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The Court of Comedy

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Crawling from the Wreckage, 411 B.C.E.

δημοκρατία οὐ μόνον ἀνιεμένη ἀσθενεστέρα γίνεται ὥστε τέλος ἦξει εἰς ὀλιγαρχίαν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐπιτεινομένη σφόδρα.

Democracy will weaken and finally become oligarchy, not only when it is too loose, but also when it is stretched too much.

—Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1.4.12.1360a25–27

After the celebration of *Peace* in 421 and the ebullient confidence of *Birds* in 414, Aristophanes' next extant play, *Lysistrata*, of 411, finds Aristophanes back in attack mode, and the situation in Athens at the time leaves little doubt about why. Externally Athens was engaged again in war operations against Sparta, now allied with Persia, and internally major changes were taking place. Although Thucydides would in retrospect reckon the years between the Peace of Nicias and the Sicilian expedition as a period of low-level hostilities, and the expedition itself as the resumption of the war, for Aristophanes most likely it was only with the battles of the summer of 412 that he considered Athens once again at war.¹ From this perspective, Aristophanes wasted no time in launching a play critical of the war. While nothing in *Lysistrata* even hints that Aristophanes presages the oligarchic coup that

1. See Strauss (1997) on the problem of periodization and the Peloponnesian War.

ensued months after the play's production, the internal changes in Athens were sufficient to disturb and inspire him. Aristophanes is no less pointed or specific about the times than in any other play.

While Thucydides devotes most of his history of 413–412 B.C.E. to political and military movements, he does comment on other developments. When he summarizes the reception in Athens of the news that the expedition to Sicily was a catastrophe, he says that the first reaction was disbelief, then (8.1.1):

ἐπειδὴ δὲ ἔγνωσαν, χαλεποὶ μὲν ἦσαν τοῖς συμπροθυμηθεῖσι τῶν ῥητόρων τὸν ἔκπλου, ὥσπερ οὐκ αὐτοὶ ψηφισάμενοι, ὠργίζοντο δὲ καὶ τοῖς χρησμολόγοις τε καὶ μάντεσι καὶ ὁπόσοι τι τότε αὐτοὺς θειάσαντες ἐπήλπισαν ὡς λήψονται Σικελίαν.

Once they realized, they were hard on those of the *rhetores* who had encouraged the expedition, as if they had not voted for it themselves, and angry with the oracle-readers and prophets who had used divination to inspire hope in them to take Sicily.

The Athenians begin planning what to do next, and Thucydides includes this somewhat sardonic account (8.1.3–4):

τῶν τε κατὰ τὴν πόλιν τι ἐς εὐτέλειαν σωφρονίσαι, καὶ ἀρχὴν τινα πρεσβυτέρων ἀνδρῶν ἐλέσθαι, οἵτινες περὶ τῶν παρόντων ὡς ἂν καιρὸς ἢ προβουλεύουσιν. πάντα τε πρὸς τὸ παραχρῆμα περιδεῆς, ὅπερ φιλεῖ δῆμος ποιεῖν, ἑτοῖμοι ἦσαν εὐτακτεῖν.

In order to bring some economical restraint to the city's business, they also empowered a board of elders to enable proposals about the situation as circumstance called for it. As the Demos is inclined to do, at the moment of terror, they were ready to put all their affairs in order.

For a playwright always interested in the role of *rhetores* in the democracy, the importance of deliberation, the folly of oracles and the benefits of peace, it was only a matter of how to dramatize his response. Only one passage in *Lysistrata* refers specifically to the deliberations that resulted in the Sicilian expedition, wherein one of the venture's strongest proponents, Demostratus, advocates proposals in the Assembly, while women shriek inauspiciously during a celebration of the Adonia (388–97). Thus for the first time since the 420s, we have a play with a vignette of failed deliberations in the

Athenian Assembly, so it should be no surprise that the deliberative process will once again be crucial to a play and that it is translocated. The topic plays itself out at length in the *agon* and focuses squarely on the very character who actually referred to Demostratus but who embodies the bottleneck in democratic deliberation: the Proboulos.

The office of Proboulos has left little trace in the historical record. Thucydides comments on the creation of the board and later mentions how an enlarged board cleared the legal hurdles to permit the oligarchic revolution (8.67), a process described more fully in Aristotle (*Ath. Pol.* 29). Other than the names of two of the members (Hagnon at Lysias 12.65 and Sophocles at Arist. *Rhet.* 1419a26–30), nothing more is recorded, and it is no surprise that the office did not survive when democracy was restored in 410. Still, it is evident from even the sparse evidence that the Probouloi represented a significant concession on the part of the Demos. In *Lysistrata*, the Proboulos seems to have independent authority to negotiate and pay for war supplies. The very title of the office suggests they have powers to make proposals to or set the agenda for the Council. Their later activity indicates they were empowered, or at least entrusted, to consider the power structures of the democracy at a deep level. In any case, a representative of these elders was important enough in 411 for Aristophanes to make him the primary antagonist to his heroine in her plot to bring peace to Greece.

IDENTITY AND INCLUSION: *LYSISTRATA*

The *Lysistrata* is sufficiently rich that, in spite of this prominent choice of an immediately topical figure, scholars have mostly focused on other areas, from its nearly coherent plot to its play on gender dynamics.² As with Aristophanes' politics generally, scholars have debated whether there is much seriousness in the play, to the point that H. D. Westlake (1980) had to take pains to observe that, while the play's protest against the war is broad and fantastic, Aristophanes embeds sharply focused criticism of Athenian leaders. More recently, James McGlew examines the *Lysistrata* against the background of rising oligarchic power.³ He argues that Aristophanes offers up two models of citizens, a negative one in the Proboulos and a positive one in

2. On gender dynamics, for example, see Byl (1991), Taaffe (1994), Mastromarco (1997), Andò (2004) and Faraone (2006), all of which at least touch on the limits gender identities put on Aristophanes' depiction of political success. See Henderson (1980) on what nearly constitutes a plot in the play.

3. McGlew (2002, 139–48).

Kinesias, to show the audience that, by grounding their sense of purpose in the *oikos* and restoring their passion for participation in politics, the city will prosper through their renewed involvement. Both Westlake and McGlew take steps in the right direction. Westlake demonstrates there is pointed and trenchant political commentary in the play, and McGlew rightly views the Proboulos as an embodiment of a certain trend in civic political behavior.

The episode of the Proboulos, which consists mostly of the play's *agon*, is the longest sequence in the play (nearly double the length of the next longest episode) and constitutes the central exploration of the current political circumstances. The Proboulos tends to be characterized by scholars, implicitly and explicitly, as a generalized authority figure, but such a figure would be without parallel in Aristophanes. Major political antagonists in his plays are attacked either as themselves (Lamachus in *Acharnians*, Cleon in *Knights* and *Wasps*) or as personified abstracts (Polemos in *Peace*, Poverty in *Wealth*). Neither scholiasts in antiquity nor scholars today have access to sufficient information to determine whether the Proboulos character in fact represents an individual historical holder of the office. Without such information, the Proboulos most resembles a certain class of political operatives, along the lines of the sycophant in *Acharnians*, the arms dealer of *Peace*, or the various con artists who visit Peisetaerus in *Birds*. At a minimum, though, the Proboulos represents a more specific political entity than the government in general or the supporters of the war. Since the Probouloi had the authority to present legislation directly to the Assembly, bypassing one bulwark of the democracy, the Council, they effectively set the agenda for the democracy. Given Aristophanes' demonstrated faith in the Demos retaining ultimate judgment over the deliberative process, the Proboulos is a natural antagonist.

It is precisely as a figure inimical to the democratic process that Aristophanes portrays his Proboulos. It is customary today, when describing the Athenian democracy, to point out that it was less democratic than many modern democracies in that it accorded citizenship to a comparatively restricted subset of the resident populace, excluding women, metics, and slaves. In late fifth-century Greece, of course, the Athenian democracy was on the more inclusive end of the political spectrum. The bulk of the ideological, indeed political and military, tension was not over how much more inclusive the democracy could or should be, but whether franchise should be restricted to fewer citizens. Democrats invoked the fear of tyranny, should such restrictions be put in place. Oligarchs invoked the fear of irresponsible mob rule. The vote of the Probouloi to pave the way for the oligarchic Five Thousand clearly places them in the oligarchic camp in favor of further

restricting the size of the functional deliberating body of Athens' government. The traumatic news of the failure of the Sicilian expedition provided political ammunition for the oligarchs to criticize the judgment of the popular democracy. Aristophanes invokes just this scenario when he introduces the Proboulos. He has the Proboulos, upon entering the stage, discuss the deliberations over the Sicilian expedition and emphasize the need to control the war effort, when he first arrives to confront the obstructionist actions of the women (387ff.).⁴

In order to highlight the contrast between the oligarchic movement toward restriction, represented and articulated by the Proboulos, versus the democratic principle of inclusion, Aristophanes places the moral and religious authority for successful political leadership in a group currently excluded from deliberations: the women of Greece. Thus Aristophanes uses the episode involving the Proboulos to dramatize his criticism of the oligarchic agenda. Even as the Proboulos tries repeatedly to silence the women, Aristophanes has Lysistrata demonstrate throughout the *agon* that the women possess superior experience and leadership. Lysistrata's forces twice rout the Proboulos's Scythian archers. After the women dominate militarily, the formal *agon* begins. In debate, Lysistrata quickly declares that the women will control the finances, because they can do a better job (486–501). Questioned further by the Proboulos, Lysistrata cites the failure of men's earlier deliberations, but her solution is quite the opposite of that of the Proboulos and the oligarchic factions. In the past, when the women heard about the men failing in deliberation about important business (κακῶς ὑμᾶς βουλευσαμένους μέγα πρᾶγμα, 511) before the Demos (ἐν τῷ δήμῳ, 514), their husbands shut them out of the process (514–22). In the tradition of Aristophanes' protagonists, Lysistrata translocates the deliberative process by gathering the women to save Greece (524–25).⁵ Even the men themselves are aware of their own failure, Lysistrata says (522–24). So now, much as Dicaeopolis and other comic protagonists before her, she and the women are taking control of the deliberative process (527–28):

ἦν οὖν ἡμῶν χρηστὰ λεγουσῶν ἐθειλήσητ' ἀντακροῶσθαι
κάντισιωπαῖν ὥσπερ χήμεϊς, ἐπανορθώσοιμεν ἂν ὑμᾶς.

4. On the significance of the Proboulos' invocation of the Adonia at his entrance here, see Reitzammer (2008). Cf. O'Higgins (2003, 160–68).

5. Murphy (1938, 107–8) proposes an analysis of lines 507–97 as an organized rhetorical speech but concedes: "The dialogue form nearly obliterates the speech of Lysistrata which underlies the whole." I argue that debate and deliberation provide a much more important structure or reference point than a single speech.

So if you'll be willing to listen back to us while we give useful advice,
And keep silent as we did, we can straighten you out.

Through *Lysistrata's* prescriptions, Aristophanes attempts to swing the pendulum away from oligarchic restriction, by calling for broader, not narrower, participation in the deliberative process. The call for listening to and embracing the broadest possible coalition climaxes in *Lysistrata's* speech on wool working as a metaphor for governance (574–86). *Lysistrata* first describes removing the dirty and corrupt factions in the city, via the metaphor of culling dirt and knots from raw wool (574–78), along with cutting off the “heads” (κεφαλάς, 578). She then calls for *metics*, allied foreigners, debtors and colonists to participate (580–85; cf. Chapter 3 on the treatment of foreigners in *Knights*). The result will be harmonious prosperity, in the form of a cloak for the Demos (τῷ δήμῳ χλαῖναν, 586). The thrust of her proposal is clear: reject the oligarchic special interests and involve more people, not fewer, in the political process. Prosperity of the Demos should be the goal and will be the result.

The ode that follows the dismissal of the *Proboulos* appears where, in other plays, a *parabasis* appears. In place of a *parabasis* come rival odes between the men's and women's semichoruses, but, as would be characteristic of a *parabasis*, Aristophanes reiterates the political point *Lysistrata* has just made. In their odes, the women continue sounding the theme that advice from a broader coalition will save Athens. The women establish their own civic credentials by citing their participation in the city's religious festivals (638–47). They go on to declare that they have the right and authority to advise the *polis* because they contribute sons to the citizen body and because the men have squandered the city's finances (648–57). In conclusion, the women declare that they, unlike the men, have support throughout the Hellenic world, invoking in particular their allies in Sparta and Thebes (696–705). Where *Lysistrata* earlier had demonstrated their commitment to bringing Athens' allies under the political umbrella, the women now assert that they can unite even Athens' enemies in a common cause.

The resolution of the play's conflict validates the women's claims and advice. Later in the play, *Kinesias* meets up with a Spartan ambassador, and, after discerning the extent of the women's plot, they decide to pursue a treaty together. *Kinesias* declares that he will have his companions on the Council choose the representative for the negotiations (ἐγὼ δ' ἑτέρους ἐνθένδε τῆ βουλῆ φράσω/ πρέσβεις ἐλέσθαι 1011–12), in the process bypassing or ignoring the authority of the *Probouloi*. In the negotiation scene that follows, the men, of their own accord, request that *Lysistrata* provide guidance.

Lysistrata takes on the role, informed by her experience as a woman, and insists on a Panhellenic spirit throughout the proceedings.⁶

Familiar principles thus gird the play's events. No one uses canonical rhetorical structures or events in their speeches, but Lysistrata engages in persuasive advocacy in support of the Demos. She knows the disastrous results of incompetence at the Assembly, so she translocates the deliberative process. Spatially she moves it to the Acropolis, but the more important movement is one of identity. Unlike previous plays, in this play a protagonist who is not a member of the Demos, insofar as she does not have the right to speak or vote in the deliberative process of the *polis*, takes over the process. Crucially, Aristophanes' long-standing point remains: sound deliberation in service to the Demos yields success and prosperity. In this play more than in any previous ones, the action during the play directly dramatizes this prosperity for Athenians and other Greeks. Dicaeopolis was prosperous in *Acharnians*, Demos was rejuvenated in *Knights*, Philocleon was happy in *Wasps*, the fruits of peace were promised in *Peace* and the benefits of empire were reported and implied for the Demos in *Birds*, but in *Lysistrata*, citizens like Kinesias, the representatives of the Council and the husbands of all the women involved in the strike, along with a Panhellenic coalition, all celebrate happiness and prosperity by the play's finale. Thus translocation of the deliberative process to marginalized identities becomes the most inclusive and promising mechanism for widespread success and prosperity. In his next play, Aristophanes uses this same translocation by identity, but on a still larger scale.

STANDING UP IN THE ASSEMBLY: *THESMOPHORIAZUSAE*

In rebuffing the Proboulos and referring authority to negotiate peace to the Council in *Lysistrata*, Aristophanes defends the role of the Council in leading Athens back to success and prosperity. The other play of 411 effectively does the same for the Assembly in ways that are both less and more direct. The two plays were first produced within months of each other, and it is reasonable to expect that their composition overlapped somewhat. There are some basic similarities to the two plays. Both make women central and prominent. Both begin with a problem and set up a proposed resolution to it. Central to each is a lengthy, formal debate, the *agon* between the Proboulos and

6. The finale of the play spotlights two songs sung by a Spartan, underlining in yet another way the principle of giving voice to those outside of the current deliberative process. On the uncertainty about the end of the script as we have it, see Revermann (2006, 254–60).

Lysistrata in *Lysistrata* and the Assembly of women in *Thesmophoriazusae*. Following an ode analogous to a *parabasis* in each play comes a series of episodes prolonging the conflict in a lighthearted way (the escaping women and the thwarting of Kinesias in *Lysistrata*, the series of Euripidean parodies in *Thesmophoriazusae*), before the principal character returns and resolves the conflict (Lysistrata and Euripides). Within this comparison, certainly, *Thesmophoriazusae* comes across as the less engaged with the political tremors shaking Athens at the time. It might be, however, the more subversive of the two plays.

Scholars have agreed that some pointed lines in *Thesmophoriazusae*, where Athena is invoked to make an appearance as a hater of tyrants (φάνηθ', ὦ τυράννουσ/στρυγοῦσ', ὥσπερ εἰκόσ, 1143–44), were intended to reverberate strongly with spectators in Athens while the movement toward oligarchy was ongoing.⁷ It is the lengthy and detailed staging of the Assembly, however, that presents the most sustained challenge to the looming oligarchy. Aristophanes is quite willing to dramatize or report a dysfunctional Assembly, but neither play of 411 does so.⁸ The scene of the Assembly does experience a translocation, to the women's festival of the Thesmophoria, and it is a parody insofar as it devotes the occasion to deliberation about Euripides' defamation of the women's *demos*, but it hews closer to the actual proceedings of a public institution than any other scene in fifth-century comedy.⁹ J. A. Haldane finds the scene "one of the most elaborately planned and carefully written passages in ancient drama" and details how Aristophanes merges language and procedure from the Athenian Assembly into this scene and moves from splitting the language evenly between actual usage and comic additions to suit the translocation to the Thesmophoria to "almost wholly a debating society."¹⁰ Aristophanes also explicitly makes the Assembly the one remaining operating body of the democracy. Inlaw, by way of explaining how Euripides should have nothing to fear, says: ἐπεὶ νῦν

7. Much inevitable uncertainty clings to any sober attempt to match up *Lysistrata* and *Thesmophoriazusae* to the developments that culminated in the oligarchic coup in the summer of 411. See Shear (2011, 22–41) for an overview of events and sources and Austin and Olson (2004, xxxiii–xliv) for a solid overview of the issues pertaining to *Thesmophoriazusae*.

8. *Lys.* 390ff. refers to the Assembly in an unflattering manner, but this reflects the character of the Proboulos, who makes the reference and who is being introduced here. The occasion he describes also predates the Sicilian expedition and was well before the oligarchic threat became so serious and immediate.

9. Translocation of the area for deliberation was to become a historical reality in Athens shortly after the play's performance, as over the course of the revolution of 411, oligarchs and democrats jostled for control and the authority to govern in different locations. See Shear (2011, 36–40).

10. Haldane (1965, 39, 44). Cf. Chapter 3 and Rhodes (2010) for a similar documentation of the references to the Assembly embedded in *Knights*.

γ' οὔτε τὰ δικαστήρια/ μέλλει δικάζειν οὔτε βουλῆς ἐσθ' ἔδρα, “since the courts are not in session now and the Council is not meeting” (78–79). Thus of the three principal political institutions of the Athenian democracy, only the Assembly remains open and active.

When formal proceedings begin, the prose announcement comically mixes in some material to suit the women (295–311), but the passage is more remarkable for staying on topic and not undercutting the business of the Assembly than for satirizing it. A simple invocation for successful deliberation and success now seems to bear the weight of the occasion (301–11):

ἐκκλησίαν τήνδε καὶ σύνοδον τὴν νῦν κάλλιστα καὶ ἄριστα ποιῆσαι,
πολυφελῶς μὲν τῇ πόλει τῇ Ἀθηναίων, τυχηρῶς δ' ἡμῖν αὐταῖς.
καὶ τὴν δρῶσαν καὶ ἀγορεύουσαν τὰ βέλτιστα περὶ τὸν δῆμον τὸν
Ἀθηναίων καὶ τὸν τῶν γυναικῶν ταύτην νικᾶν. ταῦτ' εὐχέσθε, καὶ
ὑμῖν αὐταῖς τὰγαθά.

[Pray] to make this current Assembly and meeting most right and good, both very beneficial to the city of the Athenians and fortunate for us, and she who provides the best counsel for the Demos of the Athenians and of the women, that she prevail. For this we pray, and for blessings for you.

This is not a satire to distort the proceedings but rather a nearly entirely straightforward reminder that the mission and activity of the Assembly, as it normally runs, are what is needed, and under attack, if not already missing in action. Similarly the group of prayers that follows reinforces the proper ritual of the Assembly, only with additions specific to the women's occasion (335–39):¹¹

εἴ τις ἐπιβουλεύει τι τῶ δῆμῳ κακὸν
τῶ τῶν γυναικῶν, ἢ ἰπικηρυκεύεται
Εὐριπίδη Μήδοις τ' ἐπὶ βλάβῃ τινὶ
τῇ τῶν γυναικῶν, ἢ τυραννεῖν ἐπινοεῖ
ἢ τὸν τύραννον συγκατάγειν, . . .

If anyone plots any evil against the Demos
of the women, or makes overtures
to Euripides or the Persians to cause any harm to

11. On this passage in the context of constitutional debate just prior to the oligarch coup, see Shear (2011, 43–44).

the women, or intends to be a tyrant,
or cooperates in restoring a tyrant . . .

Where little over a decade earlier Aristophanes had mocked the Demos' paranoia about tyrants, and even three years earlier had used a similar parody to make such prayers against tyranny seem silly (*Birds* 1074–75), now the Demos seems to need a reminder that they are sworn to oppose tyranny. After more prayers specific to the women, the chorus emphasizes the point (352–67):

ξυνευχόμεσθα τέλεα μὲν
πόλει τέλεά τε δήμῳ
τάδ' εὖγματα ἀποτελεῖσθαι,
τὰ δ' ἄρισθ' ὅσαις προσήκει
νικᾶν λεγούσαις. ὀπόσαι δ'
ἔξαπατῶσιν παραβαίνουσί τε τοὺς
ὄρκους τοὺς νενομισμένους
κερδῶν οὐνεκ' ἐπὶ βλάβῃ,¹²
ἢ ψηφίσματα καὶ νόμους
ζητοῦσ' ἀντιμεθιστάναι,
τὰ πόρρητά τε τοῖσιν ἐχθροῖς
τοῖς ἡμετέροις λέγουσ',
ἢ Μήδους ἐπάγουσι τῆς
ἀρχῆς οὐνεκ' ἐπὶ βλάβῃ,
ἀσεβοῦσ' ἀδικοῦσί τε τὴν πόλιν.

We pray together that this
may be well fulfilled
for the *polis* and the Demos.
All who deserve the best,
may they prevail in their speeches. And all who
deceive and transgress the
oaths established by tradition,
for profit or to cause harm,
or seek to invert
the laws and legislation
and tell secrets to our enemies,
or invite the Persians in the name of empire

12. N. G. Wilson deletes this line, but see Austin and Olson (2004, 169 *ad loc.*) for parallels.

to cause harm,¹³
they commit sins and wrong the city!

The entire meeting proceeds efficiently and effectively, and in a traditional manner as if to emphasize that the democracy need not, should not, be overhauled or dismissed. The Assembly receives its proposal from the Council (372–75), and the motion is read. At the open invitation for someone to speak on the proposal, Mica puts on a crown and prepares. The chorus is at once respectful and quips (381–82):

σίγα, σιώπα, πρόσσεχε τὸν νοῦν· χρέμπτεται γὰρ ἦδη
ὅπερ ποιοῦσ' οἱ ῥήτορες. μακρὰν ἔοικε λέξειν.

Shut up and be quiet. Pay attention! She's clearing her throat now
just like *rhetoires* do. Looks like it'll be a long one.

Mica and, in response, the hapless Inlaw give the two longest uninterrupted speeches anywhere in the extant plays, forty lines for Mica (383–432) and fifty-four for Inlaw (466–519), and, with the addition of a brief second bit of support for the prosecution by the Garland-Seller (a mere sixteen lines, 443–58), both sides get roughly equal time. While these are indeed the longest, most sustained speeches in the plays, and do reflect some parody of speech construction, they do not conform to fourth-century standards of rhetorical speech structure.¹⁴ Even with the comic content (joke after joke at the women's expense), the speeches are a display of continued airing of issues in the Assembly, and the ability of the meeting to deliberate is crucial. At the conclusion of Inlaw's ill-conceived defense of Euripides, the chorus is stunned and offers (528–30):

τὴν παροιμίαν δ' ἐπαινῶ τὴν παλαιάν·
ὑπὸ λίθῳ γὰρ παντί που χρὴ
μὴ δάκη ῥήτῳ ἀθρεῖν.

I like the old proverb:

13. The text is problematic, and its sense is uncertain. See Austin and Olson (2004, 170–71 *ad loc.*) for details.

14. See Murphy (1938, 108–9) for his scheme of these two speeches. To compensate for the lack of a *diegesis*, he substitutes *prosthesis* in his analyses of both speeches, as he does for the speech of Diaecopolis in *Acharnians* (see Chapter 3, 56–60). Cf. Sousa e Silva (1987–88, 96–103) for a discussion of *Ach.* and *Thesm.* together, focusing mostly on the parodies of *Telephus*.

you have to look under every rock
so a *rhetor* doesn't bite!

As the women turn hostile, Inlaw invokes his right of free speech to defend his stance (εἰ γὰρ οὔσης/παρρησίας, 540–41). Aristophanes has long established that the ability to deliberate is crucial and central to success and prosperity. He has also been willing for protagonists to take the position sharply opposed to the majority, so there is legitimate suspense about what will happen. Is the Assembly dysfunctional? Mica and Inlaw debate (533–66) and prepare to come to blows (567–70), which would indicate a breakdown in the process, before the *prytanis* of this assembly, Critylla, orders them to stop brawling (λοιδορούμεναι, 571), a regular term for failed deliberation (cf. the entry in the Appendix). At this moment, Cleisthenes arrives, and the debate takes a different turn. When he reports that a man has infiltrated the meeting to defend Euripides, the women turn to inspecting Inlaw. Once he is exposed, rather than resume the threat of violence, they prepare to hand him over to the Prytaneis (654). After a search by the chorus (655–87), the parodies of Euripides' plays begin. With Inlaw ensconced on the altar playing Telephus (688–764), the women again prepare to report his actions to the Prytaneis (764). As the parodies continue (*Palamedes* 765–84, then *Helen* 850–928), the women continue to wait for the Prytaneis (854). A Prytanis does in fact arrive, scaring off Euripides and giving orders for how to detain Inlaw (923–48), for which he explicitly says he acts on the authority of the Council (943). It is following the climactic parody (*Andromeda* 1001–1135), with Inlaw still bound by the rightful authority of the Demos, that Aristophanes has the chorus utter its ode invoking Athena as protectress of the *polis* (1140–42) and hater of tyrants (1143–44).

Now Euripides returns and makes a formal proposal to the women, which gives them exactly what they want: cessation of the slander against them. Euripides and the chorus negotiate in formal terms (1163–64). Euripides uses the terminology for making an offer (ταῦτ' ἐπικηρυκεύομαι, 1163) that was used in the invocation at the start of the Assembly ([ἐ]πικηρυκεύεται, 336). That passage invoked death on anyone who made such an offer to Euripides or the Persians, overtures undeniably parallel to contemporary negotiations between Pisander and the Persians. In the play, however, the Assembly has held its debates, stuck with the established authority of the Council, and the enemy Euripides has come with his own proposal, conceding to the women. A parallel action outside the theater would have the Persians making a proposal of concession to the Athenian Demos, rather

than the Demos conceding authority to tyrants whom the patron goddess of the city despises. The chorus agrees to accept Euripides' proposal, and the conflict is resolved (1170–71). In other plays, Aristophanes displayed his faith in the deliberative process by dramatizing it outside the Assembly and showing how the process still yielded success and prosperity. Here he demonstrates his faith in the democratic deliberative process by having it succeed in the Assembly, at a time when the Demos' reliability for making judgments to lead Athens to success and prosperity was under extreme pressure. At no time does Aristophanes ever concede with anything less than confidence that the Demos' judgment will lead Athens to maximize its potential. Whether it is the demagogues of the 420s or the oligarchs of 411, they are impediments to Athens' greatness by obstructing the deliberative process and collective judgment of the Demos. The only change Aristophanes ever promotes for configuring who should participate in the process is to expand the range of those advising and deliberating, whether it be the allies, metics or women, rather than shrinking the number of voices.

Thesmophoriazusae suffuses its political commentary with probing depictions of dynamics of gender and tragedy, both in the figure of Agathon who simultaneously adopts fully the character and gender of his creation, while defying any category himself, and more so in Euripides, who is made parallel to the Persian threat, hostile to the citizen body of the play, but ultimately reconciled. Six years later, however, in his last play of the era, Aristophanes revisits the problems of politics and tragedy, their relation to the Demos, and much more besides, but with irreconcilable results.