

## The Imitation Of Athena In The *Lysistrata* Of Aristophanes

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In the *Lysistrata* of Aristophanes, the women of all Greece, deprived of sexual pleasure because their husbands are fighting each other in the Peloponnesian War, determine to end the war. To secure their own sensuous good, they agree on a sex-strike against their husbands and the seizing of the Athenian acropolis. The seizing of the Acropolis, however, leads to a deepening of their goals. Opposed by the violence of men representing the old order, they decide that nothing short of the elevation of women into the government of the State is capable of saving Greece. In this spirit they repulse not only the immediate violence of the old men but also the official of State who attempts to harangue them into submission. During the second part of the play, the women learn, through the guidance of Lysistrata, to subordinate their sex to the general good of the State and to the institutions that define it. The women and especially Lysistrata now compel the men, made radically miserable by the sex-strike, to acquiesce in peace. Peace between Athens and Sparta now achieved, the men are then reconciled with their wives. This marks the re-institution both of the Family and a pan-Hellenic City. A celebration of those gods who preside over religious festivals, then of those protecting the ethical institutions now re-established and finally of Athena, patron of the actual life of the City, ends the play. The praise of Athena declares a common humanity joined in celebration with the unifying principle of the gods. Male and female, Spartan and Athenian, see in her the presence amongst them of Zeus's authority, the living City that can contain the divisions between familial and political, Athens and Sparta. Adoring what they have imitated, the Greeks enjoy true communion with their gods.

No critic has brought into one view the four main elements of the drama, the topical, the political, the triumph of individuality, and the role of the Gods.. Thus a celebrated classical scholar of the first part of the twentieth century, Gilbert Murray, regards only the topical element, the Peloponnesian War, as of interest, and thinks of the play as a passionate plea for peace.<sup>1</sup> The recent editor of a major edition of the play, Jeffrey Henderson, at least, recognizes that *Lysistrata* is drama; he thinks it a utopian fantasy, an escape into imagination from the horrors of the Peloponnesian War.<sup>2</sup> Cedric Whitman has deeper insight into the drama; he sees in Lysistrata a heroine who can "subdue society to

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<sup>1</sup> Gilbert Murray, *Aristophanes*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933), 164 ff

<sup>2</sup> J. Henderson, ed., *Lysistrata* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 190), xxv ff.

her ends" and does so by restoring peace and domestic integrity, remaining within society, however, and experiencing no apotheosis.<sup>3</sup>

That none of these views can do justice to the particularities of the plot indicates the need for a broader view. Thus while Murray rightly sees the Peloponnesian War as the external occasion for the play he does not show how the sex-strike, the assertion of female independence, and the final reconciliation of the sexes realize the peace that he says the drama pleads for. Henderson exposes the weakness of this 'topical' theory by speaking of the action as fantasy. Yet why the fantasy assumes the form it does, the reconciliation of essential elements of Greek Society and religion he does not say.

Whitman sees clearly that the drama depends on the action of the comic hero, here a woman with a revolutionary plan. The individuality that he attributes to her, however, that of one who can 'subdue society to her ends' belongs more to our own time than to the fifth century B.C.. Whitman's view accounts for the first part of the play, the initial statement and triumph of the women's programme. Lysistrata's development in to an Athena-figure is beyond Whitman's insight.

The seventh of Aristophanes' extant plays, *Lysistrata* was presented in 411 B.C. and partakes of those characteristics that differentiate the plays after *Birds* from those before. All the plays show the history of a representative Athenian who having sought first to subject his city's institutions and religion to some natural good of his own, then learns that his participation in the life of the City depends rather on a reason that can govern this passion. The form in which the hero seeks to make the life of the city his own gives to each play its peculiar character.

In the plays before *Birds* (the sixth of those extant) the central character feels alienated from a particular aspect of the City's life, and his struggle with this alienation determines his relation to the essential spheres of life. In *Clouds*, for example, Strepsiades feels oppressed by the extravagance of his son and wife; this leads him to educate his son in sophistry as a means whereby he can avoid this son's debts. The son, educated in sophistry, then turns against his own family; Strepsiades thereupon repents of what he has done and again affirms the gods whom sophistry has denied, and the institutions which they support.

*Clouds*, then, begins with an oppression not universal at Athens, but peculiar to Athens. Strepsiades' attempted solution to this leads to sophistry, which is a more general phenomenon, but not specifically related to any of the established institutions of the City. The result, a general affirmation of the gods and the City, is of a very partial kind. On the one hand, the hero's allegiance to the gods is now explicit, and not customary. Nevertheless since the subjectivity thus asserted is initially mediated by a very particular question, it does not threaten the established order of the gods or the city. Strepsiades does experience what the gods cannot, first a deviation from the order and then a return to

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<sup>3</sup> Cedric Whitman, *Aristophanes and the Comic Hero* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), 201.

it. However, the sphere in which this has arisen is not the total domain of the gods, the entire city, but a particular sphere within it.

In *Birds* this alienation from the City is felt as total, and the overcoming of this must likewise be total. Disgusted with Athens as a whole, the hero first seeks to find his well-being by building a city of the birds, a nature-city. When this proves unstable, he gradually realizes that only a city founded on a deeper reason can include nature within it. The hero, and through him the spectator, has experienced first a natural turning away from the existing city as a whole and then a development from this alienation, to a re-appropriation of the whole city. This means that the hero has a deeper sovereignty over the city than even Zeus, whom Greek religion has presented as that god who ultimately rules not only the universe but also the human city. Thus the play can end with the transfer of sovereignty from Zeus to the mortal hero, now hailed as highest of gods.

*Birds* might appear then as the literal completion of Aristophanes's poetic enterprise. If the education of a representative human being can end in his displacement of the highest god, then a true account of humanity and its relation to religion has been discovered, and nothing more need be said. However, the same indeterminacy that has allowed the 'overthrow' of Zeus also allows the comic relation of man to the gods to assume other, more complete forms. That is, since the reigning Olympian gods are imagined to have developed out of the Titans, no particular god is absolute in the sense that God as understood by the Jews is. Nor is this the perception of Comedy only. In the Prometheus trilogy of Aeschylus, the title character knows that if Zeus has a son by a certain mortal, that son will overthrow him, that is, better unite divinity with men. Thus the 'overthrow' of Zeus in *Birds* is the occasion for the poet to imagine a deeper clarification of the divine-human relation. In this way the relation of humanity to Athena becomes his theme. Born from Zeus's head, she presides over practical wisdom, and as the name Athens implies, she is the animating spirit of the life of the whole City. A humanity capable of imitating her will have a deeper life than even one that can imitate Zeus.

In outline, *Lysistrata* has the following form. The long continuance of the Peloponnesian War, as noted above, has deprived Greek women of sexual pleasure. Deliberation convinces a pan-Hellenic assembly of them summoned by Lysistrata to decide on a sex-strike against their husbands. Thus from the beginning of the play there is pan-Hellenic agreement amongst all women, but a division within each of the two warring cities, Athens and Sparta, between men and women. The remainder of the first part of the play shows the sharpening of this division at Athens. The women's seizure of the Acropolis, to secure the money intended for the prosecution of the war, summons forth the extreme hatred of the old men who had fought at Marathon and regard the women as traitors to the City. They and an official arrived to control the women, regard them as having no say in matters of war. The first part of the play ends with the women saying that war is their care only and in possession of the field, but having not by any means convinced the men of this. The second half of the play shows the reconciliation of the sexes. The women again desire their husbands, and only Lysistrata can persuade them to restrain themselves. When one wife repulses her sexually desperate husband, victory is

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in sight. Spartan and Athenian, alike immobilized by passion, agree to accept the arbitration of Lysistrata. She recalls all the men to their common religion and history and then reconciles them to their wives. Finally, restored to political unity and family life, all hymn those gods Zeus, Hera, and Athena whose spheres of being the action has made real.

The play begins as the Athenian Lysistrata awaits the arrival of women whom she has summoned from all Greece. Even when called to so momentous an assembly, the women, obedient to their usual habits, are slow in coming. Their eventual arrival constitutes a pan-Hellenic sisterhood that transcends the sharp difference between Athens and Sparta, now so evident in war. Because Lysistrata, whose name means destroyer of armies, hopes that the community of women can end the war, a strong opposition between men and women will define the action of the play.

The women's desire for peace arises from their being deprived of sexual pleasure. First, says Lysistrata, husbands vanished, then adulterers, but the embargo on imported dildos has proved decisive; strong action is necessary to end the war and restore their pleasure.<sup>4</sup> As in every Aristophanic comedy, the action begins with the central character's feeling oppressed by the current state of life in the *polis*, in some aspect of his natural well-being. To be freed of that oppression, the character must control that state of life. Here the entire female sex aims at governing all Greece. At first, the women respond enthusiastically to Lysistrata's appeal and say that they will do anything to end the war; their heroism reaches such a peak that one woman says she would even be cut in two, if it could bring peace. Another agrees to any abstinence in order to compel the men to make peace. When, however, Lysistrata says that they must all abstain from the penis, the women turn away in horror. One explains her reluctance by declaring that since there's nothing like it, she would rather go through fire than endure such an abstinence.<sup>5</sup>

The Spartan Lampito has more spirit, however, than the others and agrees to Lysistrata's plan. This gives Lysistrata the opportunity to convince the other women that difficult as it is, a sex-strike will quickly compel their husbands to make peace. Although the women do not speak of it, a certain contradiction is present in their plan to abstain from sex in order to later enjoy it. The necessity of abstaining from sexual pleasure shows that the women do have in fact a deeper goal perhaps than its restoration. This appears in the subsequent scene which shows the women's belief that only the transfer of government into their hands can rescue Greece from ruin. Lampito wonders, though, how the Athenian men, so long as they have their navy, can ever be induced to make peace. Lysistrata has not been remiss in her planning. The older women, she says, have been directed to seize the acropolis, and the money kept there for the building of ships. Thereupon all the women swear an oath to pursue Lysistrata's scheme. Thus the women set themselves against an order in which men have the power of decision in both Family and State, to restore both peace and sexual pleasure.

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<sup>4</sup> *Lysistrata* 99-101, 107-112.

<sup>5</sup> *Lysistrata* 133-135.

As Lampito leaves to inspire the Spartan women to practice abstinence from the joys of Aphrodite, the Athenian women have meanwhile seized the Acropolis. By seizing the Acropolis, they seize the very center of Athenian political and religious life, as well as its source of funds. The pan-Hellenic sisterhood thus has shown itself capable of wide-ranging political activity; it has begun the unification of Greece from an altogether new standpoint.

As the old women seize the Acropolis, a chorus of old men with a different vision of Greece now opposes them.<sup>6</sup> These had helped to expel the tyrant a hundred years before and fought at Marathon to protect Greece from the Mede; they represent the historical basis of the State heretofore. The men are naturally outraged at the women's having seized the Acropolis. They can regard the women only as criminals worthy of death and thus attempt to burn them.

Having failed in their violent attack, the men summon a Proboulos, who manages the finances necessary to the prosecution of the war.<sup>7</sup> In his encounter with the women, his office proves no guarantee of sense. He imagines that their behavior arises from men's having indulged their sexual desires; he thus thinks that force alone is the suitable method for dealing with them. When he directs his Scythian archers, however, to arrest the women, the latter repulse them with ease.

Although he agrees to a discussion with the women, he understands nothing of their argument. He can only insist that matters of war and peace are not the concern of women. Lysistrata indicates why this view can no longer prevail. For too long, women have tried to influence their husbands quietly and to dissuade them from the policies that have led to the current ruinous war, only to be curtly rebuffed by them. Therefore, women have now taken action, and their domestic qualities, she argues, will make them adept at managing the affairs of state. Lysistrata further indicates that as mothers, wives and lovers, the War has been especially hard on them. Old men can always marry, she says, while young girls, once they pass their season, must remain forever unwed.

The exchange with the Proboulos shows a deepening of the women's interests. They agitate now not for a restoration of sexual pleasures but for all the interests of women. They speak of restoring peace, but from the standpoint of their own sex. They do not see the men as ethical persons with a standpoint of their own, but as obstacles to their well-being, just as the men, represented by the Proboulos, regard them.

The Proboulos is incapable of sympathy; he can only respond that no man who has not lost his virility ever suffers sexual deprivation. He regards women not as wives or mothers but as the merely animal objects of men's desires. Thus the women see that they can treat men, at least now, only as their enemies. They dress the Proboulos as a corpse,

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<sup>6</sup> *Lysistrata* 254 ff.

<sup>7</sup> The Proboulos enters at 387.

therefore, and prepare him for burial.<sup>8</sup> In so doing they take his contempt for them one step further. They regard him not only as merely an animal, but a dead one.

The play has seen a significant movement of the women toward their being the political governors of the State. From the beginning they appear as the entire sex of women. Their initial search is for the restoration of that sexual pleasure that the War has deprived them of, and to this end they undertake, contradictorily enough, a sex-strike against the men. For their own ends then they rebel against men as the (patriarchal) heads of families. The Athenian women's seizure of the Acropolis, however, leads to a deeper conflict with men and a deeper assertion. Here they announce their refusal to accept the government of men as citizens. War is the business of women, they declare, and only their government of the City can save it.

After the Proboulos has departed, the opposed reflections of the male and female choruses take the place of the traditional parabasis.<sup>9</sup> The men look with horror at the women's having co-operated with the Spartans, and consequently think of the women as plotting a tyrannical revolution within the state. For their part, the women lay claim to an equal share in the management of the State's affairs and recall the parts they have taken, since childhood, in the various festivals the City has celebrated.

That the women have not been dislodged and that the men still oppose them shows a sharp division within the State. Neither the men nor the women can rationally claim as a sex to constitute the State. If the behaviour of the men in waging war without regard to the welfare of the women had implied their claim to alone constitute the State, the women have now for their part made a directly opposite claim.

Thus the play does not end simply with the victory of sisterhood. Rather Lysistrata leads them to a victory they had not dreamt of. Neither the erotic bliss that they had originally sought nor the reign of women that they had later declared, will be their goal. Rather a capacity for governing their sexual passions will make first them and then their husbands capable of political life, the restoration of the disrupted family, and the celebration of those gods they have imitated.

The action has four main divisions. First, Lysistrata dissuades the women from returning home so that they might again enjoy the embraces of their husbands.<sup>10</sup> Second, a representative woman rejects the appeal of her husband to become again a wife and mother.<sup>11</sup> Third, the men of all Greece, disabled by their sexual passions, allow Lysistrata

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<sup>8</sup> *Lysistrata* 599 ff.

<sup>9</sup> *Lysistrata* 614-705. Hereafter the choruses do not so much advance the action as reflect the development accomplished in others.

<sup>10</sup> *Lysistrata* 706-780.

<sup>11</sup> *Lysistrata* 829-953.

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to dictate a peace.<sup>12</sup> Fourth, the men are restored to their wives, and all hymn the gods who define the life of the City.<sup>13</sup>

The first scene after the parabasis shows various women leaving the Acropolis and going home. When questioned about why they are leaving, they allege various domestic responsibilities. According to *Lysistrata*, however, all that they say is mere pretext, and they are in a frenzy of sexual desire for their husbands. *Lysistrata* is able to restrain the women only through an oracle which declares that Zeus will establish peace only if the women abstain from sexual relations. The women accept this oracle and agree to continue with their enterprise.

This marks the turning-point of the women's career. They no longer pursue their interests simply as women, but act for the whole City and its good; this represents, at the same time, an imitation of the various Olympian gods who preside over the essential spheres of life. Here, for example, when *Lysistrata* exposes what the other women have said as mere pretext, she has shown the distinction between the imitation of Aphrodite and that of Hera; the former presides over the attraction of men and women for each other, the later over their marital union. Only at the end of the play are those gods openly invoked whom the humans have earlier imitated.<sup>14</sup>

The next scene tests and deepens the women's ability to exercise that dominion over their passions which *Lysistrata* has taught them. They learn that the men desire them more than they desire the men, when a certain Cinesias, husband of one of the women, approaches. *Lysistrata* urges his wife Myrrine, to tease him, leading him on, but not to yield. She agrees readily; the women have determined to contain their sexual desire, and now Myrrine will show that this resolve has become real in them.

Cinesias's sole interest, as his name implies, is to satisfy his sexual desires. He appeals to his wife's maternal instincts, however, bringing their small child with him and showing the neglect it has suffered through its mother's absence. He even appears willing to make peace with the Spartans when Myrrine insists on this as a condition of their sexual union. When Cinesias, however, imagines himself secure of his wife's affections, he turns vague when asked what he intends to do in the assembly about securing a peace. Myrrine thereupon runs away, leaving her husband to bemoan the miserable state to which unsatisfied sexual longing has reduced him.

Although this scene has necessarily shown the effects of the strike on one man and one woman at Athens, the facetious names of the pair (Myrrine and Cinesias) show that each represents his entire sex. Thus the scene shows that the women of Athens have arrived both at a Zeus-like knowledge that all goods must be subordinated to the political community, and the capacity to act on that knowledge. Their husbands have shown

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<sup>12</sup> *Lysistrata* 1072-1188.

<sup>13</sup> *Lysistrata* 1273-1321.

<sup>14</sup> As noted above, Whitman denies that *Lysistrata* experiences apotheosis. However, here it is clear that both she and the women begin that imitation of the gods which is the very definition of apotheosis.

themselves to be governed, on the contrary, by natural passions of a sub-Olympian kind; no Olympian deity presides over sexual passion simply. Those under the aegis of Aphrodite are moved in some measure by mutual attractiveness, of which the best human example is the love affair of Paris and Helen. Cinesias has not attained even to this kind of mutuality.

The arrival of a Spartan herald, his state of sexual excitement by no means invisible, shows that the Spartans also suffer what in Cinesias Athenian men are seen to suffer. The two sides thereupon agree to treat for peace. Neither good will nor an eirenic spirit but their common sexual suffering first unites them and compels them to begin those talks which will end the war.

The Spartan ambassadors accordingly arrive, and they commiserate with their Athenian counterparts about the sexual tension that they both suffer. The Athenian indeed regards his countrymen's situation as so desperate that they will have to f\*\*\* Cleisthenes, a reputed pathic<sup>15</sup> All agree that only Lysistrata can so restore peace that they can all be freed from their currently unfillable passions. Upon her appearance she produces 'Reconciliation,' here personified as a young woman. Then she declares her suitability for the office they have given her: although she is a woman, she has nous within her.

For men to allow a woman to govern and direct them is indeed a revolution. Thus Lysistrata grounds her ability to do so in a characteristic that at least potentially transcends sex, the capacity for practical wisdom. This capacity, imagined as especially belonging to Athena, which the whole action has shown the women as acquiring, the men's current state shows them as now altogether without. Lysistrata then exercises her practical wisdom by showing the men the ground on which they might make peace, the unity already subsisting among the Greek states. They sacrifice at the same altars, and they celebrate various pan-Hellenic games. These games were all instituted by Heracles, the son of Zeus and a mortal woman; those who participate in the games imitate his heroic virtue.

As well as instancing this religious unity, Lysistrata reminds them that while they destroy each other barbarian enemies await them outside their borders. Thus she calls to mind the age-old division between Greeks and others, and most poignantly the Persian Wars of eighty years before. Lysistrata then reminds the Spartans of a political benefaction of the Athenians; similarly she reminds the Athenians of a Spartan benefaction.

Having shown them this deeper unity, Lysistrata can then extract concessions of territory from each side and thus end the war. The language that Lysistrata uses to

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<sup>15</sup> The Greek verb here, *binein*, is perhaps only translatable as f\*\*\*. It is a true obscenity, having no other use, unlike many other Greek obscenities, which represent the special meaning of other perfectly respectable words. Thus, as is often the case in translation, 'f\*\*\*' is not a perfect translation, since it can be used in other contexts than the explicitly sexual, e.g. 'snafu,' which is an acronym for 'situation normal, all f\*\*\*ed up.'



describe the 'rectification of borders' the Ambassadors all interpret as referring to the person of Reconciliation. Their fixation on satisfying their sexual pleasure dominates them so completely that they are will to acquiesce in whatever Lysistrata directs.

Under the presidency of Lysistrata, the women of all Greece have learned how to subordinate their passions to the attainment of a political good. Because the men have not learned this for themselves, they must accept the direction of a woman. The men know at this stage only that the satisfaction of sexual desire is dependent on their agreeing to peace.

Although Lysistrata has now brought all Greece to a common political end, she has not yet finished her task. First she summons all the men to a common banquet, where a Spartan praises the valor of Athenian and Spartan arms in the Persian Wars. Lysistrata's lessons have been learnt: Hellenes do not fight each other but rather the barbarians. War is thus known as ordered to the maintenance of the common political order, and not its destruction.

Now Lysistrata directs each husband, both Spartan and Athenian, to stand by his wife and summons them all to give thanks to the gods in dance.<sup>16</sup> Her commands here complete her work and thus the dramatic action. First she grounds marriage in the now-achieved political unity. Second she leads the Greeks to acknowledge the gods as the essential ground of their activity.<sup>17</sup>

In their worship, the Greeks acknowledge those gods the action of the play has shown them as imitating; this celebration has two divisions. First an Athenian hymns both the gods of various festivals and those of the two central ethical institutions.<sup>18</sup> Second, a Spartan sings of those offspring of Zeus who bring the life of the gods to men, and especially of Athena.<sup>19</sup>

The hymn of the Athenian calls upon several Olympian gods, and first upon Apollo, Artemis and Dionysus. Apollo and Artemis lead men in the dance; Dionysus, among numerous rôles, presides over the enthusiastic communion of men with the gods as patron of Comedy. By praising these gods, they praise those who preside over their current festivities.

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<sup>16</sup> *Lysistrata* 1273-1278. Who speaks these lines and lines 1279-1290 is a disputed question, the determination of which does not affect the interpretation offered. Whether Lysistrata or an Athenian ambassador speak them, a praise of the gods by peace-making Greeks concludes the play.

<sup>17</sup> Whitman (*op. Cit.* 215--16) argues that the "weddings in the *Lysistrata*, both of the sexes and of Athens and Sparta, are weddings of eternal youth in Paradise; and Paradise, though it may be in the future, we know is in the past." This mention of Paradise is Whitman's attempt to explain the unreality of the grounding of the reconciliation in the praise of the gods. Paradise as Whitman describes it has no existence in Greek religion or anywhere else. Whitman here cannot take Greek religion seriously; he can only allegorize it according to his own private system of interpretation.

<sup>18</sup> *Lysistrata* 1279-1290.

<sup>19</sup> *Lysistrata* 1296-1321.

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The hymn then calls upon Zeus and Hera, the king of gods and men, together with his consort. She presides over marriage, and he over the political realm and its justice; their union, moreover, indicates the inseparability of these institutions. The action has just seen the re-establishment of the family and state, in their mutual dependence. The hymn in its entirety implies a profound human-divine synergy. The humans praise those gods whose realms, both in ethical institutions and festivals they have made actual and real. This aspect of the hymn praises those gods whose gifts the Greeks have just made their very own. The entire hymn shows that the divine presence in the festivals and the institutions of the *polis* can only be made real by human activity.

The hymn of the Spartan then celebrates the various offspring of Zeus who unite men with the gods. First, it sings of Apollo, leader of the dance, and then of the Dioscuri festive in celebration, of Helen, not as the paramour of Paris, but as leading a chorus of maidens, and finally of Athena in her temple. The hymn shows a progressively deeper integration of the divine and human. The image of Apollo indicates a general divine presence in celebration. The invoking of the Dioscuri images the political realm and its festivals, while that of Helen suggests the realm of family and its festivals. The hymning of Athena completes this picture. Born from the very head of Zeus, she bears his full authority. In her appears as united what had dividedly appeared in Apollo, the Dioscuri and Helen. Even though only the Athenians have named their city after her and thus indicated most clearly that she is the spirit animating the City, all Greeks knew her as *polias*, goddess presiding over the city. Thus present amongst men and women as what gives life to the whole City and its various aspects, its institutions and festivals, she thus makes the life of the gods to dwell in them.

This aptly ends the play. The action has shown Lysistrata leading all Greece to the restoration of both the political and the familial realms, and to the due celebration of those gods who preside over them. In making the life of the City actual for men, she and they have humanly imitated Athena's presence as the very substance of the *polis*. Therefore in hymning Athena, they celebrate at the same time their own activity.

This marks a significant change from the *Birds* in Aristophanes's treatment of the Olympian gods. The earlier play had shown the human hero, and through him, all Athens, as founding a city built on a deeper reason than the gods, even Zeus, were capable of. Thus the poet can depict Zeus as losing his sovereignty to men. Here, led by Lysistrata, the Greeks have been able to imitate her sovereignty; as the ever-virgin goddess, she suffers no natural involvement that could lead to her being 'overthrown.' Yet this reveals a human completeness that she lacks. Lysistrata and the women have experienced a turning-away from the City and thus from the Olympian religion to assert the power of their sex, only to revert from this to the imitation of Athena. She has existed as the thought of her father from the very moment of her birth. The play ends therefore with the opposition between, and the unification of, a divine essentiality, on which humanity depends, and a human activity that can alone make it real. Because the action has revealed in Athena the division between the eternity of her idea and the factitiousness of

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her subjectivity, the play shows a deeper unification of men with the gods than even *Birds* had.