have been left to Plautus to re-invent the wheel, and for the modern world to invent musical comedy all over again, in which the old and the young are still with us.

David Konstan
(Providence)

Aristophanes' *Lysistrata:* Women and the Body Politic

«Meanings of all kinds flow through the figures of women, and they often do not include who she is herself»[1].

I begin with a passage from Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors,* the relevance of which to the *Lysistrata* of Aristophanes will immediately be apparent. The scene is the city of Ephesus, where one of the twins called Antipholus resides; the other, from Syracuse, has been mistaken for his brother and admitted to his house by his wife. The wife's maid, Luce or Nell, is enamored of the servant, Dromio; he too has a twin, who happens to be in the service of the Syracusan Antipholus. Luce, then, makes the same mistake as her mistress and pursues the wrong Dromio. When this Dromio is reunited with his master, he jokes coarsely about Luce's girth:

Antipholus S.: Then she bears some breadth?
Dromio S.: No longer from head to foot than from hip to hip. She is spherical, like a globe; I could find out countries in her.
Ant. S.: In what part of her body stands Ireland?
Dro. S.: Marry, sir, in her buttocks. I found it out by the bogs.
Ant. S.: Where Scotland?
Dro. S.: I found it by the barrenness; hard in the palm of her hand.
Ant. S.: Where France?
Dro. S.: In her forehead, armed and reverted, making war against her heir.
Ant. S.: Where England?
Dro. S. : I looked for the chalky cliffs, but I could find no

[1] Warner 1987: 331.

whiteness in them; but I guess it stood in her chin, by the salt rheum that ran between France and it[2].

There are more questions in this vein concerning Spain, the West Indies, and finally the Netherlands, to which Dromio replies, «O, sir! I did not look so low». (III.ii. 112-28, 137)

The reader will already have thought of Diallage, or Reconciliation, at the end of the *Lysistrata*, on whose figure the Athenian and Spartan men stake out the various parts of Greece.

> Spartan Ambassador: We must demand this promontory here return to us.
> Lysistrata: Which one?
> Spartan Ambassador: This one in back: we count on having, we can almost feel it.
> Athenian Ambassador: By the God of Earthquakes, that you'll never get!
> Lysistrata: You'll give it up, sir.
> Athenian Ambassador: What do *we* get, then?
> Lysistrata: You'll ask for something that's of equal value.
> Athenian Ambassador: Let's see now, I know, give us first of all the furry triangle here, the gulf that runs behind it, also the two connecting legs. (1162-70)[3]

The dialogue continues with a few more tasteless bits along these lines.

In both scenes, the body of a woman is imagined by men as a map or globe, divided into discrete geographical regions. It is thus rendered divisible, as though composed of independent parts that may be the object of territorial ambitions or opposed as rival states. This complex image of the female body, simultaneously unitary and yet exposed to a kind of political dissection, may be taken, I shall argue, as an image or emblem of the way in which women as a political body are represented in the *Lysistrata*.

The Comedy of Errors is, of course, adapted from Plautus's *Menaechmi*, but among other departures from his model Shakespeare

[2] Cited according to Jorgensen 1972.
[3] The translation is that of Henderson 1988.

portrayed Syracuse and Ephesus as powers mortally hostile to one another. As Solinus, the Duke of Ephesus, explains:

> It hath in solemn synods been decreed,
> Both by the Syracusians and ourselves,
> To admit no traffic to our adverse towns:
> Nay more, if any born at Ephesus
> Be seen at Syracusian marts and fairs;
> Again, if any Syracusian born
> Come to the bay of Ephesus, he dies,
> His goods confiscate to the Duke's dispose,
> Unless a thousand marks be levied,
> To quit the penalty and to ransom him. (I.i.13-20)

Political and commercial rivalries, then, divide the comic world that is mapped onto the body of a woman, just as they do in the *Lysistrata*. At the same time, there is the suggestion of a fraternal connection between Ephesus and Syracuse, which harbor identical twins as citizens, and the two cities' implacable antagonism thus has a tragic aspect. Again, the case of the *Lysistrata* is analogous. In her reproach to the warring Athenians and Spartans, Lysistrata says:

> Don't you share a cup
> at common altars, for common gods, like brothers
> at the Olympic games, Thermopylae and Delphi? (1129-31)[4]

The cities that are locked in struggle have a common identity imaged in the relationship between brothers or kinsmen *[xungeneis]*. Beneath their mutual antagonism Lysistrata can appeal to a familial unity or oneness among the Greeks.

In the *Lysistrata*, the women of Greece constitute themselves as an organized opposition across barriers of age, class (456-58), and nationality, in order to put an end to the war between the Athenian and Spartan alliances. Their most salient quality is solidarity, and in this they are dramatically differentiated from the men's commitment to pursuing the conflict. One might be forgiven for seeing here a curious parallel with the role of the working class in Marxian communism. In each case, a disempowered section of the population

[4] Henderson translation; subsequent translations are my own.

is represented as overcoming national rivalries and making league with their confrères (or consoeurs) abroad in order to put an end to wars among states. In Aristophanes' play, however, the women do not aim to seize power permanently. Their plot is defined or limited by the single goal of effecting a reconciliation among the warring parties. After that, the women will return to their individual homes, which are seen as the locus of traditional values. Despite their professed excellence in home economics, the women in the *Lysistrata* have no specific proposals to improve government or change policy, apart, of course, from a negotiated peace with Sparta[5]. They do not rehearse in any serious way the kinds of deals on which such a truce might depend, and it is open to doubt whether, in the political climate of 411, an immediate resolution of the war was conceivable[6]. The women, in any case, have no hesitation in appealing to the traditional responsibility of the Athenians, enshrined in the ephebic oath, to preserve and extend their empire (652-55). Their differences with the men are more over means than ends. They are rebels, not revolutionaries.

The women, then, are a one-purpose army, disbanded at the end of their campaign and reduced once more to the domestic sphere. Having assigned a public and political role to women as bearers of

[5] When the Athenian official sent to draw funds from the treasury protests against Lysistrata's assertion that the women will henceforward manage the public accounts, Lysistrata argues that women's domestic skills equip them to the run the state. The premise is that women are in fact mistresses of the home, and that their tasks involve a substantial measure of competence and responsibility. This is not quite the same as saying that «the city is assimilated to the individual household» (Henderson 1987: xxxii, cf. 129; Vaio 1973: 372). To be sure, there is a certain simplification involved in the women's depiction of the Athenian economy, not to mention the motives for maintaining the war, but it is no worse than most political sloganeering. But the analogy between the city and the household on which the women make their case sustains the association between women and the domestic space, even as they push their claims for greater representation. It is not so much that the women's arguments are feeble, as that the form in which they are presented marks the women as still centered in the home, and this undermines their' claim to a place in the public realm reserved for men.

[6] See Westlake 1980 on the small likelihood of a negotiated peace at the time the *Lysistrata* was produced, and cf. Andrewes in Gomme et al. 1945-81 v. 190; contra Sommerstein 1977a: 119.

social harmony and solidarity among the Greeks, Aristophanes manages the trick of recontaining the women within separate households. But he does so at a certain cost to the logic and coherence of his text.

Let us begin with what seems like an anomalous aspect of the depiction of women in the *Lysistrata.* Despite the grand role they will play in ending hostilities among the Greeks, Aristophanes cheerfully exploits the commonplace derogatory descriptions of women as bibulous, sensual, thieving, and indifferent to the customs and well-being of the larger community. An example is Calonice's curiosity concerning the reason why Lysistrata has summoned the women together: «Is it something big?» «Yes.» «And thick?» «Thick too, by Zeus». «So how come we're not all here?» «That's not the kind of thing it is» (23-25). Now, despite her impatience with Calonice, this lubriciousness is germane to Lysistrata's plan. For a major part of the motivation behind the sex strike that she is about to propose is women's need of sex, and the deprivation they are experiencing as a result of the war. «Don't you miss the fathers of your children who are away on campaign?» (99-100) she inquires. There is here the suggestion of domestic concerns, to which we shall return. But Lysistrata's next remark shifts the focus: «There's not even a scintilla of a lover left» (107), she complains, and the importation of dildoes has also dried up since the rebellion of Miletus. Later, Lysistrata will have her hands full keeping the women from going back on their oath of abstinence.

Their husbands, by contrast, seem not to have been equally distressed at their own privation, and this leads to a slight inconsequentiality in the plot. For if the men are away at the front, and for that reason are unavailable to their wives, how will a sex strike alter their resolve to continue the war? And if they have not hitherto been troubled by the lack of sex, why should the strike have more effect on them than on the women themselves?

The answer to this conundrum lies in part in the intimation of concern for children and home contained in Lysistrata's opening probe of the women's sentiments about the war. The women are not, in fact, fighting simply for sexual satisfaction. Rather, they are chiefly disturbed by the disruption to the home caused by the war

and the absence of their husbands. Later, in her confrontation with the Athenian official sent to remonstrate with the women barricaded on the acropolis, Lysistrata will assert that «just when it is right to have fun and enjoy the fruits of youth, we have to sleep alone on account of campaigns. Okay, I'll leave us out of it; but I suffer for the young girls who are growing old in their bedrooms». «Don't men also grow old?,» asks the official. «But it's not the same thing, by Zeus,» replies Lysistrata (591-94). The sexual motive is there — more in the case of women, it would appear, than of men — but it is subordinated to the idea of marriage and the home.

John Vaio, in a fine article on the *Lysistrata,* writes of the opening scene in the play (1973: 369-70):

> the poet goes out of his way to depict a sad consequence of the war [i.e., its effect on the household], wholly inconsistent with the plandeveloped by the heroine in the same passage [i.e., the sex strike]. Why does he do so, when he could easily have omitted any reference to the separation of husband and wife? By sacrificing dramatic logic Aristophanes establishes a major theme at the start of the play: the disruptive effect of war on family life. It is partly to cure this ill that the women's action is directed, and the success of this action at the end of the play enables husband and wife to return home together in an atmosphere of peace and reconciliation.

I would state the problem slightly differently. Why, we may ask, does Aristophanes insist on the women's sexual motive for halting the war, rather than on their concern for the domestic space? He is clearly fusing two distinct images, one representing women as licentious, the other as concerned for home and family. In one respect, these images are mutually contradictory, since uninhibited sexual desire may also find satisfaction in extramarital affairs, as Lysistrata plainly hints: the idea that war has made lovers as well as husbands scarce (107, 212) is a pretty lame excuse for the women's utter desperation, as the reference to slaves as lovers in the *Thesmophoriazusae* (491-92) makes amply clear. Of course, the women's randiness makes for some good dirty fun at their expense both in the prologue and later on the acropolis, and this may be justification enough for its presence. Aristophanes readily sacrifices

logic and consistency of characterization for comic effect in a given scene or line. But there is more to it, I believe.

Women's sexuality threatens to go beyond the legislated confines of the home. To that extent, it must be recontained, held within limits. Aristophanes makes women's eroticism the basis for a plan to reaffirm the values of the household, and thus simultaneously insinuates and denies the threat it represents. On the one hand, there is the male anxiety over women's independence or subjectivity. Women, when left to their own devices, are imagined as creatures of lawless desire, prone to violate the social order which is predicated on the integrity of the individual household. On the other hand, there is the male fantasy of women as the guardians of the home, prepared to fight for its values and exclusivity against danger from without, which arises in the masculine, public space of politics and war.

The coexistence of these two contrary perspectives on women in the ideological repertoire of Athens is, I think, a sign of the contradictory structure of gender relations in the classical city state, where fidelity on the part of women is crucial to the continuation of the *oikos,* yet they have an inferior status in it and tend to be imagined as property to be controlled, a part of the estate. In this latter role, they have no independent interest in the integrity of the home, and may be seen as implicitly or potentially lawless and disruptive of domestic propriety. Aristophanes cleverly synthesizes the two attitudes in the double motivation of the women's scheme in the *Lysistrata,* but the small illogicality, whereby sex-mad women are seen as the saviors of the home, bears witness to a tension in the text, where women as sexually autonomous beings are nevertheless made to serve and preserve the conditions of their social dependency[7]. There is a similar strategy of containment, though it is much more transparent, in *The Comedy of Errors,* where Luciana admonishes her sister, the much-abused wife of Antipholus of Ephesus, that men

> Are masters to their females, and their lords:

[7] Frow 1986: 19 describes a text as «a labor of transformation carried out on a raw material of ideological values»; we may imagine Aristophanes as selecting and shuffling contradictory stereotypes in the public discourse, and assembling them into a pattern of his own which still bears the traces of its complex origin.

Then let your will attend on their accords. (II.i.24-25)

This advice is echoed later by Emilia, an abbess at Ephesus who is revealed as the long-lost mother of the twin Antipholuses:

> The venom clamors of a jealous woman
> Poisons more deadly than a mad dog's tooth....
> Thou sayest his sports were hind'red by thy brawls.
> Sweet recreation barred, what doth ensue
> But moody and dull melancholy. (V.i.69-70, 77-79)

I cannot help but note the contrast between this defense of a double standard from the mouth of a woman, and the final words of the comedy, addressed by the Ephesian Dromio to his Syracusan twin:

> We came into the world like brother and brother;
> And now let's go hand in hand, not one before another.
> (V.1.427-28)

Equality among males is predicated on a hierarchical structure within the household.

The containment of women's *erôs* within the limits of the conjugal relation gives us a clue to the dynamics of the sex strike in the *Lysistrata.* Once the erotic impulse is domesticated, the men's indifference to the welfare of the household as against the claims of the war may be figured as a failure of desire. We can now understand the source of the inconsistency by which the women engage in a sex strike under conditions in which the men seem to have been unperturbed by their corresponding sexual deprivation. Since passion is constructed as a conjugal urge, the task facing the women is not so much to exploit men's desire as to arouse it, planting in the men the same longing that they feel for the pleasures of the home. By this implicit logic, the men are sexually undermotivated. This is, I think, part of the reason why the women not only conspire to refuse sexual privileges to their husbands, but also tease them into a state of excitement by diaphanous garments and cosmetics (46-48), a maneuver dramatized in the scene where Myrrhine arouses and then frustrates her husband Cinesias. The men must be seduced into wanting sex enough to abandon the pursuit of the war. Women's

libidinousness, then, is necessary to the scheme to end the war. But it must be safely limited to the home.

The very possibility of organizing a sex strike, however, presupposes a collective and concerted action on the part of the women of Greece — an action that transcends the dispersion of women into discrete households, where the space for women is defined. Just because they undertake to defend the home, the women are obliged to abandon it, at least temporarily, and join together as a corporate body. The anomaly of women inaugurating a political conference is underscored by the difficulty they experience in escaping from their houses, to the chagrin of an impatient Lysistrata. Once assembled, the women act out a parody of masculine debate and ceremony, the only model available for political behavior. Despite its farcical character, the collective action of the women imports a new element into the drama, which goes beyond the antinomy between adulterous eroticism and fidelity to the home. For libertine sexuality and marital fidelity are both defined in relation to the home as the presumed locus of a woman's life, segregated from the public sphere of male activity. The household is still recognized as a woman's proper place, even if its boundaries are respected in the breach, so long as each transgression is conceived of as an individual affair. But women meeting in assembly in order to influence state policy exceed this simple opposition, and challenge the ideological basis of the opposition between men's and women's spheres. By representing them as engaging in a political action against the war, Aristophanes conjures up the image of women as a counter-society, a kind of mirror world of the masculine civic space. Here is the germ of the representation of women as an alternative public or *demos,* with their own state institutions, that will be developed further in the *Thesmophoriazusae,* where a women's festival is imagined as a public assembly or *ekklêsia.*

The characterization of Lysistrata is an index of this new dimension to the representation of women in the prologue to the play. She seems free of domestic constraints, and has no difficulty organizing and participating in the conference of the women. She also stands above the sexual obsessions of the others. Her age and marital status are indeterminate. Lysistrata is clear-headed, decisive,

and self-controlled, with the traits of a natural political leader (cf. Henderson 1987: xxxvii-xxxviii). Her persona is appropriate, given that the women are acting as a civic body, but that very fact is extraordinary. As Jeffrey Henderson remarks, «Greek tradition contains no parallel to the organized defiance of Lysistrata and her comrades» (xxxv); «there are no earlier examples of a female protagonist like Lysistrata» (xxviii). Lysistrata, in her capacity as leader, represents the political role assumed by the women, a role that transcends the spectrum on which the image of women runs from loyal housewives to passionate adultresses. It is grounded in an imaginary construction of women as symmetrical to men in their social organization.

Along with the proposal for the sex strike, Lysistrata also reveals that the oldest women of Athens have been ordered to seize the citadel, which they are to enter under the pretext of performing a sacrifice[8]. By taking control of the acropolis, the women openly organize themselves into a separate community, and any suggestion of individual resistance to husbands at home is tacitly dropped. All the women, young and old, are now gathered together, and in a position to withstand an assault collectively. By locating themselves at the ritual center of the Athenian state, moreover, the women cease simply to function as a kind of shadow society, with a parallel organization to that of the men, and insert themselves into the male domain in fact.

The *Lysistrata* lacks a proper parabasis, since the chorus remains divided till near the end of the play (1014-75), and Lysistrata's argument with the Athenian *proboulos,* properly part of the formal debate or *agôn* in the structure of the play, effectively takes over this function (cf. Henderson 1987: 141, 149). While Aristophanes uses a woman as his spokesperson, she may be seen as the medium of a gender-neutral message, occupying the place reserved for the comic poet's own political counsel to his fellow citizens. And yet, it is not entirely an accident that this advice is tendered by an actor in the guise of a woman. For women, thanks to their very distance from the public life of the city, are not conceived of as having the same stake in its narrow exclusivity. They are outsiders to the hierarchy that discriminates between imperial Athens and its subject cities, colonies, and free allies, as well as to the division of Greece into rival leagues. Thus, Lysistrata recommends the incorporation of all allied populations into a single civic community (579-86, with Henderson 144), and defends a thoroughgoing panhellenism based on the kinship of all the Greeks (1128-34).

To be sure, Aristophanes expresses analogous sentiments in other plays (cf. esp. *Frogs* 701-02 for a more inclusive attitude toward the allies). But Lysistrata is not merely an advocate of the policy of reconciliation; she has already achieved it in practice among the women of Greece, whether allies or enemies, at the beginning of the action. From a dramatic point of view, the strongest argument in favor of peace is, I think, the image of the women representatives of the several Greek states cooperating effortlessly with one another, and mutually determined to put an end to the conflict among the men. It is, of course, a comic absurdity that Lysistrata can arrange a meeting of women from all over Greece and across battle lines in the wee hours of the morning, so that they can slip undetected out of their houses. Old Comedy was tolerant of such fantastic devices, such as Dicaeopolis' private truce with the Spartans in the *Acharnians.* But the women's collaboration on an international level may be seen as an extension of their local organization within Athens itself, a kind of subterranean cohesion outside the public spaces where men regularly convened. In a word, the women rely on networking, that parallel system of relations that men represent as covert or mysterious. The idea that women maintain their own forms of communication takes the edge off the implausible device of a panhellenic women's conference in wartime Athens. Moreover, the international solidarity among the women is different from Dicaeopolis' isolated pact with the enemy. It is women as a group

[8] V. 179. One source for the representation of women as participating in the public and collective life of the city is their role in women's ritual activities and festivals. Later, they adduce the part they have played in public cults as part of the reason why they are pre-eminently suited to offer advice to the city (638-47). Such rites are the only occasion on which women acted collectively and in public, and they provide a model for the women's interest in the governance of the commonwealth as an independent body, parallel to the corporate association of males.

who are capable of transcending factional and national differences and acting in concert against the war.

The women are not, then, just a mirror image of male society. Their solidarity is a function of their marginalization with respect to the power structure of the city-state. There is a suggestion of a specifically female mode of relating, perhaps, in Lysistrata's instructions to the women to draw the Athenians and Spartans together, «not with a rough or violent hand, and not the way our husbands used to do in their ignorance, but as women ought, very familiarly *(oikeiôs)*» (1116-18). Behind the coarse humor is, I think, the suggestion that women have a different gestural language from that of men.

It is women's status as other with respect to the reigning society of men that makes them fit representatives for a policy based on an apparently natural and spontaneous sentiment of solidarity, as opposed to the politicized and contentious mode associated with men. It is also this same distance from civic responsibility that underwrites the representation of women as sexually demanding and indiscriminate. Thus, the topos of the sex-hungry woman, which Aristophanes exploited to motivate the women's action at the beginning of the play, is also the other side of the coin to their ability to transcend parochial allegiances and petty spites such as characterize the men's combativeness. The women offer a different model of social relations, both domestic and international, a model which, viewed from the perspective of masculine codes of differentiation, appears transgressive. The women, in a word, act as a body.

We may compare the women's role in the *Lysistrata* with the role of the birds in the play named for them. The birds, like Lysistrata and the women, form a polis protected by walls, which they defend against petitioners from the city below. Like Lysistrata, the birds oblige their opponents, here the gods, to submit by virtue of their control of an essential resource, the aroma of sacrifices wafting toward heaven on which the gods depend for sustenance. Both plays conclude with the epiphany of a mute female figure, Reconciliation in the *Lysistrata* and Sovereignty in the *Birds*, in a scene of erotic triumph and communion. Like women, the birds stand for an alternative order, based on elementary forms of social solidarity[9].

Unlike the women, the birds, under the guidance of a pair of Athenian rogues, establish a new regime of their own, which is characterized by an absence of private property and other forms of social differentiation, in accord with their primitive mode of life. Lysistrata, on the contrary, does not realize the full implications of women's political organization, and settles for the more limited objective of inducing the Athenian and Spartan men to come to terms, upon which the women will return to the private spaces of their homes. It would have to await the *Ecclesiazusae* before Aristophanes would take off from the analogy between the management of the home and the governance of the city to launch a complete inversion of the social order under a women's regime, where the walls between houses are torn down, all property is held in common, men and women are allowed indiscriminate sexual congress, and the entire city is restructured along the lines of a single vast household. True, this revolutionary dispensation is introduced rather abruptly in the play, after authority has been voted to the women in a meeting of the Athenian assembly. It does not seem to follow directly from the women's claims to superior wisdom in the direction of the state. Yet Aristophanes evidently regarded it as natural enough that women, once in power, should propose such a scheme, both because of women's association with the structure of the household, and because, as the social other, they represent the potential negation of the privatism in economic and sexual relations that characterizes city-state society.

So too, I suggest, the panhellenic solidarity among women in the *Lysistrata* has its roots in an image of women as a counterorder that transcends distinctions of nationality — or at least, of Greek nationality — as they are inscribed in masculine society. Correspondingly, the women's sexuality threatens to disrupt the boundaries of the domestic unit or household, although it is recontained inasmuch as women's *erôs* is assimilated to the wish for domestic security. In contradistinction to the divisiveness and competitiveness of the male realm, women are figured as a corporate

[9] For a detailed discussion of the *Birds*, see Konstan 1990.

body, and a woman's body is imagined as the geographical substrate, parcelled out by men into warring areas and states[10]. And yet it is Lysistrata herself, acting as a kind of *lena* or pander, who presents the figure of Diallage to the inspection of Spartans and Athenians, and exposes her to be carved up according to their desires. This is in conformity with the image of Lysistrata the statesman, who argues on equal terms with men like the *proboulos,* and who explains that even though she is a woman, she has *nous,* because she has listened to the discussions of her father and other elder men (1124-27). Women both are and are not like men in the *Lysistrata.* Making the two aspects cohere in a single plot is the achievement of Aristophanes in this comedy[11].

[10] Vegetti 1983: 41-58 («Metafora politica e immagine del corpo nella medicina greca») suggests that in the Hippocratic tradition the body is conceived of as an undifferentiated vessel for humors and the like to enter or exit, whereas Plato and Aristotle develop an «anatomical» image of the body as a kind of polis, in which the internal organs enter into the formation of a coherent structure. According to Vegetti, it is the latter conception that conforms to the ideology of the Athenian city-state. Perhaps the former underlies Aristophanes' use of the female body to represent Greece as a unified whole. We may contrast Menenius Agrippa's allegory of the revolt of the limbs against the belly (Livy 2.32.9-12; cf. Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Antiquities* 6.44 ff.), with which he persuades the rebellious plebs to accept the authority of the aristocracy; here, the interdependency of the several parts of the body serves as a justification for the hierarchical ordering of society. No such hierarchical principle is implied in the division of Diallagê's body.

[11] I wish to thank participants in the Nottingham conference for helpful suggestions, and above all to acknowledge my debt to Elizabeth Bobrick of Wesleyan University, who clarified for me the fundamental thesis of this paper.

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(St. Andrews)

The contest in Aristophanes' *Frogs*: the points at issue[1]

We might have expected Dionysus to contemplate a journey to the underworld for a good poet and then decide that Euripides is the one who will fill the bill. In fact, it is the other way round, as he explains it to Herakles: his reading of *Andromeda* aroused in him a desire at all costs to bring Euripides back, and the need for a δεξιὸς ποιητής is offered as a justification. This distinction between the actual sequence and a hypothetical alternative sequence may seem at first sight pedantic, and the choice of δεξιός in preference to other complimentary terms which are used of poets may not seem important; but both considerations have a bearing on the structure of the play and on the terms in which the contest is presented.

Herakles, on being told (72) that none of the poets remaining in Athens is any good, is surprised. Isn't Iophon, alive and well, good enough (73)? Well, he might be, but perhaps the good in his plays has all been the work of his father, Sophocles (73-5, 78f.). Then why not, if a dead poet is to be resurrected, bring back Sophocles himself (76f.)? Dionysus can only say that it would be impracticable to try to extract from the underworld a man likely to be content with his fate, wherever he is (80-2). Agathon? No longer in Athens (83-5). Xenocles, Pythangelus? Not worth considering (86f.). But if it is Euripides' style that Dionysus wants, doesn't Euripides have plenty of imitators (89-91)? Ah, but they can't produce the real phrase (97

[1] This paper is virtually identical with what will be Chapter III Part 2 of the Introduction to my forthcoming edition of *Frogs*, to be published by the Oxford University Press. Comic fragments are cited with the numeration of Kassel and Austin 1983-, but Alexis and Antiphanes from Kock 1880-88. Fragments of Sophocles are cited from Radt.

Cover picture:
Paestan bell-crater. Museo Provinciale, Salerno.

TRAGEDY, COMEDY AND THE POLIS

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