

MAPPING WOMEN'S BODIES AND THE MALE 'GAZE': RECONCILIATION IN ARISTOPHANES' *LYSISTRATA*

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This article returns to the debate centred around feminist readings of Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* (recently aired in *Akroterion* by Pauw 2014) and of the Reconciliation scene, in particular, in which the terms of the peace treaty between Sparta and Athens are mapped by the male ambassadors on the naked and mute body of a woman, whose body is actually that of a male actor. Problems raised by contemporary theories of the male gaze, as applied to the Athenian theatre, and the possibly pornographic dismemberment and commodification of the female body are explored in relation both to Athenian constructs of sex, gender and sexuality in the 5th century BC, and to reception of the text and play by multi-cultural audiences and readers in contemporary South Africa.

Keywords: bodies; comedy; drag; gender; nudity; performativity; sex; sexuality; visuality; women.

Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* is regularly prescribed in Classical Civilization courses in South African universities, particularly in courses with a focus on gender and sexuality in antiquity.¹ Productions of the play by professional companies or by university drama departments are less common in this era of transformation of the curriculum and avoidance of performance of any text perceived as eurocentric; however, in the pre-democratic era in South Africa, Aristophanes was a staple of the drama curriculum and explicit feminist readings of the play were common. As a consultant for one such production,² in which the director used, for the character of Reconciliation, a naked blow-up female doll, purchased from a shop which sold sex aids and pornography,³ deliberately to comment on the mapping of women's bodies by the male gaze, both by Athenian and many South African men, I would

¹ See Sharland 2014:119-138 for her interesting (and rather grim) experiences teaching this play at two different South African universities. Thankfully, I have been spared the kind of extremist student responses to the play, perceptively contextualised by Sharland.

² At the University of Natal (now UKZN) in Pietermaritzburg, directed by Rosemary Bamford (1992).

³ Which exploded by mistake (whilst being prodded) before the audience on the final night of the production. Whether this ruined or accentuated the serious 'message' was vigorously debated.

like to interrogate further the appropriateness of feminist interpretations of the Reconciliation scene in *Lysistrata*.⁴

How some men gaze at women's bodies, appropriate, dissect, and represent them has been the focus of much theoretical reflection in the fields of gender, media and literary studies.⁵ No work of representational art, whether a painting or a film or a play, can now, it seems, escape analysis of the ubiquitous 'male gaze',⁶ an all-seeing, patriarchal eye, imprisoning the object gazed at (usually female) within the 'mind-forged manacles' of the sex-gender system and its oppressive hierarchies.

If in the final scene in Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, in which the terms of the peace treaty are mapped out by the Spartan and Athenian ambassadors on the body of the naked goddess *Διαλλαγή* (Reconciliation herself), were played by a real naked woman (a slave hetaira, let us say), as some scholars have believed,⁷ then we, contemporary readers, critics and 'gazers', have here a singularly brutal example of the male gaze publically dismembering and mapping the female body as a space to be conquered and owned: a body whose very divisibility brings warring patriarchs together.

But what if the male gaze, in the Athenian theatre of the fifth century BC, objectifies, dissects and commodifies a woman's body which is actually that of a man? Does this make any difference to the prevailing ideology which positions women as submissive subjects to be conquered, dismembered and mapped within the male colonizer's contours? In short, do false breasts and fake pudenda a woman's body make? And, if they do, what does this say about sex and gender within Athenian patriarchal ideology?

⁴ Recently critiqued by Pauw, arguing from the premise that 'politically correct' humour does not exist. Hence Pauw's view that feminist readings of this play (such as Zweig 1992), focusing on the 'commodification' of women's bodies, miss the point of Aristophanic comedy (2014:15-24).

⁵ The *locus classicus* is Laura Mulvey's pioneering work on the male gaze in film studies, inspired by Lacanian psycho-analytic theory (1975:6-18). But see earlier work by Berger (1972). Cf. Taaffe 1993:16-17; Pauw 2014:15-16.

⁶ Or indeed 'gazes' as each viewer brings his or her own cultural baggage to the act of gazing. See Zita 1998:184-201 for a provocative analysis of how viewers of different races and genders 'see' the documentary film, *Paris is burning*. How, for instance, the white male gaze of the colonizer reduces black men to mimicry and alienation is one of Fanon's major themes (1967).

⁷ See Zweig 1992:80-81 for a survey of those scholars in support of the 'real hetaira' and those in favour of the male actor in padded costume.

*Reconciliation and her lineage: the texts*⁸

In *Lysistrata* (1112-1188) the warring Spartans and Athenians, afflicted by a desperate priapism, are forced to speak the language of reconciliation. Lysistrata, summoned as the supreme reconciler, surprises the delegates by introducing the naked Διαλλαγῆ, thus apparently playfully embodying visually the cause of the men's painful priapism and the effect of making peace.⁹

Business-like Lysistrata makes it perfectly clear what Reconciliation's role is. She is to lead the Spartans and Athenians forward (1115, 1120) and position them on either side of Lysistrata (1122-1123). Furthermore Lysistrata tells her how to behave: not with male brutality and ignorance, as 'our husbands used to treat us' (1117), but with the touch of a woman: οἰκείως πάνυ (1118). What Lysistrata means by this is revealed in the following line: Ἦν μὴ δίδῳ τὴν χεῖρα, τῆς σάθης ἄγε. ('if he refuses to give you his hand, lead him by the dick') (1119). By reminding the men, surprisingly bluntly, of the possible intimacies which await them in the οἶκος, Lysistrata, aided by the embodiment of Reconciliation, craftily prepares the delegates for the much-cited section of her speech: Ἐγὼ γυνὴ μὲν εἰμι, νοῦς δ' ἔνεστί μοι ('I am a woman, but I have a mind') (1124).

In response to her first argument, that the Spartans and Athenians are kinsmen with a shared religion and history, who should be fighting their enemies, not each other, the Athenian delegate, presumably reacting to Reconciliation's charms, can only comment on his erection (1136).¹⁰ In answer to Lysistrata's rebuke of the Spartans, in which Athenian benefits to Sparta are recalled (1137-1146), the Spartan delegate, perhaps as an aside, comments on Reconciliation's arse (1148). Lysistrata then rebukes the Athenians and recalls how Sparta has benefited Athens (1149-1156). In response to this section of her speech, the delegates make two comments: a general one on Reconciliation's beauty (1157); a more specific one on her lovely κύσθος (her vagina) (1158). Lysistrata makes a further plea for reconciliation (Τί δ' οὐ διηλλάγητε; 1161) and the Spartan delegate begins the process of mapping out the terms of the treaty on Reconciliation's body.

Predictably, the Spartan begins with her bottom (τῶγκυκλον 1162)¹¹ on which he has already commented (ὁ πρῶκτός 1148) and focuses on the thorny question of the return of Pylos, here also the πύλος to sexual pleasures from the

⁸ For the purposes of this discussion, I have used Henderson's text of the *Lysistrata* (1987) and his texts of the *Acharnians* (1998a), *Knights* (1998a) and *Peace* (1998b).

⁹ Thus Revermann 2006:254, Robson 2009:137.

¹⁰ Interjections like these Wilamowitz found 'truly offensive' (Henderson 1980:212). For the differences in the nature of the obscenities used by male and female characters in Aristophanes, see McClure 1999:205-259.

¹¹ Used of a woman's himation earlier (113), but here used metaphorically of the rump of her posterior (Henderson 1987:204). The 'fortification' before the Gates.

rear (1163-1164).¹² The Athenian delegate continues the sexual *double entendre* (1166) and, in return, requests Echinus (1169, her pubic triangle),¹³ the gulf of Malia (1169-1170, her vulva)¹⁴ and the walls of Megara (1170, her legs), thus expressing an apparent Athenian preference for sex from the front, a preference undermined by the frequency of scenes of heterosexual copulation *a tergo* in Attic vase-painting.¹⁵

Lysistrata momentarily gets caught up in the sexual word game (1172) before the desperate delegates express their desires to get down to action immediately: the Athenian delegate wants to strip off and begin ploughing (γεωργεῖν 1173), alluding to sex, fertility and the general benefits of peace; the Spartan to spread manure (κοπραγωγεῖν 1174), alluding not only to the perceived Spartan predilection for anal sex,¹⁶ but also the return to the soil (and preparing it with manure) which Reconciliation promises. Lysistrata interrupts these metaphorical flights of agricultural fancy with a reminder of the technicalities of reconciliation (διαλλαγῆτε 1175): the need to confer with their respective allies. The priapic Athenian makes sex the immediate priority of all (1178-1180); the Spartan concurs (1180-1181) and Lysistrata promises the joys of real reconciliation (returning home with their wives) after a picnic on the Acropolis¹⁷ and the exchange of mutual pledges (1182-1187). Reconciliation then leaves the stage.

¹² The use of the verb βλάμᾶζειν ('to grope' 1164) confirms this (Henderson 1987:204). Cf. Sommerstein 1990:215.

¹³ For the use of ἐχῖνος, of the sea-urchin, and hence hairy female pudenda, see Sommerstein 1990:216; of a wide-mouthed jar and 'perhaps of bodily cavities', see Henderson 1987:205. LSJ (s.v. III 2; IV) record the meanings 'neck-vertebra' and 'third stomach of ruminating animals': Aristophanes clearly has in mind the triangular shape of the land on which Echinus on the Malian Gulf is located (Reconciliation's presumably neatly-shaved pubic triangle). Cf. Pauw 2014:12-13.

¹⁴ Henderson comments on the use of κόλπος to mean 'vulva' and τὸν ὀπισθεν as the 'gulf behind the pubis' (1987:205). Later he connects the epithet 'Malian' with μῆλον/μᾶλον, 'apple, breasts, buttocks' (2000:425, n.105). For 'vulva', see also Dover and Tremewan 1989:95.

¹⁵ Sutton 1992:9-11 (on both black and red figure vases).

¹⁶ With both women and men, see Sommerstein 1990:215 *ad loc.*; for the scholarly controversy about Spartan and Cretan homosexual acts see Davidson 2007:326-331; Skinner 2014:74-84. For the primary sources, see Hubbard 2003:pass.

¹⁷ The κίσται (1184) may well be the kind of basket used in ritual processions of Demeter and Dionysos (Burkert 1985:99), but Henderson is right to suspect a 'jocular pun' on κύσθος here (1987:206). Lysistrata is not promising sex on the Akropolis, which would be profoundly 'unholy', especially as she has already used the verb ἀγνεύειν, (1182), but she is peppering her technical truce talk (1182, 1185) with a hint of what the covered baskets may promise. *Captatio benevolentiae* has never been more transparent.

Reconciliation has appeared in previous war-time plays. In his earliest surviving play, *Acharnians* (425 BC), Aristophanes introduces Reconciliation (Διαλλαγή) as the companion of Aphrodite and the Graces (989). The chorus leader comments on her lovely face (990) and fantasizes, through the metaphor of planting vines, figs and olives, about sex with her (995-999).¹⁸ However, it is not clear whether an actor actually *appeared* in the role of Reconciliation or whether she was intended to be a fantasy created for the audience, as Henderson believes (1998a:183, n. 124). The fact that the ekkyklema is soon put to use for the entrance of Dikaiopolis and his household (1003) suggests that it would not have been used a few lines earlier for the entry of Reconciliation.¹⁹ Furthermore the reference to the depiction of Eros in Zeuxis' celebrated painting (992) suggests that Aristophanes may have intended Reconciliation here to be conceptualized similarly (i.e. not as 'real').²⁰ There is certainly no allusion to her nudity or her body parts in the way in which the old man alludes to his penis and testicles (995-998) and as the drunken Dikaiopolis comments on the breasts of the two dancing girls who inflame his desires in the play's closing revel (1198-1202). His suggestions to them become cruder as he orders them to take his πέος in hand (1216-1217): this has the desired effect, as he envisages a nap, presumably after a *ménage à trois* in the gloaming (1220-1221).

In *Knights*, produced a year later,²¹ Reconciliation does not appear, but the two thirty-year peace treaties (αἱ Σπονδαί) are represented by two girls: their beauty is commented on (1390); as the old man expressed his desire for Reconciliation in *Acharnians*, so Demos, through word-play foregrounding penetration (κατατριakonτουτίσαι), expresses his desire to have sex with the two girls (1391) and the sausage seller hands them over to Demos to take back to his farms (1394).

Similarly, in *Peace* (421 BC), the production of which almost coincided with the ratification of the Peace of Nicias,²² the statue of the eponymous goddess Εἰρήνη is accompanied by her two attendants, Ὀπώρα and Θεωρία (523, translated

¹⁸ Thus anticipating the agricultural metaphors in the *Lysistrata* (1173-1174). Cf. Sommerstein 1980:205 *ad loc.*

¹⁹ For the use of the ekkyklema here, see Henderson 1998:185; for its general use in Aristophanic comedy, see Dearden 1976:50-74.

²⁰ For Zeuxis' painting, see Henderson 1998:184, n. 125.

²¹ Both plays won first prizes at the Lenaia of 425 and 424 respectively (see Dover 1993:1).

²² The treaty was ratified at the beginning of spring 421 BC shortly after the City Dionysia at which the play was first performed (Olson 1998:xxxii).

by Henderson as ‘Cornucopia’ and ‘Holiday’).²³ Trygaeus comments on Θεωρία’s lovely face and fragrant breath, but Hermes awards him Ὀπώρα as his wife (to beget a brood of grapes in the countryside, 706-708)²⁴ and Θεωρία to the Boule (713-714). Trygaeus informs the girls (726) that many randy men are waiting for them with erections (727-728).

Later in the play Trygaeus appears with both girls and orders a slave to take Ὀπώρα inside in order to prepare her for the marriage ritual (842-846); as bridegroom he comments on her breasts (863) and the slave on her bottom (868), after she has bathed (868). We are thus to imagine a disrobed Ὀπώρα off-stage. Θεωρία, presumably on-stage, is to be given to the Boule (846, 871-872) and the slave comments on her arse (876), and the Ἴσθμια (879), as he marks out a place to pitch his tent with his πέος (880). Although the games held at the Isthmus of Corinth would be the particular sphere of any Θεωρία’s interest, this is an obvious allusion to her genitalia,²⁵ and presumably rape-as-fantasy, anticipating the fuller development of the association with geographical features and female body parts in the *Lysistrata*. As Θεωρία disrobes, Trygaeus refers to her legs, pubic hair and genitalia (889-891)²⁶ and embarks on a list of sexual puns with reference to events in the games (894-904), prefigured by the reference to the Isthmia.²⁷ In the final moments of the play, Ὀπώρα is escorted from the house as the bride (1329); in the hymeneal hymn the chorus traditionally comments on gathering her fruit (1339-1340) and on her sweet fig (1351-1352), presumably not visible at this point.

From this brief consideration of the portrayal of Reconciliation, Peace and her two companions, it is clear that, although all three personifications of peace are closely associated with sex and fertility,²⁸ and that the objectification of women’s bodies is progressively more violent and cruder, only Reconciliation in *Lysistrata* is depicted as a naked woman on which the terms of a peace treaty are mapped.

²³ He gets them confused in the course of his translation (1998a:421, 495). Olson offers the rather bland ‘Harvest’ and ‘Festival-going’ or ‘Holiday’ (1998:184). I prefer Sommerstein’s predictably racier ‘Fullfruit’ and ‘Showtime’ (1985:55).

²⁴ For the sexual innuendo here, see Olson 1998:213-213.

²⁵ Sexual slang, as Henderson notes, for ‘the place connecting two legs’ (1998a:537, n.71).

²⁶ For the sexual allusion in τούπράνιον (891) [‘place for roasting, kitchen’ LSJ s.v.], see Olson 1998:240 *ad loc.*, 166.

²⁷ See Olson 1998:241 *ad loc.*

²⁸ For peace, sex and fertility, see *Acharnians* 1052, 1060 (at home), 1147-1149, 1220-1221; *Knights* 1391-1394; *Peace* 341, 439-440, 536-537, 571-581, 867, 1138-1139, 1339-1340, 1351-1352. See Dillon 1987:97-104 for his interpretation of *Lysistrata* as a post-Decelean peace play which differs from its predecessors in that it foregrounds the ‘fertility theme within the realm of womanhood’ (102).

The reference to the Ἴσθμια in *Peace* (879) prefigures the fuller development of the conceit in *Lysistrata*.²⁹

The actors — men, of course

Athenian audiences of both tragedy and comedy in the late fifth century were, of course, used to men playing women and it is possible that some of the κοῦφά πρόσωπα were actually played by women, as Dover thinks.³⁰ But were the peace-treaties in *Knights*, the goddess and her two attendants in *Peace*, and Reconciliation in the *Lysistrata* played by a woman — a slave-prostitute, for instance?

Henderson (1987:195) suggests that the use of slave-prostitutes 'in any official way' at dramatic festivals was 'highly unlikely', arguing *ex silentio* that references to prostitute-hire occur only in private or symposiac contexts (1987:195). Zweig (1992:73, 78-79), however, entertains the possibility that *some* of the comic female roles (e.g. flute or dancing girls) may well have been played by actual hetairai or slave girls, but that others (e.g. Lampito and the Megarian 'piggies') might well have been played 'to better theatrical effect if enacted by costumed male actors' (1992:80). In *Knights*, two male actors presumably appeared as αἱ Σπονδαί; however, there is no indication that they were represented as naked. They may have been costumed as 'girls', as Henderson imagines (1998a:403) — thirty-year treaties in their infancy — perhaps even with visibly hairless genitalia like the two 'piggies' in *Acharnians* (781-782)³¹, thus clearly

²⁹ In *Knights*, the first slave of Demos uses a combination of body parts and geographical names (both real and imaginary) to comment on the extent of Paphlagon's (i.e. Kleon's) influence and political opportunism (75-79). He has one limb in Pylos, the other in the assembly; the stride of this colossus places his arsehole over the dark abyss, his hands amongst the Aitolians ('begging') and his mind on the fake deme of Klopidae ('theft'). This is obviously not the same sort of conceit as the mapping of body parts in *Lysistrata*, but one can perceive the germ of Aristophanes' later image here. Both images have Pylos and anal intercourse in common. However, the geographical sites in *Lysistrata* are all real.

³⁰ 'In *Wasps* 1342-1387, the words of the text imply that the part of the slave-girl is taken either by a live girl who is naked or by somebody (male or female) wearing tights on which pubic hair is depicted. The end of *Women in assembly* seems to introduce some girls whose sole function is to contribute an element of spectacle to the festive dancing with which the play closes ... were they absent, nothing dramatic would be lost, and it is open to question whether dressed-up men would have been regarded as funny enough *per se* to contribute more to the theatrical effect than real dancing girls' (1972:27-28). Cf. Zweig 1992:73-89.

³¹ Dikaipolis clearly distinguishes between a χοῖρος (a pre-pubescent girl's vagina) and a κῦσθος (an adult woman's vagina) (781-782), but this distinction is abandoned shortly afterwards (788-789). Cf. Sommerstein 1985:196, *ad loc*; Taaffe 1993:28.

identifying the actors as ‘young girls’, but there is no evidence for any of this. In *Peace*, the goddess’ two attendants were presumably played by male actors — Θεωρία is clothed until she disrobes, and the slave, tracing the outlines of her pudenda for the audience, adds that this is where he wants to pitch his tent at the Isthmian games (879-880).³²

In keeping then with Athenian dramatic convention, one would assume that the non-speaking role of the naked Reconciliation in *Lysistrata* was played by a male actor presumably, as Henderson believes, wearing a female mask and tights (σωμάτια), with exaggerated breasts, fake genitalia and pubic hair, which were ‘as much part of the fun as false phalloi’ (1987:195).³³ Henderson argues that ‘what is demonstrably the case for the actor who played Lampito ... must be the case for all ‘naked women’ in comedy’. However, Lampito is a speaking role and is not obviously naked. Calonice and Myrrhine remark on her breasts and pubic hair (*Lysistrata* 83, 88-89) and the comic stage business clearly involves her being ‘felt up’ on stage (84). The male actor must have sported impressive false breasts and elegantly cropped pubic hair, but, rather than naked, could have been wearing a Doric peplos which was considered too revealing for respectable Athenian women (Henderson 1987:77). Furthermore, it is unlikely that Lampito was naked on stage for the full duration of her speaking role (78-244): otherwise Aristophanes

³² In other plays produced during the Peloponnesian War, male actors appeared in non-speaking roles as young girls or women. In *Wasps* (422 BC), the drunken Philokleon abducts the presumably naked αἰλητρίς, Dardanis, from the feast (1342-1386) and offers to make her his παλλακή (1353). In an angry exchange with his father, Bdelukleon draws attention to her pubic hair (1374) and backside (1376). In *Birds* (414 BC), Procne clearly has a bird’s head and a beak (672, 673-674) and was presumably costumed as an αἰλητρίς: Euelpides wants to have sex between her thighs (669); Peisetairos wants to kiss her (671)! In the hymeneal scene at the end of the play, a male actor appeared as Peisetairos’ wife, βασίλεια. The chorus comment on her youth and beauty (1724): there is no allusion to her body parts. In the *Thesmophoriazousai* (probably 411 BC, the same year as *Lysistrata*) a male actor appeared as a young dancing girl, Elaphion (1172-1175), who is required to dance to the accompaniment of a boy piper. She has to strip for a Scythian archer (1181-1183) and sit on his lap: he comments on her πωγή (presumably astride his tumescent penis); Euripides (in drag as an old bawd in saffron yellow) then orders her to get dressed; he / she allows Elaphion to kiss the Scythian with her tongue (1191-1192) and then disappear with him for a ‘quickie’ (1198-1214) so that he can release his kinsman. Finally in *Frogs* a male actor has to appear as the Muse of Euripides, summoned by Aeschylus (1306): Dionysus comments on her lack of talent and sexual appeal with an explicit reference to oral sex (1308).

³³ Reinforced by some vase paintings of scenes of male tragic and comic actors getting ready, armed with masks and costumes, to perform women’s roles (Taaffe 1993:5-10, 69). Cf. Csapo 2014:109 for a vase painting of two male actors as naked women in tights.

would have had further 'fun' with Lampito's impressive physique, which she claims is the product of exercising naked (82)! However, if we accept that Reconciliation was played by a man wearing tights, false breasts, genitalia and pubic hair, where does this leave the theory of the male gaze and the objectification of women's bodies?

Vision, visibility and the gaze

Let us remind ourselves of the visual context in which this representation of Reconciliation occurred. In the sculpture and vase painting of the late fifth century BC, respectable Athenian citizen wives are not depicted naked.³⁴ According to Woodford, the 'Knidian Aphrodite is the first large-scale Greek representation of a female nude'; representations of naked women (e.g. courtesans or mythological figures like Cassandra) appeared 'only in the minor arts (vase paintings, terracottas and small bronzes)' (1986:154). Although Skinner concedes that the Knidian Aphrodite must have been 'radically innovative' (2014:223), she too draws attention to the fact that there are many representations of nude females, and not only hetairai, on Attic vases, but these pre-date *Lysistrata's* first performance (411 BC) by some decades, perhaps because of the triumph of the austere classical ethics of *sophrosyne* and *enkrateia*.³⁵ Be that as it may, monumental sculpture, such as the Lapith women at Olympia (clothed, but with exposed breasts) and the 'wet drapery' style of female figures on the Parthenon's east pediment anticipated works like the Cnidian Aphrodite (Skinner 2014:222-223), thus visually assimilating these to 'liminal' female figures, such as the rape victim or the prostitute (Stewart 1997:41-42, 128-129). The ten male judges and male spectators in the audience of Aristophanes' plays in the late fifth century³⁶ were perhaps not unused to seeing women depicted naked on vase paintings in the private sphere (in symposia, for instance): Frontisi-Ducroux's study (1996:81-95) of the gaze in

³⁴ As Stewart rightly notes (1997:40-41), in art of the late 8th century onwards, nakedness, for the male artist, is a sign of the real man' in his native state; on the other hand the 'real woman', is depicted clothed (appropriately for a 'cultural construct'); after all, Pandora is decked out in clothes shortly after her creation (Hesiod *Theogony* 573-580; *Works and days* 63-66).

³⁵ Stewart 1997:171. Zweig 1992:84 also notes that the sexually explicit vase paintings 'fade out at about the time that Old Comedy is being officially established at dramatic festivals' suggests, along with Sutton 1992:21, that the 'increase in suppression of women and of open expression of sexuality during the fifth century may account for the shift in sexually explicit scenes from the medium of privatized vase painting to the more public forum of comedy'. Cf. Osborne 1996:72; Stewart 1997:6, 38.

³⁶ And perhaps some women (De Marre 2001:60-62). In view of the problematic evidence, MacDowell 1995:14 concludes that Aristophanes addresses his plays to male spectators. Cf. Taaffe 1993:17; Bassi 1998:99-143.

erotic scenes in vase paintings demonstrates how important the gaze was for the Athenian viewer, invited, by the gaze of the eyes in the vase paintings, to identify himself or herself with the subjects of the vase paintings themselves. In homoerotic courtship scenes, for instance, the direction of the gaze of pursuer and pursued can suggest reciprocity or lack of it (*ibid.* 82-85): the ‘frontality’ of the gaze of the older, bearded adult male may invite the adult male viewer to identify with his erotic power and, conversely, the youthful pre-citizen male viewer with the submissiveness and vulnerability (and sometimes lack of reciprocity) of the pursued. In scenes of heterosexual pursuit as well, the one-way gaze of the satyrs in satyr-maenad scenes clearly ‘indicates an unequal relationship’ (*ibid.* 84); scenes of heterosexual copulation *a tergo* and oral sex involving women obviously ‘preclude the gaze’ and position women as powerless objects for male sexual gratification; strikingly, Frontisi-Ducroux can find no example, in heterosexual courtship scenes, of female ‘frontality’ (*ibid.* 86). Female viewers of scenes like these thus watch themselves being looked at. Although generalizations about the gazes of Athenian viewers, based on the gaze and lines of sight in vase paintings, many destined for elite, non-Athenian viewers, is dangerous, Frontisi-Ducroux’s study does give us some evidence of the ways of seeing of male, Athenian potters, some of whom may have been in the theatre audiences. Looking at naked women in the privacy of the οἶκος is not quite the same as looking at a naked woman in a public space, before an overwhelmingly male audience, culturally conditioned to heroic male nudity and its validation of homoeroticism in the public spaces of the πόλις.³⁷

Even within the generic boundaries of Old Comedy, however, I do not think that the naked figure of Reconciliation, with full ‘frontality’, was a complete surprise for the contemporary audience. By the date of the first production of the *Lysistrata* in 411 BC, the Athenian audience must have been used to the conventions of Old Comedy or rather its tendency to transgress the conventions of τὸ πρέπον, clearly more rigid for tragedy. Unlike tragedy, the comedy of Aristophanes especially seems continually aware of the fictions it employs to sustain itself.³⁸ In the very same year, the *Thesmophoriazousai* explores the possibilities of swapping gender roles with hilarious results: male actors appear as women in an exclusive women’s ritual which is gate-crashed by a man badly disguised as a woman. For the comedy to work the audience must know and believe that the actors are not really women; otherwise the clever Aristophanic

³⁷ See Stewart 1997:63-85.

³⁸ See Zeitlin 1992:171-181 for an acute analysis of the way in which Aristophanic comedy reflects on its own ‘fictions’ as it playfully interrogates the relationship between art, mimesis and ‘reality’.

stage business falls completely flat. In this play, Euripides shaves, depilates and dresses Mnesilochus before the eyes of the audience (214-268), presumably using 'female' props at hand (a dress, wig and headband): what Euripides says towards the end of this scene can be applied to all representations of women in comedy: Ἄνῆρ μὲν ἡμῖν οὕτοσι καὶ δὴ γυνή/τό γ' εἶδος. Ἦν λαλῆς δ', ὅπως τῷ φθέγματι/γυναικείῃ εὖ καὶ πιθανῶς (266-268) ('this man here is a man to us but definitely a woman in appearance; if you speak, make sure that you speak convincingly like a real woman').

In the *Lysistrata*, the butch Spartan, Lampito, with her false breasts and pudenda is groped before our eyes (*Lysistrata* 83); in the later *Ekklesiazousai* (c. 392 BC), the male actors play women impersonating men in the assembly. This involves the donning of men's boots (46-47), beards (68-69, 121), men's cloaks and walking sticks (74-75, 269-277) and the removal of them all when the plot demands (501-502, 506-509). This also takes place in full view of the audience which must have been used, certainly by the fourth century, to comedy's gender fictions. Taaffe (1993:11-12) is right to distinguish between tragedy and comedy in this regard: comedy lays bare its fictions, whereas tragedy has to conceal them. The audience has to believe that Medea, for instance, is a woman; if one does not, her great speeches become parodies and the tragedy collapses into melodrama.

Drag queens?

How helpful is it to use the term drag or drag roles (Taaffe 1993:18) for modern audiences desiring to understand the gender fictions in Aristophanic comedy? Modern drag-shows, as distinct from transvestitism as a psychological condition, rely on the concept of gender as performativity, to use the language of Judith Butler,³⁹ and this is underpinned by the belief, familiar to us all since de Beauvoir's ground-breaking 'Second Sex', that sex and gender are not 'natural' unities, but that their relationship is culturally contingent. Thus someone who is biologically male or female may 'perform' a gender not usually associated with his/her sexual category. The purpose of this may be serious — to interrogate gender categories and subvert the binaries which haunt the sex-gender system — but to the average drag queen or king, entertainment in a public space through parody and gender satire (or gender trouble) is the predominant concern.⁴⁰ Distinguishing between sex

³⁹ For Butler drag reveals the 'imitative structure' and 'contingency of gender: 'Indeed, part of the pleasure, the giddiness of the performance is in the recognition of a radical contingency in the relation between sex and gender in the face of cultural configuration of causal unities that are regularly assumed to be natural and necessary' (1990:137-138).

⁴⁰ See the recent documentary film 'Queen of Ireland' (2015) reflecting on the career of the Irish drag queen, Panti Bliss, and her contribution to the 'yes' vote in the referendum

and gender (which our South African constitution does) is a twentieth century concept, the product of feminist and human rights discourse, entirely unfamiliar to Aristophanes and the fifth century Athenian audience, and to traditional communities in South Africa, who feel that the distinction between sex and gender is an alien threat to traditional patriarchal values.⁴¹ The modern drag queen dons female clothes, make-up, a wig, false breasts and may even tape back her penis, but she does not undress before the audience and expose the artifice which contrives her constructed body. She may remove her wig at the end of the show to reveal a balding male pate, but that is usually the extent of the gender fiction the audience is allowed to witness. Aristophanes' male actors dress up as women, don masks and/or beards when they have to be men and breasts and pudenda when they have to be naked women. In other words, becoming a naked woman is like donning a costume or prop, precisely because Aristophanes and his audience do *not* distinguish between sex and gender.⁴² However, that does not mean that Butler's concept of the performativity of gender would be alien to a fifth century Athenian audience, but for them it would be the performance of the sex-gender unity: hence the prominence of fake phalloi and female pudenda — the former characterized by power, visibility and presence, the latter by powerlessness and penetrability.

Back to the gaze: Body parts, dismemberment, 'playing the other'

What of these body parts and the dominant visual code of the Athenian audience gazing at Aristophanes' comedies in the very place of the gaze itself (the θέατρον)?⁴³ Bruno Snell, in his magisterial *Die Entdeckung des Geistes* ('The discovery of the mind'), argued that the Homeric concept of the male and female body was that of a fragmented assemblage of limbs and body parts, rather than a unified whole.⁴⁴ How many members of the Aristophanic audience still conceived of bodies not as unities, but as a Lacanian assemblage of disparate body parts?⁴⁵

for approval of same-sex marriages in the Irish Republic: Bliss constantly refers to herself as a giant 'cartoon' of a woman.

⁴¹ See Lambert 2008:550-551.

⁴² Pace Foley 2014:260: the dramaturgy of Old Comedy 'invited its audience to view gender roles as socially constructed even as it refused to repress human 'nature'/desire'.

⁴³ Telò, interestingly, shifts this emphasis on the visual, to the 'quasi-tactile properties of the performative medium', the surfaces of the *chlaina* and *himation* (2016:160-161).

⁴⁴ 1953:6-8, 14. See Bremmer 1983:3, 8, 66-67, for the abiding value of this theory, and critiques of it. Cf. DuBois in Kampen 1996:60 for the application of Snell's hypothesis to art in the classical period. See Stewart 1997:19, for rejection of Snell's hypothesis, without supporting arguments.

⁴⁵ In the psycho-sexual development of the child and his / her concept of self, Lacan theorizes that in the 'mirror stage' when the child recognizes a whole, unified body as her real self (fictive, of course!), this illusory recognition of wholeness must pre-suppose

Could the proliferation of phalloi and the use of female body parts not suggest too that the Homeric conception of the body (or rather misconception) still survived and that Aristophanes knew this and believed it too?⁴⁶ Dover's detailed survey of archaic and early classical vase-painting supports the views of Woodford and Skinner: naked males outnumber naked females by far, and 'on many occasions ... male and female bodies are distinguishable by the presence or absence of the breasts and the external genitals' (1978:70). Thus, until the mid-fifth century at any rate, the female body is depicted by vase painters as a male body with different visible parts.⁴⁷ Furthermore, the much-cited views of Aristotle on the physiognomy of women clearly provide the kind of intellectual discourse which reflects the gaze of the earlier male vase painters: a boy resembles a woman in physique, as the woman is an infertile male, characterized by lack and inability, because the 'coldness' of her nature impedes her from concocting sperm.⁴⁸ If bodies are perceived as assembled fragments rather than unities, and if women in the visual art of vase painting resemble boys anyway, then re-arranging body parts and thus contriving, in the theatre, a mimetic woman, performing sex-gender, is perfectly possible.⁴⁹

the memory of a pre-linguistic self as a fragmented set of body parts (1977:2-5). Although the influence of ancient Greece in the fields of psycho-analysis, sexology and art history is well-known (Kool 2013:79-96), and, conversely, characters in Greek literature have often been placed on the psycho-analyst's couch (*in absentia*), which has its dangers, there are suggestive parallels between the Lacanian hypothesis of the development of the human subject's 'selfhood' and ancient Greek perceptions of the female body's evolution from dismembered object to desiring subject, the Knidian Aphrodite; see Stewart's persuasive reading of this statue's pose and gestures (1997:104-107).

⁴⁶ Fifth century Athenians were familiar with the sight of dismembered phalloi: Hermae, phalloi at Dionysiac and other festivals (e.g. the Skira) and in works of art. Cf. Sutton 1992:23 for a vase painting depicting a 'floating set of disembodied male genitals'.

⁴⁷ Dover does argue for the reverse process (that male bodies were 'increasingly assimilated' to female bodies) in the vase painting of the late fifth and fourth centuries, but this process must refer to effeminate youths and boys (and hermaphrodites) (1978:71-72).

⁴⁸ Ἔοικε δὲ καὶ τὴν μορφήν γυναῖκι παῖς, καὶ ἔστιν ἡ γυνὴ ὥσπερ ἄρρεν ἄγονον· ἀδυναμία γάρ τινι τὸ θῆλυ ἔστι τῷ μὴ δύνασθαι πέττειν ἐκ τῆς τροφῆς σπέρμα τῆς ὑστάτης (τοῦτο δ' ἔστιν ἡ αἷμα ἢ τὸ ἀνάλογον ἐν τοῖς ἀναί-μοις) διὰ ψυχρότητα τῆς φύσεως. (*G.A.* 728a17-22)

⁴⁹ Interestingly, in some postmodern art, 'reconceptualizing' the body in terms of 'assemblage' of parts has become an important theme (see Klopper 2016:32-33). Zeitlin 2002:121-122 characterizes the Greek woman as the 'mimetic creature' par excellence, since her creation in Hesiod's *Theogony*. Cf. Bassi 1998:106-111, for an analysis of the relationship between the construction of femininity, clothing and deceptiveness in Greek literature, and the analogous association of masculinity with the nude male body.

In the comic theatre then of the late fifth century BC, one can argue that fake breasts and pudenda do make a woman: how might the male in the audience have gazed at Reconciliation's naked body on which the peace treaty is mapped, and how might this mesh in with theories of the male gaze in modern / postmodern feminist critique?

In Gorgias' 'Encomium to Helen', more or less contemporary with the production date of the 'Lysistrata', the famous rhetorician defends Helen on the grounds that persuasion (πειθῶ) coupled with speech (λόγος) was an irresistible force against which she could offer no resistance.⁵⁰ In the final section of his argument (17-20), after comparing the effect of speech on the mind to the effect of drugs on the body, he proposes that sight (ὄψις) has an equally powerful effect on the mind (ψυχή). Many have succumbed to disease and madness, simply after seeing some horror; so deeply, says Gorgias, does sight engrave on the mind images of actions that are seen. Other images delight the sight; as examples of this, Gorgias explicitly cites paintings and sculpture. He concludes: Helen's ὄψις, delighted by Paris' body, transmitted desire and love to her psyche and so she cannot be blamed for her actions as she had no choice (20).⁵¹ Despite Gorgias' sophistic dexterity and his final word which suggests that he was entertaining himself at the audience's expense,⁵² Gorgias' discussion of ὄψις is the closest we can get to a contemporary Athenian theory of the gaze. The person who gazes is affected physically and mentally; the person who gazes is subjected to forces beyond her control and her character is permanently altered. The progression of Gorgias' thought is instructive: persuasive speech, seeing the real, seeing the representational, seeing the real. Hearing and sight, whether of the real or the mimetic, are the main sensory organs which determine the shape (or if you like) the identity of the psyche.

Let us apply the Gorgianic theory to the comic theatre and the mimesis of Reconciliation's body. The audience sees the breasts and the fake pudenda, but cannot see the intimate details which are suggested by the mapping of the body. In other words, ὄψις in the theatre needs the persuasive power of the λόγος to be

⁵⁰ See Zeitlin's discussion of this text in relation to the rhetoric of Athenian drama (1992:208-210).

⁵¹ For an analysis of the mechanism of desire through sight, see Frontisi-Ducroux 1996:81-82; her discussion of phalloi with eyes and the sexualisation of the masculine gaze is especially interesting (1996:93-94).

⁵² The last three words of Gorgias' final sentence ἐβουλήθη γράμμαι τὸν λόγον Ἑλένης μὲν ἐγκώμιον, ἐμὸν δὲ παίγνιον (Donadi 2016:31) suggest that the accomplished rhetorician considers his defense of Helen as a mere game, an elegant bit of fun, without any substantial argument.

wholly effective.⁵³ To use the language of postmodern critique, the 'gaze' is always embedded in discourses which determine its nature.⁵⁴ The fact that the Spartan and Athenian delegates ignore the content of Lysistrata's peace-making efforts and comment on Reconciliation's arse and pudenda, thus subverting her λόγος, indicate that the patriarchal ideology, to which Aristophanes and the majority of his audience subscribed, is all pervasive. The objectification of the silent naked woman triumphs over the woman who talks and reasons. In a play in which women have power over men and have demonstrated it, men must be seen to have regained that power at the end.⁵⁵ In addition, it is salutary to remember, as Pauw notes (2014:22), who objectifies whom in the context of the play: the naked figure of Reconciliation is introduced by Lysistrata herself, the woman with the mind. Lampito is 'felt up' and sexually objectified by the female Kalonike (*Lysistrata* 82). The female Myrrhine objectifies the Boeotian woman even more crudely, with a geographical pun for the female genitalia (*ibid.* 87-88).⁵⁶ When patriarchal male playwrights speak for and about women, the mask often slips and the women in their plays reveal what they really are: men with female body parts, mimetic women reinforcing patriarchal attitudes, and traditional constructs of masculinity.⁵⁷ This is what I think Butler means when she argues that drag can subvert and destabilize heteropatriarchal norms, but it can also reinforce them. Drag queens at least have voices — men's voices. Reconciliation is silent and her

⁵³ For the power of sight and the visual in Greek culture generally, see Stewart 1997:19.

⁵⁴ As Stewart pertinently reminds us, vision is to visuality as sex is to gender: vision and sex are biologically constructed, whilst visuality and gender are cultural constructs (1997:3). Rabinowitz, in her analysis of Phaedra in Euripides' *Hippolytos*, comments on what she believes is the double meaning of δέλτα in *Lysistrata* 151 (female sexual parts and tablets) and speculates whether Phaedra's letter (her tablet) and her sex are 'circulating freely' in the public realm of men (1993:165). If δέλτα without the article could refer to female 'sexual parts', rather than the delta-shape in which women's pubic hair is shaved (see Henderson 1987:85), then the use of the word in *Lysistrata* 151 could be an intriguing example of ὄψις and λόγος at work.

⁵⁵ Or as Zeitlin comments, in relation to the gender reversals in the *Thesmophoriazousai*: 'when women are in a position to rule men, men must become women' (1992:178).

⁵⁶ Hence Pauw's 'anatomical-geographical bawdy' (2014). Bowie rightly points out that Reconciliation receives from men the same kind of treatment dished out to women by women earlier in the play (1993:202).

⁵⁷ Especially in a wartime context in which the Athenian male population had seriously declined and traditional gender values (as is typical of wartime contexts) were under threat (Taaffe 1993:72-73). No wonder Plato, in his ideal state, explicitly desired to ban men playing women's roles (*Republic* 395d5-e1).

voicelessness dramatically reinforces the association of passivity and silence with Athenian constructs of the ‘feminine’.⁵⁸

Feminist readings and pornography

Aristophanes in *Lysistrata* uses humour, parody and gender reversals to reinforce these attitudes in his predominantly male audience and, because of this, can never be a proto-feminist,⁵⁹ but, of course, there can be feminist readings and productions of the play: whether these can ever work is highly unlikely, when the plot itself may have ‘feminist’ elements (the women-only sex-strike for peace led by an intelligent woman, the female occupation of the Akropolis), but these ‘protests’ are solely in the service of restoring husbands to wives and thus preserving the patriarchal status quo in peacetime — hardly the aim of feminist politics.⁶⁰ Out of the *polis* and back to the *oikos*: that is where women are perceived to belong.⁶¹

Whether too the scene with Reconciliation would constitute pornography or not depends on how the audience or members thereof define pornography. Zweig, following Kappeler (1986:50-52), strongly believes that any depiction of a naked woman on stage, whether performed by a woman or a man, as an object for the consumption of the male gaze, constitutes pornography ‘by modern standards’ (1992:74). Pauw, distinguishing between fictive women in the illusory world of Greek comedy and women in ‘reality’, contends that feminist scholars such as Zweig and Taaffe ‘may well expend their solicitous energy on *real* women who are belittled or insulted, but personae on the comic stage are there to be laughed at, not to be concerned for’ (2014:20).

⁵⁸ Zeitlin 2002:103-138 argues, persuasively, that, in tragic figures like Herakles in Sophocles’ *Trachiniae* and in Euripides’ *Herakles*, as well as Ajax in Sophocles’ play and Hippolytus in Euripides’ *Hippolytus*, Athenian tragic dramatists assimilated male weakness, suffering and self (and bodily) fragmentation to the ‘feminine’, thus ‘playing the other’ for ‘the purposes of imagining a fuller model for the masculine self’ (122). On the other hand, the crude objectification and colonization of Reconciliation’s body here would seem to me to be a theatrical rejection of the gender paradox Zeitlin perceives in tragedy.

⁵⁹ Thus Pauw, rightly (2014:10-11, 22).

⁶⁰ Cf. Henderson 1980:186, Dillon 1987:101, Bowie 1993:204, Taaffe 1993:73, MacDowell 1995:248, De Marre 2001:37, 59 and Sharland 2014:137, for rejection of the claim that *Lysistrata* is a ‘feminist’ drama or manifesto (neither is it a ‘misogynistic jeer’, adds MacDowell, arguing that the main theme of the play is neither women nor citizenship, but peace). Russo (1994:172) persists with ‘feminist comedy’.

⁶¹ Mossé 1983:115-116, 119. For criticism of this naïve polarity, and arguments for a dialectical unity in *Lysistrata*, see Foley 1982:1-21; for a more nuanced reading of this theme, see Konstan 1995:47-60.

Such a distinction underplays the serious side of Aristophanic comedy: not all *personae* are to be 'laughed at' as the chorus of initiates in *Frogs* makes clear (354-371), nor are all jokes, especially inappropriate ones, funny (358).⁶² Furthermore the social and political comment in Aristophanes' comedies is one of the hallmarks of Old Comedy: on at least one occasion Aristophanes was prosecuted by a politician (Kleon) for libelling Athenian magistrates in the presence of foreigners (allied ambassadors) at the City Dionysia.⁶³ Such comment blurs the distinction between 'fiction' and 'reality'. Distinguishing between 'fictive' women and 'real' women is thus inimical to the very nature of Aristophanic comedy: what 'fictive' women and women in 'reality' have in common is the patriarchal ideology underpinning the construction and characterization of both.

Furthermore, Zweig is careful to distinguish between ways in which scenes like the Reconciliation scene 'may differ from modern pornography' especially in the context of its creation. Unlike the 'anonymous, distancing conditions of cinematic porn', Zweig suggests that scenes of this type are 'closer to live striptease' and overlap with the 'sanctioned, open, and liberating expression of sexuality in ancient culture not paralleled by modern customs' (1992:87-88). Pauw also draws attention to the influence on scenes of this type, with their deliberate use of obscenities to provoke liberating laughter, of the *aischrologia* of religious festivals of Demeter and Dionysus — possibly at the very root of Old Comedy (2014:19, 22).⁶⁴ However, the similarities Zweig perceives between scenes of this

⁶² Not 'mere humourists out for a good laugh' is Henderson's wise comment on Aristophanes and the other authors of Old Comedy (1996:77). Cf. De Marre 2001:56-57. The most sophisticated discussion of the comic and serious in Aristophanes is Goldhill 1991:167-222. See too, more recently, Silk 2000 and Robson 2006.

⁶³ Halliwell 1991:65, Dover 1993:3; Halliwell 1991:60 comments on the reduced level of personal political attacks and satire in both *Lysistrata* and *Thesmophoriazousai* perhaps because of the tense political situation in 411, after the mutilation of the Hermai and the disastrous Sicilian expedition, which narrowed down the comic poets' choices for their customary political attacks.

⁶⁴ Influenced by the interpretation of Reckford, who resurrects the ghost of Cornford's ritual origins for Old Comedy, along with its celebration of fertility and the power of sex (1987:461-497). More convincing is Goldhill's nuanced application of theories of the carnivalesque to Dionysiac festivals and especially to the 'constitutive ambiguity' he, following Carrière, perceives in the comedies of Aristophanes, reflected in the tension between social, political and artistic criticism, and the comic inversion and licence of the carnival (1991:176-188). See too Sharland 2014:136-137. For a gendered distinction between kinds of *aischrologia* in male and female fertility cults, see McClure 1999: 215-218. But cf. Henderson's no-nonsense rejection of comic festivals as 'carnival'. Rather their themes suggest 'civic business, big business' — the city and its citizens

type and the conditions of modern pornography are difficult to ignore: the mute, naked woman is objectified and crudely dismembered, by men, for the male gaze, thus reflecting and reinforcing the ‘unequal social dynamics’ of a society which ‘encouraged and condoned hostile attitudes and violent actions against women’. In a manner typical of representation in cinematic pornography, the mute naked Reconciliation is indeed ‘a sign in the iconography of patriarchal power dynamics’ (1992:87-88).⁶⁵ Frontisi-Ducroux’s study of gazes in vase paintings would support a conclusion of this kind.

Finally, it is highly unlikely, in contemporary South Africa, with its horrendous rape statistics, embedded in vicious masculinist constructs of women’s bodies and their commodification,⁶⁶ that mapping out the terms of a peace treaty on the naked body of a real or mimetic woman in a theatre (or anywhere else for that matter) would be received with anything else but outrage.⁶⁷ In our universities too in which ‘decolonization of the mind’ is high on the list of postcolonial priorities, performing the colonization of a woman’s body on ‘Reconciliation’ — rather like the scramble for Africa and the dismemberment of *terra nullius* — would not be received ‘with a twinkle in the eye’⁶⁸, but would seriously offend most members of a multi-cultural South African audience, with the exception perhaps of those whose humour is rooted in their heterosexism and its routine (and often unconscious) objectification of women’s bodies.⁶⁹ But, one could retort, Aristophanes never shied away from offending members of his audience.

(1996:79-79). For his earlier views, cf. Henderson 1975:14-29. See Silk 2000:306-349 for a critique of Henderson’s notion of ‘seriousness’ in Aristophanes.

⁶⁵ How Aristophanes’ *Lysistrata* has been appropriated by some gay erotica (pornography for intellectuals?) is worthy of a paper on its own. In Ralf König’s graphic novel (2003), the sex-strike backfires and the men turn to each other for sexual gratification with gay abandon. The motley assemblage of harpies and gorgons looks down from the Akropolis at their warriors copulating with imaginative energy: the misogyny deployed in this graphic novel is yet another strategy of patriarchal power dynamics. Predictably, enforced lesbianism is the only solution.

⁶⁶ It is increasingly difficult to generalize about South African masculinities, but it seems to me that what Morrell deems the ‘formerly hegemonic white masculinity’ (2001:25) and most heteropatriarchal black masculinities share common constructs of the feminine gender and women’s bodies. One could, of course, use the scene with Reconciliation’s body to critique these masculinities, as it does, in Bowie’s words ‘show the persistence of male lustfulness and hunger for power’ (1993:203).

⁶⁷ Awareness too of the global ‘Me Too’ and ‘Time’s Up’ campaigns would contribute to this.

⁶⁸ Pace Pauw 2014:24.

⁶⁹ In this respect, Plato, in considering the effects of a good laugh in the comic theatre on the reason of the spectator, really does have it the wrong way round: it is not the comic theatre which may result in giving rein to baser instincts at home, but sexist βωμολοχία

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at home which needs a good laugh in the theatre's masculinist space to validate it (*Republic* 606c2-9). Cf. Aristotle *Politics* 1336b3-23, who wants his lawgiver to ban all forms of *aischrologia* particularly for the sake of the impressionable youth.

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