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**WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT THROUGH SEXUALITY IN
ARISTOPHANES *LYSISTRATA***

*An Extended Essay Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement for the
Master's Degree in Literature and Civilisation*

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents Professor Belhadj TORCHAOUI and my beloved mother whose words of encouragement and push for tenacity ring in my ears. Their love, prayers, caring, and sacrifices continue to regulate my life.

To my precious sister Saja and my cousins Ahlem and Amira for loving me unconditionally. I am also very thankful for my best friend Ghyzlen, her strength and faith during the last years of my life gave me a new appreciation for the meaning and importance of friendship.

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Abstract

This work deals with the topic of women in ancient Greece, the main objective is to show women's power at that time and how Greek women used their bodies as a weapon to achieve their desire. It explores the theme of women's power through sexuality in the play *Lysistrata* by Aristophanes. By analyzing *Lysistrata* within its cultural and historical context and the play's portrayal of women's solidarity, power, and unity, as well as their positive image in ancient Greece and representation in Greek mythology, this dissertation sheds light on the complexities and significance of women's empowerment in a male-dominated society and argues that the women's decision to withhold sex from their men was a powerful move that demonstrated their agency and determination to end the war. Through a close reading of the play and a survey of relevant scholarship, along with the search of online articles relating to the topic, this work shows that Aristophanes not only employs humor and satire but also provides a platform for exploring women's agency and how they challenge societal norms. *Lysistrata* offers a positive image of women as strong, intelligent, and resourceful, and that their actions were motivated by a desire for peace and an end to the suffering caused by the war. Overall, this dissertation aims at a better understanding of the role of women in ancient Greece and the enduring relevance of *Lysistrata* as a feminist text. It also underscores the significance of Aristophanes' work as a source of social commentary and provides insights into the complexities of women's agency in ancient Greek society.

Table of Content

DEDICATION.....	I
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	II
ABSTRACT.....	III
CONTENT.....	IV
GENERAL INTRODUCTION.....	6

CHAPTER ONE: Greece, Mythology, and Women

1.1 Introduction.....	8
1.2 Greece; Historical Background.....	9
1.2.1 The Peloponnesian War.....	12
1.3 Greek Mythology.....	16
1.3.1 Women in Greek Mythology.....	20
1.3.2 Greek Mythology and Literature.....	24
1.3.3 The Position of Women; Feminism.....	27
1.4 Greek Literature.....	30
1.4.1 Plays.....	32
1.4.2 Characteristics of a Play.....	35
1.4.3 Comedy.....	38
1.5 CONCLUSION.....	42

CHAPTER TWO: The Power of Unity; Women’s Collective Action in *Lysistrata*

2.1 Introduction.....44

2.2 Play’s Summary.....45

2.3 ARISTOPHANES.....48

 2.3.1 ARISTOPHANES THE FATHER OF COMEDY.....52

 2.3.2 ARISTOPHANES AND WOMEN.....53

2.4 Women Struggle for Peace in *Lysistrata*.....55

 2.4.1 Lysistrata.....57

 2.4.2 Description of Some Other Women of the Play.....59

 2.4.3 Women’s Power through Sexuality.....62

2.5 Women’s Empowerment after the Peloponnesian War.....64

2.6 CONCLUSION.....65

GENERAL CONCLUSION.....67

BIBLIOGRAPHY70

General
Introduction

General Introduction

In the period of the twentieth year of the Peloponnesian War, specifically in Athens in 411 BCE, Greek literature flourished as a mirror of society's triumphs and tribulations. Among the popular genres that emerged, Greek comedy and drama stood as powerful evidence of social norms and human nature. In this dissertation, the main theme is women's power, intertwining Greek mythology with realities faced by women during the Peloponnesian war. It is within this area that Aristophanes, one the most popular Greek writers, crafted *Lysistrata* a masterpiece that aimed to deliver humor yet became a work that showcased the strength and fearlessness of women.

Lysistrata serves as a testament to the spirit of Greek women, their strength, and their intelligence when faced with challenges. Notably, this dissertation uncovers an observation; the absence of information regarding women's perspective in Greek mythology and the prominent dominance of a male-oriented civilization. *Lysistrata*, even with the passing of the time it was first performed, remains relevant to this day, serving as a timeless reminder of women's enduring power. Engaging in research on Greek mythology not only promises intellectual enjoyment but also presents a fascinating opportunity to unveil the dynamic roles of women throughout history. The main concern of this work revolves around how women used their power through sexuality. Therefore, moving from the origins and significance of Greek mythology, the treatment of women in ancient Greece, the portrayal of women in Greek mythology, and the struggle of Greek women for peace during the war, the following questions are raised:

- How does Aristophanes portray women in *Lysistrata*?
- What is the significance of women's decision to withhold sex from their men, and how does it relate to their broader goals of ending the war and promoting peace?

Exploring these aspects will help reveal the rich historical background of Greece. Moreover, it seems that Aristophanes, through his works, played an important role in presenting women in apposite light in the world of Greek literature.

The methodology employed for this research work involves a comprehensive analysis of the available evidence from writers who extensively researched the Greeks, as well as the collection of information that has accumulated over the years with the advent of technology. The objective is to investigate the Greek perspective on women, focusing on how writers represented them and analyzing the impact of significant events. The main consideration in this research is ensuring statistical significance and being cautious of relying on rumors or misinformation that may have been propagated by individuals making false accusations about women in ancient Greece and related matters.

The first chapter will be devoted to the exploration of Greek mythology. It will begin with an introduction to Greek mythology, explaining its significance concerning literature and its portrayal of women. There will be a historical background of Greece, given its prominent role as the main setting of the topic, particularly during the Peloponnesian War. Furthermore, the chapter will examine the position of women in ancient Greece, with a particular focus on the concept of feminism. Additionally, the chapter will explore the genre to which *Lysistrata* belongs, providing definitions of plays and highlighting the characteristics of comedy as a genre.

The second chapter will exclusively center on the play *Lysistrata*. It will commence with a comprehensive summary of the play, providing a clear overview of its events and highlighting the overarching theme of women's struggle for peace within the narrative. Following the play's summary, there will be an introduction to the main protagonist and a descriptive analysis of the female characters featured in the play. The primary objective is to answer the question of how women utilized their power through sexuality, tracing the process of empowering women that unfolded within the play and continue to inspire women to this day.

CHAPTER ONE

GREECE,

MYTHOLOGY,

AND WOMEN

CHAPTER ONE: Greece, Mythology, and Women

1.1 Introduction

1.2 Greece; Historical Background

1.2.1 The Peloponnesian War

1.3 Greek Mythology

1.3.1 Women in Greek Mythology

1.3.2 Greek Mythology and Literature

1.3.3 The Position of Women; Feminism

1.4 Greek Literature

1.4.1 Plays

1.4.2 Characteristics of a Play

1.4.3 Comedy

1.5 CONCLUSION

1.1 Introduction

Greek mythology has long captivated audiences with its sophisticated images of gods, heroes, and epic battles. This chapter dives into Greek mythology, Aristophanes, and the portrayal of women in ancient Greece while traversing the rich landscape of history, literature, and culture to better understand their influence and legacy. To explore the captivating world of Greek mythology and the portrayal of women within its vast narrative scenery. It is essential first to establish an understanding of ancient Greece's historical context. Doing so allows for an appreciation of women's positions in society and how they were knitted into myths and legends. The analysis will focus on various Greek literary works, particularly plays providing insight into cultural and societal norms of that era. The comedies of Aristophanes will take center stage as they offer a unique and compelling view into women's lives and their roles within ancient Greek society's fabric.

In the first part of the chapter, the focus is on Greek mythology, followed by a discussion of women in Greek mythology. As a follow-up, the title will be Greek Mythology and Literature, followed by a brief history of Greece that will include the Peloponnesian War and the position of women in terms of feminism. There will also be a title on Greek literature, focusing on plays and their qualities, as well as comedy and the famous Greek poet Aristophanes and his perspective on women. The purpose of this chapter is to help comprehend the Greeks and the realm of Greek Mythology.

1.2 Greece; Historical Background

Located in southeastern Europe, Greece is a country famously known for its culture and the amazing contribution it made to different areas of the world. It is located in the southern part of the Balkan Peninsula a region in Europe that takes its name from the Balkan Mountains that go past the whole of Bulgaria. Greece also occupies many islands in the Ionian and Aegean Seas where Europe's earliest civilizations took place. The majority of Greeks are Christian Orthodox which is the largest branch of Christianity. This country is famously known for its civilization, where at first was only a society that did not have much power, but after going through a series of events that include wars, and development Greece became a country where

Chapter One: GREECE, MYTHOLOGY, AND WOMEN

the Greeks made the biggest contribution to philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, and medicine. Furthermore, literature and theater were a major part of their culture that had influenced Western culture a lot¹. Some of our intellectual legacies can be traced back to Greece. Philosophy and history are two fundamental academic areas that date back to the Greeks². Greek philosophers such as Socrates and Plato are among the most influential thinkers in history while Herodotus is often regarded as the world's first true historian. Some parts of science had their origins in Greece as well. It is the source for what people now know as science and philosophy along with other areas of study, searching about Greek civilization will lead to well-known names such as Socrates.

Socrates is a Greek philosopher that examined all aspects of life in ancient Athens all of the information he provided was shared through the writings of his contemporaries and his students, mainly his star pupil Plato. People still talk about what had become Greek Mythology and its impact on them and of course their sculptures and architecture, in areas in Greece such as Athens Europe's oldest capital city, there are landmarks of the 5th century BC. For example, The Acropolis of Athens, an ancient citadel located in the city of Athens contains the remains of ancient buildings. There cannot be an agreed-upon exact period of when and where the beginning of Greece was. Ancient Greece's appearance is drawn between historians in various ways, some say it started after the Romans. Others took a more detailed path by mentioning Minoan and Mycenaean civilizations but it can be considered a different part that is not related to what we know as Greece today, however, it is best to be familiarized with this part of Greece's history to have a better idea on how Greece started.

When it comes to the history of Greece it is said that in the earliest of times, Greek habitation has varied majorly throughout the years as it is. This history is a wide specter of what can and cannot be said. Yet, historically speaking many

¹ <https://www.nationalonline.org/oneworld/map/greece-political-map.htm>

² (2022 atlys.com/country/Greece/a-historical-guide-to-Greece)

Chapter One: GREECE, MYTHOLOGY, AND WOMEN

informational studies show the earliest habitations of the Greeks and how they rose to become a civilization. The first appearance of the Greeks in Europe is said to be before 1500 BC and then they started to spread across the globe. From Egypt, Turkey, North America, South Africa....etc, but today they are known to generally live in the modern states of Greece. Prehistoric Greece is where the earliest civilization Minoan appeared and was invaded by the Mycenaeans from mainland Greece a civilization that flourished for 1600 years. It was called the Bronze Age Greece, a time when Homer and Greek Mythology came to life. Mycenaeans had been known for the way they buried their deceased which was in a sitting position and mummification. The collapse of this civilization was in 1100 BC and that is when the Dark Age period started. From 1200 BC to 800 BC a time in Greek history when the Dorian invasion began and also the rise of the first Greek city in addition to the appearance of Homer's first writings in letters in the 8th century BC³.

The dark ages had the Greeks living in famine and suffering with less trade. It is also when the kings started to rule and writing was spread among the Greek world. In Ancient Greece, there was not a figure that ruled the country or what it was before, people were guiding themselves often debating and individually voting on problems. They did not have a right to vote nor were they governed by a representative, although democracy was still found, especially in the city of Athens, some consider the city as democratic acknowledging the fact that there are certain facts people must be familiarized with and a certain job security that has to be found. The Athenians created this democracy as a system of rules, which lasted approximately two centuries⁴. This along with other Ancient Greek city-states has had its government. This is one of the various Greek concepts that have influenced the democracy that we know now.

Much like Socrates, Aristotle, another Greek philosopher may have been the reason there is democracy because among his writings is believed that he or maybe

³ 2007 Schools Selection cs.mcgill.ca/rwest/wikispeedia/wpcd/wp/h/History-of-Greece.htm

⁴ Athenian Democracy: a brief overview ancientgrecereloaded.com/blog/athenian-democracy-a-brief-overview.

one of his students had written the constitution of the Athenians, which contains the political system of Ancient Athens thus constitution is the first of Athens as a model democracy and how it came to existence. It influenced the formation of the United States government. This is why when searching about Greece, one may find this information calling Greece the birthplace of Democracy.

On the one hand, Ancient Greece's democracy was a fair way to choose a leader, all men were fairly treated and free to speak, and on the other hand, it only gave Greek men these rights. It is a known fact that women in ancient Greece were overcome by a male-dominated society, not having the ability to watch nor participate in the Olympian games. After all, to the Greeks, women were part of the Oikos which means "property of the house", indirectly labeling her as an object owned by a man because the man was the owner of the house.

Women in Ancient Greece were expected to stay at home and focus on domestic tasks such as weaving and preparing meals. They were not allowed to participate in politics or public life and were not even allowed to leave the house without their husband's permission. Women did not have the same rights as men and were seen as inferior to men. They were not allowed to own property or inherit and had to be supported by their husbands or male relatives. Despite this, there were some exceptions – some women were able to own and manage their businesses, and some even had careers in medicine, philosophy, and music. Over time, women's roles in Ancient Greece began to expand, and they were seen as more valuable members of society⁵.

Women in modern Greece have much more rights and freedoms than their counterparts in Ancient Greece. While there is still a strong emphasis on traditional gender roles, women have the right to vote, own property, and have a career. Education is more accessible to women, and they are more likely to pursue higher education and careers. Women are also more likely to be involved in politics and are increasingly being represented in the Greek Parliament. Despite these advances,

⁵ Cartwright, Mark Women in Ancient Greece World History Encyclopedia world history 27 Jul 2016

there is still a gender gap in terms of wages and opportunities, and discrimination against women in the workplace is still widespread. Greece has had an immense impact on the world throughout its long history. The ancient Greeks were one of the most advanced civilizations of their time and made major contributions to art, architecture, philosophy, and science. Their influence can be seen in many aspects of modern life, from political thought to the Olympic Games. Greek culture also had a strong influence on the Roman Empire and spread throughout Europe and the Middle East. Greek language and literature have also had a lasting impact, with the Greek alphabet being used in many languages today. Greece's legacy of democracy and its legacy of philosophical thought has been particularly influential in the development of modern democratic societies.

1.2.1 The Peloponnesian War

An event that is considered a world war because of the effect it had during and after the conflict. This conflict has known major changes when it came to who ruled Greece and which side was seen as the strongest, most powerful league of Greece. This conflict has continued for nearly twenty-seven years, it is the hardest period Greece has ever known. “The Peloponnesian war, the epic struggle between Athens and Sparta, occupies a vital part in military history because of the enormous military and political changes it inspired” (Bagnall, 2006).

The Peloponnesian War (431–404 BC) was a war fought by the Delian League led by Athens against the Peloponnesian League led by Sparta (Brown, 2002). The Delian League was an alliance of city-states led by Athens in 478 BC. It was formed to protect the Aegean Sea from the Persian Empire and to promote inter-city cooperation. The league was named for Delos, the birthplace of Apollo, and was headquartered there. It consisted of over 150 members from all over the Aegean, including many of the island states. The League was disbanded in 404 BC following the defeat of Athens in the Peloponnesian War. The Peloponnesian League was an alliance of Greek city-states led by Sparta in the 5th century BC. It

was formed in 461 BC and continued until the end of the Peloponnesian War in 404 BC⁶.

The main purpose of the League was to protect its members from the threat of invasion by rival powers. The League included Sparta and its allies, such as Argos, Corinth, Elis, and Megara. The League also had several member states from other regions of Greece, such as Acarnania, Aetolia, Boeotia, and Thessaly. The battle lasted for 27 years and was fought primarily in the Peloponnese region of Greece. The war was fought in three distinct phases; the Archidamian War (431–421 BC), the Peace of Nicias (421–415 BC), and the Decelean War (415–404 BC). The war ended in a Spartan victory, with the Athenian Empire losing much of its former power and prestige. The war resulted in a power shift in Greece, with Sparta becoming the dominant power and Athens becoming a vassal state⁷.

The war profoundly impacted Greek culture and society, leading to the development of a new form of warfare, the common activities and processes of the military struggle, and the emergence of new philosophical schools of thought. It marked the end of the Golden Age of Greece. The war is also noted for its use of siege warfare and naval battles, as well as its influence on the development of democracy in Athens. Because before the war, democracy in Greece is generally traced to the city-state of Athens in the 5th century BCE. The basic principles of democracy were first developed by the Athenian statesman Cleisthenes. He proposed a system of governance in which all citizens were equal and had equal access to political power. This system was based on the notion of citizens electing representatives to serve in a council of 500 members. This council was responsible for making important decisions on behalf of the people of Athens. Over time, Athenian democracy became more complex and evolved into a system of direct democracy, in which citizens had the right to participate directly in decision-making. This system of direct democracy was eventually replaced by a more limited form of representative democracy, in which citizens elected representatives to make decisions on their behalf. Nevertheless, the development of democracy in Athens

⁶ <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/Peloponnesian-war.com>

⁷ <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/Peloponnesian-war.com>

had a lasting impact on the development of democracy throughout the world. So after the war, this idea of democracy failed down as a result of the victory of Sparta⁸.

The war also had a significant economic impact on Greece, leading to a decline in trade and commerce. The Peloponnesian War had a lasting impact on Greek culture and society, with its effects still being felt today (Jones-Mclean, 2010). Yet, it was not just a positive impact since this war had made the Greeks struggle emotionally and physically thus all Greek city-states were weakened by the war. Many farms were destroyed. The war made it difficult for the Greeks to trust each other and made future unification nearly impossible. After Sparta broke up the Athenian Empire, they tried to rule over Greece but it only made the city weaker and vulnerable to other foreign countries to invade them. It was not only a good beginning for Greece after the war because the negative impact the Peloponnesian War had on Greece was devastating. It caused economic and social destruction, the destruction of infrastructure, and the displacement of large numbers of people. It also weakened the city-states of Greece, allowing them to be easily conquered by the Macedonians in the fourth century BCE. This war also weakened the cultural and political ties between the city-states, contributing to their eventual decline. It also saw the rise of Sparta as the dominant power in Greece, leading to further strife and instability throughout the region⁹.

The strategic goals of each side during the war were to defeat the other side and to gain control of the Aegean Sea. Athens sought to maintain its empire and its control of the sea, while Sparta sought to expand its power and influence in Greece. The tactics used by each side during the war were largely dictated by their strategic goals. Athens attempted to use its naval superiority to blockade Sparta and attack its allies, while Sparta attempted to use its land forces to cut off Athens' supply lines and attack its allies. Both sides also employed diplomacy, with Athens attempting to win allies among the other Greek city-states and Sparta attempting to divide

⁸ <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/Peloponnesian-war.com>

⁹ <https://www.history.com/topics/ancient-greece/peloponnesian-war>

Chapter One: GREECE, MYTHOLOGY, AND WOMEN

Athens' allies and weaken its support. In addition, both sides used diplomacy and bribery to win the support of neutral powers.

In a press journal written by Raphael Sealy “the *causes of the Peloponnesian War*” there was an explanation as to why the war started and they said. Until recently it was widely believed that the two financial decrees proposed by Callias were passed in the Attic year 434/33, and indeed on the same day of that year (Seley, 1957). Accordingly, they could be studied to discover the outlook of the Athenians immediately before the disputes which led to the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War. They could be interpreted as bringing sacred treasures into safety on the Acropolis, where they would be preserved in the event of a hostile invasion of Attica. It could be supposed, that as early as 434/33 the Athenians were looking ahead to war. To this, it can be summarized that the causes of the Peloponnesian War can be traced back to the growth of Athenian power and influence in the 5th century BC. Athens had become a major commercial and naval power and had gained control of several important city-states in the Aegean Sea. This led to tensions between Athens and Sparta, and eventually led to the outbreak of the war in 431 BC.

During the Peloponnesian War, prisoners were taken by both sides. The Athenians took prisoners during their successful campaigns against the Peloponnesian League, while the Spartans took prisoners during their campaigns against the Athenians and their allies. The fate of prisoners taken during the war varied, with some being ransomed or exchanged, some being used as slaves, and some being executed. They were hunted down, tortured, thrown into pits to die of thirst and starvation, and even young children were murdered. A battle during the war had been said that the Athenian commanders captured nearly 300 Spartan soldiers to be taken as prisoners. In the book *Prisoners of the Peloponnesian War* we see the story of the ones who fought during the war and other people who were captured, their fate varied with some being executed, enslaved, or the ones who were lucky enough to escape and gain freedom. The war ended in 404 BC with a Spartan victory. The Spartans imposed a harsh peace treaty on Athens, stripping it

of its naval power and forcing it to pay reparations. The end of the war marked the end of the Athenian Empire and the beginning of the Spartan hegemony in Greece. Finally, the Peloponnesian War had a lasting influence on the development of warfare, with its use of siege warfare and naval battles becoming a model for future wars.

1.3 Greek Mythology

Creatures, monsters, gods, and legends are terms usually associated with what are called myths, but to understand myths is to understand their meaning in terms of Greek perspectives because myths were told by many ancient civilizations including Egypt, Romans, and many more, but the focus here is on Greek myths. Before defining Greek mythology, it is necessary to define myth as a term on its own. The purpose of a myth is to explain and provide answers, it can be seen as a manifestation of what human culture was and is today because myths are essentially about what people believed was the explanation of what they see in their lives.

What humans fear the most is the unknown, thus to avoid living in a world where there is no explanation for its surroundings, Greeks used myth as the key element to their questions. Some scholars define myths differently than others but what it shares is their content, which is spiritual and mysterious. Myth when it is linked to culture becomes mythology, “the term myth is of Greek origin” (Graf, 1993). It is essentially what the Greeks were known for. The word mythology is divided into *mythos*; a word that means narrative in Greek, and *logos*; the explanation of a culture into a body of stories. It is the most popular genre of Ancient Greek folklore.

Greek mythology was known to the Greeks as a collection of myths that were used as a means of conveying messages or simply for entertainment purposes. It is a series of events about gods and their rise to rule over an area in Greece where people worshipped them and saw them as powerful beings that were able to change the weather or transform their bodies into animals. These stories of Gods and Goddesses were used as a way to explain the weather changes or for entertainment. These Greek stories called myths were about deities and their power, furthermore,

myths were documented on paper and passed on between 800BC and 146 BC evolving into stories, and books. Greek Mythology is a form of literature that is considered epic, historical, and in a sense, romantic. Greek Mythology takes myths on a heavier sense of reason to explain things people do not understand. A mythology is a collection of myths or stories about a specific person, culture, religion, or any group with shared beliefs. Most people do not consider mythology to be entirely true, but they still take it seriously, it is about Gods and Goddesses who had names, powers, certain characteristics, and areas they ruled, they were called the gods and goddesses of the Pantheon on Mount Olympus the highest mountain in Greece ¹⁰. There are Titans, Olympians, Lesser gods, Demigods, and Monsters. At first came what they call the first gods and the idea is that chaos gave birth to the oldest god heaven, and Earth the oldest goddess named Gaea. To name a few, there is the most popular one, Zeus, leader of the Olympian gods. He was known for being the god of the sky highlighted by depicting him carrying a thunderbolt as his symbol, for each god represented an emotion, a season, or a natural cause as their signature “symbol”. Just like Zeus there is, Poseidon, the God of the sea, as his name implies, has the power to create magnificent underwater palaces and other fascinating forms of aquatic creatures. Along with his brother Zeus, he was known for fathering many children – a common theme in Greek mythology, where gods were often described as having numerous offspring. (Capstone, 1998, p.11).

Hades the god of the underworld, Demeter goddess of corn and the harvest, Hestia goddess of the hearth, Athena Goddess of wisdom, war, civilization, and peace, Apollo the sun god, god of music, poetry, wisdom, light, and truth. Dionysus god of revelry and the vine, Ares god of war Aphrodite goddess of love and beauty, and so on. They would appear in the different make belief stories that were told but their character would not change for example Zeus is always introduced as the god of thunder. In these adventures, we would find these gods fighting each other and causing trouble on Earth. Some Greek gods were known as Titans who were

¹⁰ Vocabulary.com/dictionary/mythology

depicted as rulers of the world and there are Olympians, the reason for the Titans' defeat.

Each god had a personal story but they are not what represents Greek mythology as a whole. Many forms of mythical creatures appeared in these stories, for instance, we would find creatures that were half horse half men, griffins, monsters, and so on. Greek mythology still influences culture and modern civilization, and many popular series movies, and comedy shows were inspired by this mythology. Greek mythology is characterized mainly by the ideas, lessons, and creativity of the myths. It showed a different perception of nature and made great changes to the human forms, it has been discovered that the gods of Greek mythology are often depicted with multiple limbs and heads, which creates a supernatural image that is not based in reality¹¹. However, this may be what made Greek mythology so popular, as it not only allows readers to imagine different forms of these creatures but also challenges their minds with puzzles and codes. This aspect of Greek mythology can be seen as a test of the reader's imagination and intellect. These stories talk about love, war, family issues, parenting problems, and other types that spark interest.

This storytelling uses myths as their general piece, some may see them as lies or specs of imagination but to the Greeks, myth is a story, a journey that takes to places, a folktale, and legends. The ancient Greeks had a polytheistic belief system, which involves the worship of numerous gods, each with a unique personality and area of influence. It was considered a religion to some as it was present in their everyday life; they believed in the presence of these gods and they prayed to them when they needed something. To confirm the presence of a deity is nearly impossible because again these are myths yet one has to put oneself in the mindset of people in their old age, Greeks had an idea about religion and customs that could sound unbelievable to people today¹².

¹¹ <https://greektraveltellers.com>

¹² Greek Gods and religious practices <http://www.metmuseum.org/grgl/htm> october 2003

Ancient Greeks believed in many gods like Hades. Gods in myths looked and acted like people. But the gods were immortal. They lived forever. The gods also were very powerful. People believed they controlled everything that happened in the world (Richardson and Bowman, 2003)

To consider the characters of this mythology as nonexistent would cancel its effect and Greek mythology would not be what it is in recent times. So, the idea at that time was that people considered Zeus as the actual God of thunder insisting on the reliability of the writer's "proof" especially since the stories were told and barely anyone wrote anything for the first years because many ancient Greeks did not know how to write and read. The mythological Zeus is told to be the Greek king of the gods, he was the son of Cronus Heaven's son described as evil, and wanted to become the ruler instead of his father. Since Zeus was the most powerful being and the head of the Olympians he lived in a palace on Mount Olympus.

Hades was a name everyone was afraid to pronounce because he was the one who ruled the underworld and many believed he was the one to imprison the dead and once he has them they would never leave the underworld. Nobody dared to say his name since it was associated with death and the myth was that once Hades notices you, your time alive will be cut short and you will die sooner than you would before. He was seen as the cold dark king of the underworld, yet, he was the only brother who was not one of the twelve Olympians because even though he allied with his brothers to defeat the Titans in a war that would last ten years, eventually he was still considered to be the odd one out, which explains why he was feared the most because he had a lot of anger (Richardson, 2003, p. 5).

As for other characters in Greek Mythology, there is Poseidon and Hercules. Poseidon and Hercules are characters from Greek mythology. Poseidon is the god of the sea, earthquakes, and horses, while Hercules is a demigod known for his superhuman strength and twelve labors. Poseidon is often depicted with a trident, while Hercules is usually seen with a club. Both characters are associated with strength, power, and courage. Poseidon and Hercules are two of the most well-known characters in Greek mythology and represent the heroic figure in ancient

times. They both embody courage and strength, and they help to illustrate the power of the gods and the importance of courage and perseverance. They add to Greek mythology by embodying the idea of strength and courage in the face of adversity, and by providing an example of heroes who can overcome any obstacle¹³.

To summarize what has been said before. Greek mythology is a body of stories and beliefs about the ancient Greek gods, goddesses, heroes, and rituals. It originated in the Greek region of ancient Greece and it is one of the oldest forms of religion in the world. The stories of Greek mythology are filled with gods and goddesses, heroes, monsters, and other characters. In addition, many of the stories have a moral lesson to be learned. Some of the most well-known gods and goddesses include Zeus, Poseidon, Apollo, Athena, Ares, Aphrodite, and Hera. The most famous heroes from Greek mythology are Hercules, Theseus, and Perseus. Other characters include the Minotaur, Cyclops, and the Sirens. Greek mythology is still very popular today and is often used as inspiration for books, movies, and games.

1.3.1 Women in Greek Mythology

As mentioned before, the stories were not only just about Gods, there were also Goddesses and feminine creatures present in Greek mythology. One of the most talked about deities is the Goddess of Love and Beauty and she has the name, Aphrodite, she could make others fall in love using her magical belt. “Everyone knows that Aphrodite was the Greek goddess of feminine beauty, sex-appeal, and love she was that in Homer's Iliad, while in the Odyssey her name stands simply for sexual love” (Marcovich, 1996)

Athena is known for being the Goddess of wisdom and courage she is famous for the name Athens which is a real city in Greece. On the side of creatures, there is a monster called Medusa who is well known for what the myth says about her, that she was so evil that just one look at her eyes would turn a body into stone, and her features were described to have snakes instead of hair a description that

¹³ Britannica, the Editors of Encyclopedia Heracles <https://www.britannica.com/topic/heracles>.

would explain the stone turning part¹⁴. Although this was a mere description of women in these stories, the representation of women in Greek mythology is not always that bright.

The notion now presumably obsolete that a man should be active and aggressive, a woman passive and subject to control by the men in her family, is expressed in virtually every Greek myth, even in the ones in which the women seek to gain control of their own lives... (Lefkowitz, 1985, p 207-219)

Greeks' attitude towards women was often seen in the way they were written about in the stories, often seeing them as menacing aspects in Greek myths. Men portrayed fear of women's sex appeal. The stories they wrote were believed to reflect how they treated women in real life. "In ancient Greece, the portrayal of women in mythology as deceitful, manipulative, and the downfall of men corresponded with oppressive treatment and forced seclusion, which mirrored Greek patriarchal society" (Meehan, 2017, p 8-26), which means that most of the works that survived were the writings of men's perspective.

Greek mythology is considered one of the largest genres that is still present nowadays in different cultural aspects, its content was consumed by society thus shaping values, beliefs, and culture in some way. This means that the myths involving feminine characters could have been the image painted by the mythology to represent women for the readers. Whether is it a positive or a negative image, it does not change the fact that Greek mythology's representation of women could be what people in real life took as a guide or inspiration. Stories especially fiction and legends tend to bring a sense of excitement, joy, and strong emotions that may influence readers to behave the same way. The myth part has somewhat of a relationship with what was written about women, "to read the history of ancient Greece as it has been written for centuries is to enter a thoroughly male world" (Blundell, 1995, p20), as if they were held hostages by what men thought of women

¹⁴ Britannica, Medusa Encyclopedia Britannica <https://www.britannica.com/topic/medusa-greek-mythology>.

and pushed that image down their throats until it became the normal way to behave in front of men. The representation of these women was shared among society until now stories about Aphrodite and Athens are still present. Some consider Greek myth as a direct image of the attitude of Greek society, confirming the presence of patriarchy even in the oldest times. Stories where marriage is not respected, and having intimate relations with siblings is considered normal, stories for example a goddess, forced to marry a god because she was so embarrassed to admit he assaulted her, a clear explanation of how myth turns from a fictional group of an event to being considered as historical and representative.

Medea betrayed her father and left her homeland for the love of Jason. Then when he abandoned her, she murdered her children. But did she? And what of Clytemnestra, the conniving adulteress? For ten years she plotted the murder of her husband Agamemnon, king of Mycenae and Conqueror of Troy. How would she have told her story? The Greek myths as we know them were told for men by men (Cahil, 1995, p217)

It cannot be confirmed how women were in Ancient Greek since the only proof that exists is in Greek mythology. Myths are widely defined in many different ways and no scholar seems to agree on one however, concerning the beginning of Greek mythology, the stories were shared by men. Women too shared stories yet the tradition of long conversations was generally between men that is what we see in Greek Mythology, stories told by men. A description that could be interpreted as; how men see women physically and emotionally. Some of the most famous and respected women in Greek mythology include Athena: the Goddess of wisdom, courage, inspiration, civilization, law and justice, mathematics, strength, war strategy, crafts, and skill. Aphrodite: Goddess of love, beauty, and sexuality. Hera: Queen of the Gods, Goddess of marriage, childbirth, family, and women. Demeter: Goddess of the harvest and agriculture. Artemis: Goddess of the hunt, wilderness, animals, the moon, and chastity. Persephone: Goddess of vegetation, fertility, and spring. Hestia: Goddess of the hearth, home, and family. Eos: Goddess of the dawn. Hecate: Goddess of magic, witchcraft, and crossroads. Gaia: Mother of the Earth

and all its creatures. Nyx: Goddess of the night. Selene: Goddess of the moon. Iris: Goddess of the rainbow and messenger of the gods.

Athena for instance, is one of the most popular ancient deities of Greek Mythology and has been represented in various works of the Greeks. To talk about Athena is to tell about justice, wisdom, and a female warrior. Today Athens has been recognized as a well-known landmark of where her temple remains. In ancient Greece despite them knowing that Athena was not a real human, the Greeks were worshipping her to the extreme. The reason may be because of the meaning she held for them because she was the protector of their cities and held somewhat of diversity to her name and various qualities, being seen as a cunning, courageous, and virgin could be the reason she was worshipped. “This diversity is also seen in her modes of operation. The gods of the Greeks were multifaceted powers, but Athena was especially so. She was the city protectress for instance, of Athens and numerous poleis throughout the Greek world” (Deacy, 2008 p 5). The city protected by her was the most popular feature that was introduced whenever the topic was about Athena, she was also known to represent childbirth, music and activities usually made by men such as navigation and metalwork. Maybe it is because of her various skills and qualities that made her so special yet hard to understand for there is so much contrast in her that she represents war yet a goddess of peace.

From a symbolic point of view, women have often attributed the symbol of fertility, love, marriage, and sexuality. “Perception of the physical nature of women and the details of menstruation, sex, and birth recur as determining factors of male attitudes towards women in general, women were often seen as dangerously borderline, to be controlled and tamed” (Cameron, 2013 p x). Specific areas of women's image in ancient Greek Mythology emphasizing the aspect of fertility and the importance of women to society yet simply ignoring that fact when it comes to the portrayal of women, often found as tempting and were directed to a perfect idea of a woman by mentioning qualities that are nearly impossible in real life. Scenes of rape and forced marriage are a recurring theme in Greek Mythology.

The goddesses Athena, Artemis, and Aphrodite are some of the most powerful female figures, exhibiting strength and wisdom. However, despite their power, women were still subjected to a patriarchal society and were often portrayed as temptresses, seductresses, and objects of desire. Women were seen as inferior to men in the eyes of the gods, and the concept of the ideal woman revolved around being a wife and mother. Nonetheless, certain goddesses such as Demeter and Hestia were celebrated for their nurturing qualities, demonstrating the importance of motherhood in ancient Greek culture.

1.3.2 Greek Mythology and Literature

As mentioned before, Greek mythology was shared through oral traditions. It was not until people started reading and writing that the written proofs of these myths were discovered, so to say it started as a literary form is not the truth, Studying this genre has to be done through various research on what makes myths and how it started to become what we know today. Greek mythology cannot be presented without calling it a category of literature because it is inseparable from it.

In the definition of myths itself, Greek mythology is fictional, cultural, and supernatural, it also has poems and comedies parts that are considered to be literature. Greek mythology survived through literary and artistic sources and as said before since it survived through talks it is considered oral literature. Literature encompasses written or recorded works, and it fosters a sense of exploration and inquisitiveness. Without literature, it would be difficult to comprehend how people lived in the past. Greek mythology is intrinsically connected to literature as it provides a clear path to understanding ancient civilizations. This may be why Greek mythology remains pertinent even today. The stories of Zeus and his siblings are considered literature due to their inclusion of plots, events, themes, and other literary elements.

There is a literary nature to Greek mythology in what it talks about, in its form of storytelling there is a human aspect in the characters of these gods and their stories take on the experience of human life. Despite the fictional and folk-tale aspects, they give a sense of optimism and perhaps a sense of freedom. Many

writers of Greek Mythology gave readers the opportunity of getting to know the art of myth through the eyes of the Greeks; “The Greeks at their best were a sane, high-spirited, clear-headed, beauty-loving optimist, and not in the least other-worldly. Hence their legends are without exception free from cloudiness” (Conradie, 1972, p5). They were not fond of reading or hearing stories that were sad, which explains the fact that most of the stories were in a sense written on a happier note. As mentioned before, stories of these myths were shared orally and there were poems too. It was not until later that the Greeks started to share written works. Greek Mythology was the birthplace of amazing writers and poets known today, and one of the famous Greek poets is Homer, a word that means security, pledge, and hostage in Ancient Greek, it comes from “Homéros” an ancient name famously known from the Greek Author Homer. He is a male author known as the father of all later literature, works of history, Poetry, Tragedy, and Comedy are acclaimed by this famous poet. He is known for *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, two epic poems that are foundational works of ancient Greek Literature. This Greek poet was born between the 12th and 8th centuries BC, his works have had an amazing effect on Western culture. His poetic works are more of an epic instead of lyric poetry, his works do have the conventional repetitive elements of what a poet usually has rather it was more of a spoken-word performance¹⁵.

The idea of Homer is quite a mysterious image; since it appeared in ancient times. There is a widely held belief among many individuals that the authorship of these popular stories attributed to Homer is the work of multiple people, while others claim that *The Odyssey* story tells about facts of his life¹⁶. This type of curiosity has raised many questions about who he was, when and where was he born eventually became called The Homeric Question. Homer succeeded in showing the Greek culture by writing rhythmic tales that gathered their imagination and created a treasure that still has an impact on the world today. His writing represents what we know now as the Greek Gods and what they are capable of,

¹⁵ Kirk, Geoffrey S Homer encyclopedia britannica 30 Mar 2023
<http://www.britannica.com/biography/homer/greek-pet>.

¹⁶The British Museum britishmuseum.org/blog/who-was-homer

what type of powers they had, and the impact they had on humans, his stories were a direct information tool to allow the readers to get to know about Greek myths. As Homer will appear in any information concerning Greek Literature since he helped shape its form, as Richard Hunter said, “In antiquity, the relationship between Homer and subsequent Greek literature was figured through a series of (often overlapping) images. Homer was the source from which all subsequent writers were irrigated, the fountainhead of both subject and style” (Hunter, 2004, p. 235-253). In other words, Homer is the reason behind the popularity of Greek Mythology.

Descriptions of Homer’s appearance, characteristics, and aspects of his life were mainly taken from his work *The Odyssey*. The latter is an epic poem written by the ancient Greek poet Homer. It is one of the two major ancient Greek epic poems, the other being *the Iliad*. *The Odyssey* seemed to anticipate comedy of manners, and here certainly, are some of its characteristics ingredient, a slice of ordinary life, comic coincidence, humorous appreciation of gender stereotypes” (Hunter, 2004). *The Odyssey* is one of the most famous and influential works of ancient Greek literature and is still widely read and studied today. Its influence can be seen in literature, film, art, and music, and it has been adapted into numerous works and retellings over the centuries. The vast influence of *The Odyssey* is still evident today, and the themes, characters, and plots it contains have inspired countless writers and artists over the centuries.

Aristophanes, another well-known Greek author of Ancient Greece is one of the leading comic dramatists in Athens. While Homer took writing to pass on a serious message of Greek mythology, Aristophanes used comic poetry instead. “Aristophanes is one of the smartest, wittiest and most nuanced authors I have ever read” (Robson, 2009, p.ix). He is best known for his comic play *The Birds*, as well as *Lysistrata*, *The Clouds*, *The Frogs*, and *The Assemblywomen*. He is also credited with originating many comic theatrical conventions, such as the use of an actor to impersonate a god, and the use of the chorus to comment on the action. Aristophanes’ comedies transgress authority and continue to speak to many social groups in Greece who have found in him a witty, pointed, and accessible champion

from their 'native' traditions (Van Steen, -2000) The young might see him as the cool part of Greek, he inspires humor by using serious subjects to deliver it. He saw theater as something that had a moral and didactic purpose and it was his mission to give political advice using comedy.

What is known today as literature is what we were taught in schools and colleges, in the literature that each generation had known and grew up with, it is the evolution of literary works from years and years passing by, and every generation has its literature. It can be assumed, in ancient times, that there was literature for them whether it was Egyptian, Arabic, or Greek. This means that literature has existed long before writing and reading were introduced because the stories shared today, through books and novels, were once shared only by speaking. Greek literature has been studied for centuries to understand its origins and how it started yet it is still not easy to do something new about it. The information available is sourced from translated literary works authored by individuals whose identities and physical characteristics are widely disputed. But, what is certain is that Greek literature had an impact on Poetry, tragedy, comedy, history, science, and philosophy, and it continues to inspire generation after generation with its effect on literature.

1.3.3 The Position of Women

Despite the negative image the idea of feminism might have in the eyes of society, one cannot deny the fact that men and women can never be equal. However, this does not give men the right to consider themselves superior to the female gender, as human beings there is a set of rules and basic human behavior that one must follow to respect each other whether it is female or male. Greece, despite being a powerful popular civilization has many flaws when it comes to treating Greek women fairly.

Women in ancient Greece had very limited rights and were largely seen as inferior to men. They were not allowed to own property or participate in politics. They were expected to marry young and were expected to be obedient to their husbands and fathers. Women were generally restricted to the home and were not allowed to participate in public activities or to be educated. They had few legal

rights and were not allowed to testify in court or initiate divorce proceedings. Women were expected to bear children and manage the household. “women’s lives in Greece might have been comparatively restricted, but imagination-of both sexes, no doubt-was far less constrained” (Blundell,1998, p 84). Because they had limited rights and privileges compared to men, they could not vote, own property, or inherit wealth. Women were typically confined to the home and were expected to take care of the household, raise the children, and prepare meals. Married women were under the control of their husbands, who could legally divorce them at any time. Some women, however, were able to gain more power and influence in society. Women of wealthy families, like the wives of politicians and wealthy businessmen, could gain influence and act as leaders in their communities.

In some parts of Ancient Greece, women also had a role in politics and public life, such as in Sparta. Some ancient Greek women led fascinating lives in a civilization dominated by men, for example, the first known female poet of ancient Greece was Sappho, who wrote lyric poetry in the 7th century BC¹⁷. Her work was highly acclaimed in her time and her poetry has survived to the modern day.

Another Greek poet goes by the name Antye, The name Antye is a variant of the name Anthea, which is derived from an ancient Greek word meaning “flower.” It is also a diminutive form of the name Anthony. Antye is an ancient Greek poet and writer whose works date back to the 5th century BC. She wrote poetry, plays, and hymns, and her most famous works include the epic poem “The Wanderings of Antye” and the hymns “Eros and Aphrodite” and “Hymn to Artemis.”

Daily life for a woman in ancient Greece was largely confined to the home and family. She was responsible for managing the house, preparing meals, and caring for her children. Women had very limited legal rights and could not vote or own property. They could not participate in public life or hold public office. Education was also largely off-limits to women and most were illiterate. The songs of working women are reflected in Greek poetry and poetics. In ancient Greece,

¹⁷Laura Hayward, MA classics thecollector.com/fascinating-ancient-greek-women/

women's daily lives were occupied by various forms of labor. Women were expected to remain in the home and were not allowed to socialize with men outside the family (Karanika, 2014). They could, however, participate in religious festivals and celebrations. They could also own slaves and have them do the work in the home. As for the females who committed crimes or were taken to be slaves, they had a position that was different from women who were married or young. The status of female slaves in ancient Greece varied depending on their circumstances. Generally, they were regarded as property and were expected to serve their masters in any way commanded. Women were sometimes used for domestic work, agricultural labor, and in some cases, sexual services. They were usually bought and sold at slave markets and could be subject to cruel treatment and abuse. Serving as maids, nurses, and cooks in addition to some who were artists, craftsmen, musicians, and others they had a decent life with a chance to earn income¹⁸.

Female prisoners in ancient Greece were also subject to harsh treatment. Women were often taken as prisoners of war and were treated as slaves by their captors. They could be put to work in the fields or sold off as slaves. In some cases, they were even forced into prostitution. Because of the facts mentioned before, it was expected that someday women would start to defend themselves just like the modern world females started to gain confidence to use their voices and speak about the injustice and the overwhelming patriarchal world they lived in. This created a movement called feminism.

Feminism is an ideology and social movement that seeks to end the discrimination and oppression of women. It strives to create an equal and equitable society where people have equal rights, opportunities, and access to resources. Feminism focuses on challenging the patriarchy, the system of male-dominated power structures, and advocating for the social, political, and economic equality of genders. It has shaped modern society in numerous ways, from the introduction of women's suffrage to the fight for equal pay. Feminism has also played a key role in

¹⁸ <https://study.com/academy/lesson/women-of-greece.html>

changing laws and policies to make them more equitable for women. Feminism did not exist in Ancient Greece in the way it is understood today; however, the idea that women should have equal rights and opportunities to men was certainly present in some of the Ancient Greek texts. For example, the philosopher Socrates believed in the equality of the sexes, arguing that women should be educated and have equal rights. He also argued that a woman should be allowed to choose her husband, and not be forced into an arranged marriage (Rattini, 2019).

The philosopher Plato, who was Socrates' student, also believed in the equality of the sexes and wrote about it in his work *Republic*. Plato argued that both men and women should be educated and have the same rights, including the right to own property and participate in politics. Despite these beliefs, Ancient Greek society was largely patriarchal and women were expected to be subordinate to men in all aspects of life. Furthermore, Ancient Greek law dictated that a woman's husband was responsible for her financial and legal needs and that she was the property of her husband.

1.4 Greek Literature

Known to be the oldest form of art, Greek literature is the combination of what could be seen as guides for men to understand themselves, in ancient times, especially in Greece. Knowledge was a powerful weapon and the ones who did not have it considered the ones with knowledge as superior, the ones who they should follow to understand the nature of the world they live in and the explanation to any question they might have. It demonstrates that divine epiphanies not only reveal what the Greeks thought about their gods; they tell us just as much about the preoccupations, preconceptions, and assumptions of ancient Greek religion and culture (Petridou, 2016). These writings were not only seen as the literary aspects of the Greek world but also opened the window to what the Greeks believed in, and how they considered their gods and their culture to be. Greek literature is the tool for us to see Greece in the eyes of its people, it demonstrates their preoccupations and their ideas of myth. This literature is the manifestation of those myths where they become real in a certain sense, writing about the gods had been the way for

them to explore the deities and see the way they appear in their lives, how they came to be, and the situations they lived in.

Greek literature comprises written works in the Greek language. Ancient Greek writings were written in the ancient Greek dialect and the writing encompasses works from the earliest surviving publications to those from the 5th century. The period is split into the Preclassical, classical, Hellenistic, and Italian periods. Preclassical European writing mainly revolved around myths and consider the works of Homer; the Iliad and the Odyssey¹⁹. This classical period saw the dawn of play and the past. Three philosophers are particularly famous: Socrates and Plato. During the Italian period, considerable contributions were made to a variety of topics, including history, arts, and the sciences. It is the direct road to the Ancient Greek civilization where the oldest writings have been made.

These writers were the reason behind the widespread of Greek literature because they helped introduce the genres of the world's literature. One of the earliest writers of Greek Literature is Hesiod, Greek name *Hesiodos*. It is believed he had been writing around the time Homer also was producing his works. Hesiod is also an ancient Greek poet he was born in Cyme and then died in Ascra, and he is known as the father of Greek Didactic poetry. Didactic poetry, which was not regarded as a separate genre by either Greek or Roman theorists, embraces several poetic works which aim to instruct the reader in a particular subject matter, be it science, philosophy, hunting, farming, love, or some other art or crafts. One of Hesiod's surviving epics is by the name *Theogony*, it tells the myths of the Greek gods, describing their origins and genealogies (8th-7th century BC) this poem is considered to be important because of the way it talks about the myth's popular topics giving importance to the gods and their stories ones like Zeus and Chaos²⁰. There is the old period, subdivided into the Mycenaean point (textbooks at syllabic writing attested from the 14th to the thirteenth century BC and the archaic and classical periods (beginning with the adoption of the alphabet. From the eighth to

¹⁹The art of classical Greece Hemingway, Colette <http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd-tacg.htm>

²⁰ oxford.com (2023) oxford classical dictionary

the fourth century BC). The Hellenistic and Italian periods, the Byzantine period 5th to 15th century CE and the Modern phase.

Greek literature is the highest form of classical art, Ancient Greek literature comes as the pinnacle of what Western history and literature have reached. The Greeks were a civilization that was very advanced in their writings. Greek literature includes many genres including Epic, prose history, and lyrical including poetry and drama. Their literature is based on many different aspects of life. These stories usually have a theme or idea that is universal to all people and are often told in a variety of ways. Greek Literature could be seen as the development of literature as a whole, introducing genres that include what we know today. Genres rooted in Ancient Greeks are, for example, epics, lyric, pastoral poetry, tragic and comic drama, prose history, philosophy, and the novel²¹.

Epic is a type of literature that has been written for years, it is a form of literature that tells stories about events and is used to express ideas about the world, people, and events. The story of Odysseus is an example of this. Poems are also very popular because they contain many themes, some of these themes include love, friendship, and loyalty. A poem is a collection of words that describe something. There are many different types of poetry but the most common one is lyric poetry, which is a type of writing that uses simple language. Lyric poetry is usually written by a poet or lyricist, it is often called a lyric poem because it contains many lines that rhyme with a lot of details. Examples of this can be seen in the first line of Homer's Iliad, a description of what the gods would do if they were to kill Achilles. Another popular literary device derived from Drama is called a play²².

1.4.1 Plays

When it comes to literary genres, many types can be explored, and among these is drama, this type of literature is usually performed in front of an audience because of its heavy content. Drama writers aim to influence the audience and affect their

²¹ <https://www.classics.pitt.edu/research/greek-language-and-literature.com>

²² <https://www.britannica.com/art/lyric>

emotions, the best way to achieve an effect is if the action is performed live in front of people. That is why dramas are generally performed as plays to enhance the dramatic quality of the genre. Nowadays dramas are mostly performed and watched through television and other new technological devices.

A play is an action story, and its plot is based on the events that take place in it and how they affect the characters. It is a work of drama that contains dialogue most of the time and is performed in a theater. However, there is a difference between drama and play, In drama, the readers have the freedom to imagine the characters as they like, in plays, there is a human representation of each character which limits the audience when it comes to the interpretation of the characters.²³ A play is a literary work written for the theater that dramatizes events through the performance of dialogue and stage directions. The authors of plays, called playwrights, structure the performance into acts and scenes, which help build the tension and compellingly present the story to audiences. Since drama is a type of play it can not be taken away from its description, as a result, to define play it is found that it can be defined as a dramatic performance to reach the audience with emotional and meaningful insights.

When it comes to the beginning of plays, the history of this literary work is traced to ancient Greece, known for dramatic presentation, originally known as the first dramatic play that was performed in the theater of Dionysus, he was a Greek God who lived in Athens, he was very popular with the people of Athens. He was the god of wine and was known for playing an instrument called a ²⁴*LYRE*. Dionysus was one of the most famous Greek gods his music was played to make the gods happy or sometimes sad.

The theater of Dionysus is one the most ancient and first examples of Greek theaters. It was the place where the drama started and eventually became very popular among the Greek people²⁵. The theaters were built in Athens on Acropolis

²³ “play” Supersummary, www.supersummary.com/literary-devices- accessed 28 April 2023

²⁴ An instrument like a small U-shaped harp used especially in ancient Greece oxford languages

²⁵<https://www.urbsttravel.com/post/history-of-the-theater-of-dionysus>

Hill. Western drama began in ancient Greece, where dramatists wrote plays to compete in national competitions honoring Dionysus²⁶. firstly Greek drama is performed for special occasions or festivals. Athens had four festivals for worshipping Dionysus. Secondly, Greek drama was competitive and prizes were awarded to the actors and playwrights. Thirdly, they were choral because the signing was an important part of the play. The chorus underscored the ideas of the play, provided a point of view, focused on issues of the play and implications of the action, established the play's ethical system, and participated in the action²⁷. Lastly, Greek drama was closely associated with religion and stories based on myth or history.

Greek plays were very popular during the period of ancient Greece, they were written for entertainment purposes and were performed by people who had no money and did not know how to read. In ancient Greece, a play was performed every night at the theater. This was a way to show how much fun they were having by playing games. The Greeks believed that there was no such thing as a bad day or good night. ²⁸Greek plays were performed as part of religious festivals in honor of the god Dionysus, and unless later revived, were performed only once. Plays were funded by the polis, always presented in competition with other plays, and were voted either the first, second, or third (last) place. One of the most famous plays of Greek literature is ²⁹Sophocles's play *Oedipus Rex*, first performed in the early-to-mid 400s BCE, it is one of the most famous and influential tragedies left to us from the ancient Greek tradition. Based on the myth of *Oedipus* whose cursed fate was to marry his mother and kill his father, the play explores themes of destiny, free will, and literal and metaphoric vision and blindness.

³⁰*Medea* is also a tragic play written by the ancient Greek playwright Euripides. It was composed in 431 BCE as Euripides's entry for the Dionysia, an

²⁶ "play" Supersummary, www.supersummary.com/literary-devices/. accessed 28 April 2023

²⁷TheAnoka-Hennepin School District 11 [www.ahschools.us/centricity/domain/5143/GREEK THEATER 2023](http://www.ahschools.us/centricity/domain/5143/GREEK_THEATER_2023)

²⁸ the theater of Dionysus, *Athens* (Saksia. Ltd.) Walter Englert Humtech 110

²⁹<https://ancient-literature.com/greece-sophocles-oedipus-king>

³⁰<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Medea-play-by-Euripides>

important religious festival and theatrical competition in the city of Athens. Though *Medea* placed third in the competition that year, it has since become one of Euripides's most popular works, enjoying special attention for its nuanced treatment of revenge and domestic strife and the complexity of its lead character, the clever witch Medea. ³¹The oldest play known today is by the previously mentioned playwright Aeschylus he wrote *The Persian* which was first performed in 472 BC, the ancient Greek tragedy *Persians* the oldest extant example of the genre, and Aeschylus is known as the father of Greek tragedy. *Oedipus Rex and Medea* are one of the most famous Greek plays along with *Prometheus* bound by Aeschylus and *Antigone* also by Sophocles. These plays had given Greek literature its name and what is known today, the drama theater and to shows we see in Western culture are still influenced by Greek plays and other literary devices.

1.4.2 Characteristics of a Play

Just like a novel or a short story, a classic play contains the main elements that are known in literature in addition to some features that are specifically used only in plays. These characteristics are acts and scenes, characters, dialogue, spectacle, setting, plot, and stage directions.

Acts and scenes are the actions played by the actors where there is an act performed by actors and then these acts are divided into scenes, between each acts there is usually a pause, and the scenes are divided by a light going off or a few seconds of silence³². Scenes are what grab the attention and that is where usually the main part of the play is presented.

Characters are the ones whom the story talks about and the most important elements of a play because their actions and decisions are what create the play as a homogenous story, a playwright cannot have a play without characters since they are the reasons for the events of the plot. They provide the audience with a visual

³¹ "play" Supersummary, www.supersummary.com/literary-devices-, accessed 28 April 2023

³² <https://www.bellevuecollege.edu/artshum/materials/dram/101sixaristoaplay.asp>

representation of the act and the scenes they are talking about and living through in the theater.

Dialogue is the key element that gives the audience the story and it is what tells them about the character's personality, and the background story is also the way for the play to tell the action happening. It consists of conversations between two or more characters and it takes over all the spoken part of the play. In some plays, there can be a one-person dialogue called a monologue where one character talks alone to express thoughts or observations, which creates the illusion that the audience is hearing the person's inner thoughts. In ancient Greece, the dialogue is usually written in verse creating a rhythmic style just like the music of Dionysus.

The spectacle is everything that the audience hears and sees. From the way the characters walk, speak or the clothes they wear, they present a spectacle to the people who are watching them. There has to be a continuous attraction for attention, which consists of the way they deliver their dialogue. This brings us to the next element which is language. It is a necessity that the performers have a good grip on the language they speak where they speak and have good articulation since a play is performed live, there can be a chance for errors and mistakes so the actors have to practice speaking in a language that is dramatic, clear and express themselves in dramatic dialogue. The spectacle of a play is also called *The setting*, the place where everything happens, the play's actions take place in the setting but it can mean many places because the setting could have a relation to the actual place geographically speaking, a house, an area outside, or a mountain. The setting can also be a fictional world or a magical period, it also includes the time of the actions, the weather, and the surroundings.

The plot is the sequence of events linking the story together and presenting it in a cohesive, compelling way³³. The plot consists of five general elements: an introduction that introduces the characters and setting; rising action; a climactic scene; falling action; and a resolution. These elements are used for plays as a plan to

³³ (Supers summary literary devices/genre form/ play)

present in the theater. So the plot is used to clearly define the problem and give the characters a way to solve it. A playwright must create a plot that follows a series of events that lead to the eventual ending.

Stage directions; this part of the play is only visible to the actors and the playwrights because it is what provides them the direction and time for their entrance or the time they exit the stage. Stage directions are the key elements to a successful play since it directs all the characters to the exact time of the upcoming scene or the ending of one. It is also the visual guide to how the set must look and how the characters read and act a specific line of the script. The script is where their dialogue is written along with the stage directions in case an actor needs to revise one of his lines. Some playwrights use stage directions continuously and insist on following them others use them less.

In Ancient Greek, plays and theater were different than what we see now, some features disappeared, and others were developed and became a lot more detailed. Attending a tragedy or comedy in the 5th century BC was in many ways a different experience than attending a play in the United States in the 20th century³⁴. To name a few differences, Greek plays were performed in an outdoor theater, used masks, and were almost always performed by a chorus and three actors. Because despite it being the inspiration behind plays performed today Greek plays were different in comparison to today's performance.

To mention a few, here are some of the notable ancient Greek playwrights who have left an imprint on the world because of their works of art. Aeschylus (c. 525-456 BC), Sophocles (c. 495-406 BC), Euripides (c. 480-406 BC), Euphorion (5th century BC) the son of Aeschylus and Aristophanes. A play has many functions but the general one is entertainment. There can be a way for comedic relief or serious thoughts, some may leave their audience in a confusion, and some plays lead the audience to think about the ending, perhaps interpret one of

³⁴ The Theater of Dionysus, *Athens* (Saskia, Ltd.) Walter Englert Hum tech 110)

their own, while others play to give the audience the chance to have a little laughter while presenting a serious topic.

Plays can shed light on the mysteries of human nature like family and other interpersonal conflicts, the pain of social change, and rebirth. Many plays, even those not specifically classified as comedies, include lighter moments of levity, proving there is always time and space for laughter³⁵. Just like plays, there are other types of drama in the literature that are performed on stage, and the one that is usually associated with joy where the main purpose is to cause laughter is the Comedic plays.

1.4.3 Comedy

Comedy, simply put is an act made for people to make them laugh, sometimes the events are about everyday life or it is about political topics but in a laughing matter. It is a dramatic work made to give amusement and laughter to the audience. It is a set of actions that always conclude with a happy end because comedy playwrights avoid making their audience sad or confused. Comedy is a form of art that can be defined as a genre where many types of performances are made. The definition of comedy is based on the fact that it involves a variety of elements such as humor, used to make a statement about the world or people. The main characteristics of comedy include laughter, exaggeration, and irony.

The audience laughs at a comedic play because they think that what is happening in the world is a laughing matter, but that was only true because the playwrights made it seem like it is a laughing matter. This is the reality for comedians who have been performing since childhood and do want to change their style of writing, they try to make people laugh by making them feel something or doing something they would not normally do. They use humor to make people laugh at themselves and others. The most famous example of this type of comedy is when a comedian plays an act called “The King’s Speech”. It is a play that has many different characters and situations that are very funny.

³⁵ “play” Supersummary, www.supersummary.com/literary-devices-. accessed 28 April 2023

Plays can perform many emotions and types of stories. Some of these plays and stories are comedies and tragedies. A comedy is usually written by a chorus of people who have heard the story, it is a humorous story with a happy ending. There are many different types of comedy in literature but they all have one thing in common: they are funny. While a tragedy is a serious story, it is known as a drama, which means that the main character of a play is usually a person who dies by the end, There could be a certain clash between comedy and tragedy where in some stories a character is killed.

The first comedies were mainly satirical and mocked men in power for their vanity and foolishness³⁶. A satire is a type of play where the playwright uses humor or exaggeration to criticize something. The first master of comedy was the playwright Aristophanes. Much later Menander wrote comedies about ordinary people and made his plays more like sitcoms. Sitcoms are the modern version where there is a series played on television about characters and their comedic life journey, sitcoms mean *situation comedy*.³⁷ One of the final three principal dramatic forms in the theater of classical Greece is a play called Satyr play, a short play performed between the acts of tragedies and made fun of the plight of the tragedy's character. The satyrs were mythical half-human, half-goat figures and actors in these plays wore large phalluses for comic effect. Few examples of these plays survive as tragicomic, or comedy dramas.

The evolution of comedy from Aristophanes to Menander has intrigued scholars since antiquity.³⁸ A number of factors contributed to comedy's development during the fourth century, but a major influence that has not been appreciated is fifth-century satyr drama. Analysis of fragments and ancient literary commentaries reveals that various characteristic elements of Middle Comedy (e.g., mythological burlesque, domestic and erotic themes, a generally depoliticized humor, riddles, stock characters, and a playful style of humor) can be found in

³⁶International Journal of Reaserch in Social Sciences Vol.9 Issue 2 feb 2019 <https://www.ijmra.us>

³⁷<https://www.pbs.org/empires/thegreeks/background/24b.html>

³⁸ Shaw, C. A. (2014). *Middle Comedy and the "Satyric" Style* [Photograph]. OUP Academic. <https://academic.oup.com/book/7306/chapter/152039963>

earlier satyr play. Comic poets of this period looked to their satyric predecessors and transformed comedy into a more “satyric” genre. Aristotle even implicitly makes this connection, employing similar language to describe these genres and periods.

Greek Comedy has qualities that define its position in literature, for starters, it was not admitted to the Dionysus festival till 487-486 BC. It has an unknown origin and influence which some believed was purely from improvisations. Some playwrights were called comic dramatists like Aristophanes who most of his plays survived.³⁹ Greek comedy has the quality of commentary on contemporary society, politics, literature, and the Peloponnesian war. It is based on a happy idea and lastly, it was always made in a tone that was exaggerated and farcical). According to Aristotle, Greek comedy has the purpose of showing people worse than they are for comedic purposes, it is for exaggeration. Athenian comedy or Ancient Greek Comedy is also one of the three principal dramatic forms in the theater of classical Greece. It is highlighted by the famous writers and playwrights in each period. This dramatic form is divided into three periods; old comedy, middle comedy, and new comedy.

Old Comedy is considered the beginning of ancient Greek Comedy where the Athenians first started writing and performing comedy in the 5th century⁴⁰. A genre that has lived and evolved over the years and it is known as the oldest genre that continues to be used in works today.⁴¹ The term “Old Comedy” describes a specific type of play written by Aristophanes in the 5th century B.C. It is also known as an Aristophanic comedy. The earliest surviving comedy plays are the works of Aristophanes, old comedy is known as a play that has the sense of comedy that pokes fun at the general public and the audience it is also said that the jokes were directed to the politics of that time. This period of old comedy is divided into six parts that make its structure. They are an introduction, a paradox or the moment

³⁹ The Anoka-Hennepin school district 11 Theater 2023

⁴⁰ International Journal of Research in Social Sciences Vol.9 Issue 2, feb 201 <https://www.ijmra.us>

⁴¹ poem analysis, PoemSolutionsLimitedInternational House, 24 Holborn Viaduct

when the chorus entered the stage, a contest (also known as an agon), a parabasis (during which the chorus addressed the audience), and a series of amusing scenes inspired by the information in the introduction and the chorus' insults, and a finale (usually a banquet or a wedding)⁴². This structure was not followed when the other types of comedies started to appear since the playwrights began to change some of the rules and the forms of comedy, some opted to avoid the chorus and others changed the introductions. Old comedy came to an end when Athens lost the Peloponnesian war.

Middle Comedy is the period of comedy that was shared between the old and the new comedy, a term taken on by Aristophanes because of his famous works. It represents the change from the old comedy. This period's comedy has tackled topics of philosophy and politics as well, including the humor about the normal life of the people of Greece. Where the audience is seeing a realistic representation of domestic social life, this form of comedy was preoccupied with social themes. Comedy started to become less harsh in its handling of democracy and politicians in the fourth century. And as a result, it evolved to have more respect for the principle of law and order (Rosenbloom, 2013, chap14). The comedy never stopped evolving especially after the change of democracy and the laws of the civilization, the playwrights were learning to get used to their society and figure out how their comedies can be familiarized with the real world without offending.⁴³ Middle Comedy, which reduced or eliminated the chorus, ridiculed private personages rather than public ones, and often featured plots that revolved around an intrigue created by the characters. This style was prevalent from the end of the Peloponnesian War to the conquest of Greece by Macedonia.

New Comedy is the era where the plot and the characters were inspired by the society they lived in. Authors were known for their comedies that portray simple lives with a sense of humor, and there were fewer comedies about politics or making fun of the upper power, this period started to poke fun at the daily struggles

⁴²poem analysis, PoemSolutionsLimitedInternational House, 24 Holborn Viaduct

⁴³ earlyworldhistory.blogspot.com/2012/02/new-comedy

of a normal citizen. This created a change in the form of entertainment at that time. The works that were created in this period were many but a few have survived, the main characters of the new comedy were plain people, unlike the old comedy where we find characters that are the rich of civilization, the politicians, and the ones with power. ⁴⁴New Comedies tended to focus on the role of chance in the average citizen's daily fight for survival. The play would open to find the characters' lives had become quite tempestuous, but by the final act, chance would have resolved the difficulties in the characters' favor. Mistaken identities, disguises, and comical errors abound in these plays. The new comedy succeeded in influencing the theater of ancient Greece and also Romans where fragments of this type of comedy are still found nowadays.

1.5 Conclusion

This chapter served as an introduction to the civilization of Greece, allowing readers to become acquainted with its rich history. It explored Greek mythology by providing clear definitions of key terms and delving into the origins of this literary genre. By immersing ourselves in the realm of Greek mythology, we gained insights into the role of women in these stories and their connection to literature. Additionally, this chapter played a crucial role in elucidating the historical context of Greece, particularly focusing on the Peloponnesian War, which marked a pivotal moment for democracy in the region. Furthermore, the chapter encompassed Greek literature, offering explanations of various genres such as plays and comedy. Notably, it highlighted Aristophanes, widely regarded as the father of Greek comedy. This section also aimed to shed light on the portrayal of women and the perspectives of Aristophanes in his plays.

Alongside these discussions, the chapter aimed to provide a comprehensive overview of Greek literature. In conclusion, this first chapter deepened our understanding of the fascinating world of the Greeks and their mythology. By exploring ancient Greek myths, including the gods, goddesses, heroes, and monsters

⁴⁴ earlyworldhistory.blogspot.com/2012/02/new-comedy

Chapter One: GREECE, MYTHOLOGY, AND WOMEN

that have captivated audiences throughout history, we gained a profound appreciation for their cultural significance and enduring impact. Women held significant roles in Greek mythology, occupying positions of power as goddesses and mortal heroines, albeit with a range of portrayals that reflected the attitudes and values of the Greek society in which they originated. Thus, this chapter not only offered insights into ancient Greek culture and its perceptions of gender roles but also underscored the lasting legacy of these ancient tales.

CHAPTER TWO
THE POWER OF
UNITY; WOMEN'S
COLLECTIVE
ACTION IN
LYSISTRATA

CHAPTER TWO: The Power of Unity; Women's Collective Action in *Lysistrata*

2.1 Introduction

2.2 Play's Summary

2.3 ARISTOPHANES

2.3.1 ARISTOPHANES THE FATHER OF COMEDY

2.3.2 ARISTOPHANES AND WOMEN

2.4 Women Struggle for Peace in *Lysistrata*

2.4.1 Lysistrata

2.4.2 Description of Some Other Women of the Play

2.4.3 Women's Power through Sexuality

2.5 Women's Empowerment after the Peloponnesian War

2.6 CONCLUSION

2.1 Introduction

In the timeless play '*Lysistrata*' by the Greek playwright Aristophanes, a group of women undertake a remarkable journey to bring an end to the devastating Peloponnesian War. However, what sets their approach apart is not the use of force or violence, but rather the harnessing of women's strength through peaceful means. This chapter will explore women's agency and their struggle for peace. As well as an examination of the women characters of *Lysistrata*, their power through their sexuality, and the process of empowering women where they preach for an environment where women have equal opportunities and take control of their lives.

To fully comprehend the significance of women's power in '*Lysistrata*,' it is essential to understand the historical and social context in which the play was written. Aristophanes, a prominent playwright of ancient Greece, crafted this comedic masterpiece during a period of war and political unrest. Within this backdrop, the play becomes a compelling reflection of the power dynamics and societal roles of women in ancient Greece. The overarching objective of this chapter is to show how the women in '*Lysistrata*' demonstrate their power and reshape the narrative through non-violent resistance. This chapter aims to shed light on the inspiring depiction of women's power in '*Lysistrata*' and its relevance in the present time. By examining their non-violent strategies and the impact of their collective actions, this chapter will unravel the layers of women's power in '*Lysistrata*'.

2.2 Play's Summary

Lysistrata is a play written by Aristophanes, a famous comedy playwright. This play is labeled as an ancient Greek comedy play performed in classical Athens. It is one of the surviving works of Aristophanes, written in the period of old comedy. *Lysistrata* has founded the idea of women's power by using their version of a weapon. The story, while using humor to comment on social and political issues of its time, focuses on the idea of feminism, giving a voice to Greek women to express their frustration. This comedy shows Greek women as powerful and persistent and it is a proof of the real Greek world. The male perspective dominates most of the literature written in Ancient Greece, leaving out the female perspective and narrative. This is problematic because

it is essential to understand the context of plays, art, and books of the time. To have a more well-rounded view of Ancient Greece, the female perspective is needed. Without it, scholarly articles and reviews remain one-sided and skewed. By looking at works through the lens of women, Ancient Greece can be seen as a whole new civilization. (Tobias, 2020, p5).

The play is about Lysistrata, a woman who decides to convince other women in Greek society to withhold sex from their husbands until the end of the Peloponnesian War. In the play, there are speaking characters and mute characters. In a play, speaking characters are the ones who have lines and are involved in the dialogue, while mute characters are the ones who do not speak or have lines (Jenkins, 2022). In Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, among the speaking characters, there is Lysistrata, an Athenian woman, Calonice, an Athenian wife, and Lampito, a Spartan woman. While the mute characters are the ones who are in the background, the Athenian wives, slaves, police, and so on (Henderson, 1988, p 21). The first scene starts with a conversation between Lysistrata who is expressing her frustration with the other Athenian women's lack of presence at the meeting she called for. Calonice is asking for guidance and advice from Lysistrata, trying to understand how they could make a difference if they "...are good at putting make-up on, designer clothes and wigs and necklaces, imported gowns and fancy lingerie!" (Henderson, 1988, p23). Eventually, other women arrive at the meeting asking for the reason behind Lysistrata's call. Lysistrata, the protagonist of the play, asserts that the sole means of achieving peace is by withholding men from their deepest desire. She astutely observes that men are primarily attracted to women for their physical attributes and that the ongoing war has plunged Greece into chaos. Lysistrata, a woman of strong character, takes it upon her fellow women to harness their most potent power, their sexuality, as a means of attaining peace and tranquility. She exhorts them to reject men's advances and initiate a sex strike, whereby no Athenian woman will engage in sexual relations with men until they emerge victorious in the Peloponnesian war.

In the play "*Lysistrata*," the stage comes alive with two distinct choruses: the Chorus of Aged Men and the Chorus of Elderly Women. Guiding both choruses is a

Koryphaios, who leads their respective performances. The initial appearance unfolds with the Chorus of Men, a weary and disheveled group, laboring to transport wood and pots of fire to the gates of the Akropolis. Their burden weighs heavily upon them, causing considerable difficulty. Their objective is to smoke out the women who have taken refuge within the Akropolis⁴⁵.

Simultaneously, the Chorus of Old Women approaches the scene, carrying jugs filled with water, prepared to extinguish the men's fiery intentions. A spectacle ensues as the choruses clash in a battle of wit and determination. Ultimately, the Chorus of Elderly Women emerges victorious, joyously drenching the heads of the men with triumphant cascades of water.

Amidst this lively encounter, the Commissioner, a magistrate appointed with specific duties, arrives at the Akropolis in search of financial support for the naval fleet. He is taken aback by the unexpected presence of the women and promptly issues an order to his policemen, instructing them to apprehend Lysistrata and her female companions. The ensuing confrontation takes on a humorous tone, with minimal physical contact, as the policemen find themselves intimidated and startled. Seizing the moment, the Commissioner seizes the opportunity to address the men of Athens, candidly expressing his belief that they have been excessively magnanimous, allowing the women of the city an undue amount of freedom.

As the policemen hastily retreat from the scene, the Commissioner and Lysistrata find themselves engaged in a spirited exchange concerning the Peloponnesian War. Lysistrata passionately argues that the war is of particular concern to women, offering her insights on how the city should be governed. She masterfully weaves an intricate analogy, illustrating that Athens should be structured akin to the meticulous art of spinning wool, a domain traditionally associated with women. Lysistrata emphasizes that women have made tremendous sacrifices for the war, having given up their husbands and sons in the service of the effort. Furthermore, she highlights the present challenges faced by women in their pursuit of marital partners

⁴⁵<https://www.sparknotes.com/drama/lysistrata/summary>

due to the war's impact on the male population. In a satirical twist, the women mockingly dress the Commissioner in women's clothing, playfully illustrating the power dynamics at play.

In the next scene of the play, Kinesias, a man in great pain, pleads with his wife, Myrrhine, to make love to him. Kinesias is desperate, and he promises to do anything Myrrhine wants if she will only relieve his pain. At first, Myrrhine refuses, but then she pretends to agree to his request. However, she starts teasing him by leaving every few minutes to fetch pillows and other comforts from the Acropolis. Kinesias becomes increasingly desperate, and his pain becomes unbearable. He begs and pleads with Myrrhine, but she continues to tease him by leaving again and again. Finally, Kinesias promises to do anything to make peace between Athens and Sparta if Myrrhine will only relieve his pain. Myrrhine disappears into the fortress for good, leaving Kinesias alone and in agony. He is left alone to contemplate the error of his ways and the destructive nature of war. Later, a Spartan messenger approaches the Acropolis, and he gives a speech describing the plight of his army and begging Athens for a treaty. The Athenian men are eager to make peace at this point, and a congress of men gathers at the Acropolis to sign a treaty. The men are tired of war and desperate for peace, and they agree to negotiate a treaty. That is when Lysistrata walks out of the Acropolis, accompanied by a naked woman named Peace, who distracts the men while Lysistrata delivers a powerful speech on the need for Greeks to make peace with one another. According to Lysistrata, both Athens and Greece have much in common, as they were allies in the past, defeating the empire of Persia together. She argues that the war between them is an unnecessary and destructive conflict that only benefits their enemies. Her speech is persuasive, and the men agree to put down their weapons and negotiate a peace treaty. They negotiate their territorial dispute using Peace's body as a map of Greece, and when peace is declared, Lysistrata summons the women out of the Acropolis, and everyone rejoices together. The play concludes with a festive celebration of peace and unity among the Greeks. Thus, through their resilience,

humor, and strategic actions, the women of "*Lysistrata*" defy social norms, challenge authority, and spark thought-provoking debates amid a tumultuous war-torn setting⁴⁶.

2.3 Aristophanes

Aristophanes is the playwright who shaped old comedy for what it was. This Athenian comic had his works of the comedy genre stand out more than other comic writers because of the topics he wrote about and the time he produced his works. Aristophanes was born circa 446 BCE in Athens, Greece. Despite limited information about his childhood and family life, it is believed that he grew up in a comfortable environment because he came from a wealthy family⁴⁷. This likely provided him with the necessary resources to pursue his talent and passion for theater. He wrote nearly forty plays yet only eleven survived. Most of his writing highlights the characteristics of old comedy, which is the era he appeared in. Throughout his career which spanned over four decades, Aristophanes wrote *The Acharnians* the story of Dikaiopolis, a desperate Athenian citizen fed up with the Peloponnesian War. In search of peace, Dikaiopolis strikes a private treaty with Sparta and experiences both the benefits and backlash that come with his decision. As a powerful critique of war and political incompetence, *The Archanians* remains relevant today for its timeless themes and biting satire.

Aristophanes also wrote *The Knights*, the play focuses on the political corruption and incompetence of Athenian leaders, particularly targeting the influential statesman Cleon⁴⁸. The main characters are two slaves, who represent the common people, and their master, who symbolizes the noble class. They seek to find a new leader who can save Athens from its current problems. After a series of comic scenes and debates, they discover a simple yet effective public figure: a sausage seller named Agoracritus. Under his new leadership, Athens starts to rebuild and prosper, highlighting Aristophanes' message that honesty and integrity should be valued more than wealth and power in leadership.

⁴⁶<https://study.com/learn/lesson/lysistrata-by-aristophanes-summary-themes-analysis.html>

⁴⁷[Http://www.notablebiographies.com/an-ba/Aristophanes.html](http://www.notablebiographies.com/an-ba/Aristophanes.html)

⁴⁸https://ancient-literature.com/greece-aristophanes_knights/

⁴⁹*The Clouds*, another play by Aristophanes is the story that revolves around Strepsiades, an Athenian man burdened with debt, and his son Pheidippides. In an attempt to escape his financial troubles, Strepsiades enrolls in Socrates' famous "Thinkery" (a parody of the Platonic Academy), which claims to teach clever ways to win lawsuits and manipulate creditors. Strepsiades' plan backfires when his newly educated son ends up outsmarting both him and their creditors. Aristophanes uses the character of Socrates and the idea of intellectual sophistry to humorously critique new philosophical ideas of the time and highlight the potential consequences of abusing knowledge for immoral purposes. And many other famous plays such as *The Wasps*, *Peace*, *The Birds*, *Lysistrata*, *The Smophoriazusae*, *The Frogs*, *Ecclesiazusae*, and *Plutus*. Each play is distinguished by its satirical cleverness and humor – characteristics that earned Aristophanes a reputation as one of the great comic geniuses in Western literature.

Aristophanes' work provides a unique insight into Greek comedy during the so-called "Old Comedy" period (roughly 480-320 BCE). His plays openly criticized public figures and ridiculed societal norms using crude humor while also addressing philosophical questions. This period had a lot of suffering for the Athenians because Athens was fighting in the Peloponnesian war so the time was not the best for comedy to be around. However, Aristophanes still produced his works and many plots of his works were focused on advocating peace by using humor. He was widely known for his satirical plays and razor-sharp wit. Aristophanes' works showcased a unique blend of farce, exaggeration, and political commentary that were both entertaining and thought-provoking. Through the lens of comedy, he managed to question and critique the society he lived in while unveiling universal human experiences that resonated with audiences. The beginnings of Aristophanes' career are characterized by a rapidly evolving comedy scene in Athens. Known as Old Comedy, this art form provided an opportunity for playwrights to mock contemporary public figures and political leaders without fear of repercussion. Comedy was used as a powerful tool for expressing free speech, an element that Aristophanes skillfully exploited. One undeniable aspect of

⁴⁹https://ancient-literature.com/greece-aristophanes_knights/

Aristophanes' work is his acute sense of satire. His ability to criticize societal norms while still maintaining humor proved essential to his creative vision (Stow, 1942, p83-92). Most notably, within *The Clouds*, Aristophanes aims at Socrates, ridiculing his philosophical ideas as well as creating a broader commentary on fifth-century Athenian intellectualism. Through this play and others like it, Aristophanes displayed his aptitude for capturing the absurdities prevalent in Athenian society. Aristophanes' inventiveness is also evident in the themes he broached within his plays.

The storyline not only highlights the significance of women in society but also explores the far-reaching consequences of speaking up against the higher power. Aristophanes was an influential playwright during an age in which Athens had no shortage of great thinkers. Although little is known about his personal life, it is clear that Aristophanes' works captured the vibrant spirit and intellectual fervor of classical Athens⁵⁰. He produced more than 40 plays throughout his career, with 11 having survived the test of time in their entirety. These plays offer valuable insights into Athenian democracy, public life, and everyday interactions. Aristophanes' plays are vibrant literary texts, designed primarily to appeal to a classical Athenian audience as a piece of living drama (Robson, 2009, p242-245).

One notable aspect of Aristophanes' skill was his ability to create wildly imaginative worlds that defied the conventional sensibilities of his time. He blended reality with fantasy to create humorous situations that resonated with his contemporary audience. An excellent example is *The Birds*, where two Athenians convince a group of birds to create a new city in the sky that would dominate both humans and gods. The play offers a satirical look at power dynamics, societal hierarchies, and ambition. Aristophanes' comedies were not only vehicles for entertainment but were also powerful social commentaries that delved into political satire. He critiqued prominent political figures like Cleon and Socrates through biting humor and verses with swear words. His play *The Knights* directly targets Cleon – an influential Athenian

⁵⁰<http://www.jstor.org/stable/23038118>

demagogue – by portraying him as a deceptive and oppressive slave master (Edwards, 1991).

Aristophanes has made an impact on the genre of comedy. Aristophanes, often referred to as the "Father of Comedy," contributed to the development of Old Comedy, a form that relied heavily on political and social satire, slapstick humor, and exaggerated characters. One of the ways Aristophanes influenced the genre was by introducing the use of satire and parody in his works. This allowed him to criticize various aspects of Athenian society, politics, and culture while still maintaining an entertaining and humorous tone. His play *The Clouds*, for example, skewered contemporary philosophers like Socrates and demonstrated how satire could be used to challenge established ideas and values. Another way Aristophanes impacted comedy was through his creation of memorable characters rooted in stereotypes that persisted throughout comedic literature. For example, *The Birds* showcases an array of over-the-top bird personas that represent different aspects of society – from political figures to everyday citizens – showcasing his ability to blend humor with commentary on the human condition. Moreover, Aristophanes' skillful use of language and puns set a precedent for comedy writers who came after him. He often incorporated wordplay, puns, absurd dialogue, and clever rhymes into his plays, demonstrating linguistic innovation that would become a staple of comedic writing in later generations. Finally, (Edwards, 1991) Aristophanes' focus on social issues in his comedies laid the groundwork for future playwrights to tackle relevant themes within their works. His plays often confronted societal norms and challenged traditional beliefs through humor and wit, paving the way for future comedians to explore complex topics while engaging audiences with laughter and wit.

Aristophanes' influence on the genre of comedy is apparent through his innovative use of satire and parody, memorable characters rooted in archetypes, skillful incorporation of language-play and puns, as well as his willingness to confront

societal issues through humorous means⁵¹. By doing so, he left a lasting legacy and played an instrumental role in shaping the course of comedic literature.

2.3.1 Aristophanes; The Father of Comedy

This ancient Greek playwright is a well-known figure in the sphere of literature. Often regarded as the father of comedy, Aristophanes was prolific and influential in his time. He composed numerous plays wherein satire and wit took center stage, offering hilarious takes on politics, culture, and society in Ancient Greece. He has been designated the 'Father of Comedy.' A title that reflects his innovation and mastery in the realm of comedic theater during the 5th century BCE. ⁵²Aristophanes was given this title for several reasons mainly because he played an important role in the growth of old comedy, the creation of memorable comic characters, and the use of clever language. His impact on the comedic genre was notable because of his ability to provide social and political commentary, directly address the audience (breaking the fourth wall), and inspire future playwrights with his works. Finally, his lasting legacy is evident in the 2003 women's anti-war protest, where *Lysistrata* was adapted and used as a symbol of resistance.

Aristophanes' innovations and contributions to comedic theater have solidified his title as the Father of Comedy⁵³. Aristophanes' comedy becomes cast as a prestigious object, a soft, protective cloak meant to shield viewers from the debilitating effects of competitors' comedies and restore a sense of paternal responsibility and authority. Associations between afflicted fathers and healing sons, between audience and poet, are shown to be at the center of the discourse that has shaped Aristophanes' canonical dominance ever since. His ability to engage audiences with humorous social and political commentary has left a lasting legacy on the comedic genre that still echoes through time. As one delves into his works, it becomes obvious that his works

⁵¹Gill, N.S « Aristophanes the ancient greek comedy writer thoughtco.com/aristophanes-old comedy-writer-117123

⁵²The university of chicago press <https://press.uchicago.edu> aristophanes and the clock of comedy 2016

⁵³The university of chicago press <https://press.uchicago.edu> aristophanes and the clock of comedy 2016

have left a great impact on the genre of comedy and this is why he is called the father of comedy⁵⁴.

2.3.2 Aristophanes and Women

Aristophanes was known for his writing and his title was earned as a result of his image of confidence and his choice of words when it came to giving opinions, especially on politics. His wit, his satire, his poetry appeal to all, and the many scholars who have turned their attention to the varied aspects of this poet's genius have not exaggerated but only made more manifest how merited is his reputation (Lloyd, 1942, pp83-92). However, when it comes to his opinion of women it is shown purely in his plays and to understand his perspective is to understand his plays and the characters played by women. Aristophanes' perception of women, as evidenced in his plays, often portrayed them as intelligent and resourceful figures, capable of outwitting men. However, he also depicted them as prone to gossip, indulging in luxury, and ruled by their emotions. Overall, Aristophanes used women as powerful literary devices to provide social commentary and humor in his comedies, but it is important to recognize that this portrayal was filtered through the lens of a male-dominated society. Aristophanes often portrayed women in his plays as powerful and resourceful figures who challenged social norms. In a society where women were typically seen as passive and submissive, Aristophanes presented an alternative perspective that highlighted their intelligence and strength (Lloyd, 1942).

In his comedies *Lysistrata* and *The Assemblywomen*, Aristophanes depicted women taking control of political and social matters to rectify issues caused by men. *Lysistrata*, the protagonist, leads a group of women to end the Peloponnesian War by withholding sex from their husbands and using their influence within private spaces to bring about change in public affairs. Similarly, in *The Assemblywomen*, women disguise themselves as men to infiltrate a male-dominated political assembly and propose reforms that serve both genders' interests. In *Lysistrata*, Aristophanes examines gender relations and female empowerment. In the story, *Lysistrata* leads a

⁵⁴ The university of chicago press <https://press.uchicago.edu> aristophanes and the clock of comedy 2016

group of women from various city-states in a sex strike to force men to end the Peloponnesian War. The humorous plot underscores the potential power women held in society if they were to use their sexuality as leverage against men.

Another play that demonstrates Aristophanes' view on women is *The Assembly Women*, also known as "Ecclesiazusae." In this play, women assume control of the government by disguising themselves as men and implementing a series of radical reforms intending to create a utopian society. The women's interference with the political system highlights their potential influence in shaping policy.

Though Aristophanes' portrayal of women may be seen as progressive for his time, it is essential to recognize that his plays are works of fiction and satire. His characters and their actions should not be taken as a literal representation of how he or others viewed women during Athens' Golden Age. However, it does demonstrate that Aristophanes was aware of societal issues surrounding gender roles and chose to incorporate these themes into his work. While his plays are satirical in nature, they serve as a commentary and critique of gender roles and expectations in ancient Greece. Aristophanes' unconventional portrayal of women illustrates his belief that they were capable of thinking critically and taking decisive actions. This view was not widely accepted at the time but certainly demonstrated his progressive standpoint on gender equality. Aristophanes' point of view towards women in ancient Greece was one of admiration for their potential, even though his plays were comical and exaggerated. He used humor to expose the absurdity of the rigid roles confining women, suggesting that society would benefit by acknowledging and embracing their agency and wisdom (Herman, 1890, p159-186).

These are some of the earliest survivors of works that portray women in ancient civilization and these characters showcase strong, independent women who play crucial roles in executing their respective agendas, often engaging in humor, satire, and social commentary related to wider Athenian society. For Aristophanes women were not a tool used to express his opinion and enforce his political standing, rather they were a literary device in his play written to inform and send a message to his audience mainly the men. "These plays [of Aristophanes] provide a unique glimpse of

women not only in their familiar domestic roles but also concerning household and city, religion and government, war and peace, theater and festival, and of course, to men” (Henderson, 2010, p ix).

Aristophanes had a complex relationship with women. His satirical comedies often portrayed them as intelligent and influential figures in Athenian society. However, it is important to remember that these portrayals were often exaggerated and used for comedic purposes rather than being a true reflection of his personal opinions on women.

2.4 Women’s Struggle for Peace in *Lysistrata*

One of the most powerful themes present in the play “*Lysistrata*” is the struggle for peace, especially in the character Lysistrata and her efforts to bring an end to the Peloponnesian War.

Lysistrata symbolizes the determination and agency of women as she takes the lead in organizing a united front of women from both Athens and Sparta. She recognizes that the men's continuous warfare is causing immense suffering and destruction, and she believes that women have a crucial role to play in bringing about peace. In one of the scenes of the play; a character, addressed as the commissioner is introduced.

The women in the play face significant challenges as they try to exert influence in a society dominated by men. However, through their collective action and the implementation of the sex strike, they showcase their resourcefulness, resilience, and unity. By withholding sex from their husbands and lovers, they effectively disrupt the power dynamics and force the men to acknowledge their demands. When they stood against the commissioner who wanted to arrest them, they managed to intimidate and scare off the policemen through their strategic and clever tactics. While the exact details may vary depending on the adaptation or interpretation of the play, some common methods used by the women to assert their resilience include:

- **Verbal Wit:** The women engaged in sharp and humorous dialogue, employing clever wordplay and sarcastic remarks to ridicule and disorient the policemen.

Their quick thinking and wit caught the officers off guard. Oh yea? Well, let me tell you, Mister Magistrate, sir! Officer or not, he who touches even my little pinky shall spill plenty of tears for it⁵⁵.

- **Mocking Gestures:** The women may have used exaggerated and mocking gestures to mimic the policemen or to ridicule their authority. By turning the situation into a humorous spectacle, they undermined the seriousness of the arrest attempt.
- **Nonviolent Resistance:** Instead of resorting to physical force, the women relied on nonviolent resistance techniques. They might have employed tactics such as blocking the path of the policemen, obstructing their efforts, or employing distracting maneuvers to confuse and disorient them. Why the Rams, boys? We don't need rams here, we just need a bit of brain. Much better than all the Rams in the world. We should just use a bit of grey matter and noise, that's all! This is Athena's Temple. Athena, boys, the Goddess of wisdom⁵⁶.
- **Unity and Solidarity:** The women likely acted collectively, supporting one another and working together towards a common goal. By standing united, their collective strength and determination would have been evident, making it more challenging for the policemen to overcome their resistance. you touch our Myrrhini old man and I'll rip all your hair out. Strand by miserable strand. That'll make you squeal like the pig you are!

These tactics combined to create an atmosphere of chaos, confusion, and amusement, ultimately leading to the policemen's retreat and the women's victory in asserting their resilience.

This struggle for peace goes beyond the physical act of withholding sex. It represents a larger symbolic gesture of women reclaiming agency over their bodies and asserting their political influence. It challenges traditional gender roles and highlights the potential for women to participate actively in political decision-making

⁵⁵<https://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Greek/Lysistrata>.

⁵⁶<https://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Greek/Lysistrata>.

processes. Furthermore, the play emphasizes the futility and absurdity of war, presenting it as a destructive force that affects everyone, regardless of gender. The women's determination to end the war reflects a desire for a peaceful and harmonious society, where the well-being of their families and communities takes precedence over warfare and conflict. Through the character of Lysistrata and the women's collective struggle, *Lysistrata* explores the idea that peace can be achieved through dialogue, cooperation, and a recognition of women's agency. It challenges the notion that war and violence are the only means to resolve conflicts and highlights the importance of women's perspectives and contributions in the pursuit of peace.

2.4.1 Lysistrata

Lysistrata is the main character in the ancient Greek play "*Lysistrata*" by Aristophanes. She is a strong and determined woman who comes up with a plan to end the Peloponnesian War by convincing the women of Greece to withhold sex from their husbands until they agree to make peace. Lysistrata is portrayed as a clever and resourceful leader who is willing to take bold action to achieve her goals. She is also shown to be a compassionate and empathetic character that cares deeply about the suffering caused by the war. Throughout the play, Lysistrata demonstrates her leadership skills by organizing the women of Greece and persuading them to join her cause. She is also shown to be a skilled negotiator, using her intelligence and wit to outmaneuver the male politicians who oppose her⁵⁷. Overall, Lysistrata is a complex and dynamic character who embodies the spirit of resistance and empowerment. Her character has inspired many people throughout history and continues to be an important figure in feminist literature and thought.

Lysistrata is considered a strong character due to her actions in the play. When women protest against their husbands forcing them to have sex, Lysistrata advises them to submit, but in a disagreeable manner. She tells them that men do not enjoy sex when they have to force it upon their partners. Lysistrata also suggests that women should make their men suffer in other ways. These passages reveal that Lysistrata is a

⁵⁷ https://ancient-literature.com/greece_aristophanes_lystrata/

shrewd and intelligent woman who knows how to achieve her goals⁵⁸. She is cunning and sly, as she wants the women to make their men crave them, and clever, as she knows that by denying sex, the men will eventually give in to the women's demands.

Lysistrata and the women display cunning and deceitfulness in their takeover of the Akropolis. The older women are assigned to occupy the Akropolis, pretending to be there for a sacrifice while the women work out their agreement. The women, particularly Lysistrata, fall into the stereotype that women are mischievous and deceitful. Lysistrata instructs the women to lie about their true intentions on the Akropolis and uses the refusal of sex to achieve her goals. The story of *Lysistrata*, as suggested by Aristophanes, is a testament to the protagonist's ability to not only convince women who were afraid of men but also create an organized revolution of women. The ingenuity of the character Lysistrata's ideas is evident in the way she planned this strike⁵⁹. She did not just tell them to stop complying with their men but also wanted to tease them. This is why she instructed the women of Athens to keep teasing them by wearing their revealing clothes and behaving in an alluring way to confuse the men and make them frustrated. Lysistrata's ability to organize the meeting and convince the women underscores Aristophanes' desire to demonstrate the power of women through this play by selecting the protagonist and giving her a voice. He made her use her voice for the rights of women. The play was performed during the war, so Aristophanes believed it was the ideal time to produce comedic relief for the people of Athens. Since the ending is positive, this play was a means of giving women confidence in their voices. As previously mentioned, at that time, women were not allowed to participate in performing plays in the theater, so all the characters were played by men. Nonetheless, it was a bump in the road because the play was successful, and until now, it is used as an example of women's power and the idea that if all women agreed to do something, they would make it happen.

⁵⁸ : https://www.cornellcollege.edu/classical_studies/lit.com

https://www.cornellcollege.edu/classical_studies/lit.com

⁵⁹<https://www.sparknotes.com/drama/lysistrata/section1/>

2.4.2 Description of Some Other Women of the Play

Lysistrata has been hailed as an icon by many, both those seeking an ancient feminist and those who admire her anti-war efforts. However, Aristophanes used the format of Old Comedy to create a play that was humorous at the expense of women and built upon the weak and dependent status of women in ancient Athens. By examining the status of women in classical Athens and the stark contrast between Athenian women and the character Lysistrata, as well as understanding the format of Old Comedy and how Aristophanes used women as comic devices, it becomes apparent that Aristophanes' original intent differs from how modern audiences and individuals perceive Lysistrata. Despite being seen as a feminist icon by modern theatre artists, her strength and resilience do not align with Aristophanes' intention. (Tobias, 2020, p.3).

- **Calonice**, a supporting character in the play "*Lysistrata*", is a feisty and confident Athenian woman living in ancient Greece during 411 BC. She represents the archetype of a supporting neighbor and wife. Calonice's role in the play revolves around being a part of the band of women who unite under the leadership of Lysistrata to end the Peloponnesian War by withholding sexual privileges from their husbands. Calonice is known for her enthusiastic and placatory nature, constantly encouraging and supporting her fellow women in their quest for peace. With her spoken voice, she engages in lively scenes, displaying her determination and wit as she navigates the challenges faced by the group. As an Athenian Greek woman⁶⁰, Calonice embodies the spirit of her time and plays a crucial role in the comedic yet socially significant plot of *Lysistrata*⁶¹.
- **Myrrhine** is a supporting character in the play. She is a strong-willed Athenian Greek woman who plays a crucial role in the comedic plot. Myrrhine is depicted as an adult wife and mother, adding depth to her character. Her voice is spoken, and she actively participates in the dialogue-

⁶⁰<https://stageagent.com/characters/28098/lystrata/calonice>

⁶¹<https://www.sparknotes.com/drama/lystrata/character/lystrata/>

driven scenes throughout the play. Myrrhine's role in the story revolves around her involvement in the band of women led by Lysistrata. Together, they devise a seduction plan to manipulate their husbands into ending the Peloponnesian War. Myrrhine's character is characterized by her deep interest in the cause and her teasing nature. She engages in captivating and playful interactions with both the women and the men, using her charm and wit to advance the plot and create comedic moments. In the context of the play, Myrrhine stands out as an influential figure within the band of women, contributing to their collective efforts to bring peace to their city⁶². Her presence adds a dynamic and captivating element to the scenes she appears in, making her an integral part of the overall story of "*Lysistrata*."

- **Lampito** is a supporting character in the play. She is a strong and attractive Spartan woman who adds a unique flavor to the story. Lampito's voice is spoken, and she actively participates in the dialogue-driven scenes, showcasing her strong presence on stage. As a member of the band of women led by Lysistrata, Lampito represents the Spartan faction. She brings with her a distinct Scots accent, which adds an element of cultural diversity to the play. Lampito is known for her physical fitness and sporty nature, reflecting the Spartan ideal of physical strength and prowess. Despite being a supporting character, Lampito's wisdom and toughness make her an influential presence. She stands alongside the Athenian women in their quest to end the war by withholding sexual privileges from their husbands. Lampito's character serves as a bridge between the Athenian and Spartan women, showcasing the unity and shared purpose between the two groups. In the context of the play, Lampito's portrayal adds depth and complexity to the overall narrative⁶³. Her combination of strength, attractiveness, and cultural uniqueness creates a captivating and memorable character that enriches the dynamic interactions among the band of women in "*Lysistrata*."

⁶²<https://stageagent.com/characters/28099/lysistrata/myrrhine>

⁶³<https://stageagent.com/characters/28100/lysistrata/lampito>

- **Stratyllis** is a supporting character in the play. She is a mature adult woman who assumes the role of a leader within the chorus. Stratyllis possesses a strong and confident voice, which she uses to actively participate in the spoken dialogue throughout the play. As a spokesperson for the chorus, Stratyllis is resourceful and quick-witted. She displays a tough and scrappy nature, ready to engage in argumentative exchanges to defend her beliefs. Her lively personality shines through her interactions with other characters, adding energy to the scenes she appears in. Stratyllis takes on the responsibility of representing the chorus, conveying their collective opinions and desires. She serves as a strong presence, providing guidance and support to the group while advocating for their cause. Her leadership qualities make her an important figure within the play, influencing the actions and decisions of the chorus. In the context of the play, Stratyllis's character contributes to the overall liveliness and dynamic nature of the story. Her confidence, resourcefulness, and argumentative nature create compelling moments and add depth to the interactions among the characters⁶⁴. Stratyllis represents the strength and spirit of the chorus, embodying the vivacity and determination of the women in *Lysistrata*⁶⁵.
- **Old Women** is a supporting group of characters in the play. Composed of mature adult women, they play an essential role in providing commentary and adding depth to the story. The members of the chorus collectively represent female solidarity and unity within the play. The Chorus of Old Women showcases a range of voices, including spoken dialogue, as well as the musical aspects of soprano, mezzo-soprano, and alto. Their voices harmonize and add a melodic element to the play, enhancing the overall theatrical experience. These women serve as a reflection of the collective wisdom and experiences of older generations. They offer commentary on the

⁶⁴<https://stageagent.com/characters/28101/lystrata/stratyllis>

⁶⁵<https://www.sparknotes.com/drama/lystrata/character/lystrata/>

events and actions taking place, providing insights and perspective. The Chorus of Old Women is tough and protective, demonstrating their dedication to their cause and their willingness to support their fellow women. In addition to their commentary, the Chorus of Old Women actively engages in lively and proactive scenes, adding energy and enthusiasm to the play. They contribute to the overall atmosphere and dynamics of the story, highlighting the strength and determination of the women in "*Lysistrata*." Throughout the play, the Chorus of Old Women serves as a vital component, reinforcing the themes of solidarity, female empowerment, and the importance of collective action⁶⁶. Their presence and involvement contribute to the richness and depth of the narrative, making them a memorable aspect of "*Lysistrata*."

2.4.3 Women's Power through Sexuality

Throughout history, the notion of power has often been associated with physical strength, wealth, or political influence. However, there are instances where women have harnessed a different kind of power, one that transcends traditional notions of dominance.

The major powers of ancient Greece, Athens, and Sparta, have been engaged for two decades in a conflict known as the Peloponnesian War (431 – 404 B.C.). During this time, war has damaged many things. Women are the group who undergo the disadvantages before the war begins and persists. Drama, *Lysistrata*, made in 411 B.C. by Aristophanes is one of his works of art that has been influenced by the condition above. Its story contains much meaning about women's life and their struggle to get rights and equality (Narasati, 2019, p23)

Ancient Greek thought, with its social conventions, perpetuated the gendered categorization of the physical universe, associating women with matter and the body,

⁶⁶<https://stageagent.com/characters/28105/lysistrata/chorus-of-old-women>

and men with form and the soul. (Fletcher, 1999, p108-125). Lysistrata, the remarkable character of the play, had a strategic use of sexuality that transformed the potential of women's power using their bodies. In her role, Lysistrata strategically utilizes the decision to abstain from sex as a negotiation tool, recognizing the significance of sexual desire as a potent force for driving social transformation. By appealing to women's shared sexuality, Lysistrata challenges patriarchal structures, uniting women across social classes and revealing the strength inherent in their collective action. Through this process, traditional gender roles are subverted, disrupting male desire and empowering women to reclaim agency and redefine femininity. Lysistrata boldly rejects objectification and asserts her autonomy, highlighting the notion of female sexual power as a means of self-expression and liberation. Her actions reverberate through history, paving the way for future feminist movements and leaving a lasting legacy. Today, the ongoing relevance of female sexual agency in contemporary society is acknowledged, as Lysistrata's story continues to inspire and fuel the pursuit of gender equality and empowerment. In the ancient Greek play *Lysistrata*, Aristophanes portrays women as intelligent, resourceful, and capable of using their bodies as powerful tools for political change. Through the characters of Lysistrata and her fellow female rebels, Aristophanes highlights how women's sexuality can be harnessed as a means of achieving peace and social justice. One of the key ways in which women in *Lysistrata* use their sexuality as a tool for power is by withholding sex from their husbands and lovers. By doing so, they can disrupt the social order and demand a better future for themselves and their communities. This strategy is particularly effective because it targets men's desires and vulnerabilities, and forces them to confront the consequences of their actions.

Another way in which women in *Lysistrata* use their bodies to assert their power is by presenting themselves as sexually desirable and confident. Characters like Lysistrata and Myrrhine use their wit, charm, and beauty to manipulate men and gain an advantage in their negotiations. By presenting themselves as strong and confident women, they can challenge traditional gender roles and assert their right to participate in public life. Overall, the power of women's bodies and sex appeal in *Lysistrata* lies in its ability to challenge the status quo and demand a better future for women and their

communities. By using their bodies as a tool for political change, women can assert their agency, challenge traditional gender roles, and demand a more just and equitable society. In this sense, *Lysistrata* remains a powerful and relevant text that challenges us to rethink our assumptions about gender, power, and sexuality.

2.5 Women's Empowerment after the Peloponnesian War

Over the past five decades, there has been a significant transformation in the perception of women in ancient Greece. This shift has been driven by the evolving roles of women in contemporary society, leading historians to reexamine the subject with a fresh perspective. Consequently, a more profound comprehension of the diverse range of female influence and experiences has been achieved. This encompasses recognizing the divine authority of female gods, acknowledging the social and religious power wielded by female priests, appreciating the archetypal women depicted in Homer's works, exploring the complex anti-heroines found in myths and dramas, acknowledging women who held considerable influence behind the throne, those who held royal power themselves, and even recognizing the contributions of women as authors⁶⁷.

After the Peloponnesian War, the role of women in ancient Greece began to shift in various ways. In Athens, women became more visible in public life, particularly in discussions surrounding social and political equality. They were also present in law courts, where they addressed issues relating to citizenship. In Sparta, women emerged as landowners and were celebrated for their physical prowess in training for motherhood and athletics⁶⁸. The changes in women's roles were not limited to these two cities, however. Throughout Greece, women began to express themselves in new and innovative ways, often in response to the unpredictable world around them. Women's voices were heard in poetry, music, and art, and they became more involved in religious practices. They also began to participate in sports, such as running and wrestling, and some even competed in the Olympic Games. These changes were not always welcomed by society, however. Women who challenged traditional gender

⁶⁷ <https://www.historytoday.com/archive/feature/rise-women-ancient-greece>

⁶⁸ <https://www.historytoday.com/archive/feature/rise-women-ancient-greece>

roles were often met with resistance and criticism. Yet despite these challenges, women persisted in their efforts to expand their roles and assert their rights. In doing so, they paved the way for future generations of women to achieve greater equality and freedom⁶⁹. Overall, the Peloponnesian War had a profound impact on the role of women in ancient Greece. It forced society to reconsider traditional gender roles and allowed women to emerge as powerful and influential figures in their own right. While there were certainly challenges along the way, the changes that occurred during this time ultimately paved the way for a more inclusive society.

2.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, the main concern was Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, diving deep into the multifaceted theme of women's struggle for peace and their empowerment through sexuality. The play provides a foundation for the profound social transformation that unfolds within its comedic framework. Throughout *Lysistrata*, there is the unwavering determination of women to bring an end to the destructive cycle of war. Their resolute commitment to peace and the unyielding strength of their resolution serves as a testament to the indomitable spirit of women throughout the annals of history. Through the power of collective action and their unification across societal divisions, these women have demonstrated the immense potential that lies within their united front.

⁶⁹<https://www.historytoday.com/archive/feature/rise-women-ancient-greece>

General Conclusion

GENERAL CONCLUSION

This research is about understanding female empowerment, the main objective was to show how women in ancient Greece and how marked their empowerment by using their bodies as their most powerful weapon. The main topic was analyzed according to Aristophanes' comedic play *Lysistrata*.

At the heart of this remarkable tale stands the unwavering figure of Lysistrata herself, emerging as a beacon of hope, a catalyst for change, and a symbol of women's unwavering determination. Examining each character, the early representations of women, and the societal expectations that sought to confine them within limited roles. Lysistrata, with her strategic intellect and unapologetic charisma, defies these norms, offering a radical departure from the traditional portrayal of women in the ancient Greek society of that era. Central to Lysistrata's transformative journey lies the exploration of women's power through their sexuality. Contrary to prevailing notions, women possess a unique agency that extends far beyond objectification. Lysistrata skillfully harnesses the force of desire, employing it as a strategic tool for negotiation and disruption. Through embracing their sexuality, women challenge deeply ingrained patriarchal structures and redefine femininity, ultimately empowering themselves and reclaiming their rightful place as active agents of change. The profound journey undertaken within the realm of *Lysistrata* reverberates far beyond the confines of its ancient Greek context. Its resounding message of female empowerment and the pursuit of peace transcends the barriers of time, serving as an enduring reminder of the perpetual struggle for gender equality and liberation. The actions of Lysistrata and her steadfast comrades stand as a potent precursor to future feminist movements, inspiring countless generations of women to confront societal norms and demand justice, freedom, and equal rights.

In conclusion, *Lysistrata* stands as an indelible testament to the innate power of women, not solely in their quest for peace, but also in their remarkable ability to effect profound societal transformation through their agency and sexuality. This enduring work challenges us to critically reassess prevailing gender dynamics and recognize the inherent strength that resides within women. As we reflect upon the timeless legacy of Lysistrata, let us be steadfastly reminded that women's empowerment and the

GENERAL CONCLUSION

relentless pursuit of peace are inextricably intertwined. May we draw ceaseless inspiration from this timeless comedy as we persist in our unwavering endeavors to forge a world where women's voices resound, their power is acknowledged, and their agency is celebrated.

By employing a meticulous methodology and dividing the research into chapters focusing on Greek mythology and the play "Lysistrata," this study shed light on the power dynamics and representation of women in ancient Greece, offering valuable insights into the enduring impact of Aristophanes' work and its relevance in contemporary society.

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