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*Lysistrata* Paper

We of Athens have long been a prime supporter of the art of drama. Ever since 530 BC, we have encouraged playwrights to make and have performed the best plays possible, whether in honor of the gods or in critique of them; whether critique of humanity and war or in praise of them. I see no reason to break this time-honored tradition now of all times. The play *Lysistrata* should be put on because it is a very well put together play that is bound to succeed despite its controversial nature, it follows the long held tradition of Greek drama, and preventing it from being put on would go against the ideals of our great city.

Regardless of the controversy, I am of the opinion that *Lysistrata* is an excellent play that will succeed greatly. First of all, the women's plan to stop the war is quite hilarious and original. Many ideas, from naval supremacy to coercion of Sparta's allies, have been implemented to no avail, but the idea that all the women of Greece would abstain from sex is one that, while hard to implement in actuality, would most likely work and is all the funnier because of it. One of my personal favorite humorous moments within *Lysistrata* is the oath all the women swear, with such phrases as "I will withhold all rights of access or entrance from every husband, lover, or casual acquaintance who moves in my direction with erection . . ." and we Greeks love a good play on words with our drama. Second of all, the play portrays Athenian culture as superior to the Spartans. With phrases like "Hit's right onsettlin' fer gals to sleep all lonely-like, withouten no humpin'. But I'm on yore side. We shore need Peace, too," the Spartans are shown as an inferior culture. Even though the play ends with peace, Athens remains superior culturally. Third, the women of the play, while being subversive, are not displayed as having any power over the men besides sexual. In fact, the women are portrayed as quite powerless and weak

compared to the men, which will be preaching to the choir of the playgoers. I think that if the woman had been portrayed as equal or even superior to the men in the play then it might not be such a good idea, but they do not win the day due to being better. They are not shown as being intellectually superior, while they claim to be able to better manage the treasury this is empty boasting. They are not fighting to change their status in life; they just want their husbands and sons back and for life to go back to normal. They feel the effects of the abstinence from sex just as much as the men did but just had enough willpower to hold out until the men gave up. There is even a scene where Myrrhine, the wife of Kinesias, tries to escape to her husband by claiming she was pregnant and in labor by sticking a helmet in her clothes to bulge her belly. The only reason why they held the Acropolis is that the army was away fighting a real battle and the police left behind were incompetent buffoons, not because of any real strength of the women. This is why *Lysistrata* will succeed despite its controversial nature.

While being of a controversial nature, *Lysistrata* follows the norms of drama. It deals with a familiar subject, namely the Peloponnesian War. While the gods are not directly involved in the story, the women make their stand on the Acropolis, which is a sacred site of Athena, a protector of women. Fate is also discussed; the fate of the men was one of hopelessness. They were powerless in the face of the women's alliance. Morality is touched on as well, with such subjects as war and the role of women in society (which ends up being a decision that echoes favorably with the men who would be watching it) being discussed. Finally, the characters are more realistic, following the trend set by Euripides. They all have strengths and weaknesses, and although the men are portrayed as somewhat weak-willed and buffoonish, the women are not much better. *Lysistrata* follows both long held and newer conventions of drama.

Refusing to let *Lysistrata* to be put on would go against the very freedoms and independence we are now currently fighting for. We Athenians are graced to live in the most democratic polis of Greece. In our histories, instead of giving in to monarchy or allowing the rich and powerful nobles to control us, we fought against them and kicked them out. Over time we have enacted measures that reduce the power of a single man and given power to the people. Considering the rights that we Athenians have grown to expect as a people, it would go against everything we stand for to all the sudden decide that one person should not be allowed to speak because we disagree with his views. While we may be in the middle of a draining war, we are in this war to fight for our place in Greek society as a leader among equals, and we are a leader because of our democratic ideals. If we abandoned those ideals to squash any dissenting opinion, we would be no better than the Spartans we are dying to protect ourselves from.

Since *Lysistrata* is of the top caliber of quality, follows the ideals of Greek drama, and is a representation of our ability to speak and think freely, it should be allowed to be put on during Dionysia. Playwrights get better by studying the great works of previous playwrights, and arguments are developed by studying dissenting opinions and countering them. *Lysistrata* is both a great play and a dissenting opinion, and the best option is allowing it to flourish in all its glory to ensure success to future playwrights and to sharpen our leader's arguments for continuing this war. For if we don't allow this to happen, wouldn't this war be the Sparta of the Peloponnesus versus the Sparta of Attica?