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LYSIMACHE AND *LYSISTRATA*

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Abstract: It has long been suspected that the eponymous heroine of Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* was intended to evoke the historical Lysimache, priestess of Athena Polias at the time of the play's first production. But the reasons for this (partial) identification have been relatively little discussed. This paper argues that the *Lysistrata* engages more closely than has traditionally been assumed with urgent political issues at Athens in late 412 and early 411 BC, in particular with the decision in summer 412 BC to broach the 'Iron Reserve' of 1,000 talents set aside at the beginning of the Peloponnesian War (Thuc. 8.15.1). A possible intervention of the historical Lysimache in the controversy over the appropriate use of the 'Iron Reserve' would help account for various otherwise surprising features of the *Lysistrata*.

Keywords: Aristophanes, Thucydides, Athens, priestesses, Ionian War

I. Introduction

Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* was first performed during the archonship of Kallias (412/11 BC), most probably at the Lenaia festival in late winter 411 BC.[1] We do not know how far in advance of performance Aristophanes would have begun writing the play, but mid- to late summer 412 BC seems a reasonable guess: he presumably had to 'apply for a chorus' early in the archon-year (August–September 412 BC?), and so the general plan of the play must have been more or less settled by then.[2]

In this paper I hope to explain certain peculiarities of the *Lysistrata* by placing the play more firmly than is normally done in the context of events at Athens in late 412 and early 411 BC. I will, as it happens, have relatively little to say about the sex-strike which dominates both the first part (1–239) and the last part (706–1321) of the play. The argument will proceed in three stages. First, we will focus on that part of the play which is concerned with the women's occupation of the Acropolis and their reasons for doing so (240–705). Second, we will look at the characters of Lysistrata, Myrrhine and Kalonike, and their likely relationship to historical Athenian priestesses of the late fifth century BC. Third, we will consider one of the major political events at Athens in late summer 412 BC: the decision to broach the 'Iron Reserve' of 1,000 talents (Thuc. 8.15.1). All three of these topics have been discussed more or less extensively in the past, but I am not aware that they have ever been set in relation to one another. By doing so, I hope to shed some new light on Aristophanes' purpose in writing the *Lysistrata*, and particularly on the historical individual on whom he modelled his remarkable heroine, the priestess Lysimache.

II. The occupation of the Acropolis

It is often noted that the *Lysistrata* has what we might call a double plot.[3] In the opening scene with Lysistrata and Kalonike, and the first part of the women's conference (1–172), Lysistrata's plan is exclusively one of depriving men of sex until they are compelled to make peace. Only at

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[1] Sommerstein (1977); Gomme et al. (1981) 184–93; Avery (1999); Samons (2000) 318–22; Austin and Olson (2004) xxxiii–xliv. A minority of scholars attribute the *Lysistrata* to the Dionysia of 411 BC (e.g. Tsakmakis (2012); Vickers (2015) 111–12); the argument is not crucial for the argument of this paper.

[2] Olson (2012) 73. What exactly was involved in 'applying for a chorus' (χορὸν αἰτεῖν) is unclear (Pickard-Cambridge (1968) 84).

[3] Gelzer (1960) 26; (1970) 1475–76; Hulton (1972); Vaio (1973); Konstan (1995) 50–53; MacDowell (1995) 229–32; Revermann (2006) 253; Olson (2012) 76–77.

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line 173 does a second, parallel plan unexpectedly emerge. The Spartan Lampito objects that it will be very difficult to persuade the Athenians to make peace ‘while their triremes still have feet, and there is unlimited silver stored up in the Goddess’ house’ (173–74). Lysistrata replies that this has been taken care of, and a separate group of older women will be occupying the Acropolis that very day, while the younger women initiate the sex-strike (175–79).

This planned Acropolis occupation drops back out of view during the subsequent oath-taking scene, until it suddenly moves to the centre of the action at line 240 (the shout that announces the seizure of the Acropolis). It is worth emphasizing that throughout the first 239 lines of the play, it is clearly envisaged that the women will be on sex-strike *at home* (*oikoi*, 217–18); Lysistrata even explains what strategies to adopt if their husbands drag them into the bedroom by force or try to rape them (149–66, 217–32).

From line 240 onwards, the sex-strike moves entirely into the background. Aside from a single oblique reference at 551–53, it is not mentioned at any point during the next 466 lines, which are concerned solely with the Acropolis occupation (240–705).[4] The consequences of the sex-strike only return to prominence in the scene that begins at line 706 (Lysistrata struggles to stop the women sneaking off to have sex with their husbands). It now turns out that the younger women executing the strike have not in fact gone home at all, as originally envisaged, but are occupying the Acropolis along with Lysistrata and the older women. The withholding of sex is no longer a matter of individual self-restraint by the women, but physical segregation on the Acropolis from their husbands. The occupation of the Acropolis thus in a sense becomes fused with the sex-strike in the latter part of the play – and indeed the original aim of the occupation (to prevent the Athenians from using the silver in Athena’s treasury to pursue the war: 173–79, 342–45, 421–23, 487–93) is quietly forgotten from this point on, and is not mentioned again in the remaining 617 lines of the play.

In practice, these shifts of focus do not remotely bother the ordinary reader or viewer of the *Lysistrata*. Once we start criticizing comedy for formal lapses in narrative logic (exactly when did the women change their plan from individual sex-strikes at home to collective seclusion on the Acropolis?), there will never be an end of it.[5] But it is worth emphasizing one critical difference between these two aspects of the women’s plan to stop the war. The sex-strike plot is timeless, fantastical and (for the most part) played for laughs.[6] There is certainly nothing that ties it precisely to 412/11 BC, and it is to my mind very unlikely that there is any ‘real’ historical event underlying it. The same is emphatically not true of the Acropolis occupation plot, the narration of which is packed with very immediate contemporary references, ranging from the figure of the *proboulos* (a magistracy created for the first time in late 413 BC) and his attempt to procure money to pay for oar-spars (421–23), to the criticism of the demagogue-turned-oligarch Peisander (489–92), to Lysistrata’s lengthy critique of recent Athenian decision-making (507–28), and culminating in the virtuosic extended wool-working allegory for political reconciliation (567–86).[7] In what follows, I will suggest that the Acropolis occupation plot may in fact be even more closely tied to the specific political issues and concerns of late 412 and early 411 BC than has hitherto been noticed.

The aim of the Acropolis occupation, in general terms, is to save Greece and the Athenians from ‘war and madness’ (342–43). The women will achieve this by preventing the Athenians from using the silver in Athena’s treasury on the Acropolis for the war, as Lysistrata indicates to Lampito

[4] Gelzer (1960) 26; Vaio (1973) 371, 376; Henderson (1980) 199.

[5] The change of plan is obliquely announced at 245–46, where Lysistrata calls on the younger women to accompany her to help the older women. On the logical disjunction, see Hulton (1972) 34; Henderson (1980) 185–87. For the shift in the character of the sex-strike from ‘private’ to ‘public’, see Vaio (1973); Konstan (1995) 51.

[6] For its mythical antecedents, see Hall (2010) 29–31.

[7] MacDowell (1995) 235–39. On the *proboulos*, see McGlew (2002) 142–48.

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in the play's opening scene (173–76). The clearest statement of this plan comes in an exchange with no comic colouring at all: when the *proboulos* asks Lysistrata 'What do you hope to achieve by shutting and barring our Acropolis?' (487), she replies simply, 'So that we may keep the silver safe, and so that you may not pursue the war with it' (488).[8] Lysistrata goes on to make a rather obscure point about the trouble repeatedly stirred up in the past by Peisander and other seekers after political office, 'in order that they might have something to steal' (489–91). The crucial point is that crooks like Peisander will no longer be able to get at the Acropolis silver (492), because Lysistrata and the other women now have control over it (493–96).[9]

Lysistrata is certainly no pacifist. Although she wants this particular war to end, she has no objection to warfare *per se*.[10] In reality, in late 412 and early 411 BC, a peace of any kind with Sparta must have seemed further away than at almost any other point during the entire Peloponnesian War.[11] If the *Lysistrata* is a serious plea for anything, it is for better management (particularly financial management) of the war, not peace. The women claim to be able to offer this: they will manage the state finances as effectively as they manage household economy, metaphorically taking over the role of the (male) Treasurers of Athena (493–96).[12]

Bad collective decision-making lies at the core of the critique of Athenian male behaviour offered by the women of the *Lysistrata*.[13] The division of the chorus means that the *Lysistrata* does not have a true parabasis, but in the sequence of four songs and four speeches by the male and female hemichoruses at the centre of the play (614–705), the hemichorus of old women does offer critical advice to the audience in something of the style of an ordinary parabasis: 'All you citizens, here we begin our speech which will be beneficial to the city' (638–39); 'so I am bound to give some good advice to the city' (648).[14] The female hemichorus goes on to criticize the old men, 'since you have exhausted the ancestral common fund built up from the time of the Persian Wars, and now do not pay your own property-taxes to make it up; but moreover we are at risk of dissolution, because of you' (652–55).[15] The emphasis here is not on the conduct of the war itself, but on bad financial management: the Athenians have squandered their financial resources, are unwilling to make up the shortfall and hence the city is facing disaster.

In the second passage of tetrameters spoken by the female hemichorus (696–705), bad Athenian decision-making is once again the main theme, this time specifically the passing of poor decrees (*psēphismata*) in the assembly. The men will be unable to prevent the women succeeding in their plan 'even if you vote decrees seven times over' (698); the women complain that they are unable to import eels from Boeotia 'because of your decrees' (703), and they warn that the men 'will never stop making these decrees' (704) until they are prevented by force.

Precisely the same criticism of Athenian decree-making has already been made earlier in the play by Lysistrata, in still more specific and trenchant form, in her three speeches to the *proboulos* at 507–28. In the past, says Lysistrata, the women often used to hear that the men had made a bad decision (*kakōs bouleuein*) on a major issue, such as their decision to inscribe an unwise addendum to the *stēlē* bearing the peace treaty (507–15: first speech). Subsequently, they came to hear of

[8] Vaio (1973) 373; Henderson (1987a) xviii; MacDowell (1995) 233–35.

[9] Peisander's demagogic machinations: Sommerstein (1977) 113–14; Gomme et al. (1981) 188–89; Henderson (1987a) xxi–xxiii; Avery (1999); Austin and Olson (2004) xli–xliv.

[10] Sommerstein (2009) 223–36.

[11] Thuc. 8.53.2–3; Westlake (1980); Heath (1987): 14.

[12] The notion of state finance as analogous to household finance is well paralleled in Classical Greek thought: the household and the polis differ only in scale, not in kind (Xen. *Mem*. 3.4.12; Arist. [*Oec.*] 1343a). On the Treasurers of Athena, see Harris (1995) 11–25.

[13] Rightly emphasized by Olson (2012).

[14] Gelzer (1960) 210 n.4, 257; Händel (1963) 103–04.

[15] The reference is to the *eisphora*, an occasional property-tax on the well-off, perhaps first levied in 428/7 BC (Thuc. 3.19.1); whether it had been introduced earlier depends on the controversial dating of the second Kallias decree (Osborne and Rhodes (2017) no. 144). See Fawcett (2016) 156–59, with the earlier literature.

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even worse decisions, and asked why the men were handling affairs so senselessly (*anoētōs*) (516–20: second speech). And finally, having long been prevented from giving advice even when the men were making bad decisions (*kakōs bouleuein*), the women made their own resolution (*edoxen*, the language of formal assembly decrees) to save Greece, to give the men some good advice (*chrēsta legein*) and set them straight (*epanorthoun*) (521–28: third speech).

Lysistrata's three speeches evoke a series of bad decisions made by the Athenian assembly over a long period of time, the cumulative impact of which has finally spurred on the women to take over the decision-making process themselves. The first speech directly alludes to a notorious Athenian decision in 419/18 BC: the resolution to add the phrase 'the Spartans have not kept their oaths' to the bottom of the inscribed Peace of Nikias.[16] It is not clear whether the 'even worse decision' (517) mentioned in Lysistrata's second speech has a precise referent; if so, the most likely candidate is the decision to send a fleet to Sicily in 415 BC. The third speech is still more allusive: the women were finally stirred into action when they heard the men saying openly in the streets 'There is not a man in the country –', and 'No, by Zeus, there isn't –' (524). We will return later to the question of what precisely is being referred to here. For now, I note only that the internal logic of Lysistrata's three speeches to the *proboulos* suggests that this 'street-corner chatter' about lack of men ought somehow to be connected to a third bad assembly decision, the one that finally drove the women to intervene.

The essence of the case made by Lysistrata in her three speeches to the *proboulos* (and later by the female hemichorus) is that Athenian decision-making is consistently lacking in good sense (*nous*), a term that appears repeatedly in the play in relation to public decision-making. When Lysistrata first exits the Acropolis to speak with the *proboulos*, who is trying to crowbar his way through the gates, she tells him, 'what you need is not crowbars but good sense (*nous*) and wisdom (*phrenes*)' (432). Later on, the *proboulos* accuses the women of being 'senseless' (*anoētoi*) for thinking they can settle serious matters by handling them like wool; Lysistrata replies that if only the men had good sense (*nous*), that is precisely how they would conduct their political affairs (572–73). Rational conduct is what Lysistrata claims to be able to offer: 'I may be a woman, but there is good sense (*nous*) in me' (1124).[17] Aside from good sense, there also is some indication that the women may be superior to their male counterparts in piety. When the male hemichorus is preparing to set fire to the doors of the Propylaia, the old women exclaim that 'no excellent or pious (*eusebeis*) men would ever have behaved like this' (351), and the women later emphasize their own impeccable religious upbringing as a reason why their views ought to receive a hearing (638–48).[18]

III. Lysistrata, Myrrhine, Kalonike

One of the more startling features of the *Lysistrata* is the character of its titular heroine. We do not know whether Lysistrata was the first female protagonist in Attic Old Comedy, but she has no securely attested predecessors; indeed, the play is unique among extant comedies in being named after a human character.[19] Lysistrata is, moreover, a distinctly curious kind of comic heroine: 'sober, entirely rational, non- or even asexual'.[20] She is the only woman in the play who seems to be

[16] Thuc. 5.56.3.

[17] The *nou-* root also appears at 626, where the male hemichorus says that it is 'a dreadful thing that these women should be lecturing (*nouthetein*) the citizen body (*politai*)' (626).

[18] On *Lysistrata* 638–48, see Sourvinou-Inwood (1988) 136–48; Bowie (1993) 180; Parker (2005) 218–48.

[19] Henderson (1980) 169–70; (1987a) xxviii; (1987b) 107–08; (2000); Foley (1982) 8; Sidwell (2009) 252–53. But see Storey (2003) 315–20 and Hughes (2012) 201–02 for possible antecedents.

[20] Revermann (2010) 74; MacDowell (1995) 247. At 715, Lysistrata does say 'we want a fuck'; but here she is clearly speaking for the collective, rather than on her own behalf. At 107–10, one of the women laments her lack of a dildo; the lines are traditionally attributed to Lysistrata, but MacDowell ((1995) 230, n.4) plausibly argues that they should instead be given to Kalonike, and this is accepted by N.G. Wilson in the OCT and by Sommerstein (2007) viii.

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unmarried.[21] She seldom tells jokes (exceptions at 757, 776) and is never the butt of one. Throughout the play she generally acts as the 'straight woman' to the other characters, setting up sexual innuendos rather than making them herself (for example 23–30, 66–68, 78–92, 861–63).[22] Other characters in the play (the hapless *proboulos* aside) treat her with notable respect. She is addressed as 'lady/ruler' (*anassa*, 706) and as 'bravest of all women' (1108); the Athenian delegate describes her as 'the only woman who can reconcile us' (1104) and the Spartan ambassador claims never to have seen a nobler woman (1157).[23] Her unusual status is underlined by the fact that she is the only Athenian citizen woman anywhere in Old Comedy to be referred to (and directly addressed) by name by Athenian men unrelated to her (1086, 1103, 1147).[24]

In 1955, David Lewis showed that the senior Athenian priestess in 411 BC, the priestess of Athena Polias, was almost certainly a woman by the name of Lysimache.[25] Pliny the Elder refers to a Lysimache who was priestess of Athena Polias for a period of 64 years and was honoured with a portrait statue by a sculptor named Demetrios; this man is surely the famous Demetrios of Alopeke, active in the first half of the fourth century BC.[26] The base of this statue survives today, and indicates that the priestess Lysimache's father was a certain Drakontides, also attested as the father of the secretary to the Treasurers of Athena (Lysikles) in 416/15 BC.[27] Given the extraordinary length of Lysimache's tenure of the priesthood, we can be effectively certain that she was in office in 411 BC.

Lewis went on to suggest that the character of Lysistrata was in some sense modelled on the historical Lysimache, and that the curious 'non-comic' presentation of Lysistrata in the play – serious, authoritative, largely sexless – reflects the august status of the priestess of Athena Polias.[28] The two names are virtually synonymous (Lysistrata, 'dissolver of armies'; Lysimache, 'dissolver of battles'), and indeed Lysistrata at one point says that if the women's plan is successful, 'I think that one day we will be known as *lysimachai* ('dissolvers of battles') among the Greeks' (554).[29]

There are numerous other indications in the play that link Lysistrata with the role played in Athens by the priestess of Athena Polias. She expects to have unquestioned authority over the women of Athens (13–15); she has ordered the older women to seize the Acropolis on the pretence of making a sacrifice (179); she is a specialist in prayers and oath-making (187–239, 1185), and

[21] Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1927) 54. Taken literally, 507–20 would suggest that Lysistrata has (or had) a husband, but she is here clearly speaking as a 'generic Athenian citizen women', rather than primarily as the dramatic character Lysistrata. At 706–80 she is pointedly contrasted with the younger wives, and in the opening scene of the play she needs to have it explained to her that wives might find it difficult to get away from home (9–21). The historical priestess Lysimache (see below) was a mother (*IG* II² 3453).

[22] Although she is happy to use crude language, especially when laying out her plan for the sex-strike (124, 137–39, 152, 158; *cf.* 553, 715).

[23] Note, however, that 706 is a tragic quotation (Eur. *Telephos* fr. 699 Kannicht).

[24] Sommerstein (1980), with addendum at Sommerstein (2009) 243–44. Sidwell (2009) 256–57 implausibly sees the use of Lysistrata's name as disparaging. For the public naming of priestesses, see Augier (2015) 76–86.

[25] Lewis (1955).

[26] Plin. *HN* 34.76. A famous witticism of Lysimache, priestess of Athena Polias, is reported by Plut. *Mor.* 534B–C; it is likely enough that the same woman is meant.

[27] Statue base: *IG* II² 3453 (*CEG* II 757). Lysikles secretary to the Treasurers of Athena in 416/15 BC: *IG* I³ 370, line 37 (Osborne and Rhodes (2017) no. 170). See further Davies (1971) 169–71; Connolly (2007) 130–31; Blok and Lambert (2009) 105. Keesling (2012) shows that another inscribed base from the Acropolis, in honour of Syeris, '*diakonos* (assistant) of Lysimache' (*IG* II² 3464; *cf.* Paus. 1.27.4), refers to this same Lysimache. Lysimache may be the dedicator of a silver phiale on the Acropolis around 400 BC (Harris (1995) 246, no. 31), and it is possible that she was the honorand of a lost early fourth-century Athenian decree, apparently for a priestess of Athena (known only from its document relief: Lawton (1995) 125, no. 91; Keesling (2012) 494, n.98). Dillon ((2002) 78) incorrectly states that Lysimache had four children; in fact she saw four generations of descendants ([γένη] τέσσαρ' ἐπεῖδε τέκνων, *IG* II² 3453, line 4).

[28] Lewis (1955); followed, for example, by Gelzer (1960) 24 n.1, 258 n.1; (1970) 1480; Dunbar (1970) 270–72; Henderson (1980) 187–88; Sommerstein (1980) 395–96; Bowie (1993) 194; Loraux (1993) 179–81; MacDowell (1995) 240–43; Connelly (2007) 62–64; Hall (2010) 32–35.

[29] *Cf.* also *Peace* 991–92, with Dunbar (1970) 270–72.

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produces an oracle to encourage the women in their resolution (767–77). She has an intimate knowledge of the topography of the Acropolis (720–25, 835), and on four occasions (431, 706, 1106, 1273) she exits unsummoned through the gates of the Propylaia in a manner that indicates her control of the citadel (which is once described, admittedly in a paratragic context, as her 'home', *domoi*: 707).[30] Her skill and authority in wool-weaving for the public good (567–86) may be an allusion to the role of the priestess of Athena Polias in overseeing the ritual weaving of the Panathenaic *peplos*.[31] She brusquely instructs the Athenian and Spartan delegates to remain pure on entering the sanctuary (1182) before inviting them to dinner on the Acropolis (1183–84). At a deeper level, several scholars have suggested that Lysistrata 'becomes almost an incarnation of her patron deity', through her military leadership, her use of reason and persuasion, and her role as mediator between male and female.[32]

It is possible that the character Myrrhine was also modelled on a historical Athenian priestess of Athena, in this case the priestess of Athena Nike.[33] Thanks to the discovery of a late fifth-century verse epitaph, we know that the first priestess of Athena Nike (appointed by 424/3 BC at the latest, and perhaps somewhat earlier) was a certain Myrrhine, daughter of Kallimachos.[34] Whether this historical Myrrhine was still priestess of Athena Nike in 411 BC is much less certain. The date of the epitaph is unknown (it could be as early as the 420s or as late as 400 BC), and we do not know whether the priestess of Athena Nike served for life (like the priestess of Athena Polias) or only for a single year.[35] It is also worth emphasizing that although Lysistrata is treated throughout with a certain reverence, Aristophanes' portrayal of Myrrhine is much more straightforwardly comic (72, 87–88, 115–16, 200, 870–979).

However, two passages in the *Lysistrata* together make a strong case in favour of the identification of the character 'Myrrhine' with the historical Myrrhine. First, the long scene where Myrrhine torments her husband Kinesias (829–979) is unusually precisely situated by Aristophanes. Kinesias approaches the Acropolis via the shrine of Demeter Chloe (835), which was located at the foot of the great bastion to the southwest of the Propylaia on which stood the temple of Athena Nike.[36] Myrrhine initially converses with him from above (873, 883–84), that is to say, from the top of the Nike bastion, before finally being persuaded to 'come down' to him. Aristophanes has carefully constructed this scene so as to 'place' Myrrhine right next to the temple of Athena Nike, overlooking the shrine of Chloe from above.[37] I find it hard to believe that this can be a coincidence.

Second, virtually the only two things we know about the historical priestess Myrrhine are (a) that she was the *first* priestess of Athena Nike and (b) that she was appointed to her priesthood by lot from all Athenian women.[38] In her funerary epigram, Myrrhine twice emphasizes that she was

[30] The centrality of the Acropolis to the plot of *Lysistrata* is emphasized by Loraux (1993) 147–83; Revermann (2006) 246–53.

[31] Georgoudi (2003) 192–95; Parker (2005) 464–65; Sourvinou-Inwood (2011) 268–69.

[32] Foley (1982) 9–10; Sommerstein (2007) x; (2009) 234–35, 244–46.

[33] First suggested by Papademetriou (1948–1949) 151–53; *cf.* Gelzer (1960) 24 n.1; (1970) 1480; Bowie (1993) 194; MacDowell (1995) 241–42; Lougovoya-Ast (2006) 219–20.

[34] *IG* I³ 1330; Osborne and Rhodes (2017) no. 179; *cf.* also Rahn (1986). The date of appointment of the first priestess of Athena Nike probably falls between the early 430s (conceivably the 440s) and 424/3 BC (Lambert (2010) 153–54; Osborne and Rhodes (2017) 472). Lougovoya-Ast (2006) 214–18 argues for a 'double appointment', first in the 440s (as attendant at the sanctuary), then in the 420s (as priestess of the new temple). On the architectural chronology of the Nike sanctuary, see Mark (1993), with discussion of the priesthood at 106–13. Laughy (2018) argues for the existence of a non-democratic priesthood of Athena Nike before the mid-fifth century.

[35] Parker (1996) 126 n.20 rightly emphasizes that the evidence does not allow us to say whether tenure of the priesthood was restricted to a year (similarly Lambert (2010) 156).

[36] Paus. 1.22.3; *cf.* Philoch. *FGrH* 328 F61. The precise location of the sanctuary is unknown, but it must have been situated almost immediately below the Nike bastion (Georgoudi (2011); Lambert (2014) 30).

[37] See further on this scene, MacDowell (1995) 242.

[38] Nike temple decree: hὲ ἂγ [κλερομένε λάχε]ι ἐχς

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the first (*prōtē*) to hold the priesthood and, perhaps more surprisingly, also underscores her selection 'by lot from all'; this seems to have been an aspect of her appointment in which she (as a good democrat?) took particular pride.[39] In an early scene of the *Lysistrata*, when the women are about to swear an oath to refrain from having sex with their husbands, Myrrhine pushes forward and says 'Women, let me be the first (*prōtē*) to swear', to which Kalonike replies 'No, by Aphrodite, not unless you are the one selected by lot' (207–08).[40] These two lines are not in themselves particularly funny; they push the plot forward not an inch; and I am not aware of any other evidence for allotment being used as a means of determining the sequence of oath-taking.[41] Why has Aristophanes included them? It is surely attractive to suppose that these two lines are a gentle dig at someone who was widely known to be proud both of being 'first' and of having received her position by lot.[42]

Given the cumulative strength of the case for connecting the characters Lysistrata and Myrrhine with the historical priestesses Lysimache and Myrrhine, one naturally wonders whether the third major Athenian woman in the play, Kalonike, might also have been meant to recall a well-known Athenian priestess. The name 'Kalonike' is distinctly rare in Attica, and this could be taken as supporting the idea that Kalonike is not just a 'generic Athenian woman' but a quasi-portrait of a specific historical individual.[43] Lysistrata describes Kalonike as her 'fellow villager' or 'neighbour' (*kōmētis*, 5), which could be taken to mean that Kalonike was also 'resident' on the Acropolis. It is striking that Kalonike (uniquely among the women) repeatedly uses terms of endearment in addressing Lysistrata: 'child', *teknon* (7), 'dearest', *philtatē* (15), 'dear', *philē* (21, 95, 135, 238), 'poor dear', *talan* (102), 'my friend', *mele* (157).[44] This 'special connection' between the two women would make sense if their real-life counterparts were known to be close colleagues. Finally, when the Spartan woman Lampito arrives on the scene, Lysistrata praises her colour and strength, and Kalonike admires (and apparently feels) her breasts; Lampito's complaint that the Athenian women are feeling her over 'like a sacrificial victim' (84) would have particular point if the women are all conceived as sacred officials.

That Aristophanes intended his audience to recognize historical priestesses behind one or more of these characters is now widely accepted.[45] But implicitly or explicitly, critics have tended to assume that even if he did, these 'identifications' are of limited significance for the interpretation of the play.[46] At most, critics are prepared to say that the partial identification of Lysistrata with Lysimache invests her character with 'religious authority', 'helping to link the heroine with the

Ἀθεναίον hαπα[σõν], 'whoever is selected by lot from all Athenian women' (*IG* I[3] 35; Osborne and Rhodes (2017) no. 137). Whatever the date of appointment (see above), this is the earliest priesthood known to have been appointed 'from all Athenians', although allotment had earlier been used for *genos*-priesthoods (Parker (1996) 123–31; Blok and Lambert (2009); Lambert (2010) 153–56).

[39] ἣ πρώτη Νίκης ἀμφεπόλευσε νεών ... πρώτε Ἀθηναίας Νίκες ἕδος ἀμφεπόλευσεν ἐκ πάντων κλήρωι, 'she who first served the temple of Nike ... she was the first to serve the seat of Athena Nike, by lot from all' (Osborne and Rhodes (2017) no. 179, lines 3–5, 11–15).

[40] Mastromarco (1995) 84–85 (followed by Wilson in the OCT) switches the attribution of the two lines, giving 207 to Kalonike and 208 to Myrrhine.

[41] *Pace* Henderson (1987a) 95 (n. on 208), *Wealth* 972 does not show that the order of drinkers in a symposium was determined by lot.

[42] I here expand on a brilliant suggestion by Connelly (2007) 63.

[43] Kanavou (2011) 136–37.

[44] On affectionate terms of address used by Aristophanic women, see Sommerstein (1995) 73–78; Willi (2003) 186–87. Lines 95–96, 102–03 and 157 are reattributed to Myrrhine by Mastromarco (1995) (followed by Wilson in the OCT), on what seem to me to be indecisive grounds.

[45] The links are denied by Dover (1972) 152 n.3; Heath (1987) 15 n.21; and are qualified by McGlew (2002) 150; Revermann (2006) 236–43; Rutherford (2015) 62–64. Sommerstein (1980) 395–96 (and (2007) 5 n.31) accepts the link between the character Lysistrata and the priestess Lysimache, but not that between 'Myrrhine' and the priestess Myrrhine; similarly Henderson (1987a) xxxviii–xli.

[46] Westlake (1980) 52 n.47 ('nothing more profound than to cause amusement'); *cf.* Connelly (2007) 63 ('The discussion has rarely gone beyond whether Lewis was right'); Kanavou (2011) 129–34.

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power and wisdom of Athena ... and so promoting in the audience the feeling that her cause is the cause of right'.[47] I find this odd. No-one, I think, would dispute that the actions, personality and reputation of the historical Kleon are crucial for understanding the character Paphlagon in *Knights*; there is a vast literature on the relationship between 'Socrates' in *Clouds* and the historical Socrates. Of course, we know much less about the historical Lysimache than we do about Socrates or Kleon. But that only makes the problem harder; it does not make it insoluble.

So just why did Aristophanes choose to make the *Lysistrata* rotate around a character intended to evoke the living priestess of Athena Polias, even at the expense of having a relatively 'unfunny' heroine? Answers in the modern scholarship are inconclusive: 'Just what inspired Aristophanes to create a female character of such prodigious mental and moral capacity remains conjectural.'[48] It is of course true that the (partial) identification bolsters the authority of the character of Lysistrata and encourages the audience to sympathize with her cause; but this does not really explain why Aristophanes decided to model his characters so explicitly not just on any old priestess(es) of Athena, but specifically on the living Lysimache (and perhaps Myrrhine and 'Kalonike'). A modern sex-comedy could quite comfortably include 'The Archbishop' as a major character; a sex-comedy entitled 'Justin Welby' would, I think, have a very different tone and impact.

The notion that the *Lysistrata* might be playing on the audience's knowledge of some historical event of 412 BC in which Lysimache was involved is not new. Edith Hall suggests that the real-life Lysimache might have 'actually taken it upon herself to complain on behalf of the women of Athens about the devastating losses that were being caused by the long drawn-out Peloponnesian War'.[49] Along similar lines (although without invoking Lysimache), Jeffrey Henderson argues that the colossal manpower losses in Sicily might have prompted 'real female discontent, even rebelliousness (in the home)', and that this could account for the generically innovative female 'rebellions' of both of Aristophanes' plays of 411, the *Lysistrata* and the *Thesmophoriazousai*.[50] Hall and Henderson are at least asking the right question, though I am not convinced by their answer (I see no reason to think that the priestess of Athena Polias was in any sense the 'spokeswoman' of the women of Athens). I would like to suggest a different approach.

IV. The Iron Reserve

There is no room for doubt in identifying the single most controversial event at Athens – in both political and religious terms – during the six- to nine-month period leading up to the first performance of the *Lysistrata* in early February 411 BC.

Twenty years earlier, at the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War in 431 BC, the Athenians decided to create a financial reserve of 1,000 talents of silver, to be stored on the Acropolis.

> And they passed a decree reserving one thousand talents from the monies on the Acropolis to be set aside and not spent. The finance for the war was to come from the remaining funds, and they prescribed the death penalty for anyone who suggested or put to the vote a proposal to touch (*kinein*) this reserve for any purpose other than the need to repel the enemy if it brought a naval force to attack the city. Together with this fund, they set aside their hundred best triremes each year (and appointed trierarchs for them), to be used only in association with that money and in that same emergency, should it arise (Thuc. 2.24.1–2; translated by Hammond (2009)).

[47] Sommerstein (2007) 5; similarly Gelzer (1970) 1480. I am unconvinced by Sidwell's view ((2009) 257, 265) that Lysimache 'is the target of a characteristically vicious attack by Aristophanes'.

[48] Dillon (1987) 101.

[49] Hall (2010) 35. More cautiously, Henderson (1980) 188: 'it is possible that the real Lysimache held views similar to those attributed to Lysistrate'.

[50] Henderson (1987b) 128; similarly Sidwell (2009) 254–56: 'the unique conditions created by the massiveness of the Sicilian expedition's failure may have generated an outcry from a small band of educated females ... There are certainly signs ... that the incumbent priestess of Athena Polias, Lysimache, had made known publicly her opposition to the war.'

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This 'Iron Reserve' remained untouched throughout the years of the Archidamian War and the Sicilian Expedition. Indeed, there is some reason to think that the special status of these 1,000 talents, along with the extreme penalties laid down for anyone who proposed using them, might have been periodically reaffirmed. A fragmentary set of financial documents, usually associated with the preparations for the Sicilian Expedition in 415 BC, includes a curious series of clauses that seems to include the phrases '[... apart f]rom the 1,000(?); and i[f anyone proposes] or puts to the vote [...] reserv[ed ...]'.[51] The term for 'reserved' is the same as that used by Thucydides (*exairetos*)[52] and the phrase 'if anyone proposes or puts to the vote' looks very similar to the 'entrenchment clause' reported by Thucydides, laying down penalties for any proposal to use the 'Iron Reserve' for any purpose other than repulsion of a Spartan naval attack. Perhaps a tentative proposal to tap into this fund had been floated in 415, and so the Athenians felt the need to reaffirm its untouchability in the strongest possible terms.

In the summer of 412 BC, with Athenian finances and manpower already at a low ebb, the island of Chios revolted from Athens. The shock at Athens was immense, and Thucydides describes a startling and momentous decision taken by the Athenians on the spur of the moment:

> The Athenians recognized that they now had a major crisis on their hands: with the most important allied state gone over to the enemy, the rest of their allies would hardly stay quiet. In the alarm (*ekplēxis*) of the moment they immediately abrogated the penalties set for anyone suggesting or putting to the vote a proposal to touch the reserve of a thousand talents which they had jealously guarded throughout the war. They now voted to broach (*kinein*) this reserve and use it to man a large number of ships (Thuc. 8.15.1; translated by Hammond (2009)).

Our only other source for this decision is the ancient scholia on *Lysistrata* 174, here explicitly drawing on the fourth-century Atthidographer Philochoros. Philochoros fixes the date of this decision to the year of the archonship of Kallias, 412/11 BC:

> The Athenians would not make peace for as long as they ruled over the sea and they still had a bottomless store of money in the house of the goddess on the Acropolis. And it is true that a thousand talents were stored up (there) in reserve. They began to use (*kinein*) this money in the archonship of Kallias (412/11 BC), the year in which this play was performed, as Philochoros says in the *Atthis* (*FGrH* 328 F138).

It does not take much reading between the lines of Thucydides' account to sense how controversial a decision this must have been. The original resolution to create the 'Iron Reserve' was supported by an entrenchment clause of great weight, possibly reaffirmed as recently as 415 BC: the death penalty for anyone who proposed to broach the reserve under any circumstances short of an imminent Spartan naval assault on Athens.[53] The crisis of summer 412 BC, serious though it was, fell some way short of this. A major Athenian ally was in revolt, but major allies had revolted before. The decision to mobilize the 'Iron Reserve' at this moment, with little prospect of replenishing the fund if a still more serious crisis should ensue, lay somewhere on the scale between rash and suicidal.[54] Thucydides' language clearly indicates his disapproval: the Athenians had 'striven'

[51] *IG* I³ 93, lines 48–49 (Osborne and Rhodes (2017) no. 171, *frr.* d and g, lines 10–11). The stone carries [- -]ΡΙΣΧΙΛΙΟΝ, which could be restored either [τ]ρισχιλίον, '3,000', or [χο]ρὶς χιλίον, '[apar]t from the 1,000'. The latter restoration (referring to the 'Iron Reserve') was first suggested by Wade-Gery (1931) 74 n.69, tentatively followed by Mattingly (1968) 461 n.2 (= Mattingly (1996) 228 n.50); *cf.* D.M. Lewis in his commentary on *IG* I³ 93 (and Lewis (1974) 82–83); Figueira (1998) 372 n.38; Samons (2000) 239 n.101; Kallet (2001) 191 n.30; Hornblower (2008) 795 (all agnostic).

[52] Figueira (1998) 372–73.

[53] On entrenchment clauses in Attic decrees, see Lewis (1974); Rhodes with Lewis (1997) 16–17, 524–25.

[54] Note the panic that gripped the Athenians a year later, in 411 BC, when Euboia was lost, a Spartan naval attack on Piraeus was expected and the Athenians had no ships or crews (Thuc. 8.96).

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(*glichomai*, a strong word) not to use the reserve fund before this point and now voted to do so only under the influence of a momentary shock (*ekplēxis*).[55] And it is worth noting what the Athenians chose to spend this irreplaceable money on: not on ship-building (such as they had been undertaking throughout the winter of 413/12 BC: Thuc. 8.1.3, 8.4.1), but simply on equipping and manning existing triremes with rowers and hoplites (the verb is *plēroun*, three times in Thuc. 8.15.1–2).[56]

Aside from the strategic folly of mobilizing the reserve fund at this point, there may well also have been religious implications. The 'Iron Reserve' was physically situated on the Acropolis (Thuc. 2.24.1) in the Treasury of Athena (as the scholiast on *Lysistrata* 173 explicitly says), and was hence under the administration of Athena's treasurers.[57] If this money 'belonged' to anyone, it belonged to the goddess Athena. The hurried resolution to cancel the weighty entrenchment clauses protecting this fund, purely in order to find wages for a few thousand rowers and hoplites, could easily have been seen as an act of questionable piety towards the goddess.

Let us now return to the *Lysistrata*, which (as we have seen) must have been conceived and written in the months immediately following the momentous decision to tap into the 'Iron Reserve'.[58] As we saw earlier on, the occupation of the Acropolis by the women (the central theme of the second part of the play, 240–705) is repeatedly said to be in order to prevent the Athenians from using the silver in Athena's treasury to pursue the war. Most clearly of all, when the *proboulos* asks Lysistrata what she hopes to achieve by her occupation, she replies: 'So that we may keep the silver safe, and so that you may not pursue the war with it' (488). Lysistrata and the other women symbolically take over the role of the Treasurers of Athena, an idea that is hammered home by the repeated use of the verb *tamieuein*, 'act as treasurer' (493–95).

In the *Lysistrata*, spending money 'on the war' is essentially synonymous with spending money 'on the Athenian war-fleet'.[59] Lampito says that the Athenians will not make peace 'while their triremes still have feet, and there is unlimited silver stored up in the Goddess' house' (173–74), and the reason the *proboulos* is trying to enter the Acropolis is because he has 'procured a supply of oar-spars, and now needs the silver to pay for them' (421–22).[60] The hemichorus of old men even assumes (quite wrongly) that the women are planning to start building their own warships (674–75).

As we have seen, Thucydides suggests that the main use to which the 'Iron Reserve' was put in summer 412 BC was equipping and manning ships for the Ionian War in the eastern Aegean (8.15.1–2). This would certainly have included (among other things) paying the wages of rowers. At one point, the old men complain that the women must have been persuaded by the Spartans 'to seize our money and the wages (*misthos*) by which I used to live' (624–25). Recent commentators take this as a reference to the three-obol *misthos* received by Athenian jurors; but aside from a passing reference at 380, there are no other allusions to jurors anywhere in the play, and the term *misthos* could equally well refer to the pay that they used to receive as rowers in the fleet.[61]

[55] Kallet (2001) 246–50; Hornblower (2008) 794–95.

[56] On pay for crews in the fifth-century Athenian fleet, see Gabrielsen (1994) 105–18; O'Halloran (2019) 238–53.

[57] We might recall that Lysimache's brother Lysikles had served as secretary to the Treasurers of Athena in 416/15 BC, the very year when – perhaps – the special status of the 'Iron Reserve' had most recently been reaffirmed (see above).

[58] 'Since we cannot imagine that Aristophanes composed his plays entirely at the last minute ... the situation over the whole summer of 412 will be relevant for the background': Gomme et al. (1981) 187; *cf.* Olson (2012) 73. A link between the themes of the *Lysistrata* and the 'Iron Reserve' is floated in passing by Avery (1999) 139.

[59] MacDowell (1995) 235.

[60] The need for oar-spars was particularly pressing in this period (Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1927) 148–49): in 411 BC, Andocides brought a supply of oar-spars from Macedon to the fleet at Samos (Andoc. 2.11–12); an Athenian decree of 407/6 BC thanks King Archelaus of Macedon for furnishing the Athenians with oar-spars and other timber (*IG* I^3 117, line 30; Osborne and Rhodes (2017) no. 188, line 31); and a further Athenian decree of uncertain date (perhaps 410–407 BC) honours Antiochides and Phanosthenes for providing oar-spars (*IG* I^3 182, with Macdonald (1981)).

[61] Henderson (1987a) 152–53 (n. on 625); Sommerstein (2007) 187 (n. on 624–25). For citizen rowers as *misthophoroi*, see Trundle (2004) 18–19, 85–87; O'Halloran (2019) 248.

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We might also recall the third and last in the sequence of bad assembly decisions which (according to Lysistrata) finally persuaded the women to intervene (507–28). What pushes the women over the edge is hearing the Athenian men saying to one another in the streets 'There is not a man in the country –', and 'No, by Zeus, there isn't –' (524). The significance of this street-corner chatter is (to us) rather obscure, but the most natural way of taking it is as a reference to a critical shortage of Athenian manpower. The decision to broach the 'Iron Reserve' was expressly in order to be able to man (*plēroun*) more ships, suggesting a lack of manpower which could only be made up by buying in support from elsewhere. Indeed, when the main Athenian force of 48 ships sails for Chios in late summer 412 BC, we find that the ships are carrying 1,000 Athenian hoplites, 1,500 Argive hoplites (of whom 500 were originally light-armed, but whom the Athenians had fitted out with hoplite armour) and 1,000 allied troops (Thuc. 8.25.1). The fact that less than a third of this force was Athenian neatly echoes the situation evoked by *Lysistrata* 524: since there was 'not a man in the country', the Athenians decided to broach the 'Iron Reserve' in order to pay Argive and allied troops, some of whom even needed to be fitted out with hoplite weapons at Athenian expense.[62]

As I suggest early in this paper, if the *Lysistrata* is a serious plea for anything, it is a plea for better financial management of the war. The male Athenians have recklessly frittered away the state's resources and are now unwilling to make the necessary personal sacrifices to restore them (652–55); the women will set things back on the right track by managing state finances on the model of the household economy (493–96). As I have argued, to an audience in early spring 411 BC, 'reckless financial management' could only have evoked one thing: the hasty, ill-considered and (arguably) impious mobilization of the 'Iron Reserve', for purposes that were expressly forbidden by the original decree of 431 BC.[63]

V. Lysimache and *Lysistrata*

There remains one further step in the argument. Why did Aristophanes choose to make Lysistrata/Lysimache, and perhaps other Acropolis priestesses (Myrrhine, 'Kalonike'), the central agents of this bold fiscal coup, even at the considerably dramaturgical expense of ending up with a 'non-comic' heroine?[64] The obvious answer is that in late summer 411 BC, when the Athenians voted to broach the 'Iron Reserve' in Athena's treasury, the historical priestess of Athena Polias had in some way made her opposition to this decision known. As we have seen, the resolution to reverse the decision of 431 BC must have been intensely controversial; Thucydides' disapproval makes that abundantly clear. We do not need to assume that the historical Lysimache physically resisted the plundering of the 'Iron Reserve' or that she stood up in the Assembly to protest. It could have been as little as an expression of concern about the religious propriety of reversing the entrenchment clause protecting this particular part of Athena's treasury from illicit use.

There is nothing problematic about the notion that the priestess of Athena Polias could (within limits) exercise individual agency in Athenian politics. Two famous stories in Herodotus recount interventions of the priestess of Athena Polias in political affairs: her attempt to prevent Kleomenes of Sparta from entering the temple of Athena Polias in 508/7 BC (5.72) and her report of the departure

[62] Samons (2000) 256 (linking Thuc. 8.25.1 with expenditure from the 'Iron Reserve').

[63] Direct references to the events of the Ionian War are few and far between in the *Lysistrata*. At 108, there is a passing reference to the revolt of Miletos in summer 412, and 313 is a dig at the inactivity of the Athenian generals on Samos (*cf*. Avery (1999) 140–45). The two women trying to escape from the Acropolis at 728–41 claim to be heading home to deal with their 'Milesian wool' and their 'unpeeled flax (*amorgis*)'; it is just conceivable that Aristophanes' choice of these particular domestic objects is meant to evoke one of the main theatres (Miletos) and protagonists (Amorges) of the Ionian War. On Amorges, see Westlake (1977); Lewis (1977) 85–87, 90–91; Thonemann (2007) 173–74.

[64] The Athenians could consider 'the priestesses on the Acropolis' as a single group, as in the Hekatompedon inscription (*IG* I^3 4, B13: [τὰς] ℎιερέα[ς] τὰς ἐμ πόλει) and the 'Themistokles decree' (Meiggs and Lewis (1969) no. 23, lines 11–12: [τ]ὰς ἱερέας ἐν τῆι ἀκροπόλε[ι]).

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of the sacred snake from the Acropolis in 480 BC, in order to accelerate the evacuation of Athens (8.41).[65] Closer to our period, in 415 BC, we hear of a priestess by the name of Theano who refused to obey an assembly decision that all Athenian priests and priestesses should curse Alkibiades.[66]

Most relevant to the present case, it is clear that Athenian priestesses regularly had a supervisory role over (or exercised some kind of sign-off on) the use of funds in their treasuries. In the fourth century BC, the priestess of Athena Polias was required to 'join in sealing the account books', which were presumably financial records of some kind.[67] Although we have no evidence for the priestess of Athena Polias exercising formal collective financial oversight with the Treasurers of Athena, other Athenian priestesses certainly did so: at fifth-century Eleusis, the priestess of Demeter had personal responsibility for the expenditure of 1,600 drachms at the Mysteries and the board of Eleusinian superintendents established in 432 BC (or later) had to consult with both the Eleusinian priests and the Athenian *boulē* on any expenditure from the Goddesses' funds.[68] It is quite clear that Athenian priestesses were considered as magistrates, with the same responsibilities (and accountability) for financial management as their male counterparts.[69]

My preferred scenario, then, is something like the following. In late summer 412 BC, at a fractious and bitter assembly meeting, the Athenians voted (say by 52% to 48%) to rescind the decree of 431 preventing the 'Iron Reserve' from being used in any other context than a Spartan naval assault on Athens. Many Athenians were horrified, both at the practical wisdom of broaching this fund and at the religious propriety of overturning the entrenchment clause that protected a core part of the Treasury of Athena from frivolous use. As a normal part of the procedure of spending monies from the Treasury of Athena, the venerable priestess of Athena Polias was then asked to sign-off on cracking open the relevant jars of silver. Lysimache indicated that she had severe qualms about doing so, and was backed up by the other female religious personnel on the Acropolis, perhaps including Myrrhine, the unimpeachably democratic priestess of Athena Nike (famously appointed 'by lot from all'). Naturally, this had no practical effect; the fund was broached, the troops recruited from Argos and elsewhere, and the ships set sail for Chios (Thuc. 8.25.1). But the priestesses' objections became widely known, and the more fiscally prudent Athenians took to muttering among themselves, 'We should let Lysimache run this war; she has more sense than our accursed Assembly.' And Aristophanes spotted his opportunity. What if Lysimache and the other priestesses had in fact acted on their convictions? What if – counterfactually – she had decided to intervene 'to keep the silver safe, so that you may not pursue the war with it' (488)?

This scenario is, of course, purely hypothetical. But it is not pure fantasy. On the contrary, it makes sense of many puzzling aspects of the *Lysistrata* that have hitherto been ignored, downplayed or simply left unexplained. It explains why Aristophanes chose to create such an idiosyncratic heroine, apparently so ill-suited to the Old Comic genre. It explains the seriousness of the Acropolis occupation plot and the repeated emphasis throughout the play on the correct stewardship and use of the Acropolis treasures. And it has the crucial advantage of setting the *Lysistrata* firmly back in the context of urgent political debates and controversies at Athens in late 412 and early 411 BC. This is, I suggest, a play that was designed to respond in the most direct possible fashion to the hottest political issue of its day.[70]

[65] Georgoudi (2003) 180–82; Connelly (2007) 61, 218; Bruit Zaidman (2013) 90–92.

[66] Plut. *Alc*. 22.4; Bruit Zaidman (2013) 96–99.

[67] Lykurg. *fr.* VI 4 (Conomis); with Conomis (1961) 111; Dillon (2002) 85–86; Georgoudi (2003) 208; Connelly (2007) 217; Parker (2011) 20.

[68] Priestess responsible for expenditure: Clinton (2005–2008) no. 19 (Osborne and Rhodes (2017) no. 106), C18–19, [τὲν hι]έρεαν τἀναλόματα [δõναι]. Priests consulted on expenditure: Clinton (2005–2008) no. 30, lines 28–30, ἀναλίσκεν ... μετὰ τõν hιερέον καὶ τε̃ς β[ολ]ε̃ς. For the financial accountability of Athenian priests and priestesses, see Aeschin. 3.18.

[69] Bruit Zaidman (2013); Augier (2015) 86–91.

[70] And not just, as Westlake has it ((1980) 45), offering a 'number of topical allusions' and a sprinkling of advice 'on a variety of topics, mostly connected with the war'; similarly Henderson (1987a) xxx–xxxii.

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I conclude with a final, tantalizing question. In later periods, some Athenian priestesses, including the priestess of Athena Polias, had front-row seats in the theatre of Dionysos at Athens.[71] We have no idea whether this was already the case in the late fifth century BC, but it is at least possible that the historical Lysimache, in her capacity as priestess of Athena Polias, attended the first performance of the *Lysistrata* in a privileged seat at the very front of the audience. It is perhaps a little hard to imagine that Aristophanes could have created a play with a quasi-portrait of Lysimache at its centre, but whose plot bore not the slightest relation to anything Lysimache had ever done or said. If it is the case (as I believe) that the *Lysistrata* was, in part, a fantastical elaboration of Lysimache's own political intervention in late summer 412 BC, then her presence at the front of the audience would have given the play a particularly sharp political edge. As we have seen, Lysistrata is nowhere the object of mockery in the *Lysistrata*; she is a serious person, whose character and opinions are treated with respect and courtesy. Aristophanes took her small-scale, principled protest in summer 412 BC and made it the core of a spiralling fantasy of gender inversion, female agency and return to a Panhellenic golden age. If the *Lysistrata* has a serious message – and I think it does – it is simply that Lysimache and her fellow priestesses were right to act as they did. I wonder if Lysimache enjoyed the *Lysistrata*. I hope so.

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[71] Maass (1972); Connelly (2007) 205–13. The debate on whether (some) women attended dramatic performances at the Lenaia and Dionysia has generated a vast bibliography: see, for example, Henderson (1991) (for); Goldhill (1994) (against); Hughes (2012) 207–08 (for). The priestess of Athena Polias was an active participant in other elements of the Dionysia festival (Sourvinou-Inwood (2003) 177–84).

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