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Peace, *Birds* and *Frogs*

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CHAPTER 6

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Revolutionary Aristophanes?

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Introduction

Hardly any ancient Greek plays were staged in Paris during the years of the Revolution. Although eighteenth-century dramatists often wrote plays on Greek subjects, set in Greek contexts, their sources and models were predominantly Roman.[1] In the case of Greek comedy, if one sees the Consulate as the last stage of the French Revolution, the unique exception to what we may call the 'silencing' of ancient theatre is François-Benoît Hoffman's *Lisistrata ou les Athéniennes*. This play was an adaptation of Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, performed in the Théâtre Feydeau in Nivôse of the 10th year of the Revolution (22 December 1801–20 January 1802). This was during the final negotiations for the peace treaty of Amiens, conducted from 5 December 1801 to 27 March 1802, between France, Spain and the French-controlled Batavian Republic (Netherlands) on the one hand and Great Britain on the other. According to its subtitle, *Lisistrata* is a *Comedy in one act and in prose, mixed with satirical songs and imitating Aristophanes' play; its performances have been suspended by Order...*[2]

The author, François-Benoît Hoffman, who was born in Nancy in 1760 and died in Paris in 1828, was a minor dramatist. He only wrote about thirty short plays, and was more widely known as a literary and theatre critic whose articles appeared in the *Journal des Débats*. Nonetheless, his complete works include a few celebrated opera librettos, such as Luigi Cherubini's *Médée* (1797), directly inspired by Seneca's play,[3] and Étienne-Nicolas Méhul's *Adrien empereur de Rome*, a particularly popular (if dramatically nonsensical) opera.[4] His collaboration with Méhul, one of the most prominent French composers during the Revolution and the Empire, proved to be the determining factor in his career.

Although Hoffman had clearly attempted to clean up and ameliorate the effect of his Aristophanic model both politically and morally, the Consulate's censors could not tolerate his *Lisistrata*: its fourth performance was its last.[5] Unfortunately, there is no trace of any official report, since the archives including the censorship decisions for that period probably disappeared in 1871 when rebels burned down the police headquarters during the Paris Commune.[6] Thus the only source for Hoffman's misadventure is the play's first edition, where he defends himself against censors and critics in his preface and footnotes. Through a study of *Lisistrata* and of its relationship with its ancient model, I shall try to find out why this unique

attempt to put Aristophanes on stage was aborted, arguing that this is in keeping with Napoleon's stated desire 'to finish the revolution', asserted two years earlier, immediately after he overthrew the Directory and replaced it with the Consulate by means of the coup known as 'the 18th Brumaire' on 9 November 1799.[7]

Démobilisettes, ancient and modern[8]

Although the core of the plot is preserved (the subject in both plays is the imaginary first 'strike' in Western history), and the adaptation does not modernise the context of the action, Hoffman in fact limits himself to the Prologue and the Cinesias scene of Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*. His comedy is divided into fifteen scenes and punctuated with nineteen songs, most of them adapted from celebrated opera arias and tunes.[9] The only Aristophanic character remaining in the adaptation is Lisistrata herself, who is married to an Athenian general, Mérion. Lisistrata's niece, Carite, takes the place of Calonice as the second character. Her husband's name is not Cinesias but Darès.[10] Lisistrata's servant, Machaon — a Scythian, named after an Iliadic hero — is himself married to Thaïs. The antagonism between the chorus of old men and the chorus of women, fundamental to Aristophanes' plot, is replaced with a perfect symmetry between groups of younger and older women, who complement one another: eight distinct characters form each age group. Lisistrata explicitly takes responsibility for and justifies this symmetry in the beginning of scene iii. When her niece asks why she is so concerned with equal rights of representation, the protagonist declares (p. 6):

> In order to avoid any reproach of partiality. All women [i.e. those present on stage] must equally desire their husbands' return. The older ones, because they have no time to lose; the younger, because they want to save time.

The Spartan Lampito has no counterpart in Hoffman's play, and nothing equivalent to the audacious occupation of the Acropolis is being planned; apparently, the author did his best to avoid the real political issue, relating to the Peloponnesian War, by reducing his *Lisistrata* to a purely domestic plot, free of embarrassing 'external' enemies. On the other hand, there is also a distinct absence of internal antagonists, since, with the exception of Mérion, the men are not menacing to women. They are instead merely flabbergasted at the strike and rather guileless. The removal of the play's adversarial tenor helps to maintain the perfect politeness of the language used in the dialogue and exchanges.

The first scene exposes the play's main issue and the motive behind Lisistrata's action. It is by far the richest scene in terms of arias, since there are four within three pages. It is precisely these songs that introduce the audience to the issue: the collective despair of Athens after ten years of war (aria no. 1) is exemplified by the individual despair of Carite, who has not seen her husband for two years (arias nos. 2 and 3). Lisistrata infers that the war is an obstacle to the survival of mankind 'both positively and negatively', since many men are dying in the battlefields and others are kept away from their wives (aria no. 4). In scene ii, Machaon announces the arrival of the group of women invited by Lisistrata. Although the slave seems to be nothing more than a traditional character of stage burlesque, his final aria

(no. 5), at the same time, ironically confirms that war is contrary to common sense, by reducing this view to its simplest mode of expression — the sung opinion of a barbarian slave who is wiser than the free Greeks. In scene iii, Lisistrata is invited by Carite to name the female conspirators.

The chorus march on stage in scene iv, singing their *Hymn to Silence* (aria no. 6). This song is the first instance in this play of gendered self-criticism with a comic effect, a central feature of Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*: discretion is needed in order to ensure that the conspiracy meets with success. But discretion, according to the conventions of this comic world, is not compatible with femininity, since women are presented as characteristically talkative. When they invoke the divinity of silence, their very self-consciousness is as funny as the reason for the invocation. This long scene (pp. 7–17) develops the core of the plot. The comic theme of both Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* and the new *Lisistrata* is the contradiction between the peace project, which is a creditable goal in itself, and the means implemented to reach that goal — that is, the sex strike. Far from being remotely feminist in its thrust, scene iv is actually full of subtle jokes about nymphomania, the most ludicrous among all of women's inherent flaws. The comic equation thus consists in the correction of women's stereotypical faults (loquacity and nymphomania) in order to obtain peace, which is advantageous for all humans, both male and female. But, unlike Aristophanes' play, where both husbands and lovers are treated identically as objects of the women's desire and therefore targets of their strike, Hoffman progressively introduces the idea of female infidelity, not as a joke but a threat. The threat gradually increases during the course of this scene: if the husbands persist in making war, their wives will inevitably make love with someone else! When Lisistrata asks six of her accomplices whether they are ready to make any sacrifice whatsoever in order to ensure the return of their husbands, their answers sound like an accumulation of evidence for their moral feebleness. This comic progression begins with the allusive mythological dream of the young Cyane and reaches a crescendo with the explicit threat of Mélite (p. 13) and the warning given by Astioche, who belongs to the group of older women. Thus the comic effect of the anaphoric injunction 'my husband *must* come again'[11] is considerably enhanced. The oath song closes the scene.

In scene v, Machaon announces to the women what Lisistrata had already predicted in scene iv, just before the oath (p. 14): the army is coming back home under the terms of a three-day truce. The women confirm their commitment to their project once more. After being invited by her husband Machaon to help him with housework (scene vi), Thaïs reveals the conspiracy to him (scene vii). The conspiracy section closes with a comical comment about the impotence of the modern male as opposed to the vigour of his ancient counterpart (pp. 20–22).

Scene viii, a confrontation between Darès and Carite (pp. 23–31), is a toned-down and expurgated version of the famous Aristophanic episode in which Cinesias tries to convince Myrrhine to satisfy his burning — and perfectly visible — desire (*Lysistrata* 864–958). By the time Darès leaves the scene, he has decided to ask General Mérion to put an end to the conspiracy initiated by his own wife (pp. 28, 30). Scenes ix to xiii introduce the final *agōn* of Hoffman's play, between Lisistrata

and Mérion. In scene xiv, the general refuses to kiss his wife, pretending that he had sworn to keep away from her until the Spartans are defeated. Lisistrata falters in her plan; she is upset because of Mérion's indifference, which seriously undermines her self-confidence and her belief in her own sex appeal. When she finally manages to give her husband a kiss, her accomplices protest, accusing her of committing perjury. In the last scene, Mérion reveals that what permitted the return of the army was in fact a peace treaty, not a truce.

Generally speaking, the transition from one scene to another seems credible and dramatically justified. Nevertheless, the play leaves an unpleasant aftertaste of implausibility, mainly because of a major dramaturgical weakness: does Mérion feign indifference in order to punish his wife for the conspiracy, as suggested by the author in his Preface (p. 11), and by the fact that Mérion is only informed late about the conspiracy?[12] Or had he really sworn chastity until the enemies could be defeated? The latter assumption is in contradiction with Mérion's final statement that a definite peace treaty had been signed *before* the army's return to Athens (p. 40). But the former assumption is dramatically inconsistent, because in this case Lisistrata's statement about the truce in scene iv (p. 14, confirmed by Machaon in scene v, p. 17) is left without justification. In other words, if the peace treaty had been signed before the return of the army, why the desperate sex strike initiated by Lisistrata? In the last scene, Mérion himself does not feel very comfortable about the plot (p. 41):

> Yes, what I'm telling you is precisely that peace is made. I wanted to defer the announcement, but now I understand how important it is for you to know.[13]

Obscenity

> Last but not least, it is to you that I'm offering [this little book], you honest and enlightened men of letters who examined my play and gave me your opinion, not orders; you, who were grateful to me for having concealed [the crudeness of] Aristophanes' *tableaux*, and, since I hadn't gone beyond the bounds [of decency] as dictated by the greatest masters, allowed my *Lisistrata* to be put on stage. But I am not offering it to you, women of loose morals, young ladies of easy virtue; in public, you would find in it too much; in private, too little. I am not offering it to you either, severe critics, sorrow moralists, scrupulous readers, people of taste that Molière revolts, nor to you, too penetrating spirits, who never see in a book what the author actually presents, but only what you have on the brain.[14]

These are the final words of the dedication introducing the 1802 edition of the play. As announced in this excerpt, Hoffman consciously amends Aristophanes' immorality, while pretending that, if the women had lovers, they would not be so eager to see their husbands back from the battlefield (Preface, p. xi). It is informative to compare this moralizing inflexion of the original dramatic situation with a famous passage in the Greek *Lysistrata*, which, of course, is omitted in the adaptation (107–10):

> And not the slightest glitter of a lover!
> And since the Milesians betrayed us, I've seen

> Not even one of those eight-inch dildos,
> Which used to be our leather relief.[15]

Hoffman insists emphatically on moral decency. In scene iv (pp. 8–9), for instance, the repetitions imitated from the original oath scene (*Lysistrata* 212–36) are free of any hint of an erotic subtext. But, as we have seen earlier, the audience progressively discovers in tandem with the younger women's reactions to Lisistrata's position, and mostly through the songs, that pledges of chastity are not eternal. The return of the husbands becomes more and more urgent:[16] with adequate diction and gesturing it is easy to imagine the refrain 'il faut que mon mari revienne' as a sexual suggestion, and indeed, it seems that the imposers of censorship understood it as such. Women may be neither lascivious nor immoral, but there is a limit to their patience. Cyane's mythical kidnapping dream and her misgivings about marital fidelity in Osiris' oracle (aria no. 8, p. 12) sound as if she is assuming a philosophical position in relation to the problem of sexual frustration. Mélite — and Lisistrata — eventually sing the refrain in the opposite sense (p. 13, aria no. 10):

> Mélite *S'il tarde encor quelque tems...*
> Lisistrata — Eh bien?... Achevez donc... Ah! J'entends.
> *Vous aurez peur qu'il ne revienne.*

Yet when the sequence of events based upon this aria is in fact achieved, the general impression is that hundreds of lovers constantly harass the women. Whereas in *Lysistrata* women lack lovers for the same reason that they miss their husbands, in *Lisistrata* every male still available in Athens relentlessly besieges them.[17]

As I pointed out earlier, Hoffman raises the question of the decline of the city: in war many people get killed and many others are prevented from having children (p. 3 with footnote; p. 10). There is certainly an echo here of what were in Hoffman's time very recent debates on the demographic issue;[18] by emphasizing this point, however, the author was laying himself open to moral rather than philosophical criticism. If we are to believe him, these are the two major points that seemed lewd to critics. But there was another point that shocked them, and that was the abundant use, mainly in the Darès–Carite scene, of the substantive 'baiser', interpreted as euphemistically alluding to the infinitive of the main verb in the French language that designates sexual intercourse. Hoffman defends himself in a footnote (p. 26):

> What is Darès asking for? A kiss ... What is Carite refusing to give him? A kiss. What's all this about, after all? A kiss. A kiss, that's all I said. It's not my fault if your imagination is lewder than my pen! ... The public laughed and applauded, they called for an encore. But the scrupulous made a great fuss, turning the noun into a verb. I have never fallen into this error.

Apart from these rather mild indecencies, there is nothing that could justify the prudish reaction of Napoleon's police agents. If one of them were zealously religious, the oath by Juno might have shocked him too. Even if it has nothing to do with the explicit description of sexual practices mentioned in the oath of Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, this funny little poem, self-curse rather than promise of chastity, was intended to be a parody of a prayer form or *Gebetsparodie*,[19] since the

tune was probably a pastiche of the most celebrated hymn to Saint John the Baptist (p. 17, aria no. 14):

Non, sainte Junon,
Non,
Qui jure par ton
Nom
Ne trompe jamais;
Mais,
Si pourtant mon serment
Ment,
Punis mon forfait,
Et
Pour percer mes deux
Yeux,
Tiens tous tes
Traits
Prêts.[20]

To sum up: if we take Hoffman's assertions literally, we must deduce that the play was suspended for moral rather than political reasons. Nevertheless, a hint inserted in a curious 'Avertissement' at the beginning of the volume makes a threat against the censors to the effect that the play will not be restaged until they renounce their arbitrary 'corrections'. It also points to a second intervention by censors, *after* the performances had been stopped, intended to amend the text *in a new way*. One way of interpreting this is that the critics and censors attacked the play exclusively on moral grounds, resulting in a unique police order interrupting the performances. If this is the correct interpretation, it requires no further analysis. Indeed, this interpretation would mean that the enigmatic formulas of the 'Avertissement' ('*new* censorship [...] corrections of a *new kind*') should be understood as nothing more than boasting. The author would have been attempting to weave an autobiographical narrative bond with *Adrien*, Étienne Méhul's controversial opera which had been proscribed in 1792. On that occasion, too, Hoffman had refused to follow the censor's recommendations and to amend his politically suggestive libretto. If this were true, the 'Avertissement' should be taken as a kind of parabasis, a comic poet's act of self-praise, similar to Aristophanes' self-praise in *Acharnians*, *Clouds*, or *Peace*. Yet the most paradoxical element in Hoffman's defence against the charge of obscenity is precisely that he never shelters behind his ancient model. His strategy consists solely in emphasizing that his play is quite recent and yet much more decent than Molière's comedies and other classics of the French repertoire. He seems to forget that Aristophanes, his direct and explicitly asserted model, is much older than Molière (p. xiv):

> Are you ready to excuse immorality and indecency in comedies just because they are old? Such reasoning would indeed be quite futile. The effect that a play has doesn't depend on production? The impression that it makes isn't renewed each time that it is put on stage? If it is dangerous, if it is indecent, should one check its date, to know whether one must blush or not?

Politics

On the other hand, if one assumes that there were two kinds of censor, as stated in the 'Avertissement', the following sequence of events should be considered a serious possibility: the first intervention was an official one and it compelled the troupe to interrupt the performances for (undoubtedly political) reasons on which the author was not allowed to comment. This was because they were covered by some kind of 'official secrets' policy linked to the diplomatic negotiations and military action still in progress in January 1802. The only trace of this repressive measure is its mention in the 'Avertissement'. The second intervention would have aimed at amending the text morally, probably after the incriminated passages had been modified. This must be the censorship that Hoffman was alluding to when deploring its 'innovative character' in the 'Avertissement' or when castigating the 'scrupulous people' in his footnotes.[21] Indeed, he had the perfect right to talk about this unofficial pressure, since the play's performances had already been interrupted 'by [official] order'.

Actually, there are several anachronistic allusions to the contemporary political situation in this French play. For instance, the war against Sparta that Lisistrata tries to stop has, at the beginning of the play, already lasted for ten years (p. 1: 'dix ans de succès balancés', 'dix ans de tapage, de combats de carnage'; p. 2: 'dix mortelles années'). The detail is not consistent with ancient history, since Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* was staged in 411 BC, twenty years after the beginning of the Peloponnesian War. But it is perfectly in keeping with contemporary chronology, since the French Revolutionary Wars had been waged since precisely 1792.[22] As I pointed out earlier, the war is condemned as undermining the reproductive balance of the human race (p. 10); it is also, in a very careful formulation, presented as running counter to common sense by Lisistrata's Scythian slave, a convinced pacifist (p. 6, aria no. 5):

> *Although I know that our brave soldiers*
> *Go to meet the Creator as they go to lunch,*
> *I never had the slightest intention of following them,*
> *For the Gods ordered me to live*
> *So that to serve my country.*
> *I'm pious, I obey.*[23]

Eventually, Mérion, the providential man (named after Meriones, another Iliadic hero, half-brother of Idomeneus), announces the end of the war at the end of the play (p. 40):

> You swore to be cruel as long as war continues. Well, I'm telling you that it is not a truce that I'm announcing to you, but a peace treaty, signed, concluded, perfect and solid.[24]

The praise of Napoleon is clear, and yet it is not unambiguous. Just before his final announcement, Mérion had broken his own oath: in spite of the promise supposedly made to his soldiers to abstain from any pleasure until Sparta had been entirely destroyed (p. 36), he had finally kissed his wife (p. 39). More than the licentiousness of the play, which is not really scandalous, what must have seemed challenging to Napoleonic decorum is the combination of mild sexual allusions

with overt pacifism and, above all, with the weakness of character attributed to General Mérion.

Moreover, comedy as a genre was currently at the centre of much wider questioning of the relevance of theatrical representation in general. Fumaroli explains that the origins of this questioning can be traced back to the Christian mistrust of theatre as theorized by Bossuet and Nicole at the end of the seventeenth century; Goldzink has also brilliantly demonstrated that the Enlightenment tended towards a sense of shame in relation to the joyful comic expressivity of the new era and that therefore, paradoxically, the 'Enlightened' atheist position on theatre was quite similar to its Christian antecedent. Together they form a kind of continuum that we may call the *Querelle* of the comic, a phenomenon which lasted into the 1800s and was best formulated in the liberal, counter-revolutionary criticism of Greek comedy formulated by Madame de Staël.[25] According to Goldzink's analysis,

> As the upshot of a century so rich in tragedies, thanks to Voltaire, La Harpe's comedy looks rather miserable. Most cheerful in our eyes, the eighteenth century wanders about, sorrowful at heart, always dissatisfied, hesitating between different versions of the Comic — moral, sentimental, or buffoon. Too much cheerfulness shocks it, too much wit freezes it, too many tears in the laughter irritates it. Even before looking at itself, dismayed, in the mirror of the Revolution, the Enlightenment, so proud of its ideas, began by failing to recognise itself in its comedies. It is possible that this weakness is only a symptom.[26]

In the particular case of Aristophanes, the most eloquent writer to slate him during the eighteenth century was an enthusiastic advocate of comedy, Nicolas de Chamfort, who demonstrated in an academic essay that he apparently had learnt his Plutarch quite well, for it is ultimately from this ancient literary critic that his class-conscious critique of Aristophanes was inherited:

> For Molière, the comedy was to be found in works of another kind [...]. The irony of Socrates, so perfectly preserved in Plato's dialogues [...] belongs to a really theatrical figure; and in this sense, the comic poet of the decent people was the sage of Greece, Aristophanes being nothing more than the buffoon of the common people.[27]

Conclusion

In Aristophanes, the women eventually obtain a ceasefire. In Hoffman's play, because of the feebleness of their leader, they just surrender by giving up their strike and by delegating their peace-making power to men, since the author's aim is to restrict women to their traditional role, as defined by the domestic plot-type enacted in boulevard comedy.

The ancient Greek archetype may have been licentious, but its rehash was not. Hoffman's play probably shocked Napoleon's agents because of its offhand, irreverent treatment of war, too serious a subject to laugh about, even on the eve of a truce. 'Comedy for me is as if someone was trying to force me to be interested

in gossip. I can understand your admiration for Molière, but I do not share it,' Napoleon said.[28] Nevertheless, it was certainly not Napoleon's personal *goût* that dictated the censor's attitude towards the play.

There is an eighteenth-century contradiction between, on the one hand, theoretical positions that rejected theatre in general and comedy in particular, and on the other hand the proliferation of troupes, theatres, and plays during the revolutionary period. But this contradiction is only a superficial one. By the end of the eighteenth century, theatre, broadly defined, had become a phenomenon in daily life, and people (Parisians at least) saw themselves as real, rather than metaphorical 'actors' on the political stage. People exhibited exactly the same excited and exalted responses at assemblies and on the barricades as they did in theatres, and they were unusually receptive and reactive at this time to all forms of performance.[29] Thus, from a political point of view, theatre in Paris during the Revolution was comparable to theatre in fifth-century Athens: these were both contexts in which popular sovereignty could assert itself. This is the reason why theatrical performances were often subject to similar treatment as the press.[30] In this sense, the treatment meted out to this rather mediocre attempt to put Aristophanes on stage, namely the police order that brutally interrupted the performances of Hoffman's *Lisistrata* (whatever the exact reasons for and circumstances behind the order), was an instance of collateral damage that occurred as a result of the First Consul's will to 'finish the Revolution'.

Notes to Chapter 6

1. There is evidence for some attempts to stage Greek tragedies during this period, but none ever met any success: Euripides' *Hecuba*, for instance, in a translation published before the Revolution by Belin de Ballu (1783), was performed ten years later, on 13 Mar. 1793 at the Théâtre de la Nation. But it was never restaged. The three most celebrated Ancien Régime operas with Greek titles that were still being performed during the Revolution have so little to do with the original Greek plays that the librettists do not even mention their sources: *Œdipe à Colone*, composed by Antonio Sacchini (Marie-Antoinette's favourite composer) to a libretto by Nicolas-François Guillard, was performed continuously from 1 Feb. 1787 (at the Opéra) until 1830 (a total of 583 performances); see Hyslop (1945), 352. Another adaptation by Guillard, the libretto of Gluck's celebrated *Iphigénie en Tauride*, first performed in 1779, was even more successful — it was as popular as the first Euripidean opera by Gluck, *Iphigénie en Aulide* (libretto by M. F. L. Grand Bailli du Roullet, first performed in 1774). For Cherubini's *Medea*, see below. The most successful attempt to put an ancient theatrical text on stage seems to have been an adaptation of Plautus' *Menaechmi* by Cailhava (1791). Staged in January 1791, it was performed all year round, then regularly restaged from September 1795 onwards (source: César database, http://cesar.org.uk). The author of the adaptation recognizes in his Preface the difficulty of his task: 'No doubt, it's quite dangerous nowadays to risk a Comedy of the ancient kind. In this genre, imagination, rejecting any ornament that has nothing to do with Thalia, makes it a rule to be constantly fertile, vivid, full of ups and downs, and yet quite simple' (Cailhava (1791), p. vi). Some years later, in 1797, the same author apparently failed to put Aristophanes on stage. There is actually no trace in the sources of any performance of his *Athènes pacifiée*: Cailhava (1796/7). According to his Preface, the author pretends to put politics on stage, but the result is moralizing scholarly nonsense. See Jacob (1843–45), no. 2076; Cailhava's potpourri is now available on the Gallica website: http://visualiseur.bnf.fr/Visualiseur?Destination=Gallica&O=NUMM-108740 (accessed 22 Aug. 2006). Plutarch served more than once as a source for aesthetically, morally and politically acceptable subjects: see Viala (1997), 114. On the Roman heritage in

French revolutionary culture, see Raskolnikoff (1990) and (1992), 262–313; Momigliano (1950). For a complete list of French translations and adaptations of Greek drama until the mid-20th c., see Horn-Monval (1958). For a detailed quantitative analysis of theatre during the Revolution, see Kennedy, Netter, McGregor, and Olsen (1996).

2. First print: Hoffman (1802). Henceforth all references to the play inserted in the main text will be to this edition. The last words of the volume's subtitle is 'by Order', printed on a separate line in small capitals and followed by suspension dots. Edition available on the Gallica website: http://visualiseur.bnf.fr/Visualiseur?Destination=Gallica&O=NUMM-84958 (accessed 22 Aug. 2006). Complete works: Hoffman (1829). All translations are the author's own unless otherwise stated.
3. See Trentin (2001).
4. First staged in March 1792, this three-act opera was censored: see Jacob (1843–45), nos. 273–301. The performances were suspended after Hoffman's refusal to amend the script according to the revolutionary censorship's instructions. He probably changed his mind later. The cover of its later edition does not mention the 1792 performance; the new version was first performed on 4 June 1799 (i.e. 16 Prairial of the 7th year), in the Théâtre de la République. I can see hardly anything in this text that could be taken as hinting at a pro-monarchical stance: the Roman emperor Hadrian is presented as a lustful, completely amoral tyrant. He arrogantly tries to seduce and then incessantly harasses a princess, whom he has taken prisoner during a military campaign in Parthia, while deceiving his own fiancée, before suddenly changing his mind at the last minute. In 1802, the play had been restaged for an extensive run. The author always regarded this as his masterwork.
5. Until his address to the Conseil d'État (9 April 1809), which announced that censorship should be systematized by 1810, Napoleon's position on censorship is quite ambiguous; see Locré (1819). Unofficially, the police exercised control upon every publication and performance, and yet the Emperor seemed to condemn censorship in favour of 'organization' of culture in a letter addressed to Joseph Fouché, his Police Minister (12 prairial year XIII = 1 June 1805). As far as theatre is concerned, he explained more clearly what he meant by 'organization without censorship' when suggesting to Fouché that he commission Raynouard to write on ancient subjects. In another letter to Fouché, four years after *Lisistrata* had been censored, he feigned ignorance of his administration's habits (15 January 1806): Napoléon (1858–70), x. 325, 337; xi. 124.
6. There is no trace of *Lisistrata* in the inventory of Krakovitch (1982), which bears on the manuscripts of the plays (F18 581–668) and the official reports of the censors (F21 966–95), nor in Thalie, the electronic catalogue of the manuscripts of plays and related official reports of censorship preserved in the Centre Historique des Archives Nationales in Paris. For the entire period, only 171 manuscripts have been preserved. But we know that 80 boxes containing manuscripts of plays submitted for police approval, together with other printed material seized on the public thoroughfare, disappeared in May 1871.
7. Proclamation made by Napoleon to the Consuls on the 24 Frimaire year VIII (19 Dec. 1799), inserted in the Constitution of the 22 Frimaire (13 Dec. 1799): 'Citoyens, la Révolution est fixée aux principes qui l'ont commencée, elle est finie'.
8. 'Démobilisette', modelled on 'suffragette', is the brilliant translation of Lysistrata's name by Debidour (1965).
9. The provenance of each tune is clearly stated in the 1802 edition.
10. A man named Dares, the Trojan priest of Hephaestus, is mentioned in the *Iliad* 5. 9, but Hoffman's hero is more likely to have been named after Dares the Phrygian, the enigmatic author of the late Latin *History of the Destruction of Troy*, written or translated from a Greek original in the 6th c. AD and published in France by Mlle Le Fèvre in 1680. See Fry (1998), 231–87; Fumaroli (2001), 208.
11. See the next section.
12. 'Mérion [...] warned about that scheme, thwarts it by a comic ruse: he pretends to be as indifferent to his wife as she had sworn to be to him.'
13. 'Oui, la paix est faite, vous-dis-je: je voulais différer de vous l'apprendre; mais je vois combien il est important pour vous de le savoir.'

14. Hoffman (1802), p. vi.
15. Later in the Prologue, according to the original oath, Aristophanes' women swear to keep away *first* from lovers and *then* from husbands (Ar. *Lys*. 212–13).
16. The music of this aria is borrowed from *Les Fraises*, a translation into French of a German play for children: Schmid (1833); see Jacob (1843–45), nos. 3719, 5059.
17. It is interesting to observe the reversal of this tendency in modern productions, since nowadays the obscenity of the play is often the very reason why it is staged. This has been the case recently, in a Parisian production eloquently entitled *Lysistrata (la grève du sexe)* (the sex strike). Text: Garma-Berman and Bianciotto (2005). Obscenity is also the main feature of modern Greek productions of the play.
18. For the optimist point of view echoed here, see Condorcet (2004); for the pessimist one, see Malthus (1798).
19. For a discussion of this issue in Aristophanes, see Kleinknecht (1967).
20. 'No, Saint Juno, no; who swears by Juno never deceives. Nevertheless, if my oath lies, punish my sin and get your arrows ready to pierce my eyes', to the tune of 'Ut queant laxis', syllables from which were used to name the notes of the medieval hexachord and in modern Romance languages designate the notes of the scale.
21. See footnotes on pp. 3, 11, 26, 31, 33, 35.
22. Hoffman is perfectly aware of this inconsistency; see p. 9.
23. 'Je sais que nos braves soldats | vont à la mort comme au repas; | mais je n'ai garde de les suivre, | car pour bien servir mon pays, | les Dieux m'ont ordonné de vivre: | je suis pieux, et j'obéis.'
24. The praise is completed in the 'exodos' song (p. 42): 'D'un vainqueur l'on chante la gloire; | mais que l'on aime le guerrier | qui dans le champ de la victoire, | fait croître et fleurir l'olivier! | Si son bras étonnait la terre, | ses mains la couvrent de bienfaits [...] | Honneur à qui fait bien la guerre. | Amour à qui fait bien la paix.'
25. Fumaroli (2001); Goldzink (1992); for an analysis of Staël (1991 [1800]), 115–29 (on Greek comedy), see Goldzink (1992), 93–111. Cf. D. Marshall (1986); Avlami (2000), 299–305. On laughter as a central issue in the 18th-c. philosophical debate, see also Andries (2000).
26. Goldzink (1992), 24. Cf. Frantz (2000). For a description of the atmosphere in the theatres, perceived by the Committee of Public Safety as 'schools of the Revolution' and a 'supplement to public education', see Hyslop (1945). Cf. Tarin (1998); Quéro (2000), 67–83.
27. Chamfort (1824), 9–10. See Goldzink (1992), 86–88.
28. Quoted in Albert (1902), 188.
29. See Hyslop (1945) and Friedland (2003), 258–94.
30. See Graczyk (1989).

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