



January 1998

The Gendered Polis in Eupolis' Cities

Ralph M. Rosen

University of Pennsylvania, rosen@sas.upenn.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://repository.upenn.edu/classics_papers

Recommended Citation

Rosen, R. M. (1998). The Gendered Polis in Eupolis' Cities. Retrieved from http://repository.upenn.edu/classics_papers/25

Postprint version. Published in *The City as Comedy: Society and Representation in Athenian Drama* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), pages 149-176.

This paper is posted at ScholarlyCommons. http://repository.upenn.edu/classics_papers/25
For more information, please contact libraryrepository@pobox.upenn.edu.

The Gendered Polis in Eupolis' Cities

Abstract

Ever since Antiphanes brought on the stage a character, perhaps Comedy herself, complaining that comedy was more difficult to compose than tragedy (fr. 189.17-23 K-A), it has become something of a truism to say that the poets of Old Comedy had at their disposal much richer and less generically restricted literary possibilities than their colleagues working in tragedy.

Comments

Postprint version. Published in *The City as Comedy: Society and Representation in Athenian Drama* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), pages 149-176.

THE GENDERED POLIS IN EUPOLIS' CITIES

(in *The City as Comedy. Society and Representation in Athenian Drama*,
ed. Gregory Dobrov, University of North Carolina Press)

Ralph M. Rosen
University of Pennsylvania

Ever since Antiphanes brought on the stage a character, perhaps Comedy herself, complaining that comedy was more difficult to compose than tragedy (fr. 189.17-23 K-A), it has become something of a truism to say that the poets of Old Comedy had at their disposal much richer and less generically restricted literary possibilities than their colleagues working in tragedy. In the area of the chorus this is certainly the case: whereas a tragedian was limited in his choice of a chorus by the demands of the particular myth he was dramatizing, the comic poet's great freedom in plot construction allowed the composition and deployment of their choruses. The extant plays of Aristophanes give us a fair sampling of the range of choruses available to the comic poet, from the animal choruses of Birds and Frogs, the quasi-divine meteorological chorus of Clouds, to the choruses representing various human constituencies involved in the plot (e.g., knights, demesmen, women). But it so happens that the extant Aristophanic plays offer no examples of another important type of comic chorus, known to us from the fragmentary authors, in which the chorus members represented allegorically inanimate abstractions or institutions.

Although, as so often happens with the fragmentary material, we can capture only a fleeting glimpse of how this conceit might have been employed in the plays, some cases are particularly tantalizing for what they seem to reveal about how the Athenians conceptualized the abstractions represented by these choruses. Theatrical allegory, after all, compels the playwright to conceive of abstractions in ways that go beyond ordinary discourse, since he must ascribe flesh and blood to a lifeless intellectual construct. A "law", a "demos", an "island" must suddenly wear a costume and a mask, sing, dance and gesticulate in front of an audience intended to recognize at some level what the allegory means. The playwright must make practical decisions not only about what sort of human accouterments will best convey his conception of

the abstraction at hand, but, even more importantly, about how to give appropriate voice and character to a normally mute and incorporeal “thing”. The poet, then, must conceive of the abstraction behind his chorus in an entirely new mode, and it is precisely this necessity to articulate its nature in unfamiliar ways that leads him to invent new metaphors and representational devices for it. In the end, the very novelty and unconventionality of the way in which these choruses are portrayed often reveals particular cultural modes of conceptualizing that might otherwise be concealed by the terms of discourse more normally used to describe them.

Choruses such as these are fairly common in explicitly political comedies, where they were used to personify a social or political abstraction or institution that helped define the central issues of the play. Perhaps the most famous example occurs in Eupolis’ Demoi¹ in which the men of the chorus represented the Athenian demes, who in the course of the play sought political counsel from famous generals of the past brought up from the underworld. Even though attempts to reconstruct their role in the play have been largely unsuccessful,² the very fact that Athenians could conceive of the deme as a corporate entity with identifiable, idiosyncratic characteristics capable of being transformed into intelligible human analogues, is not inconsequential, especially in view of the relatively recent contrivance of the deme system in Attica.³ Moreover, we may legitimately suppose that the interrogation of Athenian politicians by the demes that we find in the papyrus fragments of Demoi, reflects at some level a mechanism of democratic control over political leadership in Athens that adds to our understanding of the relationship between deme and polis in the fifth century.

Just how the chorus of demes was presented, what their costumes and masks were like, what physical or verbal idiosyncrasies were used to associate individual choreutai with actual demes, we cannot tell. Some scholars have imagined that there were in fact two choruses of demes, one in the underworld representing “old demes”, the other demes of contemporary Athens.⁴ But how and to what end such choruses might have been distinguished from each other, remains inaccessible to us. One fact that we can be sure of, however, one easily overlooked—perhaps because it seems too obvious to merit comment—is that the chorus was composed of male members of various demes. Few would dispute the assumption that the poet envisioned a

chorus that looked like Attic males and acted accordingly, combining, however unconsciously, the rhetoric, physiognomy and body language appropriate to the gendered aspects of their roles. But we must not forget that this kind of a chorus represents a social institution, and while the decision to render the demes as a collection of “males” may seem “natural”, insofar as political business such as that transacted in Demoi was by and large a male affair, just how these metaphorical demes looked and behaved on the stage as a living and breathing male must have been in keeping with current ways of conceptualizing them.

In the absence of more fragments, of course, little more can be said about the significance of gender in the chorus of Demoi, especially since an audience would notice nothing very peculiar in itself about a group of males representing demes. The “maleness” of such a chorus, in other words, is perhaps best considered an “unmarked”, default aspect of its characterization, and would probably not have encouraged any particular ruminations about gender in the minds of the audience.⁵ But if we turn to another of Eupolis’ political plays, Poleis, which featured a chorus of women representing allied Athenian states, the conspicuously marked gender of this chorus (a fact highlighted by the play itself) offers, as we shall see, an unusual and subtle perspective on the ways Athenians conceived of their polity and the corporate psychology that gave rise to such a choral self-presentation.⁶

While Demoi clearly took up internal political issues such as domestic leadership and civic and judicial administration, Poleis was evidently concerned with the international political arena—how, in particular, Athens treated its subject states. The demes in the chorus of the former play, in other words, were (from the vantage point of the Athenian audience) local socio-political units, while the cities of the latter chorus represented foreign entities. Would this distinction help explain why the former chorus was male and the latter female? Was there something about the Athenian conception of a “deme” that demanded it be represented as “male”, while a “polis” was conceived of as “female”? In addressing questions such as these in this paper, I will argue below that even the apparently unremarkable gender categories found in the composition of a comic chorus can be shown to reflect subtle, but significant, aspects of Athenian self-conception.

One obvious objection to imputing so much significance to the gender of the choruses of Demoi and Poleis is that the poet would have been compelled to compose a chorus in accordance with the linguistic gender of the noun he intended to represent with actors. Δ μος, in other words, was linguistically a masculine noun, and πῶλις feminine. A poet who decided to stage a chorus of demes, one might argue, would have little choice but to personify them as men, and, along the same lines, we would expect a chorus of “cities” to be women.⁷ Even if we grant, however, that the poet would automatically base the gender of a non-human chorus on the natural gender of the noun it represented,⁸ he alone must make the many decisions about how to transform the abstraction into a recognizable human being along the road to actual production.⁹ In the process of this transformation, of assigning a humanized gender to a “thing”, the poet enters into a new imaginative realm, in which he is at liberty to explore on the stage all the ramifications of his novel creation, including all the associations that a particular gender will call forth in the minds of his audience. Many of these associations no doubt operated at an unconscious level, as we might expect in the case of an unobtrusively gendered chorus, such the male demes of Demoi. But a chorus of “marked” gender, such as we find in Poleis, compels the audience (and the poet) to confront an explicitly feminized polis on the stage, and to consider whether portraying cities as women, incarnating them with stereotypically feminine attributes, accurately reflected contemporary aspects of conceptualizing the polis.

Just how the Athenians “conceptualized the polis”, however, is hardly a simple or singular problem, since different contexts called for different descriptive and analytical approaches, and, as is the case for most complex societies, true consensus about national self-definition is virtually impossible to find at any given time in classical Athens. Moreover, Athens was but one Greek polis among many, and Athenians were characteristically fond of viewing themselves in relation to other cities. Their sense of a corporate self was therefore deeply implicated in their conception of outsiders, and this dynamic in turn inspired a variety of ways to delineate both their own political institutions and ideologies, and those of others.

Recent scholarship has done much to illuminate Athenian discourse at the intersection of national and international politics, and we have acquired a good sense, at least, of how Athenians expressed their views on their power and their role in the larger international arena. The

politically-oriented allegorical choruses of Old Comedy are particularly interesting in this regard in that they can dramatize tangibly what would ordinarily remain mere metaphors within current political discourse. For example, in the broadest and most general sense, Athenians perceived their hegemony at the height of the empire as the morally legitimate rule of a “superior” over less worthy subordinates—states that were, from the Athenian point of view anyway, felt to be actually in need of Athens’ leadership. A variety of metaphors were current that conveyed Athens’ conception of its hegemonic relationship with other states, expressed in terms of such relational pairs as masters and slaves, parents and children, humans and animals—all of them, obviously, emphasizing the authority of the one and the subjection of the other.¹⁰ When Eupolis in his Poleis, or Aristophanes in his Nesoi chose to represent subject cities as women, in keeping with the linguistic gender of the noun polis or nesos, they are exploiting yet another metaphoric strand of the same political attitude. These choruses of foreign subject states depicted as females interacting with Athenian (male) citizens, in other words, affirm the close connection between gender and politics in dominant Athenian culture that recent scholars have been stressing.¹¹ We find in these instances, then, rather unusual examples of how the political relations between states are articulated with a kind of discourse that derives from the realm of domestic gender relationships within Athenian society in general, and within the oikos in particular.

It is not enough, however, to say that the choruses of these plays obviously portray women because their customary status in the fifth century was one of subjection and subordination. Such a formulation, while true enough in a general sense, ignores the cultural subtleties which the metaphor of a female allegorical chorus invites us to contemplate. Allied cities were not “women” in reality, after all; these choruses represented serious and very real political entities whose relationship with Athens was essential for the success of its empire. Figuring this relationship in terms of the domestic interaction between male and female no doubt provided a good deal of comic novelty, but beyond that, it also raises a number of further questions, including questions about how Athenians themselves conceived of their own city. In the Athens as represented on the comic stage, we find male Athenians engaged in one sort of gendered relationship with the female chorus, rooted in traditionally conceived roles. But since Athens itself was, after all, a polis, we might suppose that it too was conceptualized in these

comedies in the same way as foreign cities were by virtue of the feminine gender of that noun. What, then, is the interplay between the gendered discourse about Athens within Athens itself and the gendered conceptualization of foreign Greek cities that we find in comic choruses? To begin to suggest some answers to such questions we may turn to the most conspicuous allegorical chorus of this sort in Eupolis' Poleis.

Even the relatively few fragments that survive from this play have led scholars to suppose that its main theatrical focus was an elaborately conceived and adorned chorus. Norwood has imagined with characteristic enthusiasm that it was a “beautiful, stirring and brilliant comedy,” largely based on the assumption that the chorus of allied states offered a colorful spectacle concerned with weighty matters of contemporary politics.¹² Elsewhere he calls it “probably one of the most charming and vigorous comedies ever produced in Athens” (p. 192). Although it is difficult to judge exactly how much theatrical emphasis was placed on the chorus, the fragments do indeed suggest that at least some of the individual chorus members in Poleis were singled out for commentary by the actors, such as we find in the parodos of Aristophanes' Birds (260-304), where the hoopoe identifies for Peisthetaerus and Euelpides identifies individual birds of the chorus as they make their entrance.¹³

Several fragments in Poleis are traditionally adduced to support a scene of this sort, and although quite brief, they are especially revealing when we keep in mind the interplay between sexual and political discourse in Athenian society. Fr. 246 K-A, which derives from a scholium on Aristophanes' Birds, leaves little doubt that one character announces and comments upon the identity and appearance of chorus members as they make their entrance:

αὖτη Χ'ος, καλῶ πῶλις <>
πῆμπει γῖρ ὦμᾶν ναῶς μακρῖς ὑνδρας θῶ ἄταν δεῶσπ,
καά τῦλλα πειθαρχεᾶ καλῖς, ὑπληκτος ἦσπερ ἦππος

and here's Khios—and a fine city <she is>!—
since she sends you long ships¹⁴ and men whenever there's a need,
and she takes orders wonderfully, just like an obedient horse

These lines clearly indicate the stage business at hand: the demonstrative αὐτῆ indicates the ceremonious entrance of Khios, and the aesthetic comment (καλῶ πῶλις) implies that she is accoutred according to her status as a valuable ally and rich city.¹⁵ But on the stage this abstraction of a city is also a woman, and this situation allows for the male actors to interact with them and comment upon them as explicitly human and female. The language immediately becomes susceptible to the standard double entendre of Old Comedy, and reveals at the same time how an Athenian¹⁶ can easily speak about the relationship between Athens and her allies as he would the relationship between male and female. Khios is praised, in other words, as a city who actively aids the Athenian war effort with ships and men, yet the speaker seems as pleased with the notion of Khios' obedience to a superior authority (πειθαρχεῖ καλῆς, ὑπληκτος ἥσπερ ἥπιπος) as he is with its material aid. In this fragment, then, we find the discourse of political power coalescing with that of sexual relations, where the relationship between the ideal ally and its putative leader (Athens) is portrayed much as the relationship between the ideal wife and her husband is supposed to be. The animal metaphor of the horse, in particular, may work easily enough in its own right to describe a well behaved city, but with a female character marching across the stage, the reference to her as an “obedient horse who doesn't need goading” introduces, no doubt with intentional comic effect, female stereotypes that extend in the extant tradition at least from Hesiod and Semonides to Aristotle and beyond.

Aristotle is particularly revealing on this point, in that he conceives of the relationship between male and female within a household in a way that can be seen as analogous to the relationship between Athens and other Greek cities. For Aristotle, that is, the “female” is allied with the “slave” by virtue of the fact that they both are deficient in the composition of their souls. Specifically, slaves lack the deliberative capacity (τῶ βουλευτικῶν) entirely, while women possess it, though it remains inoperative (ὑκυρον; cf. 1260a10-12). It is natural, and therefore just, according to Aristotle, that both women and slaves be ruled by a male element with full psychic capacities. But Aristotle was also aware that the social status of Athenian women, at any rate, within the oikos and the polis was different from that of slaves, though he never explicitly lays out a distinction between rule over women and rule over slaves.¹⁷ Roger Just attempts to

resolve the problem: “if the rational faculty of women’s psyche was akyron, ‘inoperative’, ‘without command’, then the obvious solution to the problem of their very necessary accommodation within the organization of the civilized community was to place them under a kyrios, a male, who could supply for them that rational command which they lacked.”¹⁸ Just is not clear about exactly how this would differ from Athenian rule over slaves, who also require a ruling element, but he rightly stresses the difference in the actual contemporary discourse about the two categories: a woman whose deliberative function is ύκυρον, but who then acquires a κώριος to make up somehow for this lack, would have been perceived and treated differently from a slave whose deliberative capacity was simply non-existent. A natural slave, in other words, will always lack τῶ βουλευτικῶν and so will always exist at a lower social status than a woman, who at least in theory has a capacity for deliberation.¹⁹

According to Aristotle, then, the relationship between a man and woman, though capable of being characterized philosophically as “slavish”, was in reality a good deal more subtle than might first appear. The famous scene in Xenophon’s Oeconomicus (7-10) where a rather unctuous Ischomachus describes his attempts to domesticate his young wife, illustrates well Aristotle’s fundamental attitude in which women are simultaneously viewed as chronically in need of male intellectual guidance, yet also worthy of some sort of respect.²⁰ Aristotle holds to his more rigid formulation of “slavishness” in the case of barbarians, male and female alike, whose souls are by nature constructed differently from those of Greeks.²¹

To return to the fragment from Poleis under discussion, I would suggest that the idea of having women embody allied states in the play would have worked particularly well in Athens precisely because it conflated so well the sexual attitudes we have noted in Aristotle with analogous contemporary attitudes towards the allied states. Just as women represented for Aristotle an element within society that needed by nature a form of rule, so were non-Athenian Greek states regarded as best served when they had Athens ruling over them.²² Moreover, just as a woman’s social status was not as low as the true slave’s, so were Athenian subject states differentiated from non-Greek (i.e. barbarian) states. Athenian men (in the case of domestic relations) and the corporate Athenian polis (in the case of international relations) would surely subscribe to Aristotle’s observation that “ruling and being ruled not only belongs to the category

of things necessary, but also to that of things expedient” (1252a21-22, trans. Barker). Such an attitude certainly governs the rhetoric of the Athenians in the “Melian Dialogue” in Thucydides 5.85-111, as a few examples illustrate:

91.2:

...”ς δὲ ἔπω ἠφελ’α τε πῖρεσμεν τ ς δμετῆρας ὑρχ ς καά ἔπά σωτηρ’α νών τοῆς λῶγους ἔροώμεν τ ς δμετῆρας πῶλεως, τὰώτα δηλῆσομεν, βουλῶμενοι ὑπῶν ὡς μὲν ὡμ]ν ὑρξαι, χρῆσ’μωσ δὲ ὡμὺς ὑμφοτῆροις σωθ ναι.

105.2:

δγοώμεθα γῖρ τῶ τε θεᾶον δῶξ[] τῶ ὑνθρῆπειῶν τε σαφ]ς διῖ παντῶς ὡπῶ φῶ σεως ὑναγκά’ας, οῖ ὑν κρατᾶ, ὑρχειν·

91.2.1: We will now proceed to show you that we are come here in the interest of our empire, and that we shall say what we are now going to say, for the preservation of your country, as we would fain exercise that empire over you without trouble, and see you preserved for the good of us both..

105.2: Of the gods we believe, and of men we know, that by a necessary law of their nature they rule wherever they can. (trans. Crawley).

“Expediency”, “mutual benefit”, “necessary rule”, “natural rule”—such are the concepts that undergird the ideology of Athenian hegemony during the later fifth century, and which provided the rationale for the way the Athenians dealt with its allies.²³

The little parable about the origins of gender roles which Ischomachus relates to his wife in Xenophon’s Oeconomicus offers a strikingly parallel set of concepts to justify his injunctions to her:

7.18:

ἔμοά γῖρ τοι, ἠφῆ φῖναι, καά οἱ θεό’, ἀ γῶναι, δοκοῶσι πολῆ διεσκεμμῆνως μῖλισ τα τῶ ζεώγος τοῶτο συντεθεικῆναι ἐ καλεᾶται θ λυ καά ὑρρεν, ᾶπως ᾶτι ἠφελ ιμῆτατον [] αῶτᾶ εἰς τῶν κοινων’αν.

7.28:

διῖ δὲ τῶ τῶν φῶσιν μῶ πρῶς πῖντα τὰώτῖ ὑμφοτῆρων εῶ πεφυκῆναι, διῖ τοῶ το καά δῆονται μύλλον ὑλλῶλων καά τῶ ζεώγος ἠφελιμῆτερον ᾶαυτᾶ γεγενῶται...

7.18: For it seems to me, woman...that the gods have used great consideration in joining together the pair called male and female so that it may be of the greatest benefit to itself and the community.

7.28: Since, then, the nature of each has not been brought forth to be naturally apt for all the same things, each has need of the other, and their pairing is more beneficial to each...

Ischomachus's attitude to his wife is probably much more generous than was the norm,²⁴ though it illustrates well how Athenian men could conceive of their marriage as a partnership while at the same time asserting their natural right to ultimate authority within the oikos as a whole.²⁵ Such passages from Thucydides and Xenophon do not, of course, necessarily lead to the conclusion that Athenians consciously and publicly thought of their allies as "feminine" in any general sense. But there is no question that Eupolis is able to "feminize" Khios and the other states in Poleis precisely because the allies were expected to assume a specifically defined subordinate role in a power relationship remarkably similar to that between husband and wife.

The strong likelihood of sexual double entendre in fr. 246, moreover, reinforces the conflation of the sexual and political spheres. Khios is praised for sending "long ships and men whenever there's a need", and for acting like an obedient "horse". The first phrase, mentioning ships and men, of course, was practically formulaic in contexts involving allies, and by itself need raise no eyebrows. But the metaphor of the "horse" is so charged with sexual overtones in Attic comedy that it is difficult not to assume a lewd coloration for it here, and we are probably justified in reading the previous line in this manner as well.²⁶ The horse metaphor appears in a variety of contexts in comedy, though one of the most common involves the mode of copulation in which the woman is "on top", as if riding a horse. The horse metaphor in comedy is actually used without great precision; that is, in descriptions of this form of copulation, the man technically becomes the horse, and the woman the rider.²⁷ Yet, as Aristophanes' Lysistrata 677 indicates, the metaphor of the horse can be transferred to the "riding" woman as well: "...a woman is a very horsey creature and knows well how to mount" (Henderson).²⁸ At Ecclesiiazusae 846-47, furthermore, a man named Smoios is said to put on his "horseman's garb" in order to prepare himself to "wipe clean the women's cups" (... ππικῶν στολῶν ἦχων / τῆ γυναικῶν διακαθάρει τρῶβλια), a passage that clearly

conjures up the image of a human male in control of a female sexual partner conceived of as a horse.

Implicit in the metaphor of Khios as an obedient horse, moreover, is the notion that both as a female choreut and as an allied city, she represents an element that requires domestication by a controlling and civilizing force. The idea that for Athenian men women were fundamentally creatures of the wild, of nature, lacked self-control and rationality, and ultimately presented an impediment to the progress of civilization, is evident at every turn in their myths, rituals and cultural representations. Much recent scholarship within classics has emphasized this fact, and feminist scholars outside the discipline have shown just how pervasive, if not universal, this attitude seems to be.²⁹ The conflation of women and allies in Eupolis fr. 246 within the metaphor of a tamed, serviceable beast, therefore, is a direct reflex of this mode of thought, and illuminates an aspect of Athenian self-perception which only Attic comedy is capable of articulating in just such a way. Non-Athenian Greek states could have all the allure of women as aesthetic, sexual objects (as the accoutrement of the chorus no doubt emphasized), they could assist in Athens' aggrandizement just as a woman assisted in the prosperity of the oikos within the polis. But ultimately the Athenians conceptualized their allies as "wild", as they did women, or at least as less thoroughly civilized than an Athenian citizen, and thereby could bolster their claims to political leadership and superiority.³⁰

The nature of the relationship between Athens and her allies can be further specified in Eupolis' Poleis from fr. 223 K-A, in which gender and politics once again merge:

ὦ Φιλᾶνος οἴτος, τ' ὕρα πρῶς ταῶτην βλῆπεις;
ὡκ ὑπολιβίξεις εἰς ὑποικᾶν τινί;

Hey Philinos! Why're you gawking at her?
Make yourself disappear, would you? Off to the colonies with you!

Ever since Raspe (p. 91), it has commonly been supposed that the ταῶτην of the first line refers to one of the cities of the chorus on display, and this seems reasonable, not only in view of the fact that fr. 245 and 246, as we discussed above, strongly suggest such a scene but also because

the humor of the second line (“off to a colony with you”) depends on a context that has something to do with foreign cities.

Kock offered several parallels from Aristophanes³¹ to suggest that Philinos was a spectator rather than a character in the play. Such a comic conceit, in which the poet disrupts the dramatic illusion in order to register the reaction of the audience, supports the likelihood that this scene offers considerable spectacle of some sort, and it allows the poet to call attention to his own dramaturgy. If we are right, then, to suppose that Philinos is here lewdly ogling one of the cities of the chorus, the details complement our discussion of fr. 246 by offering an even more nuanced commentary on how the Athenians perceived their relationship to their allies. To begin with, the name Philinos almost certainly was chosen for its erotic connotations, where the root *φιλ-* would suggest the usual associations of “love” and “kisses” (*φιλῶματα*).³² If the name refers to a generic member of the audience eyeing a female character with erotic intention, the humor of the scene is all the more assured by making it appropriate to his actions. The protective attitude of the speaker toward the woman, however, is noteworthy, and seems to imply that these women, in any event, ought to receive more respect than one might afford, say, a woman of lesser status, such as a prostitute, slave, or barbarian.

It would be helpful, of course, to know exactly who spoke the lines of this fragment. Although it is possible that that they belong to a male character adopting the posture of a husband, indignant at an affront to his wife’s honor, I think it is more likely that one of the female chorus members themselves, offended at the locker-room attitude displayed by the characters as they comment on the parade of female cities, is here chastizing the general male populace at Athens. In this case the sexual dynamics of the scene are subtle: the fragment strongly implies that the woman referred to (*ταῶτην*) is costumed in a suggestive manner, hence the stock male response of ogling. As such, she appears on the stage more as a typical slave or prostitute than a respectable Athenian housewife.³³ Yet the speaker seems to be objecting to such an assumption, and appeals for an attitude of greater respect toward the female choreut. The sort of small-scale female rebellion against male attitudes is, of course, well known to us from several Aristophanic plays, but it is particularly interesting here for what it says about the chorus’ identity as allied cities. As women, in other words, they insist on maintaining their

respectable status even if they choose to make themselves sexually attractive; as allies, they ask for analogous treatment, namely, to be taken seriously as political partners, even while asserting a certain degree of autonomy as the subordinate partner of a ruler-ruled relationship.

Indeed, the second line of fr. 223 (οὐκ ὑπολιβίξεις εἰς ὑποικ' ἄν τινι;) calls attention to the female chorus as political entities, if only by turning the joke in on themselves. The verb ὑπολιβίζω appears for us only in comic diction,³⁴ and occasions the gloss that supplies this fragment. Its literal meaning of “causing to drop away” has developed into an idiom meaning little more than “get the hell outta here!” In this fragment, then, the speaker consigns the offending spectator to a colony for his bad behavior. Whether spoken in mock earnestness by a male Athenian or with self-irony by a female chorus member, the import is clear: sending an Athenian citizen off to a colony represents a demotion in status, implying as it does physical removal from Athens and presumably relinquishment of Athenian citizenship.³⁵ Once again, Athenian attitudes toward her allies are quietly reinforced: being sent to a “colony” is not, perhaps, as terrifying as being sent to a barbarian country, but nevertheless non-Athenian Greek cities are by definition inferior to Athens and occupy the same sort of intermediate position in politics (Athenian—non-Athenian Greek—barbarian) as women did in gender relations (male citizen—female birthright Athenian—female slave/prostitute).³⁶

Norwood himself sensed that fragments of *Poleis* such as 223 K-A and 246 K-A indicate that the comedy played up the sexual tensions between a female chorus and male principals.³⁷ His suggestion that the cities’ “appeal for clemency—naturally successful in the poet’s hands—resulted in a marriage or pairing-off of ‘cities’ and Athenians”³⁸ cannot be substantiated with the available evidence, but fr. 243 K-A, “for I’ve got just the right man for her” (ἦχω γάρ ἐπιτῶδειον ἄνδρῶ ἀώτῃ πῖνυ), does suggest that marriage is at least addressed in the play, if it does not play a substantial role in the action.³⁹ However this theme was played out, we may be fairly certain that this fragment does highlight a particular attitude of the male Athenian actor(s) towards the female chorus, and supports my argument that the Athenians were viewing their allies here in much the same way as they would view their own wives. Their desire for a “marriage” with individual allies, therefore, was analogous to the desire for a “real” marriage with a woman: in each case the relationship ideally was intended to foster the higher

goal of managing, maintaining and enriching an oikos, whether it be the actual one of the Athenian household, or the metaphorical one of the international hegemony which Athens claimed for itself. This would surely explain why in fr. 223 we saw that a man was castigated for lecherous intentions towards one of the cities. Sexual gratification seems not to have been a necessary, defining component of an Athenian marriage, and even though, as many have rightly emphasized, we must treat the incomplete and often conflicting evidence we have with extreme care, it is safe to say that marriage was not seen in any way, for males anyway, as a necessary sanction for sexual activity.⁴⁰ Extramarital sex of all sorts was available and tolerated, and only excessive sexual activity in general seems to have been subject to moralizing. In circumspect, male-centered discourse, wives were not generally viewed as sexual creatures, and indeed to do so could be construed as a slight against their character.⁴¹ Hence, when Philinos ogles one of the cities in fr. 223, viewing them as sexual objects rather than functional elements of a social institution, he repudiates (and thereby calls attention to) their implicit claim to a higher political/domestic status.

Nowhere is this male “double-standard” more evident in the fragments of Poleis than in fr. 247, where the formal entrance of the choreut portraying Kyzikos reminds a character of a great debauch he once experienced there as a guard.

δ δὼ ὠστίτη ποῶ ὠσθῶ; ἔδε Κῶζικος πλῆα στατῶρων.
 ἔν τ ἰδε τόνυ τ ι πῶλει φρουρ]ν ἄγΗ ποτῶ ἀτῶς
 γυναῖκῶ ἔκ'νουν κολλῶβου καά παῖδα καά γῆροντα,
 κύξ ν ἄλην τῶν δμῆραν τῶν κῶσθον ἔκκορ'ζειν

But where's the last one? There's Kyzikos, the city of gold coins.
 Yes, that reminds me of the time when I was on guard-duty in that city
 and I got to screw a woman, a boy and an old man for only a penny,
 and I could spend the whole day rooting out pussy

It did not take much, of course, to inspire boastful characters in comedy to reminisce fondly about their peccadillos while on military service (“fortia memorabiliaque facinora patrare callent Atheniensium praesidia” Kassel-Austin wryly note),⁴² but this example is especially noteworthy for the way in which the speaker's sexual escapades resonate within the context of the scene.

There is virtual consensus that this fragment probably comes from the same scene as fr. 246 and 247 (discussed above), that is, as a part of the formal parade-like entrance of the chorus of cities. Like the other cities, Kyzikos was evidently distinguished by her costuming or accoutrements, as the end of the first verse suggests (Κῶζικος πλῆα στατῶρων).⁴³ Kyzikos was famous at this time for its opulence and its contributions of gold staters⁴⁴ to the League, and as such, the allegorical depiction of the city as a woman calls to mind the same nexus of associations that we have seen in the case of Khios. Like the feminized Khios, that is, Kyzikos is a subordinate, but respected player in an international relationship analogous to that between a husband and a wife within a household. In this particular case, the explicit emphasis on Kyzikos as a financial asset is especially significant in that, as Henderson has recently argued, women (especially older women) seem to have been thought of as excellent money managers at Athens, and were evidently allotted considerable financial responsibility both within the oikos and in certain public offices, such as priesthoods.⁴⁵ The speaker of fr. 247, however, like Philinos in fr. 223, can only react to the allegorized city as a sexual object. He does not, of course, treat Kyzikos herself specifically as an opportunity for sexual gratification, as Philinos apparently views the unnamed city of fr. 223, but it is clear that Kyzikos functions as nothing more than a mnemonic springboard for his own sexual bravado. In fact, the last thing on his mind is the kind of male-female relationship that one associates with an ideally functioning oikos. Indeed, what he reveals here, as is the case in all such passages in which characters recount rakish escapades on military service, is precisely a sense of sexual freedom that derives from the fact that he is away from Athens, away from the constraints of decorum, not to mention law, that would inhibit the pursuit of his most bestial desires at home. The speaker's energies while in Kyzikos are focused on undifferentiated heterosexual and homosexual activity of all varieties (γυναῖκῶ ἔκ'νουν κολλῶβου καά παῖδα καά γῆροντα, / κύξ ν ἄλην τῶν δμῆραν τ ῶν κῶσθον ἔκκορ'ζειν), and the implicit contrast between Kyzikos as a place where such libertine behavior is tolerated (if not encouraged) and Athens, where it is not, ultimately reflects a deep conflict in the conceptualizing of Athenian and non-Athenian national characters. The speaker revels, in other words, in the opportunity for unbridled sexuality in Kyzikos, yet the thrill of his experience there seems contingent on the fact that it occurs in a place that is not Athens.

For the speaker, Athens remains morally superior even as he seeks to transgress the principles upon which this superiority is felt to be grounded.

We see in this fragment, therefore, a tension between two divergent attitudes. On the one hand, the poet has created an instantiation of Kyzikos, reinforced by costume and gesture, that would signal its stature as a respected player in international politics. This portrait derives from the realm of “official” discourse about how Athens publicly acknowledged its allies. The city is valuable to Athens as a source of wealth (πλῆα στατώρων), and deserves the respect that all the other cities on parade deserve (cf. above on fr. 223). But Kyzikos, like the others, is still subject to Athens and must always acquiesce to Athenian hegemony. Allegorized as a woman on the stage, then, the city plays the role of the respected and valued, yet ultimately subordinate, housewife.

On the other hand, however, the fragment in the end undermines this rather polite portrayal of Kyzikos, as the speaker launches into the litany of sexual escapades that the city allegedly afforded him. It is difficult not to see in this fragment, then, the sort of ambivalence and anxiety towards women on the part of Athenian men that Loraux and others have emphasized.⁴⁶ In this case, it is as if the speaker’s self-indulgent sexual anecdote is an attempt to counter a perceived threat to the proper hierarchies of power and value which the polis/woman Kyzikos poses for him. Indeed, the sexual partners of line 3 (a woman, a boy, an old man) share the common feature of being physically or politically weak (or both), and the fact that on Kyzikos the speaker could gratify his lusts for only “a penny” (especially in contrast to Kyzikos’ repute as a wealthy city, as noted in line 1), further emphasizes the deliberate devaluation of these individuals, and their status as mere commodities of appetitive desire.

Indeed, the scholiast on Aristophanes Peace 1176, who cites this fragment from Eupolis, affirms this sort of attitude towards Kyzikos. The lemma from Aristophanes that he glosses is the phrase “he has been dipped in Kyzicene dye” (βῆβαπται βίμμα Κυζικηνικῶν), which he takes to refer to someone who cannot control his bowels because of excessive homosexual anal sex:

...εἰς κιναιδᾶν διαβίλλεται, ἥστε μηδὲ τῶν ὑναγκάων δι᾽ τῶν εὐρωῶτητα κρατε
 ᾶν δῶνασθαι, ᾶς κατὰ Εὐπολις ἐν Πῶλεσιν· [Eupolis fr.

247].ύλλως· τουτῆστι κατασχημονεᾶ. οἱ γῆρ Κυζικηνοᾶ ἔπα δειλᾶ καὰ θηλῶτητ
ι ἔκωμ᾽δοῶντο

...the person is ridiculed for homosexual activity, implying that he is unable to control his bowels because they have been stretched out so much, as Eupolis too [has] in Poleis::[Eupolis fr. 247]; used differently here; in other words [the speaker] acts indecently, for the Kyziceniens were ridiculed in comedy for their cowardice and femininity

It is difficult to judge from the wording whether the scholiast also sees a specific connection between the explicit homosexual innuendo of the Aristophanes passage and the reference to Kyzikos in Eupolis 247, but the nexus of associations is clear enough. Even if the scholiast would not push for such a connection, he sees that Kyzikos was an appropriate venue for the sort of activity and attitude displayed by the speaker of the Eupolis fragment, precisely because the city was characterized by emblems of subjection and cultural inferiority, namely cinaedic homosexuality and femininity.⁴⁷ The speaker of the fragment, therefore, manages to ridicule this portrait of the Athenian ally by literally wielding his own phallus in a conspicuous show of virility intended to cover all the bases, as it were. Once again, the discourse of politics and gender intertwine, freely exchanging metaphors of power and status that reflect the complex public posturing of the Athenian male persona.

Fr. 247 seems to have occurred near or at the end of the parade of female city-choreuts, (δ δῶ ὠστῖτη ποῶ ὠσθῶ; ἔδε Κῶζικος..., “but where’s the last one? There’s Kyzikos...”), and its position here, even as a passing comic remark, summarizes what was probably a basic ambivalence toward the chorus on the part of the male characters in the play. On the one hand, the chorus’ apparent criticism of Athenian policies toward the allies amounts to the sort of political self-criticism we associate with Old Comedy. In keeping with this agenda, the chorus presumably strove to enlist the sympathies of the audience (and judges), lodging complaints against an imperialistic Athens and warning, perhaps, of the dangers of political arrogance in international affairs. On the other hand, attitudes such as those voiced by the speaker of fr. 247 suggest that Eupolis was not particularly interested in repudiating the fundamental structure of the Athenian empire, and that, despite any reasonable pleas by the allies for a better relationship

with Athens, Athens' interests were ultimately best served by ensuring that the allies remained, at least metaphorically, perennially servile.

In practice, of course, Athenians made a clear distinction between a slave and a Greek ally, as they did between an Athenian woman and a household slave. But, as we noted earlier, all of such categories share the fundamental trait of being socially and politically subordinate to Athenian males. It is not surprising, therefore, to find the discourse of “servility” in all contexts that involve relationships between superiors and subordinates, even when slavery per se is not literally at issue. We find just this sort of discourse, in fact, in fr. 229 of *Poleis*, where a member of the chorus,⁴⁸ in lamenting their current status, alludes to a law that allowed slaves to change their masters:

κακῖ τοῖδε
πῖσχοισιν οὐδὲ πρῦσιν αἴτ]

they suffer such ills,
and I don't even ask to be sold

The fragment is quoted by Pollux (7.13) alongside a similar usage of πρῦσιν in Aristophanes (fr. 577K-A), and a passage in Plutarch (*Superst.* 166d) clarifies the idiom: “even for slaves who have given up the hope of freedom, there is a law that allows them to ask to be put up for sale and to switch to a better master” [ἦστι κατὰ δούλοισι νόμος ἔλευθέρων ὑπογνοῶσι πρῦσιν αἴτῃσθαι κατὰ δεσπότην μεταβίλλειν ἐπιεικῆστερον]. The speaker is evidently outraged at the suffering of her fellow cities and characterizes the relationship they have with some superior force, presumably Athens, as that between master and slave. Here, the speaker expresses additional indignation that she, at any rate, has been willing to endure a good deal of ill treatment without rebelling—without, that is, asking to be “put up for sale” to a better master (οὐδὲ πρῦσιν αἴτ]). Her attitude, in other words, is one of basic compliance with the general social order, and the point she seems to be trying to make in this fragment is that her outrage at Athens is all the more valid precisely because she accepts her status as a subordinate of Athens. The Athenian citizenry must have

heard a good deal of criticism in this play about their foreign policy, but this fragment, along with the others we have examined, certainly suggests that the traditional stereotypes remained intact: the fundamental assumption that Athens was naturally suited to rule over the Greek world does not seem here to be called into question, nor is the assumption that non-Athenians were naturally inferior. By allegorizing the cities of the chorus as women, moreover, Eupolis conflates in one stroke several socio-political categories—the political ally, the female, the slave—and thus emphatically dramatizes how monolithic and polarized a segment of the Greek world the masculine Athenian citizen body conceived itself to be.

Eupolis' allegory in the chorus of Poleis, as we have seen, relies upon the dominant Athenian conception of women and non-Athenian Greek cities as intrinsically subordinate and in need of a ruling power. My argument has assumed that Eupolis was exploiting the feminine gender of the noun "polis" in his allegory of the chorus to highlight this conception. But how did the Athenian citizen conceptualize his own polis, Athens itself? The relationship between the allied cities and Athens in Poleis was, after all, a relationship between two conceptualizations of a polis; but only one of these seems to have been portrayed on the stage as an allegorical character. The audience, rather, witnessed the interaction between the allegorized allies and Athenian men, who, though representing at some level the polis of Athens, did not embody it the way the chorus did their own. The question remains, then, whether the allies were feminized only by virtue of the fact that their political status demanded as much (they were inferior to Athens, and so were like women), or whether the abstract notion of a polis itself, of whatever kind, was "feminine" at some level in the Athenian mind. If the latter, how would a feminized conception of the Athenian polis differ from that of the allies in Poleis?

Nicole Loraux's analysis of the Periclean funeral oration in Thucydides discusses in some detail fifth-century conceptualizations of the polis, and touches on a number of the concerns I have voiced above about the representation of the polis in Old Comedy. Loraux notes that in the funeral oration in particular, and in the orators in general, there is a distinct tendency to efface the diversity and multiplicity of the actual polis in favor of a unified abstraction.⁴⁹ She contrasts this unified portrayal of the polis in oratory with its various concrete representations in everyday life (e.g. public iconography, representations on the stage), where multiplicity seems to be

celebrated, and concludes that “[n]o face...must come between the orators and the men whom it is their duty to celebrate.” In other words, the polis, when conceived of as an entity “is abstract through and through, and, being addressed to an imaginary without image, it exists in opposition to figured abstractions, which are based on a certain type of representation.” (282).

As for the representations of the polis that we find in dramatic allegories of the fifth century—one of Loraux’s “figured abstractions”—Loraux seems to imply, without quite articulating it as such, that they are less ideological, or, perhaps, less productive of ideology, than the “ideality” of the polis that emerges from the epitaphios. When a comic chorus or a sculpture puts a face on an abstraction, such allegoresis can represent concretely only a partial ideological framework. As Loraux says of the figure of Demos in Athens: “When the sculptors represent Demos as a bearded old man, they are borrowing from comedy a figure that was already fully formed: because Demos is embodied in Knights, we can forget that demos, in Athenian political practice, is first defined as a number” (283). Allegory, in other words, cannot hope to encompass the full range of ideological associations inherent in an abstraction.⁵⁰

Our analysis of Eupolis’ allegory of the polis in Poleis, helps to demonstrate the extent to which “figured abstractions” could in fact reflect important aspects of the Athenian imaginary landscape. Loraux might argue that Eupolis’ allegory is particularized to refer to non-Athenian cities, and illuminates more specifically the issue of how Athenians perceived other poleis, rather than their own. But the construction of the polis as essentially “female” need not be dismissed as a convenient device simply to put down all cities that were not Athenian. The allegory can only work to the fullest extent, it seems, if we assume that the abstract entity itself—the figure of a polis—can be articulated most meaningfully to an Athenian audience with the metaphor of the female. To illustrate this, we might try to imagine what Eupolis would have done if he had wanted to represent the city of Athens among the other choreuts of Poleis. Would he, in other words, have felt compelled to represent Athens as a male figure, in contrast to the non-Athenian cities, in order to highlight the political inequities that obtained between the two categories? This is, of course, a purely hypothetical question, but not, I think, an idle one, for there is plenty of evidence indicating that Athens itself was figured as a female in the various material representations of the later fifth and fourth centuries,⁵¹ and a male choreut representing Athens in a

comedy would surely seem completely inappropriate to a contemporary audience. Indeed, one of the remarkable features of the representations of the Athenian polis in literary sources, at any rate, is that it seems to transcend gender categories, while visual representations of Athens tend to be figured as distinctly female (283-84).⁵²

It is clear, therefore, that an allegory of any polis in fifth-century Athens, whether of Athens itself or of a non-Athenian polis, whether verbally or visually, would have appeared as a female figure. In discussing the particular allegory in Eupolis' Poleis, we were able to suggest how contemporary conceptions of the "female" intersected with conceptions of non-Athenian Greek states. But did such discourse reflect a more general and abstract way of thinking about the polis that could include Athens as well? Certainly Athenians did not portray their own polis with metaphors or allegories that would impute to themselves the subordinate and weak status generally associated with Athenian women or, worse yet, slaves. Insofar as Athenian males regarded their own city as superior in force and moral legitimacy to foreign, subject cities, it would obviously be inappropriate for them to apply to Athens the metaphors of subordination and servility that they associated with their subject states. In conceiving of a feminized Athens, rather, Athenians had to draw on the strictly positive stereotypes of "the female", while obscuring the more negative ones which seem to have predominated in most other areas of Athenian cultural discourse.

It is especially interesting in this regard that the most conspicuous metaphor used to describe Athens specifically as the caretaker of an empire is that of the "metropolis", the "mother city". This metaphor, though, could only operate when the Athenians viewed their empire as a relationship specifically between an abstract polis (their own) and other subordinate ones (their allies), in which case the relationship could be figured as that between a mother and child. In other contexts, when Athens was conceived of as a collection of Athenian males, such as was evidently the case in Eupolis' Poleis, the city-ally relationship was more explicitly figured as one between male and female. Athens could, in short, be allegorized as a female, just as the allies had been, but Athenians would have certainly invested such a figure with an entirely different set of female attributes than those used for the allegorized allied states, since they would hardly have imagined their own city in anything but a positive light.

In the metaphor of the metropolis, then, we find just such a feminized image which manages also to incorporate an essentially masculine agenda (power, control, hegemony) within a “feminine” framework of motherhood, birth, nurture and domestic economics. It is, of course, difficult to ascertain how vividly the maternal image inherent in the term would have been in the minds of a fifth-century Athenian, especially since the word has lost so much of its imagistic force in modern western culture. Still, we must remember that a μητρῶπολις in fifth-century Greek had a rather limited and specified meaning, referring mostly to a city that managed its own “progeny”, usually in the form of colonies.⁵³

Just how “technical” the term μητρῶπολις must have been at this time becomes clear when one contrasts it to the very common term πατρίς, “fatherland”, referring to Athens as the place of a citizen’s birth and belonging. Indeed, this term reflected a tendency to conceptualize one’s genealogical ties to Attica as essentially patrilineal.⁵⁴ Such an emphasis on a male conceptualization of citizenship and politics contrasts vividly with the metaphor of the polis in its capacity specifically as the parent of her colonies and/or allies. When it was a matter of their own identity, Athenian citizens tended to gender their polis as male—fatherly, masculine, war-like, ordered by a πίτριος πολιτεΐα—and their relationship with the polis paralleled that between a father and a son. But when the polis was conceived as an international “parent”, we find a shift in the metaphor from paternity to maternity, giving rise to an Athens visualized as a μητρῶπολις.

A curious fragment from the fourth-century comic poet Antiphanes illustrates well how actively gendered the metaphor of the μητρῶπολις could be at this time. Only one fragment survives from a play entitled Φιλομῶτωρ, quoted by Athenaeus in a playful discussion of the delicacy known as the μῶτρα:

ἤμητρον ὕν □ τῶ ξῶλον, βλίστην ἤχει·
μητρῶπολις ἔστιν, ὡχά πατρῶπολις <πῶλις>·
μῶτραν τινὲς πωλοῶσιν ἐδιστον κρηῆας·
Μητρὺς ἰ Χᾶῶς ἔστι τὰ δῶμ’ φ’λος (Antiphanes fr. 219)

If wood is full of pith, it can sprout;

<a city> is a “mother-city” (metropolis), not a “father-city” (patropolis)
Some sell the pig’s uterus (metra) as the greatest delicacy;
Metras the Chian is a friend to the people.

In the Athenaeon passage Ulpian adduces the fragment as part of his disquisition on the term μῶτρα, but offers no commentary on it. The context of the fragment within Antiphanes, therefore, remains uncertain, although clearly its main purpose was to introduce the extended pun on μῶτρα/μῶτηρ. The joke here merges with actual etymology, since μῶτρα refers to the “uterus” as the defining locus of maternity, and thus is derived linguistically from μῶτηρ. Kock suggested that the lines were spoken by someone who was trying to show that a mother deserved more respect than a father,⁵⁵ and such a scenario does not seem unlikely.⁵⁶ The lack of a context makes it difficult to decide whether these lines offer merely a random list of humorous puns on μῶτηρ, or whether there is some sequence of thought in them. The striking lack of any particles or conjunctions which might establish a logical flow between the lines does encourage us to treat each line as independent of the others. Still, the first two lines especially seem connected by a single thought: motherhood means growth and fecundity. By using the word ἡμητρον of wood in the first line, the speaker implies that it can grow precisely because it has a “maternal element” inherent in it. The mention of the βλίστη, the result of this growth, segues meaningfully into the following line, which can be read as an attempt to corroborate the point of the first line: to paraphrase the thought, then: “If wood is ‘motherized’ [full of pith], it can sprout; I mean, we call a city a ‘mother city’, after all, not a ‘father city’, and that’s because the city, like pithy wood, can produce progeny of a sort.” The implication of this paraphrase, of course, is that the metaphor of paternity would be not only contrary to current linguistic convention, but inappropriate to the ways Athenians conceptualized the role of their city at least in its capacity as an international power. Part of the humor of the passage may arise from the assumption that most people in the original audience would not routinely think through the literal ramifications of calling a city a “metropolis”, but even so, the joke does suggest that Athenians were capable of quite a remarkable degree of self-consciousness about a metaphor that we might otherwise assume to be “dead” or insignificant.

It seems, therefore, that in spite of the various metaphors available to Athenians in talking about their own city, when it came to thinking allegorically about Athens, actually instantiating the abstraction of the polis, the result was an idiosyncratic version of the more general tendency to construct poleis as feminized entities, as we have seen in the case of Eupolis’s Poleis. The conceptual shift from non-Athenian cities to Athens itself accompanies a shift in the conception of the female as a negative and subordinate construct to one that was positive and commanding. But the interplay of gender models implicit in these shifts is subtle. Athens, on the one hand, played out the role of a “mother” city in the international arena by viewing the world metaphorically as an oikos. Since, in the real Athenian oikos the mother seems typically to have been the financial manager and general administrator of domestic affairs, including parenting,⁵⁷ Athens was easily and appropriately “maternalized” in the Athenian imagination. Within the context of the oikos, then, the figure of the mother in fact represented a degree of control and power, and in the metaphorical, worldwide oikos of international relations, foreign cities could be figured as children—incomplete humans in need of a controlling rationality and educational guidance. It is easy to see, therefore, how the various metaphors for cities align themselves according to who is actually conceptualizing them. The following chart may help to illustrate the situation:

	<u>“Athens” as leader</u>	<u>“Athenians” as leaders</u>
<u>Athens:</u>	mother	husbands
<u>Foreign Cities:</u>	children	wives

Here the headings at the top indicate who is doing the conceptualizing, and the left-hand items indicate what is being conceptualized. The chart clearly shows how an allegorized Athens becomes feminized, while a group of males self-identifying corporately as Athenians adduce their maleness in constructing a role for themselves in international relations. It is significant, in any event, that the polis per se, when construed abstractly, is never viewed as a distinctly marked male entity. The maternalized Athens is surely felt to be a positive and powerful force, but it is feminine nevertheless.

I have spent some time speculating about how Athenians might have allegorized their own city on a comic stage as a way of exploring the tantalizing implications of the chorus of allied cities in Eupolis' Poleis. For the presence of an allegorical chorus on the Athenian stage demands that the audience (ancient and modern) try to ascribe meaning to the allegory, and in this particular case, if a woman can make sense as a city, then we will want to know whether it makes sense only because the cities are foreign cities, or because all cities were somehow feminized in the Athenian imagination. Our discussion above suggests, I believe, that in fact the latter holds, that at some fundamental level the chorus of cities in Poleis made sense as women precisely because the abstraction itself of a city was invested with stereotypically "feminine" attributes by contemporary male culture. But as in our own culture, the notion of the "feminine" in fifth-century Athens is neither monolithic nor consistent, and we have seen its conceptual fluidity in the Athenian mind. Two parallel notions of the "feminine" emerge here. In the case of the allied states, the female is seen as a subordinate player in a relationship with males based on the exercise of power. Hence we find the female cities of Eupolis' Poleis portrayed "negatively", for example, as erotic objects, prostitutes or slaves. But when it comes to Athens, more "positive" images of the female arise, such as those of maternal nurturer and household manager. Beneath this apparent ambivalence, however, there remains an inherent otherness about the female in the Athenian male imagination.⁵⁸ Athenian men may indeed have felt reasonably well disposed towards women, at least insofar as they could be mothers and oeconomists worthy of respect, but it is the citizen body of males who ran the empire, fought the wars, and brought glory to their polis. Any allegorized Athenian polis must remain the abstraction that it is, and hence, like the women to whom it could be likened, functionally static and ultimately ornamental.

Bibliography

- Brandes, E. 1886. Observationes criticae de comoediarum aliquot Atticarum temporibus.
- Dover, K.J. 1968. Aristophanes' Clouds.. Oxford.
- Dougherty, Carol. 1993. The Poetics of Colonization. Oxford.
- Ehrenberg, V. 1962. The People of Aristophanes: A Sociology of Old Attic Comedy. New York.
- Geissler, P. 1925. Chronologie der altattischen Komödie. Berlin.
- Graham, A.J. 1983 [1964]. Colony and Mother City in Ancient Greece. Second ed. New York.
- Guthrie, W.K.C. 1971. The Sophists [= A History of Greek Philosophy I.3, 1969]. Cambridge.
- Hall, Edith. 1989. Inventing the Barbarian: Greek Self-Definition through Tragedy. Oxford.
- Halperin, David M. 1990. One Hundred Years of Homosexuality and Other Essays on Greek Love. New York.
- Henderson, Jeffrey 1975. The Maculate Muse: Obscene Language in Attic Old Comedy. New Haven and London.
- Henderson, Jeffrey 1987a. Aristophanes' Lysistrata. Oxford.
- Henderson, Jeffrey 1987b. "Older Women in Attic Old Comedy." TAPA 117.105-29.
- Just, Roger. 1989. Women in Athenian Law and Life. New York.
- Kassel, R. and C. Austin. 1983 - . Poetae Comici Graeci. Berlin and New York.
- Kleinknecht, H. 1975 [1939]. "Die Epiphanie des Demos in Aristophanes' Rittern." Hermes 77.58-65 [=Newiger, H.J. 1975. Aristophanes und die alte Komödie. Darmstadt. 144-54].
- Loraux, Nicole. 1986. The Invention of Athens: The Funeral Oration in the Classical City. Cambridge, MA.
- Loraux, Nicole. 1993. The Children of Athena: Athenian Attitudes about Citizenship and the Division between the Sexes. Princeton.
- Luppe, 1972. "Die Zahl der Konkurrenten an den komischen Agonen zur Zeit des Peloponnesischen Krieges." Philologus 116.53-75.
- Meineke, A. 1839-57. Fragmenta Comicorum Graecorum. Berlin.

Murnaghan, Sheila. 1988. "How a Woman Can Be More Like a Man: The Dialogue between Ischomachus and his Wife in Xenophon's Oeconomicus" Helios 15.9-22.

Norwood, Gilbert. 1931. Greek Comedy. London.

Ober, J. 1989. Mass and Elite in Democratic Athens. Princeton.

Ortner, Sherry B. 1974. "Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?" In M. Zimbalist Rosaldo and L.Lamphere eds. Woman, Culture and Society. Stanford.

Ostwald, Martin. 1986. From Popular Sovereignty to the Sovereignty of Law: Law, Society and Politics in Fifth-Century Athens. Berkeley.

Page, Denys. 1970. Select Papyri. vol. 3: Literary Papyri: Poetry. Cambridge, MA & London.

Picard, Charles. 1935. Manuel d'archéologie grecque. vol. 3: La sculpture. Paris.

Platnauer, Maurice. 1964. Aristophanes' Peace. Oxford.

Plepelits, K. 1970. Die Fragmente der Demen des Eupolis. Vienna.

Pomeroy, Sarah B. 1975. Goddesses, Whores, Wives and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity. New York.

Pomeroy, Sarah B. 1994. Xenophon. Oeconomicus. A Social and Historical Commentary. Oxford.

Rabinowitz, Nancy Sorkin. 1993. Anxiety Veiled: Euripides and the Traffic in Women. New York.

Raspe, G.C.H. 1832. De Eupolidis Dæmoiw ac Pòlesin. Leipzig.

Schmid, W. and O. Stählin. 1946. Geschichte der griechische Literatur I.4. Munich.

Sidwell, Keith. 1994. "Aristophanes' Acharnians and Eupolis." Classica et Mediaevalia 45.71-115.

Storey, Ian C. 1990. "Dating and Re-dating Eupolis." Phoenix 44.1-30.

Storey, Ian C. 1994. "The Politics of 'angry Eupolis'." Ancient History Bulletin 8.4.107-20.

Taaffe, Lauren. 1994. Aristophanes and Women. London.

Whitehead, David. 1986. The Demes of Attica 508/7-ca. 250 BC. Princeton.

Winkler, John J. 1990. The Constraints of Desire: The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in

Ancient Greece. New York.

Winkler, John J. 1990. "Phallos Politikos: Representing the Body Politic in Athens". Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies. 2.1.29-45.

¹ For other examples cf. Cratinus' Nomoi, Aristophanes' Nesoi, or Plato Comicus' Nikai.

² Cf. Whitehead (1986) 329 n. 17; Whitehead's anxiety (329-30) about extrapolating too much about the nature of fragmentary comedies from their titles is prudent, though I hope to show that even if we cannot establish anything of the plot of these plays from their choruses, the few apparent facts about certain choruses that we can extract from the fragments is often incidentally revealing of significant cultural attitudes.

³ Cf. Ober 1989, 30-33; Whitehead 1986.

⁴ On the issue of the "two choruses," cf. Schmid-Stählin 1946, 127-28, Plepelits 1970, 69-76, Page 1970, 203-4.

⁵ See Loraux 1993, 118-19, on the cases in Aristophanes where women appropriate the term $\delta \mu\omicron\varsigma$ in describing their own "subversive" assemblies (e.g., in Lysistrata and Thesmophoriazusae). Loraux argues that when the women refer to themselves as a $\delta \mu\omicron\varsigma$, they cannot divest the term from its masculine connotations; they cannot, she maintains, refer to themselves as the "people of female Athenians" or the like, but must call themselves a "people of women, as if every intrusion of women into the political universe had to be offset by a reminder about their connection to a particular sex."

⁶ Loraux 1993, 117 on Attic comedy as a reflection of Athenian conceptions of gender relations: "[S]ince the woman is an effective source of laughter, especially when she dares to stray out of her normal role, the comic stage is a precious reserve of glimpses into the Athenian imagination about the division between the sexes."

⁷ In fact, the chorus of Aristophanes' Peace clearly shows that a poet did have some alternatives in how he represented his abstractions. Although there remains a controversy over the precise composition of the chorus of Peace—are they men from Attica or from other Greek states? Are they farmers, or members of other professions?—they refer to themselves in their first lines (302) as $\Pi\alpha\nu\eta\lambda\lambda\eta\nu\epsilon\varsigma$, and when they haul up Peace they can single out Boeotians (466), Argives (475), Laconians (478) and Megarians (480) in their number. Whatever the ultimate

configuration of the chorus (some have suggested two half-choruses, others that the chorus' identity actually changes within the play; cf. Platnauer 1964, xiv-xv) it is clear that Aristophanes wanted to represent a number of Greek cities in some capacity. He chose to do this by having as choreuts not allegorical representatives of those cities, but actual, "flesh-and-blood" representatives of them. In this case, it is unremarkable that the chorus members are male insofar as they function as little more than "ambassadors" or "emissaries" of these cities. Eupolis in Poleis could likewise have avoided the "problem" of portraying cities as women, since he could have had male choreuts act as real-life representatives of their respective homelands. Presumably in Peace the chorus needed to be men in order to help with the "masculine" task of hauling up Peace. I suspect that Eupolis' decision to employ a female allegorical chorus in Poleis was also deliberate, as I argue below.

⁸ Enough evidence survives from the fifth century to suggest, at any rate, that incongruities between gender and meaning did not go unnoticed. Cf. Guthrie 1971, 221, who discusses Protagoras' interest in the gender of nouns; cf. also Guthrie pp. 205-6 on the notion of "correctness of names" in sophistic thought. Certainly the passage in Aristophanes' Clouds, which Guthrie discusses, shows that people were attuned to the apparent dissonances created when certain words have a particular gender attached to them, hence the injunction at Clouds 680-81: "It is necessary for you to learn which words are masculine, and which are feminine."

⁹ It is probably true that once Eupolis decided to write a play about cities, and to have the chorus represent the cities, he could not very realistically have had them appear as men. But we may still wonder whether the chorus of cities was cast as female only because the noun was feminine or whether the poet himself was actually interested in the ways in which Athenians conceptualized them as feminine. Without venturing too far down the cul-de-sac of "intentionality", I would suggest simply that the answer probably lies somewhere in between: once Eupolis decided to compose a comedy about Greek cities, the choice of a female chorus would have seemed inescapable. Still, whether fully aware of it or not, his need to flesh out a role for this otherwise inanimate chorus carried with it a commitment to exploring and exploiting their gendering.

¹⁰ Tompkins 1993, 20-21.

¹¹ For example, Halperin 1990, 96-104.

¹² Norwood 1931, 197. On the dating of the play, cf. Geissler 1925, 39, who places it at the City Dionysia of 422. Most scholars place it more tentatively somewhere between 422 and 413. Geissler's arguments are essentially in line with nineteenth-century attempts at dating the play (Brandes 1886, 6; Meineke 1839-57, 1.140), which rely on several termini furnished by the fr.: fr. 246K-A mentions Khios as an ally, which places production before its revolt from Athens in 412; fr. 225 K-A mentions the seer Stilbides, who died in 413. The reference to Amyntias in fr. 222K-A, general in 423/2, however, clinches 422 for Geissler. The evidence is discussed in detail in Storey 1990, 18-20, who also opts for 422. Contra, cf. Luppe 1972, 75, n. 91, and Sidwell 1994, 99-101.

¹³ Cf. Meineke 1839-57, 2.508 and Raspe 1832, 84-85. Norwood 1931, 187 speculates that the choreuts of Demes may also have been given some "particularity". Scholarly evaluation of the evidence is revealing, however: Norwood's attraction to the perceived theatricality of Poleis allows him to rank it as among Eupolis's best work. Raspe, on the other hand, finds that it pales in comparison to Demoi: "...videri nostram fabulam multo minus nobilem illustremque fuisse, quam Δῶμους, ut non iniuria eam Lenaeis assignare possis [!]: quae sententia hac etiam re confirmatur [!], quod inspectantibus sociis vix Atheniensium iniquitas atque occulta insidiae, quas sociis struebant, aperiri potuerunt." ["...our play evidently was far less noble and distinguished than Demes, so that one might comfortably assign it to the Lenaean Festival: this suggestion is confirmed by the fact that the unfair treatment and hidden agenda of the Athenians against their allies could hardly have been portrayed on the stage if the allies were present in the theater"; exclamation points added]. Cf. also Storey 1994, 109-11 on the chorus of Poleis. Storey's article came to my attention after this paper was written. He too sensed the essential dichotomies of male/female, master/slave, human/animal, Athens/allies in Poleis, which I examine in detail below, but he was not concerned to explore them in his piece.

¹⁴ The pronoun ὦμῶν implies that the speaker is addressing an interlocutor, possibly a non-Athenian one; Meineke, however, emended to δμῶν thereby making the speaker Athenian. Khios

had been a reliable source of ships for Athens until 413, as Thucydides attests (1.116.2, 1.117.2, 4.129.2, 6.43, 7.57.4).

¹⁵ “Probably the Chian chorister was decked with naval gear,” suggests Norwood (1931, 193), on the basis of fragment 245 K-A (on which see below).

¹⁶ See note 15. More relevant than whether the speaker is Athenian or not is in this case the fact that he is almost certainly a male, addressing a predominantly male audience.

¹⁷ Cf. Politics 1252a34-69, where Aristotle contrasts non-Greek communities that fail to distinguish between female and slave because they lack a natural ruling element completely (and so they are all slaves) to communities (such as Athens presumably) in which there is an element naturally fit to rule. Just 190-91.

¹⁸ Just 191.

¹⁹ Cf. Politics 1254b20-23, where Aristotle is more explicit about the slave: “a man is thus by nature a slave if he is capable of becoming (and this is the reason why he actually becomes) the property of another, and if he participates in reason to the extent of apprehending it in another, though destitute of it himself.” (trans. Barker)

²⁰ Cf. Murnaghan 1988 and Just 1989, 114-18. Pomeroy 1994.66-7 takes the Oeconomicus rather more at face value, and in fact concludes, somewhat surprisingly, it seems to me, that “in the Oeconomicus, there is no natural hierarchy among human beings according to gender, race or class” (p. 66).

²¹ It is not entirely clear whether Aristotle regards all non-Greeks as naturally “slavish”. Politics 1327b16-1328a21, discusses the character of several non-Greek people in a way that suggests that Aristotle is open to the notion that some non-Greeks are more or less “slavish” than others. On the equation of slaves and barbarians in Greek tragedy, see Hall 1989 196-97.

²² Note that in Poleis fr. 250 K-A, someone addresses another as “master” (despotes): ὁ δῆσποτα, καὰ τίδε νόων ὑκουσον ὕν λῆγω σοι. Storey 1994, 111, notes that the Archilochean meter used in this line is associated with the chorus elsewhere in Old Comedy;

obviously, it would be in keeping with the role of the Poleis chorus as “servile” allies to use this term of an Athenian “master,” but the fragment remains without a context.

²³ Despite such a general ideology, not all Athenians were comfortable with Pericles’ own imperialistic rhetoric. Many, particularly those of aristocratic background, suspected him of aiming at a sole tyranny. See Ostwald 1986, 185-88.

²⁴ No doubt the situation between Kritoboulos and his wife described in Oeconomicus 3.12-14 was more typical. Here Kritoboulos reveals that he barely speaks to his wife in spite of her significant duties within the house. Cf. Just 1989, 135-36.

²⁵ Ischomachus illustrates more clearly what was implicit in Aristotle, namely the peculiar status of a woman as a natural subordinate, but somehow different from a servile subordinate.

²⁶ On the use of nautical imagery in sexual contexts, cf. Henderson 1975, 162-63.

²⁷ Cf. Henderson (1975, 164-65) on the related obscenities surrounding the keles.

²⁸ ἦπιπος also appears in comedy referring to the phallus (cf. Aristophanes Lys. 191, Eccl. 146); on the comic name ὠπιποβῆνος at Frogs 433 cf. Henderson 1975, 165, n. 66.

²⁹ Just 1989, 217-79; Ortner 1974.

³⁰ Halperin’s remarks about the “democratizing” effect of Athenian prostitution are apposite here. He argues that cheap and readily available sex (male and female) in Athens allowed even the poorer citizens to avoid being “effeminized” by poverty, and that the effect was “to promote a new collective image of the citizen body as masculine and assertive...and as perpetually on the superordinate side of a series of hierarchical and roughly congruent distinctions in status: master versus slave, free versus unfree, dominant versus submissive, active versus passive, insertive versus receptive, customer versus prostitute, citizen versus non-citizen, man versus woman” (p. 102). The last two categories here are particularly appropriate, as they highlight the conflation of “female” and “non-Athenian Greek” that we find in Eupolis’ chorus. Cf. also Winkler 1990.45-70

³¹ Kock ad loc.; he cites Wasps 74, 78, 81; Peace 81.

³² Cf. Henderson 1975, 181-82, and Aristophanes’ use of names such as Φ’λινα at Clouds 684 (said by the scholiast to refer to a prostitute; though also apparently a common enough name for

an Athenian woman; cf. Dover 1968, ad loc. p. 184-85), and Φιλότη at Thesm. 568 (of a servant).

³³ Ischomachus' attitude at Xenophon Oec. 10.12-13 is probably typical. Here he takes his wife to task for indulging in cosmetics judging them unseemly for a respectable woman: "a wife's looks, when in contrast to a waiting maid she is purer and more suitably dressed, become attractive..." (12); "On the other hand, women who always sit about in pretentious solemnity lend themselves to comparison with those who use adornments and deceit" (13).

³⁴ Cf. Aristophanes Birds 1467, Pherecydes fr. 42 K.

³⁵ Graham 1983, 166-92 discusses in detail the differences between Athenian colonies proper (apoikiai) and cleruchies, the latter being "a settlement of Athenians living abroad" (167) as opposed to an autonomous city-state. Technically speaking, cleruchies were inhabited by Athenian citizens and were regarded as extensions of the state, but it is often extremely difficult, as Graham makes clear, to distinguish between the two in our evidence, since the terminology was not always used with great precision (Thucydides, for example, apparently uses the term apoikia for klerukhia; cf. Ehrenberg 1952, 143ff). We cannot tell for sure, therefore, whether the apoikia of the Eupolis fragment refers to a bona fide colony, though the negative tone of the line implies that going to such a place would be a form of punishment for poor behavior. It seems likely that a "colony", where an Athenian would no longer retain citizen privileges, is, in fact, meant here. On the issue of mutual citizenship between mother city and colony, cf. Graham, chs. 5 and 6. Cyzicus and Miletus, for example, colony and mother-city respectively, seem to have shared citizen rights (Graham 108), but Athens evidently did not routinely grant isopolity to its colonies.

³⁶ Hall 1989 201-5 discusses how in Greek tragedy women, both Greek and non-Greek, who transgress Athenian (patriarchal) norms are frequently associated with "barbarian" behavior. See her discussion of the "carpet scene" in Aeschylus' Agamemnon, pp. 205-8, in which, she argues, "the antipathy between Greek and barbarian [is] an analogue to that between male and female."

³⁷ "That the sexual possibilities of a 'female' chorus would not be overlooked is certain" (Norwood 1931, 196).

³⁸ Norwood 1931, 196; Norwood further speculates “that there was a marriage-procession of these pairs to rites in the opisthodomos or rear-chamber of the Acropolis,” which he infers from the exhibition at the festival of treasure brought by each of the cities (cf. fr. 254 K-A, on which see below). Cf. Dougherty 1993, 61-80, on the prevalence of marriage metaphors in the discourse of Greek colonialization. She notes (p. 68) that “the rhetoric of marriage articulates the representation of archaic colonialization. First, the view of marriage as a harmonious union of opposites (male and female) becomes symbolic of another kind of union as well—that of Greek and indigenous populations.” In this sense, “Greece” as civilizing male/husband/superior colonizes other lands characterized as female, subordinate, in need of acculturation and civilizing. Dougherty is speaking specifically of colonies, but this sort of rhetoric is easily extended, as it evidently was in Eupolis’s play, to include all states with which Athens had some sort of hegemonic relationship.

³⁹ On Fr. 243 cf. also Kaibel (“videtur maritus quaeri uni ex Civitatibus”); Schmid 1.4.118 n. 7.

⁴⁰ Cf. Just 1989, 135-41, drawing on earlier work by Dover and Pomeroy.

⁴¹ Cf. Pomeroy 1994.35-36. Note also the prurient tone of Aristophanes Lys. 151 where Lysistrata mentions pubic depilation as a sexual attraction for husbands; as Henderson notes (1987, 130): “a practice especially associated with hetaerae and other female sex-objects.”

⁴² Cf. Wasps 236, 1201.

⁴³ We can only guess about how she would have been dressed, though it would not be unthinkable that she was dressed in extravagant gold garments, reflecting the famed gold coinage of the city, as well as the color of the famous dye known as “Kyzicene” (on which see below).

⁴⁴ References to the wealth of Kyzikos are collected ad loc. in K-A.

⁴⁵ Cf. Henderson 1988.

⁴⁶ Loraux 1993; Rabinowitz 1993.

⁴⁷ On “cinaedism” cf. Winkler 1990.45-70

⁴⁸ It is not entirely clear who speaks these lines, since it is impossible to be certain whom the third person of πίσχοουσιν and the first person of α[τ] refers to. Bekker emended πίσχοουσιν to πίσχοουσα, which Raspe (and later Kaibel) accepted, with this explanation: “loquitur rursus

Πῶλις quaedam, quae quum admodum dure tractata esset a demagogis, se cum servis comparat, qui herum mutare poterant apud Graecos...” (90) [“again a City speaks, who, as as result of past ill treatment at the hands of demagogues, compares herself to slaves who were able to change masters in Greece at that time”]. Kassel and Austin are prudently conservative, though imagining the scene on their reading becomes less clear. Possibly one of the chorus members speaks about her colleagues, and then implicates herself in their plight. In any event, the first-person form of α[τ] indicates that the speaker envisions herself to be of servile status.

⁴⁹ “He polis absorbs plurality in an abstract singularity...As the product of an official oration, the entity of the polis is nevertheless only one of the possible forms of an imaginary relationship between the Athenian community and itself.” (279-80).

⁵⁰ Loraux is certainly right to contrast the deeply abstract nature of the “polis” as it emerges from the epitaphios with its particular representations throughout Athenian culture as a whole. I would modify her focus, however, by stressing that even the “figured abstractions” of the polis in such areas as drama often appear to reflect a coherent “imaginary”, even if more obliquely and less consistently than the polis imaginary she articulates for the epitaphios. To use her own example, it is true that a comic “demos-as-old-man” does not strive for a unified or unprejudicial representation of the Athenian citizenry, but it does suggest that the characteristics which the audience would commonly associate with such a real-life figure—irascibility, forgetfulness, physical weakness, for example—depict negative aspects of an implied ideal.

⁵¹ On associations in the visual arts between Athens and Athena, and between Athens and Demokratia, cf. Kleinknecht 1939, 149 [= Newiger, 1975]; Picard, 3.98; Loraux 1986, 282-83.

⁵² “Both classical and Hellenistic iconography present the cities as women, goddesses in the classical period and personified abstractions in the Hellenistic” (Loraux 1986, 450 n. 111). Thus, the comic poets who portrayed cities as allegorical women evidently anticipated later trends in the visual arts.

⁵³ Even small deviations from this technical meaning, such as when it appears as a synonym for “homeland” (e.g., Pind. Nem. 5.8, Soph. OC 707, Ant. 1122) or for “capital city” of a country (Xen. An. 5.2.3) imply a “maternal” relationship between the city so designated and the

individual or group whose “mother-city” it is said to be. For cities in antiquity called “Metropolis” cf. RE sv.

⁵⁴ Loraux (1993) has argued that the evolution of Athenian self-identification as citizens in the classical period involved a persistent effort to repress a mythological narrative about Athenian autochthony with originally “feminine” associations. On the primacy of the father-metaphor in the discourse about the Athenian polis as a “metaphorical family” see also Loraux 1993, 65-66.

⁵⁵ Kock 208 ad fr. 220.2. Kock made this suggestion in response to Meineke (3.129), who read “Metropolis” and “Patropolis” as proper names of cities: “at non opus est nomine proprio: siquidem is qui loquitur matri plus quam patri verecundiae deberi comice exemplis demonstrat. sic μητρῷπολιν urbem dici ex qua coloniae deducantur, non πατρῷπολιν.”

⁵⁶ I suspect that the punning on μῶτρα/μῶτηρ in this fragment operates simultaneously on a coarser level as well. Μῶτρα is not readily attested as an obscene metonym for female genitalia, though it is not difficult to imagine that it might be, especially in the light of its use in this particular passage: κρηῖας is a well attested comic term in comedy for the female sexual organs (Henderson 144, which also offers a list of various food delicacies with obscene connotations), and someone selling Μῶτρα as the “sweetest meat” (line 3) might easily refer to a pimp of some sort. This might help to explain line 4, which refers to one Metras who is a “friend to the demos”. In other words the mention in line 3 of purveyors of Μῶτρα (taken obscenely), might remind the speaker of a well known example of such a person. Meineke’s speculation, in any event, that Metras was actually the fourth-century philosopher Metrodorus of Khios, seems far-fetched.

⁵⁷ Cf. Henderson, 1988.

⁵⁸ See Elizabeth Bobrick’s essay in this collection, “The Tyranny of Roles”: Playacting and Privilege in Aristophanes’ Thesmophoriazusae, pp. 000-000, for a discussion of male-female stereotypes as they are played out in Thesmophoriazusae.