the use of the aphrodisiac plant. This ritual practice gave the impression that

women had the power to preside over their own fertility. The ritual myth of the festival has a direct resemblance with the framework of the plot of the play.

During the first day of the *Thesmophoria*, there is a procession where women gather to bring food, animals for sacrifice and other offerings for the priestesses. On the second day of the *Thesmophoria* women abstained from food and sat on aphrodisiac plants that they made on the first day of the festival to mourn Demeter's loss of her daughter. The sitting on the plants had a symbolic importance, which is the reversal of their position as wives to virgins for the promotion of fertility. This gave the women the power to preside over their fertility as women. The performance of the ritual indicates the significant roles women play in society: the bearing of children. The most important of all their duties is to bring forth children and take care of their family and that is what the ritual seeks to accomplish.

In the *Thesmophoria* married women spend the nights with fellow women and recall their previous state of virgins where they exercised power over their fertility. The play emphasizes a simple fact that; Athenian women want men to recognize their position in the *oikos* and *polis*. As mothers and wives they want to discharge their duties free from the domination of men. Athenian women want Euripides to stop misrepresenting them in his plays not because they (women) want to be on the same pedestal with the men, because Athenian men at the time of Aristophanes' career as poet did not conduct themselves well lest enough they should talk about women!

### **6.3 *Ecclesiazusae***

In his final 'women plays' Aristophanes presents to his audience a novelty in his representation of women: women disguised as men to overthrow the government and rule Athenians in a communism. The essence of the power takeover in the play stems from the fact that Athenian men have become unqualified in their management of state funds. Since women have the natural ability to care for the household, they (women) suggest that the

control of state which is more or less a bigger household should be given to the women (221–227). Praxagora, in her utopian plan proposes a promise (600–603). She promises that there will be a public ownership of all properties including land.

Then again, the move from *oikos* to *polis* dialectic is seen as a dangerous intrusion which affects the smooth running of any of the institutions. The boundaries between the private and public are clearly defined in the Athenian society. Praxagora describes how her strategy of public ownership will meet the needs of all Athenians (651–60). As regards the public, women operate within certain parameters that constitute public life—with neighbours, community and even an entire society. In the case of Praxagora, she was not only concerned about her household but also her neighbours even to the point of helping a fellow woman who was in labour. In defending her position with reference to how she will care for all in the communism, she promises to provide food, cloaks and other domestic items needed by Athenians.

The patriarchal system has stereotyped women as subordinate to men. This trend transcends into the political arena in the ancient Athenian society. Those in the audience became resistant to Praxagora's ideals (396–400). Women have exclusive prerogatives in matriarchal society. The myth of the Amazonian women which Aristophanes incorporates into the play is a clear indication of how influential matriarchy was at the time. Matriarchy is based on hierarchy systems influenced by succession. Women in this society exercise territorial domination. For instance in the play, Praxagora's territorial domain was her communistic society (Athens as a utopian state).

Athenian women make an intrusion into the political sphere not for the purpose of consolidating permanent dominance for themselves but because they believe that by enforcing the principles of the *oikos* into that of the *polis*, Athens internal as well as external problems will be solved.

The *Lysistrata*, *Thesmophoriazusaie* and *Ecclesiazusaie* provide a deep insight into men's view of women during the fifth century BC. In the plays, as shown in the work, began the detail representation of stereotypical portrayal of women at the time as opposed to Taaffe's 'real women'. Gender identity in the plays, representation of females by males on stage and vice versa and the effect of comic traditions shaped and influenced actors' roles in the play. Aristophanes was not free from all these parameters. Evidence from ancient literary record shows works from the view point of men and that might contribute to the poor representation of women. However, some writers gave a fair depiction of women. In the 'women plays' of Aristophanes there is balance of their representation. Women in the ancient Athenian society have unique responsibilities that they discharge in the society which helped in contributing to the wellbeing of all in the society.

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## APPENDICES

### DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

This thesis utilizes a number of key terms which are anchored on lexical and conceptual meanings. The terms are to help the reader understand their usage in the interpretation of the selected plays in relation to secondary comments offered on the plays.

***Feminism:*** the belief that women should be allowed the same rights, power and opportunities as men and be treated in the same way, or the set of activities intended to achieve this state. (*Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, Cambridge University Press, 2003).

***Feminist:*** a person who believes in feminism and is often involved in activities that are intended to achieve change. (*Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, Cambridge University Press, 2003).

***Sex:*** either of the two main groups (male and female) into which living things are divided. (*Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford University Press, 2007).

***Gender:*** the division of people into two categories 'men' and 'women'. Through interaction with caretakers, socializing in childhood, peer pressure in adolescence and gender work and family roles, women and men are socially instructed to be different in behavior, attitude and emotions. (Borgatta, E.F and Montgomery. R.J.V, *Encyclopedia of Sociology* 2ed. Vol 2, New York, Macmillan Reference, U.S.A, 2002).

***Gender conflict:*** an active disagreement between men and women which is inevitable phenomenon in any society. It is an inherent dimension of human relations. It emerged out of how to manage economic, cultural, political and social relations among genders. (Amisi, B.K. 'Indigenous idea of the social and

conceptualizing of peace in Africa': *Africa Peace and Conflict Journal*, Vol. 1  
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**Figure 1: Utopian Constitution in Aristophanes' *Assemblywomen* and Platon, *Politeia* 5**

<b>Regulations proposed in</b>	<i>Assemblywomen</i>	<i>Politeia</i>
No private property	590-610	416D – unless absolutely essential 464D – they have no private possessions except their bodies
No Litigation	655-61	464D
Men have no private dwelling places	674-75	416D
They dine in communal halls	675-88	416E
Their maintenance will be provided by slaves	651-50	416E, 463B, 464C
Women do textile works hitherto	654	No regulation
Songs will be sung in honour of brave warriors	678-80	468A, D those who have shown cowardice will be prevented from attending
Marriage is not to exist and all women are to be 'common' to all men	614-15	457C
Rules for sex	615-34	No regulation
No parent has to know who is his child and vice versa	635-36	457D
Every older person will be treated as his parent	636-37	461D/E
Any two Guardians will regard each other as close kin and behave accordingly	638-50	463C-E
No violence by the young against the old	641-43	465A-B
Punishment for crimes	662-72	Crime does not exist

Source: Sommerstein A H, Aristophanes' *Eccelesiazusae* edited with translation and commentary: *The Comedies of Aristophanes* Vol. 10, Warminster, 1998.









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<sup>i</sup> For more detailed discussion on these festivals see Pickard Cambridge. *The Dramatic Festivals of Athens*.

<sup>ii</sup> Pickard Cambridge, pgs. 86, 91

<sup>iii</sup> See note 1 pgs. 96-7

<sup>iv</sup> Stone, Laura M.J, 1984 provides full discussion and references

<sup>v</sup> As in *Lysistrata*, men threatened the women with the torches and women lower the spirit of the men by throwing contents of their water jars on them

<sup>vi</sup> The *Parabasis* consisted of a: short introductory sing (Kommotion) and a long speech usually in anapaestic tetrameter and ends in continuous speech (choker), then two songs and two speeches, corresponding in length and meter in the order: song, speech, song, speech ode, epirrherna, antode and antepirrherna.

<sup>vii</sup> D. Harvey, pgs. 78, 80.

<sup>viii</sup> For discussions on the fragments see Casio. Albio C.; Pisa, 1997.

<sup>ix</sup> Homer *Iliad* and *Odyssey* (trans). Robert Fagles. Penguin Group, U.S.A. 1991.

<sup>x</sup> Sarah B. Pomerory. *Goddess, Whores, Wives and Slaves*, New York, 1975, pg. 30.

<sup>xi</sup> Pomerory, op. cit., pg. 60.

<sup>xii</sup> Ibid. pg. 63.

<sup>xiii</sup> Arthur W. Gomme. pgs. 89-115.

<sup>xiv</sup> Menander, Fr. 702.

<sup>xv</sup> For example Alcestis and Polyxena in Euripides and also Antigone, Ismene and Deianira in Sophocles.

<sup>xvi</sup> Plato. *Republic V*, 453e-457e.

<sup>xvii</sup> Plato. *Republic IX*, 579b.

<sup>xviii</sup> Pericles. *Funeral Oration*.

<sup>xix</sup> Plutarch. *Bravery of Women, Moralia III* 257e.

<sup>xx</sup> Plutarch. *Bravery of Women*, 243a.

<sup>xxi</sup> Diogenes Laertius. *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, A. Oepke TDNT 1,777.

<sup>xxii</sup> Plutarch. *Advice* 138b (Contra Naera, cited in Lefkowitz-Fant, op. cit., pg. 37).

<sup>xxiii</sup> Pomerory. op. cit., pg. 75.

<sup>xxiv</sup> Plutarch. *Bravery of Women* 251e.

<sup>xxv</sup> Meeks. art.cit pg. 169.

<sup>xxvi</sup> Pomerory. op. cit., pg. 76-77.

## Chapter Two

- <sup>xxvii</sup> Adultery is meant, not pre-marital intercourse. All the women who have parts in *Lysistrata* are assumed to be married.
- <sup>xxviii</sup> There is no reason for us to assume that this man Kinesias is the dithyrambic poet who appears in *Birds* and is mentioned also in comedy. The names *Kīnesias Paionides* are to remind us of *Kī nēn* (move) and *péiēn* (strike) both are common slang words for sexual intercourse.
- <sup>xxix</sup> The Acropolis suggests a symbol of chastity. The reaction of the men's chorus and the *Proboulos* do not support it. They are concerned respectively about the national shrine and the treasury. But if chastity was the main reason why the temple was occupied, then the temple of Artemis should have been occupied rather than that of Athena.
- <sup>xxx</sup> Cf. Dover, *Ar. Comedy* pg.160.
- <sup>xxxi</sup> It is very easy to go wrong about what was normal in Greek society and haul what Homer says of Odysseus' old nurse Eurykleia; Leates brought her with his wealth when she was in the flower of youth and honoured her with his own wife but never slept with her, for he wished to avoid his wife's anger. A Greek woman was no more than an instrument of pleasure.
- <sup>xxxii</sup> These were groups of men who had sworn an oath to collaborate not with foreigners but with themselves
- <sup>xxxiii</sup> Cf. MacDowell *Ar. and Athens* pgs.237-238.

### Chapter Three

<sup>xxxiv</sup> *Acharnians, Knights, Peace and Birds.*

<sup>xxxv</sup> Demeter was the goddess of earth, she is more connected with human control of the earth and Persephone her daughter who was held hostage by Hades.

<sup>xxxvi</sup> Agathon—see J. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, London, 1978, pg144.

<sup>xxxvii</sup> See sub-section 3.3.2

<sup>xxxviii</sup> *ibid.*

## Chapter Four

<sup>xxxix</sup>In 404B.C. Oligarchy could no longer meet the political demands of the people and because of that democracy was tried. Later other revolutionary measures were put in place.

<sup>xi</sup> Plato: *Republic* 5.

<sup>xli</sup> Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon* rev. H.Stuart Jones, Oxford 1968.

<sup>xlii</sup> F. Zeitlin, *Playing the other: theater, theatricality and the feminine in Greek drama*, Princeton, 1990.

<sup>xliii</sup> The Amazons of Thermodon.

<sup>xliv</sup> Bierl 2000:100.

<sup>xlv</sup> Aristotle *Politics* (1.12.1.1259<sup>b</sup>1-2.

<sup>xlvi</sup> *Birds* 667.

<sup>xlvii</sup> J. Henderson, *The Maculate Muse: Obscene Language in Attic Comedy*, London 1975.

<sup>xlviii</sup> *Thesm* 160, 190.

<sup>xlix</sup> *Thesm* 538-43.

<sup>1</sup> The women are compared with a weasel and this can be found in *Thes* 558-19, *Wasps* 363 and *Peace* 1151

<sup>li</sup> N. Loraux, *Arethusa* 1978, pg 53.