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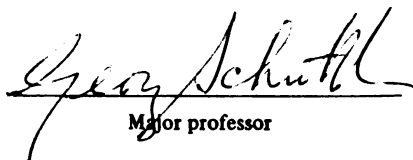
DECONSTRUCTION: Theory, Practice, and
Application

presented by

Rachel Lynn Abramson

has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for

M. A. degree in Theatre


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DECONSTRUCTION: THEORY, PRACTICE, AND APPLICATION

By

Rachel Lynn Abramson

A THESIS

Submitted to
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ABSTRACT

DECONSTRUCTION: THEORY, PRACTICE, AND APPLICATION

By

Rachel Lynn Abramson

In the study of theatre, it is necessary to recognize change and progression from both a theoretical and practical viewpoint. In fact, many obtuse theories may be best understood through practice--such is the case for the theory of deconstruction.

In this study, deconstructionist theory is discussed from two angles--the "pure" and the "practical." The history of the "pure" theory is traced back to Jacques Derrida, and discuss its transformations through practical application in the art of theatre. The study ends with a personal, retrospective look into merging theory and practice through a production of *Lysistrata*.

Through this type of dichotomous approach, future academicians and practitioners of theatre may understand the continual influence of deconstructionist theory.

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INTRODUCTION

Deconstruction: origin, form, style, and influence

This study will focus upon three major areas of deconstruction: 1) its theory, 2) its practice, and 3) its application. First, I will briefly examine deconstruction from contextual origins and theoretical standpoints to show the relationship between deconstructionist theory and theatrical theories and practice. Emphatic contemporary leaders in the field of deconstruction prove that the question of "who started it?" is still up for debate. As Howard Felperin states in his book, *Beyond Deconstruction*: "While Nobel Prizes are often awarded belatedly or retrospectively, such an infinite regress or *mise-en-abîme* of likely candidates for the dubious title of 'founding father of deconstruction' would make something of a mockery or a nonsense of the committee's august deliberations."¹

Chapter 1 will begin with a focus on Jacques Derrida, Paul de Man, and Harold Bloom, the primary documentors of

the movement, in order to establish a working understanding, not definition, of deconstruction. I emphasize "understanding" as opposed to "definition" because my research has led me to firmly believe that a concrete definition of deconstruction is not only impossible, but obsolete and anti-thetical to the genre itself:

As its oxymoronic self-appellation suggested from the beginning, deconstruction was always, given its negative understanding of the differential and deferential nature of language and textuality, a practice oppositional to all philosophies of representation and construction, the newer as well as the older, an anti-methodical method.²

Along these lines, as oxymoron, as paradox, as self-deconstructing word, deconstruction asks for an anti-definitive definition.

Many theorists have made furtive attempts to define deconstruction, or to tame it as method suited for their area of criticism. I maintain a position between what is believed to be the original theoretical conception (eventually described in words by Derrida) and practical understanding of deconstruction for the purposes of dramatic literary and theatrical theory and praxis. It is through this subjective, intermediate understanding that I approach deconstruction and how it has influenced

the theatre. Deconstruction should not be approached as if it were dogma: "To present 'deconstruction' as if it were a method, a system or a settled body of ideas would be to falsify its nature and lay oneself open to charges of reductive misunderstanding."³ However, I will trace how the ideas and impetus behind deconstruction have transformed how theorists and practitioners criticize and create theatre.

Chapter 1 ends with a look into the perseverance of deconstruction. Some theorists claim that deconstruction is dead.⁴ I agree that deconstruction, as a method for discussion surrounding textual analysis may have "said all it has to say." However, once deconstruction, like energy, is created it cannot simply disappear. It penetrates many other avenues of theory; in this work, I will focus on the parallels made between deconstruction and feminist theory as an example of such penetration and perpetual influence.

In Chapter II, I will discuss deconstruction through the practice of theatre artists and practitioners. I will begin with an overview of how deconstruction has integrated itself into theatre practice and theory. My initial analysis will focus upon the playtext and how its

function has changed through deconstructive thought and application. Then I will discuss how that newly perceived text is utilized in a deconstructed production. I will briefly emphasize some major transitions and transformations of theatre practice within the 20th century in order to clarify from where deconstruction evolved. I will then analyze previously documented deconstructed theatre productions of The University of Wisconsin-Madison's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, co-directed by Jill Dolan, and the American Repertory Theatre's *Woyzeck*, directed by Marcus Stern, in order to highlight processes of director, dramaturg, actors, and designers. Though deconstruction is not purported as an instructional methodology for theatre, these productions allow for a sense of understanding about the leap between theory and practice.⁵ I will emphasize analysis on the role of the text, in different forms and stages, throughout the deconstructed theatre production process.

The goal of deconstructive thought in relation to theatre practice is not to radically subvert all pre-formed notions of the practice and art. It is not to strip the author or director or text of their creative "power" for purposes of mere displacement or replacement

(i.e., placing this "power" into the hands or heads of someone or something else). The goal is to discover what happens in the midst of that displacement:

Deconstruction neither denies nor really affects the commonsense view that language exists to communicate meaning. It *suspends* that view for its own specific purpose of seeing what happens when the writs of convention no longer run.⁶

What Christopher Norris claims of language in deconstruction can also be said of deconstructionist theatre. The "commonsense view that language exists to communicate meaning" may be equated with the view that theatre exists to communicate meanings and emotions. It is at this point of "suspension" that I begin my study of deconstructed theatre productions. This section will show how some artists have translated deconstructive thought into applicable processes for the creation of a theatre production. I will not attempt to pinpoint specific elements of these productions and label them as "deconstruction" or "non-deconstruction;" rather, I will assume these productions as deconstructions and focus on analyzing the approach and results.

In Chapter III, I will step out of the intermediary position and discuss my first-hand approach at deconstruction with a production of *Lysistrata* performed

at Michigan State University. In this chapter, I will compare my experience with that of other deconstructionist theatre artists and their productions. I will discuss my working relationships with the other artisans involved in the production to illustrate some of the intriguing dynamics revealed through a deconstructive process. I will analyze the use of the playtext in this production through deconstructionist theory and discuss how this theory shapes and transforms production practice and methodology.

NOTES

¹Howard Felperin, *Beyond Deconstruction: The Uses and Abuses of Literary Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985) 105.

²Felperin 110.

³Christopher Norris, *Deconstruction: Theory & Practice* (New York: Methuen, 1982) 1.

⁴Diane Elam, *Feminism and Deconstruction* (New York: Routledge, 1994) 120; John M. Ellis, *Against Deconstruction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989) vii. Elam briefly discusses the argument regarding the death of deconstruction and the onset of post-feminism. She opposes the idea of either, though she does feel that "the appeal to deconstruction as an interpretative method within literary studies has reached its limit." (120) Ellis discusses the idea circulating that deconstruction is on its way out of the theoretical world. He refutes this matter by mentioning how published books and journal on the topic are on the rise.

⁵Both Elam and Norris continually state throughout their texts, that Derrida never proposed deconstruction as a tool or methodology to be used by practitioners of any sort. They stress the fact that many theorists, who denounce Derrida's theory based on the self-contradictory nature that deconstruction assumes through application, have missed this point.

⁶Norris 128.

CHAPTER ONE

Deconstruction in Theory

What is deconstruction?

Simply put, deconstruction in theory is a paradox. It touches on the basic human desire to seek *truth* and *answers* by questioning or subverting assumed, institutionalized, and presumably stable thought or method. According to Norris, "Deconstruction is the active antithesis of everything that criticism ought to be if one accepts its traditional values and concepts."¹ In other words, criticism (and critics) are bound to the theories and methodologies in which they work. They've assumed a theoretical standpoint and filter analyses through this theory in order to reach conclusions or answers. If accepted, deconstruction disallows for the assumed theoretical standpoints by subverting their foundation. The term "active antithesis" connotes that an opposite *truth* or *answer* may be sought through subversion, and this is where the paradoxical nature of

deconstruction surfaces. For deconstruction is not grounded in seeking definitions through binary opposition; it is, in its purist sense, subversion *ad infinitum*.² Conclusions discovered through deconstructive analyses may also be subverted, or *deconstructed*. Therefore, ongoing subversion of knowledge and *truth* leads the "pure" deconstructor to believe that there are no possible understandings of anything, only *mis*-understandings. This skeptical thought process eventually leads to nihilism. It would logically then seem that the concept, "deconstruction," can be deconstructed to this same point of nihilism. Why, then, would anyone bother to discuss or study it? I argue that although the *endpoints* of critical argument may always be subverted or negated in deconstruction, the *process* of deconstructive thought exists, and therefore, is not nihilistic. It is an active form of thinking and an ongoing process of doing (or undoing), not a pre-set tenet by which to define things. I agree with Norris, however, that for purposes of practical argument, "Deconstruction can sustain its sceptical position only to the point where its findings have to be argued in more or less persuasive terms."³ This is the only view that

makes sense if we are to believe that the theory of deconstruction exists. I will elaborate on this point in the next section.

From what (or whom) did it evolve?

The primary leaders of contemporary deconstruction can be split into two main groups: purists and practicalists. The purists, Derrida and his American counterpart, de Man, maintain a strict theoretical viewpoint. The Frenchman, Derrida, was the first to begin a serious written debate about deconstruction. As a student of philosophy, Derrida began his arguments for deconstruction by blurring the critical lines between philosophy and literature (or creative texts). He feels that all written language, whether *scientific* or *creative*, is subject to its own "perplexities of meaning and intent."⁴ In his essays, Derrida strives to keep deconstruction conceptual and opposes the idea of deconstruction as a system or method. Derrida proposes deconstruction as a form of questioning, an interrogation of rhetoric that has traditionally defined and shaped Western thought.

When debates surrounding deconstruction traveled from Europe to the United States, de Man rallied on Derrida's

side. In true Derridean fashion, de Man "exemplifies . . . qualities of hard-pressed argument and high conceptual rigour," and is one to "pursue deconstruction to its ultimate, unsettling conclusions."⁵

Derrida and de Man argue that when deconstruction is applied or used in conjunction with a particular practice, it is reduced to the same level of understanding, and therefore simplicity and reduction, as other theories (such as structuralism). Deconstruction becomes dependent upon the context in which it's discussed; once this contextual definition occurs, the job of deconstruction is done. The purpose of deconstruction is to subvert definition and solidified meaning; so for the purists, a process of application belies the initial intent.

An easy way to understand how deconstruction thrust itself into mainstream theory is through literary theory and structuralism. Structuralism, in literary terms, purports that texts contain meaning--that words (signs) created by the author (writer of the text) act as signifiers for meaning and are comprehensible to the competent reader. The reader must be informed enough to recognize these signs, subsequently revealing the

inherent meaning in the text. Structuralism began as a radical attempt to extract meaning from texts not from what was *included* in the words, but what was *excluded*. In other words, structuralism focuses on binary oppositions--arguing against one meaning through the discovery of its antithesis. Structuralism is "a process of adaptation by British and American critics who quickly took heart from what they saw as its 'practical' or 'commonsense' uses."⁶ However as Norris states, "What started out as a powerful protest against ruling critical assumptions ended up as just one more available method for saying new things about well-worn texts."⁷ In other words, structuralism, which sought to revoke critical assumptions, developed into a critical assumption. It rose to power as a comfortable method for "properly" interpreting texts.⁸

Derrida has many problems with this notion of interpretation through structure. He feels the structuralists are limited in their thinking. Derrida doesn't *disapprove* of the structuralist's intent: "His object is not to deny or invalidate the structuralist project but to show how its deepest implications lead on to a questioning of method more extreme and unsettling

than these thinkers wish to admit."⁹ So Derrida does disapprove of the satisfaction structuralists receive from reaching a comfortable endpoint in their criticism, and deconstruction serves as a "vigilant reaction against this tendency in structuralist thought to tame and domesticate:"¹⁰

Some of Jacques Derrida's most powerful essays are devoted to the task of dismantling a concept of 'structure' that serves to immobilize the play of meaning in a text and reduce it to a manageable compass.¹¹

and

Above all. . .it [deconstruction] questions the assumption. . .that structures of meaning correspond to some deep-laid mental 'set' or pattern of mind which determines the limits of intelligibility.¹²

Derrida's quest for deconstruction does not end within the scope of literary theory and structuralism; however, these examples are most analogous to the ways in which theatre and deconstruction relate.

As mentioned earlier, this "task of dismantling" structure (and meaning) continues *ad infinitum* for the purist. And as Diane Elam points out, "The threat of theory is that it allows us to forget the interactions with praxis."¹³ Deconstruction, in original form, is no exception. Once deconstruction gained the attention of

American critics and theorists, it gradually assumed other shapes and functions. For some, like American critic Harold Bloom, deconstruction has grand allure and undeniable presence. However, Bloom realizes that in order for deconstruction to serve a purpose (in his case, criticizing poetry), there must be some tangible grasping point:

There has to be a leap from the knowledge that *all* interpretation is a network of superimposed tropes, to the faith that something might yet be achieved to clear a space for the modern imagination. This is where Bloom parts company with de Man and the purist deconstructors.¹⁴

Bloom feels that pure deconstruction reduces all interpretation to this "network of superimposed tropes," in other words, elusive language that can never be understood literally. As a result, Bloom feels that the constant denial of all meaning, based on this "troping," or specious language, denies the existence or possibility of creativity and imagination translated through the written word. From his viewpoint, deconstruction can subvert traditional understandings of meaning in texts, but this constant act of subversion must allow for other *reconstructive* understandings of meaning to surface, even if these newly reconstructed understandings may be deconstructed. Otherwise, human imagination cannot be

justified. Bloom feels the language of creativity must be seen on a greater rhetorical level than critical language, and consequently resists deconstruction *ad infinitum*. Bloom believes that deconstruction (and deconstructors) cannot simply seek and destroy all existing theory and meaning without replacing it with a more comprehensive rhetoric. Bloom states, "The issue of the limits of deconstruction will be resolved only if we attain a vision of rhetoric more comprehensive than the deconstructors allow, that is, if we can learn to see rhetoric as transcending the epistemology of tropes and re-entering the space of the will-to-persuasion."¹⁵ In other words, Bloom feels that the language used in deconstruction (critical) must ascend to the same rhetorical level as the language of creativity if deconstruction is to be used in its purist sense. This newly *ascended* rhetoric may also be deconstructed, but the process of deconstruction becomes one of creative and scholarly achievement, not mere negation.

This adapted viewpoint on deconstruction enables practice and application without perverting the original concept. Bloom focuses on the process of deconstruction as a beneficial tool for theorists and practitioners

alike. Bloom, therefore, is considered a practicalist.

What is the purpose?

Using Bloom's "version" of deconstruction, which combines theory with applicability, deconstruction becomes a more solidified launching point for critical discussion rather than an esoteric and obscure philosophy. Therefore, at this threshold:

"...deconstruction in America is not a monolithic theory or school of thought but a gathering-point for critics who are otherwise divided on many central questions of technique and style."¹⁶

Bloom helped to provide accessibility to deconstruction by allowing practitioners from a vast array of fields to analyze deconstruction and utilize its processes in order to rethink, re-visualize, or subvert traditional foundations. The relationship between deconstruction and feminist theory strongly reveals how this is done.

Feminist theory and deconstruction.

According to Vincent Leitch in *Deconstructive Criticism*, "Cold and remorseless, deconstructive man assaults the old sensibility and subverts traditional foundations."¹⁷ This quote highlights my previous

discussion of deconstructive theory, but also unwittingly emphasizes the traditional foundation of deconstructive *man*. Initial discourse about deconstruction did begin with a group of men but certainly didn't end there. So, what about deconstructive *woman*? In her paper, "The Feminist Production of Knowledge: Is Deconstruction a Practice for Women?" Kate Nash argues both for and against deconstruction. Nash makes it abundantly clear that not all feminists agree with or utilize deconstruction with feminist theory. With references to other pro-deconstruction feminists such as Judith Butler and Jane Flax, Nash clearly presents some of the basic advantages of deconstruction for feminism. These advantages include the ability to: 1) subvert constructed gender identity, 2) ensure that the language of feminism does not, in turn, repress certain members of the category, *women* (those of different race, class, or sexual orientation), and 3) re-think the concept of objective knowledge. Nash compares the work of Derrida with that of Butler to show the harmonious parallel:

Derrida's work shows, then, how no two categories, or cognitions, are identical because of the way identities depend minutely on the contexts in which they appear. This is important for feminists because focusing on the contextual nature of constructions of gender identity is a good way for us to examine *in*

very close and precise detail exactly how gender identities have been constructed, in relation to each other and in relation to other terms with which they appear, and also, as Judith Butler emphasizes, how they are contested and subverted through repetition in very different contexts from those in which they have hitherto been used and considered appropriate. We may, then, see opportunities for, and occasions of, subversion in the fine detail of everyday social practices.¹⁸

What this means is that, for feminists, the process of deconstruction allows for the subversion of the traditional foundations of gender identity.

Deconstruction allows for the dismantling of gender definition by divorcing it from its contextual restrictions (e.g., cultural, biological, or historical constructs). And the attention to details and context that deconstruction emphasizes is what benefits feminism most. As Nash states, "Like deconstruction, then, feminism is now intent on detail--on the closely contextualized construction of gender identity, particularly in terms of the sociological categories of class, ethnicity, sexuality and so on. For this reason, the theory and practice of deconstruction can be seen as useful to feminism."¹⁹

However, as Nash points out, some feminists confront deconstruction negatively. It seems it is with the

"pure" sense of deconstruction that difficulties arise. For example, if pure deconstruction denies *all* constructed meaning (social, scientific, or otherwise), how can feminists validate a search for the meaning of "woman" or "women?" This search for the meaning of women includes creating identity. Therefore, anti-deconstruction feminists, such as Nancy Harstock, feel that deconstruction actively undermines feminism.²⁰ Harstock states, "is it not suspicious. . .that just as women are beginning to make demands *as women*, the whole idea of a stable identity from which demands can legitimately be made is discredited?"²¹ From Nash's account, it seems that most of the discourse surrounding deconstruction in the feminist arena splits into two parties--one is either an enthusiastic supporter or an adversary of deconstruction. However, these dichotomous perceptions never deny deconstruction its existence in that arena. In other words, deconstruction remains as something to argue about.

Diane Elam, in her book *Feminism and Deconstruction*, approaches the relationship between feminism and deconstruction from a neutral position. She does not attempt to show how deconstruction and feminist theory

may benefit each other, or whether or not they belong in a harmonious marriage; rather, she keeps the two concepts "along side each other" and reveals their theoretical and functional similarities.²² Elam focuses on the processes of feminism and deconstruction rather than the definitive endpoints. She states, "It would be possible. . .to understand deconstruction and feminism not as systems of rules but as an endless search for rules. Judgment lies in the process of this search, which demands responsibility without allowing the comfort of finality."²³

Because of this focus on process, Elam hesitates to define both feminism and deconstruction. She sees both of them as multi-faceted operatives that may weave in and out of other domains--philosophical, sociological, historical, political, and academic. In her view, feminism and deconstruction have something to offer all areas of theoretical discourse.

NOTES

¹Christopher Norris, *Deconstruction: Theory & Practice* (New York: Methuen, 1982) xii.

²Diane Elam, *Feminism and Deconstruction* (New York: Routledge, 1994) throughout. Elam uses this term, translated as "to infinity," to describe the nature by which deconstruction subverts meaning.

³Norris 106.

⁴Norris 22.

⁵Norris 100.

⁶Norris 1.

⁷Norris 1, my italics.

⁸Norris 5-8. Here, Norris discusses the structuralist attitude of Jonathan Culler, who views binary opposition as a way for competent readers to correctly interpret texts.

⁹Norris 79.

¹⁰Norris 2.

¹¹Norris 2.

¹²Norris 3.

¹³Elam 6.

¹⁴Norris 120.

¹⁵Norris 121. See Harold Bloom, *Wallace Stevens: The Poems of Our Climate* (Ithaca: Corness University Press, 1977) 387.

¹⁶Norris 115.

¹⁷Vincent B. Leitch, *Deconstructive Criticism* (London: Hutchinson, 1983) 45.

¹⁸Kate Nash, "The Feminist Production of Knowledge: Is Deconstruction a Practice for Women?" *Feminist Review* Summer.47 (1994): 67. See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1990) for elaboration.

¹⁹Nash 68.

²⁰Nash 71. See Nancy Harstock, "Foucault on power: a theory for women?" *Nicholson* (1990) for elaboration.

²¹Nash 71. See Harstock (1990) for elaboration.

²²Elam 1.

²³Elam 103.

CHAPTER TWO

Deconstruction in Theatre Practice

Deconstruction in theatre practice provokes interesting analysis of not just the playtext, but also the performative elements--directing, acting, and design. It is important to begin with an understanding of how deconstructive theory has influenced the theatre overall. If theatre is defined as an artistic *genre*, then presumably it is composed of systems and methods that help explain this definition and how it functions. For example, there is a traditionally understood relationship between playtext, director, actor, and audience: 1) the playtext exists, 2) the director and actors read and interpret it, 3) the director, with or without the help of the actors, creates a "vision" for the production of the playtext and directs the actors accordingly, and 4) the audience receives this "vision" and interprets the meaning of the production. Deconstruction aims to subvert some, or all, of these traditional relationships.

Theatre deconstructors question the established roles of each artist involved and, in particular, the power position of the playtext. Deconstruction in theatrical theory, much like literary theory, provokes questions regarding textual interpretation and individual power.

Theatre artists who feel they correctly interpret authorial intent and can therefore properly envision and create a production sometimes argue vehemently against those who seek an alternative approach.

Deconstructionists believe there is no "correct" interpretation and that inherent authorial intent does not exist. From this belief, the concept of "free play" comes to fruition. For the deconstructionist, interpretive meaning and consequent individual *possession* of the playtext are elusive and the theatre artists should not be bound by them:

Once you accept the rather commonplace notion that an author doesn't really imbue his or her work with an 'aura'. . .but, rather, that a text operates as a complex nexus of institutional, social, and political discourses, that it plays at a multitude of levels, some competing, some contradictory, some institutional, and some affirmative, then the notion of a text as possession gives way to the theatricality of theater, to a sense that the 'field of drama' is a playing field and not one to be rigorously (or sloppily) delimited, marked, cultivated, or otherwise colonized in the name of any country, author, or theory.¹

This idea of "free play" through deconstructive thought provides each theatre artist with a new-found, autonomous relationship with the playtext. As Constantinidis states, "The deconstructive theatre artists assert their artistic independence against the playwright and his playtext. They declare their right to initiate, create, and produce their own thoughts in their own way. The playwright has not ordered the process of theatrical production. The playwright has only given it possibilities."²

This independence does not mean, however, that the playtext is completely ignored. A deconstructive approach allows for an interdependence between the theatre artists and the playtext. The artists and the playtext are at equal levels and the production is conceived according to a synthesis of interpretations. For theatre, a collaborative art, this deconstructive approach prohibits artistic tyranny:

The deconstructive designers, directors, actors, and critics do not substitute their interpretations for the texts that they read. Instead, they create meaning by responding to the injunctions of these texts through their cultural perspectives. Meaning is not the exclusive province of playwright-gods, director-gurus, master designers, expert critics, and erudite scholars who purportedly interpret what an author 'truly' meant or what a text 'really' means.³

We can see, then, how this new deconstructive relationship subverts the systems and methodologies established in traditional theatrical theory and practice. This total reconception is deconstruction at its fullest. However, in the theatre, not all productions deemed *deconstructed* involve a complete utilization of the theory. Some deconstructed productions do not rely on a complete subversion of the hierarchical relationship between director and actor; instead they allow "free play" with the playtext to lead the deconstruction. In some cases, it is merely an alternative or avant-garde reading of the text, shared by the artists involved, that deems the production as deconstructed. Often, this type of deconstruction is found in the contemporization of classical dramas.

Transitions: From recent past to present

During the 1960s and 1970s, experimental theatre flourished in Europe and America. Theatre artists such as Jerzy Grotowski (the Poor Theatre), Peter Brook (the Immediate Theatre), Julian Beck (the Living Theatre), and Richard Schechner (Environmental Theatre) sought to subvert traditional practices in the theatre. Many of these experimental processes involved a subversion of the

traditional relationship between the performance (performers) and the audience. Grotowski and Brook wanted an integration of performance and spectator to achieve a spiritual and ritual-like experience that included confrontation and active involvement of the audience. These artists dismissed the text as the dominating influence for production; rather, they focused on the performative elements to act as translators of the theatre experience. In this respect, they wanted to achieve a "total" theatre--one that evokes emotion and immediate response from the audience; a theatre that would break restrictive, traditionally constructed barriers between performer and audience, performer and performer, and theatre artist and text.⁴

Poland's Jerzy Grotowski (b. 1933) and the company from his Polish Laboratory Theatre, performed *The Constant Prince*, an adaptation of Calderon de la Barca's text, transcribed by Julius Slowacki. Grotowski's attempt with the Poor Theatre, was to strip the production bare of any unnecessary technical elements that would minimize the relationship between the performers and audience. He believed that the audience was an integral part of the performance and should have a

specific role to play. In *The Constant Prince*, a drama about a prisoner's castigation and torture, the audience viewed the production from above the playing space, therefore "acting" as social witnesses and moral judges. For Grotowski, the psychological reaction of the spectator was on equal levels with the psychological performance of the actors.

The English director, Peter Brook (b. 1925), envisioned a theatre "which can unite spectator and performance in a communal celebration of experience, briefly achieving a totality that may leave a permanent image in the minds of its participants."⁵ Brook's Immediate Theatre utilized improvisation and reaction-based performances heavily reliant upon the audience as either willing or unwilling participants. For this type of theatre, the position of the passive spectator was sabotaged. Brook strived for a theatre that would succeed in, as he states, "linking the private and the public, the intimate and the crowded, the secret and the open, the vulgar and the magical. For this we need both a crowd on stage and a crowd watching--and within that crowded stage individuals offering their most intimate

truths to individuals within that crowded audience, sharing a collective experience with them."⁶

Similarly, Julian Beck (1925-1985) and Judith Malina (b. 1926), with the Living Theatre and "happenings," wanted theatre to become "a place of intense experience, half dream, half ritual, in which the spectator approaches something of a vision of self-understanding, going past the conscious to the unconscious, to an understanding of the nature of things."⁷ Often these performances consisted of merely a premise, or impulsive catalyst for action in the theatre or public place rather than an explicitly scripted text.

Richard Schechner (b. 1934), with Environmental Theatre and The Performance Group (TPG), wished to transform the traditional performance space and process. Schechner wished to "overlap theatre and life."⁸ His ideal theatre was a mixture of real life (e.g., public demonstrations), happenings, and traditional theatre where the overlap is skewed and the audience is immersed in the same environment as the performers. Schechner conceived of Environmental Theatre somewhere between "happenings" and traditional theatre. In this type of theatre, "All production elements speak for themselves,

and none is necessarily subordinate to the rest. This includes the text, which has no necessary primacy and in fact may disappear altogether."⁹ This type of theatre emphasized the trend toward artistic equality of the performative elements where the playtext could no longer efface the "importance of the texts 'written' by designers, directors, actors, and critics" as well as the audience.¹⁰

This loose treatment of the text caused artistic controversy between Schechner and Sam Shepard when TPG performed *The Tooth of Crime* in 1972.¹¹ Shepard's *The Tooth of Crime*, which is often called a "rock opera," calls for electrically amplified rock music (scored by Shepard) that coincides with the dramatic themes in the written text. A letter-based "battle" ensued during the rehearsal period when Shepard became aware that Schechner and TPG were going to produce the drama in a manner that went against his initial intentions. TPG didn't use electrically amplified music and they relied on the collective rehearsal process to reveal the thematic links and action within the "world of [Shepard's] script."¹² Schechner stated in a letter to Shepard: "Most directors and actors start with a 'guiding idea,' an 'image to be

realized,' a 'preexistent action.' I don't, the Group doesn't. We start with only what is there, the barest facts: seven performers and a collection of words organized under role headings."¹³ Eventually Shepard complied with Schechner and allowed TPG to perform his play with the understanding that it was not in accordance with his creative intent. This emphasis on rehearsal process over textual product was one of the most important trends--the subversion of authorial primacy--of this experimental period.

At first glance, it seems that these experimental forms of theatre were progressing in a deconstructionist manner. Although these artists aimed to subvert many aspects of traditional theatre, their new methods became new conventions; further, their processes became less aimed at subversion as they were *reversion*. In other words, their goal to bring theatre to a communal and spiritual level, though brought to life through unconventional means for the time period, actually reverted back to "deeply traditional" roots of theatre and dramatic ritual.¹⁴ Their theories and methodologies eventually became very *structure-oriented*. However, this experimental explosion did pave a pathway for

deconstruction. These artists, deeply concerned with questions regarding textual interpretation and hierarchical structure in the performance process, began the risky process of merging new theories with application.

In 1991, Jill Dolan co-directed (with Phillip Zarrilli) a deconstructed, "postmodern, revisionist, gender-bent production" of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Gilbert Hemsley Theatre.¹⁵ Dolan documented her experience in *Theatre Topics* with an article entitled, "Peeling Away the Tropes of Visibility: Lesbian Sexuality and Materialist Performance Practice." Dolan wrote the essay to describe to readers a theatrical experience "in which theory and practice really did meld in production."¹⁶ Dolan and the other artists took a chance at combining lesbian and deconstructive theories and applying them to a classical text. Dolan approached the dominant sexual/relationship themes in the text as an opportunity to explore and focus on the idea of "sexuality as performance."¹⁷

The production was set in a cabaret-style environment which encapsulated both a "working class pub" and a

"subcultural gay disco."¹⁸ One of the goals of the production was to present the constructs of sexuality and gender identity through modes of dress and inter-gender relationships; then discover what happens when those representational constructs are deconstructed. For example, Titania (played by John Jaraczewski) was conceived as a "punk drag queen. . . a 'cockettish' provocateur who carried a whip under her arm and often slapped it for emphasis."¹⁹ Titania was dressed in spiked black heels, fishnets, a black leather jacket with rhinestone bra, and black vinyl mini-skirt. Oberon (played by Darcey Engen) was conceived as a "sexy, butch lesbian,"²⁰ dressed in a sharkskin suit, an unbuttoned white shirt with black tie, spike-heeled boots, and a felt hat. At the end of the production during the reconciliation of Oberon and Titania (staged as a sexy blues dance), the characters exchanged several articles of their clothing and seductively danced together.

These stylistic choices exemplify how Dolan chose to focus on the physical, the *visible* representations of gender and sexuality through production rather than settling with the textual implications regarding sexual confusion. As Dolan states, "It's not as important to me

now, at least in the educational, academic theatre context in which our production took place, that the visible correspond with some underlying identity. . .but that these positions *be visible* in representation. These visible representations were performed possibilities, unhampered by the plodding character psychologies of realism."²¹

Furthering her approach towards visible representation unbounded by dramatic or psychologically realistic interpretation, Dolan and the designers integrated the use of masks to either eschew certain cultural identities, or create contemporary connections with particular characters in the text in order to "extend the production's topicality around issues of sexuality and performance."²² For example, the fairies, wearing ACT-UP paraphernalia, simultaneously assumed the roles of Helena and Demetrius while adorned with Balinese half-masks used to confound constructions of sex, gender, and race. Additionally, the character Bottom was transformed into an ass represented by a two-dimensional mask of Senator Jesse Helms, and wore a T-shirt that stated, "Know Your Assholes."²³ Creating this specific deconstructive montage was a source of merriment for

Dolan; she states, "When our drag queen Titania fell in love with Bottom in his new garb, the implied parody of Helms' homophobic, anti-sex, anti-theatrical crusading was quite fun."²⁴

Other deconstructive processes were also instrumental in this production. For example, student actors wrote part of the production text and acted as dramaturgs; Dolan's directorial approach was to let "desire reign"²⁵ within the actors so that they were not coached to act according to culturally stereotyped representations of gays and lesbians and cross-dressers; and the audience was integrated into the performance at certain points to emphasize the social relevance of sexuality and gender identity.

Recently, the American Repertory Theatre (ART) produced Georg Büchner's *Woyzeck* (1836), which ran from January 31, 1997 through March 16, 1997. *Woyzeck* is a German expressionistic drama about a destitute soldier, Franz Woyzeck, who is subjected to sadistic treatment by his Captain, an army medical doctor, and everything in his environment. Woyzeck suspects his lover, Marie, of having an affair with a Drum Major, and through his frenzied and hallucinatory state of mind, he becomes

overwhelmed with jealousy and rage and kills her. Because of its episodic, fragmented structure of 27 short scenes and the treatment of a common man as a tragic hero, *Woyzeck* is considered by many to be responsible for the onset of modern drama.

The ART's deconstructed version, directed by Marcus Stern, is a prime example of a practical, adapted deconstructive process and continual influence of deconstruction in the theatre today. Stern is an M.F.A. graduate of the Yale School of Drama, which, not surprisingly, was the major theoretical forum for deconstructionist theory in the 1980s. His experience at Yale provided a natural outlet for his deconstructive impulses. He has a strong idea of what his position is as director of a production. He states:

Perhaps ideally a director is a conduit for all of the collected input that comes into a production--the script, the actors, the designers, the dramaturg, the producers. In some strange way I consider myself both a very strong-handed auteur director and simultaneously a guy who's just hanging out and editing a bunch of good ideas that are coming from everyone involved. I also look to the technical staff and other personnel that are not usually inside the rehearsal hall, because it's often these people who provide a fresh set of ideas and solutions."²⁶ For Stern, deconstruction comes instinctively; it is not a long drawn-out process based on theoretical excerpts. The fragmented, episodic style of *Woyzeck* suits Stern because it "more accurately reflects how

jagged and fragmentary life feels inside. . . life seems more fragmentary than it does linear.²⁷

Dealing with playtexts in a deconstructive manner is not a problem for Stern. He does not attempt to interpret specific *meaning* from reading the playtext. Instead he prefers to deal with, as he states, "plays I don't understand when I read them on the page."²⁸ This lack of initial, dominating interpretation frees the artists to shape the playtext during the rehearsal process into a theatrical production. The artists involved form a symbiotic relationship as the production is created, and use Stern as both a leader and a sounding board. This relationship is necessary for Stern because he is "Suspicious of how words or the intellect try to capture a visceral experience."²⁹ With *Woyzeck*, Stern attempted to create a visceral experience for the audience through the cumulative effort between the dramaturg (Gideon Lester), the scenic designer (Allison Koturbash), and the actors (specifically Thomas Derrah, as Woyzeck, Scott Ripley, as Andres, and Sharon Scruggs, as Marie), and didn't rely on the playtext and a personal *mise-en-scène* alone to guide him. The concept of "director-guru" was tossed aside in order to see what was possible through a collaborative effort.

Lester, as dramaturg, was instrumental in this process. Although Lester did not contemporize the text (he did a direct German-to-English translation), he did create six different working versions by rearranging the scenes in various styles. This constant reconfiguration was key in the deconstructive process. Stern explains why:

The actors have had to hold six different versions of staging in their heads. Because I need to have the freedom of flexibility to change gears radically and quickly as I search for what best explicates each scene and find the balance between accessibility of visceral excitement and narrative line. And it's a tricky combination, particularly when you're not dealing in naturalism. In a world like *Woyzeck's*, anything is possible, and yet anything is not possible. I can't do something that's just a directorial turn for a directorial turn's sake. I think that's bullshit. So I need to keep finding stuff that I find theatrically interesting, narratively clear, emotionally engaging, entertaining, and probably four other things."³⁰

This process of "finding stuff," and consequently throwing stuff away as the rehearsal process continued, highlights the deconstructive nature of the production. In this case, the playtext gives way to the "theatricality of theatre."³¹ The traditional process of pre-mapping the production out scene by scene and directing the actors and designers to follow through is

subverted. Stern prefers a style that is more "fly-by-the-seat-of-his-pants."³² Creative ingenuity reveals itself as each artist contributes their talents.

Stern relied on Koturbash (set designer) to "create 'the world' of the play."³³ Koturbash possessed the artistic autonomy to create the set according to the flexible dramaturgical style of Lester. For Stern, this interdependency and flexibility was essential because in this process he doesn't "know what the event is until [he] see[s] the actors on stage."³⁴ In other words, he cannot begin shaping and re-shaping the production until the actors have stepped into the "world" of the *Woyzeck* presented by Lester and Koturbash.

The result of the deconstructive effort is a production process that is very impulse-driven. One glaring instance of this is a contemporary thematic parallel drawn from *Woyzeck*--the O.J. Simpson trial. Coincidentally, the trial was at its climax when the rehearsal process began. Through this real-life tragedy and the theme in *Woyzeck*, Stern grasped the opportunity to address the "notion of violence both against loved ones and against women."³⁵ He didn't contemporize the language of the text to "fit" into a mold of the Simpson

trial; however he did make reference to it in terms of production. One way he did this was to emphasize the jealousy, rage, and psychosis Woyzeck experiences when he suspects his mistress, Marie, is unfaithful.

The deconstructive process experienced by Stern and the other artists involved was not one of complete subversion. There was no attempt to subvert the relationship between the performance and the audience, nor did Stern dismiss all authoritative directing style. This adapted version of deconstruction is an example of how the theory of deconstruction is transforming through theatre practice, and how deconstruction *transforms* theatre practice.

NOTES

¹Erik MacDonald, *Theater at the Margins: Text and the Post-Structured Stage* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993) 179.

²Stratos E. Constantinidis, *Theatre Under Deconstruction? A Question of Approach* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1993) 91.

³Constantinidis 293.

⁴In saying the word "total," I am not referring to the inclusion of multiple technical elements, as this is Grotowski's meaning for the term and he is against it. Rather, I refer to the collaborative nature of all artists involved in theatre production and the inclusion of the audience participants in the performance space.

⁵Marvin Carlson, *Theories of the Theatre*, expanded ed. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993) 464.

⁶Peter Brook, preface, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, by Jerzy Grotowski (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1968) 14.

⁷Carlson 420. From William Glover, "The Living Theatre," *Theatre Arts* 45, 12 (Dec. 1961): 63.

⁸Carlson 479.

⁹Carlson 479.

¹⁰Constantinidis 104.

¹¹Richard Schechner, *Environmental Theater* (New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1973) 227-42.

¹²Schechner 236.

¹³Schechner 229.

¹⁴Constantinidis 109. This reference was extracted from the following quote: "Jerzi Grotowski's poor theatre. . . , Peter Brook's holy theatre. . . , and Richard Schechner's environmental theatre. . . , among many others, proposed a subversive revision of Western theatrical production. However, these revisionists, instead of breaking from tradition, re-established its fundamental tropes and functions. Their theory and practice resulted in a nonconformity that was deeply traditional. . . ."

¹⁵Jill Dolan, "Peeling Away the Tropes of Visibility: Lesbian Sexuality and Materialist Performance Practice," *Theatre Topics* 2.1 (March 1992): 41.

¹⁶Dolan 41.

¹⁷Dolan 42.

¹⁸Dolan 44.

¹⁹Dolan 45.

²⁰Dolan 45.

²¹Dolan 48.

²²Dolan 46.

²³Dolan 46.

²⁴Dolan 46.

²⁵Dolan 50.

²⁶Rebecca Hayden, "A Director's Journey: Profile of Marcus Stern." *A.R.T. News* (13 Jan. 1996): n. pag. Online. World Wide Web. 27 May 1997.

²⁷Carolyn Clay, "ART Woyzeck to be made of Stern stuff." *A.R.T. News* (2 May 1997): n. pag. Online. World Wide Web. 27 May 1997.

²⁸Clay n. pag.

²⁹Clay n. pag.

³⁰Clay n. pag.

³¹MacDonald 179.

³²Clay n. pag.

³³Clay n. pag.

³⁴Clay n. pag.

³⁵Clay n. pag.

CHAPTER THREE

Michigan State University's production of *Lysistrata*.

Michigan State University's Department of Theatre opened *Lysistrata* (an untraditional version) on April 10, 1997 in the Fairchild Theatre. As a Master's of Arts student in this department, I was asked by the director, Dr. Georg Schuttler, to participate as the assistant director and dramaturg. Schuttler's original concept for the production, devised to draw students into the theatre, was to set the comedy in a late-night-television, talk-show format. This concept involved integrating multi-media aspects (such as video clips and a live band), live commercials, a studio set, and contemporary costumes and language. This multi-faceted and contemporized form demanded a deconstructionist approach. Foremost, to correlate with the fast-paced, choppy, and contemporary fashion of a talk-show, it demanded a reconfigured and rescripted text, thereby dismissing the authorial primacy of Aristophanes and

translator, Dudley Fitts (whose version was used as a guide). The entire show was structured around the theme that sex is powerful and power is sexy, which we eventually adopted as the production's slogan. This theme gave us the opportunity to experiment with gender roles and dress and the subversion of traditional forms of male dominance.

This chapter will describe my exploration of the deconstructive processes used in this production. I will not attempt to speak for the other artisans involved; however, I will describe my working relationships with the director, the actors, and the designers to highlight the interesting dynamics of such relationships in a deconstructed production. Additionally, I will provide detailed descriptions of the dramaturgical process. This production was primarily created by the students, for the students, and Schuttler rejected the traditional role of "director-guru" in order to nurture a collaborative milieu.

As the audience members entered the building, they were boisterously greeted by members of the improvisational group called the Bacchants Improv Ensemble. These actors were dressed in ancient Grecian

garb and physically and verbally interacted with the audience. One of the main purposes for using a deconstructive approach in this production was to subvert the traditional audience/performance relationship. By immediately integrating the performers with the audience, before the production even began, we (Schuttler, the improv ensemble, and I) had hoped to establish a trend of participation, openness, and reciprocation.

Style

The nature of the production was episodic and fast-paced. It was composed of 11 to 13 short scenes (depending on whether or not we had special guests appear) and eight commercial breaks. There was no intermission and the show ran for approximately 80 minutes. This format was conceived to subvert the traditional climactic play structure of classical drama.

The performance was not designated to one playing space. Action was multi-directional and performers were positioned in various places throughout the theatre--in the lobby, in the house, and on all sides of the stage. Also, throughout the majority of the performance, the house lights were at half-full. These elements were to keep the audience active. We wanted to subvert the uni-

directional spectator's gaze customary in an auditorium setting. With these conditions, the spectators were often central to the action and their gaze was multi-directionally aimed at the performance and each other.

In the beginning of the show, the sidekick (played by Michael Merritt) greeted the audience, welcomed them to use applause signs hanging in the "studio," and encouraged them to participate, relax, and enjoy the show before introducing the host. This initial interaction within the confines of the "production" continued the emphasis for audience participation.

The Set

As the audience walked into the theatre, they saw a simulated television studio on stage. The backdrop, composed of multiple flats painted with landmarks of the Lansing area, could be flown in and out to create a flexible playing-space. The painted backdrop was designed to give the audience a sense of familiarity. Stage right, the studio band, The Anderson Council, was playing pre-show music--classic and contemporary rock, mixed with jazz and blues. The talk-show host's (played by Marcus Davenport) desk and guest couch were on a platform stage left. Upstage, behind the backdrop, was a

bedroom built on a 12' by 12' platform on casters to be rolled downstage for a scene between Myrhinne (played by Erin Schultz) and Cinesias (played by Brian McWilliams). The color scheme consisted of bright jewel-tones--cobalt blue, red, purple, green, and yellow. The intent was to create a lively and loud atmosphere, both visually and aurally.

Similar to Stern's relationship with the set designers for his production, Schuttler and I relied on Professor Linda Janosko and student Mark Johnson to "create the world" of "The Marcus Davenport Show." During the production meetings, it was stressed that the designers were to possess an extreme amount of autonomy. Schuttler informed the set designers that he wanted a talk show on stage: The details of how, which kind, what should it look like, etc., were up to the design team. Their collaborative research and results were brought to the directing team, and we would adjust the format of the show accordingly. Since the text for the show wasn't written at the time of pre-production, preliminary design choices were freed from the restrictions of stage directions and plot structure. Instead of beginning with a text and creating a set to establish a complementary

environment, the designers were responsible for creating an environment in which a text could begin and flourish.

The Costumes

The costume designer, M.F.A student Joshua Webb, was responsible for designing three areas of dress: 1) for the cast and crew of "The Marcus Davenport Show," 2) for the characters of the story of *Lysistrata*, and 3) for the improv ensemble. Although this production was not structured as a play within a play, the costume designs had to encompass these three different worlds.

The host, Marcus Davenport, wore a light gray suit and bright purple tie, and his sidekick (Merritt) wore brown corduroy trousers, blazer, vest, and bow-tie (see Appendix A). Webb designed these costumes to emphasize the foil-like physical characteristics of the actors. Members of "The Marcus Davenport Show" were dressed in T-shirts with the show's logo. With the direction of "short, tight, risqué," Webb designed contemporary, hip, provocative costumes for the female chorus (see Appendix B). These costumes alluded to the sexiness and confidence that the women inherently possessed *before* . *Lysistrata* announced that they could use those attributes to obtain power over their men.

Lysistrata (played by Jennifer Moore), dressed in a short, tight, red, vinyl, halter-dress, sheer black stockings, black high-heels, and slicked-back hair, portrayed the image of a sexy vixen (see Appendix C). Part dominatrix, part successful business woman, this Lysistrata was not quite presented as an altruistic peace-maker. Her outfit was to dramatize her dangerous elements--a combination of confidence, sexual energy, and female supremacy.

The male chorus, as soldiers, were costumed in military fatigues. Their drill sergeant leader (played by Alisa Berhorst), was also dressed in fatigues, military helmet, and sunglasses. This military attire obscured Berhorst's gender, playing on the cultural constructs of power and gender identity. As a "male" drill sergeant, she maintained authority through military rank. As the production progressed and the soldiers became increasingly sexually excited and frustrated (made evident by large, erect, prosthetic phalluses), the drill sergeant revealed her "femaleness" by tossing her helmet and glasses, and unbuttoning her fatigues to expose a shocking lime-green push-up bra (see Appendix D). As a female drill sergeant, her authority doubled--she

possessed the power of military rank and the power of female sexuality. This power situation parodied the recent conflicts regarding women at The Citadel Military Academy in Virginia.

The Bacchants Improv Ensemble

The improv ensemble, led by Maria Michaelson, was responsible for performing "commercial breaks" throughout the talk-show. This element became integral to the fluidity of the production. The group had a fully autonomous creative relationship with the directing team. They wrote and directed their own material using Greek dramatic literature and sexual allusions as their source of humor. Many commercials parodied those seen on late-night television, such as 1-900 numbers (e.g., the Teiresias and Cassandra psychic network and Concu-temp concubine service) and contraceptives.

The men and women were dressed the same, in neo-Grecian togas of various colors (see Appendix E). This uniformity resisted gender and character representations, thereby aiming to transfer spectator focus from physical identity to the thematic content of the commercials. Commercial content and improv performers used varied

throughout the run of the production. I never knew precisely what they were going to do during each show.

Plot

Lysistrata was on a mission. Touring around the nation, visiting various famous talk-shows, she was encouraging women to take an oath to withhold sex from their significant others until they started to respect and adhere to their various needs. From her Chicago home base, she visited the Lansing area and "The Marcus Davenport Show" to continue her efforts. Women from the area (including Marcus' fiancée) decided to partake in the effort. By the end of the production, through much coaxing, explanation, and exemplary displays of seductive prowess, Lysistrata and her "troops" of women got the men to submit and commit.

Dramaturgy

As mentioned, one of the most significant deconstructive aspects of this production was the rejection of authorial primacy. I eventually scripted the production-text, but I do not consider myself the "author" of this untraditional version of *Lysistrata*. Marcus Stern feels that, as a director, he is a conduit for collaborative and creative input in a production. I

feel the same way about the process of writing this text. I depended on many things to guide me--Dudley Fitts' version of *Lysistrata*; the preliminary production designs; the performance strengths of certain actors; suggestions from the cast, crew, and production design team; and Schuttler's direction and encouragement. I began writing portions and outlines for the production-text before rehearsals, but wrote the bulk of the scenes during the rehearsal period. This process altered the traditional relationships between "playwright," director, and actor, creating both difficulties and benefits. For most of the actors, this process was unique. Some never questioned the day-to-day development and seemed to handle it with ease; others would express a need to know what was coming next, or how the show was going to end. Dealing with semi-unknowns in any situation can be straining. For me, it was often stressful knowing that if I couldn't write a scene one evening, we wouldn't have anything to rehearse the next day. Conversely, if the rehearsal of one scene went well and flowed, the actors would help create a transition into the next scene. This symbiotic relationship continued throughout the production.

In essence, there were two different texts, or "languages" needed for the show--the language of the talk-show and the language of the story of *Lysistrata*. Developing these two languages involved an interdependency between improvisational elements and structured dialogue. For example, Merritt and Davenport were given very little text to learn; Schuttler and I explained to them their function in the production, gave them performance guidance based on research of various talk-shows, and allowed them to create their own material to suit their real-life personalities. The banter and movement between the two actors changed throughout the course of rehearsals until they grew comfortable within their own patterns. During performances, their actions and dialogue would often change depending on commentary from planted and actual audience members. Moore's (*Lysistrata*) monologues and the dialogue between her and the other characters were more structured. I would present the actors with the text in rehearsal and we would begin in a traditional fashion--read-throughs, blocking, and getting off-book. However, once the actors were comfortable with what was going on in the scene, Schuttler and I encouraged them to suggest changes for

both dialogue and movement. This combination of improvisation and structure was designed to contribute to the "off-the-cuff," impulse-driven fashion of a real talk-show, and to enhance the collaborative nature of the production process.

In order to compose a bulk production-text, I needed to name and order the individual scenes. They are as follows: 1) *Lysistrata* Intro.; 2) Small Planet (video clip); 3) Oath Scene; 4) Soldier Scene #1; 5) Getaway Scene; 6) Bedroom Scene (Myrrhinne and Cinesias) with video; 7) Soldier Scene #2; 8) Puppet Scene; and 9) Resolution. The tone and structure for the Oath Scene, the Getaway Scene, the Bedroom Scene, and the Resolution were closely derived from Fitts' version of *Lysistrata* (see Appendices F, G, H, and I). These direct interpretations were used to retain some of the original structure of *Lysistrata*. The remaining scenes were created as originals and were integrated for several purposes.

The Small Planet scene (named after an East Lansing night club) was *Lysistrata*'s prepared illustration of what women do when their men are away or neglecting them (see Appendix J). It was shown as a video clip during

the production after *Lysistrata* explained her mission. In this video, the female characters are drinking heavily, partying, and fawning over a male strip-dancer (played by Steve Lacey). This video represented heavy connotations regarding sex and gender roles. The women, independent of their men for the evening, were *powerless* to the sexual provocation of the stripper. The stripper, who possessed sexually-charged power over the women, was, in essence, foreshadowing what the women were about to do to their men--strip, seduce, taunt, tease, arouse, and leave.

Soldier Scenes #1 and #2 were short, transitional pieces that were to boost the unpredictable and antic-oriented style of the talk-show. As mentioned earlier, these scenes exposed ideas about power and gender roles; but they were also visual slapstick. The soldiers represented a portion of the men deprived of sex and provided an overly exaggerated example of the physical ramifications of sexual frustration (i.e., large, false phalluses).

The Puppet Scene was designed to expand upon the universality and contemporary, topical nature of the "battle of the sexes" theme. Three-dimensional puppet

heads of President Bill Clinton, Hillary Clinton, and Paula Jones were worn by actors, and the scene parodied the recent sexual harassment and personal defamation suit by Jones against President Clinton (see Appenedix K and Appendix L).

The running order of these scenes remained the same throughout the run of the show; however, the transitions between them varied. The live band and the improv ensemble assisted in smoothing difficult transitions with music and commercials that would reflect upon the situations occurring in the previous or up-coming scenes.

CONCLUSION

Deconstruction in theatre practice proposes many exciting opportunities and challenges for theatre artists, particularly within the educational and academic realm. It is an ongoing process of change, methodological questioning and subversion, progress, and experimentation. Deconstructive theatre practice enables the artists to wear many hats, and explore a collaborative method for production. As Constantinidis states:

The deconstructors are changing conventions and expectations as to what it means to be director, designer, actor, spectator, critic, or playwright. Theatre folks slip easily out of one role into another because formal education and hands-on-the-job training require them to familiarize themselves with several. . . roles within the theatre. As theatre artists and technicians develop their artistic consciousness, they can reconsider their artistic behavior, can recombine learned experience, or can question and modify standard production and training. They do not attribute errors unilaterally because artistic. . .relationships do not result from one-sided activity, but rather they depend on dynamic interactions which change from time to time and from place to place.¹

Extrapolating from my research and my own experience with deconstruction, I agree with Constantinidis. I feel it is necessary, in educational and professional theatre, to occasionally adopt the deconstructive approach, focusing on process over product, and discovering what you get. I feel it is important for all theatre artists to experience both a traditional and deconstructive approach to dramatic textual interpretation and theatrical production practices; for it is through one that the other is understood.

Although I feel that a deconstructive approach is necessary in the academic realm for purposes of experimentation, growth, and education, I have discovered that the institutional restrictions involved can create difficulties. An ironic relationship can develop between the deconstructive theatre artists and the university members (i.e., faculty and governance boards):

Deconstruction, which subverts or combats institutionalized hierarchical structure and rules, may be dependent upon the academic institution for financial support and a structured working environment. As a graduate student involved in this process, the fear of success or failure becomes not one of a personal issue,

but rather a departmental issue. Given the time and budget constraints of a main-stage season show, these fears and pressures cannot be denied or ignored, and yet must be overcome in order to finish the production.

Though Jill Dolan purports that the academic environment is well-suited for deconstruction, another appropriate avenue for deconstructive productions of this nature might be a grant-subsidized theatre, free from university politics, where uninhibited experimentation is expected and encouraged.

Traditional theatre is the primary source of education for many university departments, and the primary source of training for many professional theatre companies. Through learning about deconstruction, I realize that "the way we sever our ties with past methods and means of production will certainly define our ability to improve performance quality, to enhance company productivity, to enhance artistic opportunity, or to tap latent audience demand in the twenty-first century."² Deconstruction, on its own, does not assert these future definitions, but it does provide us with a process to get there.

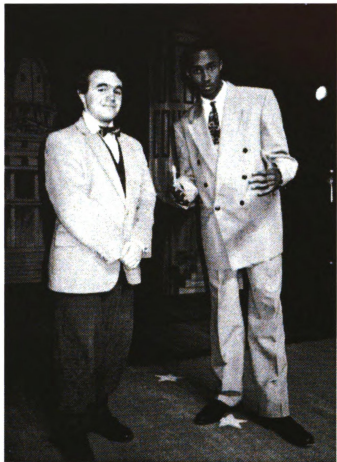
NOTES

¹Stratos Constantinidis, *Theatre Under Deconstruction? A Question of Approach* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1993) 91.

²Constantinidis 99.

APPENDICES

Appendix A



Merritt and Davenport

Appendix B



Myrrhine and Lampito

Appendix C



Lysistrata chastises Kalonike

Appendix D



Soldiers at the mercy of their sergeant

Appendix E



Members of the Bacchants Improv. Ensemble

Appendix F

OATH SCENE (My version)

LYSISTRATA: Marcus, I talked to your producer (*gestures over to Carl, Carl waves and smiles*) over there and he gave me the go ahead on a little surprise for you and the Lansing audience.

MARCUS: Is that right? First we need to talk about what happened at that Planet place. Was that really my woman stuffing my hard-earned money into some dudes shorts? (*LYSISTRATA politely nods and smiles*)

LYSISTRATA: Well get back to that soon enough, love (*winks at Michael knowingly*). As you know from the clip, I did some interviewing about town.

MARCUS: Yeah, we all saw more than I think we needed!

LYSISTRATA: Well, I've also done some recruiting. Various women from around the area seemed more than interested in my "training program" for their men. They've decided to pay a little visit to your show to take my oath and help to keep spreading the word nation-wide. So (*rising and walking to center stage, playfully fondles MICHAEL's hair on her way*), if you'll excuse me, I need to welcome my troops! (*calls the WOMEN, one at a time, to the stage from various parts of the theatre*) (*To WOMEN*) Welcome ladies!

WOMEN: (*Various yells of "Hey Lysistrata!" and "Good evening!" They walk to center stage*)

(*Improv group and LYSISTRATA attempt to get women from the audience to come on stage and participate in the oath*)

LYSISTRATA: Marcus, Marcus, Marcus, that's not all she wrote, hon. I have just one more teensy surprise for you. Come on up, girlfriend! (*gestures for NESTELYNN in the house*)

NESTELYNN: (*Walks in with drink towards MARCUS*)

LYSISTRATA: Ah yes! Even your fiancée has expressed her desire to participate!

NESTELYNN: (*Leans over and kisses MARCUS*) That's all your getting. After I take the oath, you can forget about any Boom Boom until you act right.

MARCUS: Baby! What's your problem? This is national T.V. here! This ain't no Geraldo—surprise guest embarrassment! And what do you mean, “act right?”

NESTELYNN: (*Going off*) I mean that this show of yours sucks up my love life and I'm not having it!

MARCUS: What do you want me to do? Give it up? I worked hard for this. (*Trying to smooth-talk her*) I'm not just doing this for me; I'm doing it for us. (*Sarcastically*) I didn't know I was making all this money for you stuff it some guy's jock!

NESTELYNN: Just doing what a girl's got to do. Here's the picture. I'm all happy about your little show here. I'm real proud of you, baby. But when you get home, your work day isn't done. You're clipping out news stories for the next night's show, you're glued to the T.V. looking out for the competition, you're picking out your clothes for an interview, you're fixing yourself up in the mirror trying to find good camera angles. You may be at home, but I might as well not be! You need to get yourself an assistant to wrap up all the details so when you cross the threshold of our home, you're mine! Until then, you can consider this (*makes a sweeping motion of her body*) signed, sealed, and delivered to the God of chastity. (*Walks over to WOMEN*)

LYSISTRATA: Now then, are we ready to demonstrate the almighty power of feminine persuasion?

WOMEN: Yes!

LYSISTRATA: Are we ready to lift our cups and celebrate the birth of our autonomy through this generous libation?

WOMEN: Yes!

LYSISTRATA: Then repeat after me: I WILL NOT SUCCUMB TO THE SEXUAL NEEDS OF MY LOVER.

WOMEN: I WILL NOT SUCCUMB TO THE SEXUAL NEEDS OF MY LOVER.

LYSISTRATA: I WILL NOT ALLOW INTERCOURSE, ORAL SEX, DEEP KISSING, HEAVY PETTING,

WOMEN: I WILL NOT ALLOW INTERCOURSE, ORAL SEX, DEEP KISSING, HEAVY PETTING,

LYSISTRATA: OR ANY OTHER SEXUAL ACT THAT RELIEVES

WOMEN: OR ANY OTHER SEXUAL ACT THAT RELIEVES

LYSISTRATA: SEXUAL TENSION OR SATISFIES SEXUAL AROUSAL IN MY LOVER.

WOMEN: SEXUAL TENSION OR SATISFIES SEXUAL AROUSAL IN MY LOVER.

LYSISTRATA: I WILL DO MY BEST TO TAUNT AND TEASE

WOMEN: I WILL DO MY BEST TO TAUNT AND TEASE

LYSISTRATA: AND MAKE MY LOVER NEARLY EXPLODE WITH EXCITEMENT

WOMEN: AND MAKE MY LOVER NEARLY EXPLODE WITH EXCITEMENT

LYSISTRATA: BUT I WILL NOT GIVE IN TO THE MOMENT

WOMEN: BUT I WILL NOT GIVE IN TO THE MOMENT

LYSISTRATA: AND WILL LEAVE MY LOVER TO PINE AND HUNGER FOR ME.

WOMEN: AND WILL LEAVE MY LOVER TO PINE AND HUNGER FOR ME.

LYSISTRATA: I WILL UPHOLD THIS OATH AND SUPPORT MY FELLOW SISTERS AROUND THE NATION,

WOMEN: I WILL UPHOLD THIS OATH AND SUPPORT MY FELLOW SISTERS AROUND THE NATION,

LYSISTRATA: UNTIL MY MAN AGREES TO TAKE ACTION AND SATISFY MY NEEDS.

WOMEN: UNTIL MY MAN AGREES TO TAKE ACTION AND SATISFY MY NEEDS.

LYSISTRATA: Any woman who gives in to her lover, is admitting to herself, her lover, and all women of the world, that the needs and desires of the female species are less important and less worthy of attention than that of the male. With this understood, and with the oath hereby taken, you may now drink from your cup.

EVERYONE: *(Lift glasses and drink. After, yells of celebration)*

LYSISTRATA: Take no mercy ladies. The men are going down!

Dudley Fitt's Version (Prologue, 16–18):

LYSISTRATA: Well, then, Lampito,/ what we have to do now is take a solemn oath.

LAMPITO: Say it. We'll sweah.

LYSISTRATA: This is it./—But where's our Inner Guard?/ —Look, Guard: you see this shield?/ Put it down here. Now bring me the victim's entrails.

KALONIKE: But the oath?

LYSISTRATA: You remember how in Aischylos' *Seven*/ they killed a sheep and swore on a shield? Well, then?

KALONIKE: But I don't see how you can swear for peace on a shield.

LYSISTRATA: What else do you suggest?

KALONIKE: Why not a white horse?/ We could swear by that.

LYSISTRATA: And where will you get a white horse?

KALONIKE: I never thought of that. *What* can we do?

LYSISTRATA: I have it!/ Let's set this big black wine-bowl on the ground/ and pour in a gallon or so of Thasian, and swear/ not to add one drop of water.

LAMPITO: Ah lahk *that* oath!

LYSISTRATA: Bring the bowl and the wine-jug.

KALONIKE: Oh, what a simply *huge* one!

LYSISTRATA: Set it down. Girls, place your hands on the gift-offering.
O Goddess of Persuasion! And thou, O Loving-cup!/ Look upon this our sacrifice, and be gracious!

KALONIKE: See the blood spill out. How red and pretty it is!

LAMPITO: And Ah must say it smells good.

MYRRHINE: Let me swear first!

KALONIKE: No, by Aphrodite, we'll match for it!

LYSISTRATA: Lampito: all of you women: come, touch the bowl,/ and repeat after me—remember, this is an oath—:/ I WILL HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH MY HUSBAND OR MY LOVER

KALONIKE: *I will have nothing to do with my husband or my lover*

LYSISTRATA: THOUGH HE COME TO ME IN PITIABLE CONDITION

KALONIKE: *Though he come to me in pitiable condition/ (Oh Lysistrata! This is killing me!)*

LYSISTRATA: IN MY HOUSE I WILL BE UNTOUCHABLE

KALONIKE: *In my house I will be untouchable*

LYSISTRATA: IN MY THINNEST SAFFRON SILK

KALONIKE: *In my thinnest saffron silk*

LYSISTRATA: AND MAKE HIM LONG FOR ME.

KALONIKE: *And make him long for me.*

LYSISTRATA: I WILL NOT GIVE MYSELF

KALONIKE: *I will not give myself*

LYSISTRATA: AND IF HE CONSTRAINS ME

KALONIKE: *And if he constrains me*

LYSISTRATA: I WILL BE COLD AS ICE AND NEVER MOVE

KALONIKE: *I will be cold as ice and never move*

LYSISTRATA: I WILL NOT LIFT MY SLIPPERS TOWARD THE CEILING

KALONIKE: *I will not lift my slippers toward the ceiling*

LYSISTRATA: OR CROUCH ON ALL FOURS LIKE THE LIONESS IN THE CARVING

KALONIKE: *Or crouch on all fours like the lioness in the carving*

LYSISTRATA: AND IF I KEEP THIS OATH LET ME DRINK FROM THIS BOWL

KALONIKE: *And if I keep this oath let me drink from this bowl*

LYSISTRATA: IF NOT, LET MY OWN BOWL BE FILLED WITH WATER.

KALONIKE: *If not, let my own bowl be filled with water.*

LYSISTRATA: You have all sworn?

MYRRHINE: We have.

LYSISTRATA: Then thus/ I sacrifice the victim/ [*Drinks largely*]

KALONIKE: Save some for us!/ Here's to you, darling, and to you, and to you!

In our production, all of the women repeated the oath, as well as any audience members that chose to participate. This was to emphasize the immediate and dominating influence of *Lysistrata*, as well as the uninhibited social display customary for talk-shows. Additionally, the sidekick (Merritt) joins the women in the oath, playing with notions of female/male sexual power and identity.

Appendix G

GETAWAY SCENE (My version)

(KALONIKE and LAMPITO walk in on the show and interrupt MARCUS and LYSISTRATA)

LAMPITO: Excuse me, Marcus, but we have a bit of a problem here.

MARCUS: What's up girl?

LAMPITO: Do you mind if me and Kalonike chat with Lys for a sec?

MARCUS: I guess not. Nothing else seems to be in my control!

LAMPITO: Thanks a million. *(to LYSISTRATA)* We seem to have someone here who wants to, shall we say. . . go AWOL. I busted Kalonike making out with her boyfriend in the lobby.

LYSISTRATA: Is that right? That didn't take long.

KALONIKE: Oh god, Lys. I was, um, just sort of kissing him good-bye! You know, letting him know what he won't get!

LAMPITO: What about when I heard you planning your hot tubbing session for later tonight? *(to LYSISTRATA)* And I mean they were talking *hottubbing*!

LYSISTRATA: For lack of a better word, and to oblige the FCC, you, Kalonike are pathetic. Don't you understand what we just did here a few minutes ago? Are you that desperate and dependent that you can't go five minutes without giving in? Aren't you the one who bitched and moaned about your loser boyfriend, who doesn't even have a job, but would rather spend his time out with the boys drinking and playing poker three nights a week?

KALONIKE: Well, yeah. . .but he's so scrumptious! I can't resist. One little kiss with his whiskey-filled breath and I'm his! Besides, when he's drunk, he lasts longer.

LYSISTRATA: When he actually makes it home instead of passing out on a friend's couch. And if he doesn't come home, and you've been waiting, what do you do?

KALONIKE: Well. . .it's kind of private. I'm on T.V., you know.

LYSISTRATA: Enough said, sweetie. Listen, you don't need to be deprived and left to scrape up the leftovers of your boyfriend's attention. You will be able to teach him a valuable lesson, and you'll get some sexual gratification in the process. You're allowed to touch him and tease him and get him aroused. You just need to leave when he's out of the starting gate! Make it a game. You're the master now, and he needs to learn to play by your rules.

LAMPITO: Yeah!

LYSISTRATA: Kalonike, I'll show you, (*turns to MARCUS*) and you, what this oath is really all about. Your production staff has kindly provided the necessary means for a prime live example.

MARCUS: Well, I guess when we get back from this commercial, we'll all get to see what Lysistrata's game is all about.

Dudley Fitts' Version (Scene II, 38–41):

LYSISTRATA: The behavior of these idiotic women!/ There's something about the female temperament/ that I can't bear!

KORYPHAIOS^w: What in the world do you mean?

LYSISTRATA: Exactly what I say.

KORYPHAIOS^w: What dreadful thing has happened?/ Come, tell us: we're all your friends.

LYSISTRATA: It isn't easy/ to say it; yet, God knows, we can't hush it up.

KORYPHAIOS^w: Well, then? Out with it!

LYSISTRATA: To put it bluntly,/ we're dying to get laid.

KORYPHAIOS^w: Almighty God!

LYSISTRATA: Why bring God into it?—No, it's just as I say./ I can't manage them any longer: they've gone man-crazy,/ they're all trying to get out./ Why look:/ one of them was sneaking out the back door/ over there by Pan's cave; another/ was sliding down the walls with rope and tackle;/ another was climbing aboard a sparrow, ready to take off/ for the nearest brothel—I dragged *her* back by the hair!/ They're all finding some reason to leave./ Look there!/ There goes another one./—Just a minute, you!/ Where are you off to so fast?

FIRST WOMAN: I've got to get home./ I've a lot of Milesian wool, and the worms are spoiling it.

LYSISTRATA: Oh bother you and your worms! Get back inside!

FIRST WOMAN: I'll be right away, I swear I will./ I just want to get it stretched out on my bed.

LYSISTRATA: You'll do no such thing. You'll stay right here.

FIRST WOMAN: And my wool?/ You want it ruined?

LYSISTRATA: Yes, for all I care.

SECOND WOMAN: Oh dear! My lovely new flax from Amorgos—/ I left it at home, all uncarded!

LYSISTRATA: Another one!/ And all she wants is someone to card her flax./ Get back in there!

SECOND WOMAN: But I swear by the Moon-Goddess,/ the minute I get it done, I'll be back!

LYSISTRATA: I say No./ If you, why not all the other women as well?

THIRD WOMAN: I'm having a baby—any minute now.

LYSISTRATA: But you weren't pregnant yesterday.

THIRD WOMAN: Well I am today./ Let me go home for a midwife, Lysistrata:/ there's not much time.

LYSISTRATA: I never heard such nonsense./ What's that bulging under your cloak?

THIRD WOMAN: A little baby boy.

LYSISTRATA: It certainly isn't. But it's something hollow,/ like a basin or— Why, it's the helmet of Athena!/ And you said you were having a baby.

THIRD WOMAN: Well, I am! So there!

LYSISTRATA: Then why the helmet?

THIRD WOMAN: I was afraid that my pains/ might begin here in the Akropolis; and I wanted/ to drop my chick into it, just as the dear doves do.

LYSISTRATA: Lies! Evasions!—But at least one thing's clear:/ you can't leave the place before your purification.

THIRD WOMAN: But I can't stay here in the Akropolis! Last night I/ dreamed/ of the Snake.

FIRST WOMAN: And those horrible owls, the noise they make!/ I can't get a bit of sleep; I'm just about dead.

LYSISTRATA: You useless girls, that's enough: Let's have no more lying./ Of course you want your men. But don't you imagine/ that they want you just as much? I'll give you my word,/ their nights must be pretty hard./ Just stick it out!/ A little patience, that's all, and our battle's won./ I have heard an Oracle. Should you like to hear it?

I decided to use only one woman from the chorus to break the oath in order to intensify her public humiliation on "nation television."

Lysistrata's "example" that she refers to is a seduction scene (Bedroom Scene) where the "trained" Myrrhinne illustrates, physically and verbally, how the oath works.

Appendix H

BEDROOM SCENE (My version)

(Bedroom of house. There is a bed in the middle, with a door leading to the bathroom to the right and a dresser with a vanity mirror to the left.)

KINESIAS: *(in bed)* MYRRHINE, baby, come here. I want to show you something.

MYRRHINE: No.

KINESIAS: What do you mean “No?” Big Poppa’s got a surprise for you!

MYRRHINE: I’m not in the mood for surprises. Surprise yourself.

KINESIAS: I’ve been *surprising* myself babe! I need you. Look at me! I’m dyin’ over here!

MYRRHINE: You won’t explode. Gotta go, later! *(Heads for door with baggage)*

KINESIAS: *(jumps out of bed)* Wait!! What about the lovin’ and. . .and the baby and the house and everything. You can’t just walk out on me. . .on *us*!

MYRRHINE: Michael Keaton. *Mr. Mom*. Rent it. Learn it.

KINESIAS: But nobody can do all that like you. And nobody can rock my world like you. You’re the sexiest, smartest, sassiest, most exciting woman I know. I’m getting hot just watching you stand there. You’re the master.

MYRRHINE: Really?

KINESIAS: Really baby *(puts his hands on her)*.

MYRRHINE: Then it’s really too bad that you’re not getting any! *(bumps him away)*

KINESIAS: Myrrhine! Come on! What in the hell does a man have to do?

MYRRHINE: Stop fighting other peoples’ damn wars and come home for good. I’m tired of being a military widow. You dragged me onto this base to live and then you take off! I’m tired on watching over the house, the baby, the cooking, the cleaning! My sex life consists of things that say “batteries not included” and I’m sick to death of it. Then you

come sauntering home every once in a while, get me all worked up, roll me over like a piece of dough, boink me and bolt! So that's the deal "Big Poppa," you either stick around and do the job right or you can look forward to an empty house and a chaffed right hand!

KINESIAS: I'll come up with a plan—dishonorable discharge if I have to. I'll figure something out. I swear.

MYRRHINE: (*pats his head*) That's my good baby. Then you'll get your nookie. But not yet. I took my oath with the girls—verbal contract, legal and binding you know.

KINESIAS: (*taking off his shirt and rubbing his chest*) You sure about that? You *really* want to wait? How would those women ever know?

MYRRHINE: Well, I guess you're right. You are looking pretty yummy. Maybe a quickie wouldn't count against the oath.

KINESIAS: (*jumps into bed*) That's the spirit. Lights on or off?

MYRRHINE: Oooo on. I want to see the expression on your face. It turns me on. Hang on sweetie, let me turn on some soft, sexy music (*goes over to stereo system*).

KINESIAS: You don't need to! We'll make our own!

MYRRHINE: I'll only take a sec. There!

KINESIAS: All right. Here we go.

MYRRHINE: Let me just slither into that new nightie I bought just for your eyes.

KINESIAS: Save it for another time babe—

MYRRHINE: Hush hush! It'll be worth it. Be right back! (*exits through side door*)

KINESIAS: (*Groans*) Better hurry up. We're at the launching pad! (*Rubs under the sheets*)

MYRRHINE: (*enters from side door wearing nightie*) What do you think Tiger? (*Throws one leg up on the bed*)

KINESIAS: I think it won't be on for long! (*Reaches for her thigh*)

MYRRHINE: (*Runs to mirror*) Hair up or down?

KINESIAS: How about spread out on the sheets?

MYRRHINE: Don't be a spoiled sport. This is *love-making*. It's got to be right!

KINESIAS: You call this a quickie?

MYRRHINE: Why just eat the main course when you can savor the appetizers too? Now, lay back and close your eyes. I want you to *feel* my body crawl on top of yours.

KINESIAS: (*Closes eyes and smiles largely*) Oh yeah, that's what Big Poppa needs.

MYRRHINE: (*Throwing on her T-shirt and jeans*) How long before you can get that discharge?

KINESIAS: (*Dreamily*) Couple of weeks maybe.

MYRRHINE: See you then! Hope your not too *blue*! (*Runs out laughing*)

KINESIAS: Where the hell are you going? Get back here! You're my wife damnit! I need to get laid! (*Runs after her*)

Dudley Fitts' Version (Scene III, 46–51)

KINESIAS: Myrrhine!// Darlingest Myrrhinette! Come down quick!

MYRRHINE: Certainly not.

KINESIAS: Not? But why, Myrrhine?

MYRRHINE: Why? You don't need me.

KINESIAS: Need you? My God, *look* at me!

MYRRHINE: So long!// [*Turns to go*]

KINESIAS: Myrrhine, Myrrhine, Myrrhine!// If not for my sake, for our child!// [*Pinches BABY*]/ —All right, you: pipe up!

BABY: Mummie! Mummie! Mummie!

KINESIAS: You hear that?// Pitiful, I call it. Six days now/ with never a bath; no food; enough to break your heart!

MYRRHINE: My darlingest child! What a father *you* acquired!

KINESIAS: At least come down for his sake.

MYRRHINE: I suppose I must./ Oh, this mother business!// [*Exit*]

KINESIAS: How pretty she is! And younger!// The harder she treats me, the more bothered I get./ (MYRRHINE *enters, below*)

MYRRHINE: Dearest child,/ you're as sweet as your father's horrid. Give me a kiss.

KINESIAS: Now don't you see how wrong it was to get involved/ in this scheming League of women? It's bad/ for us both.

MYRRHINE: Keep your hands to yourself!

KINESIAS: But our house/ going to rack and ruin?

MYRRHINE: I don't care.

KINESIAS: And your knitting/ all torn to pieces by the chickens? Don't you care?

MYRRHINE: Not at all.

KINESIAS: And our debt to Aphrodite?/ Oh, *won't* you come back?

MYRRHINE: No.—At least, not until you men make a treaty and stop this war.

KINESIAS: Why, I suppose/ that might be arranged.

MYRRHINE: Oh? Well, I suppose/ I might come down then. But meanwhile,/ I've sworn not to.

KINESIAS: Don't worry.—Now, let's have fun.

MYRRHINE: No! Stop it! I said no!/ —Although, of course,/ I *do* love you.

KINESIAS: I know you do. Darling MYRRHINE:/ come, shall we?

MYRRHINE: Are you out of your mind? In front of the child?

KINESIAS: Take him home, Manes./ [*Exit MANES with BABY*]/ There. He's gone./ Come on!/ There's nothing to stop us now.

MYRRHINE: You devil! But where?

KINESIAS: In Pan's cave. What could be snuggier than that?

MYRRHINE: But my purification before I go back to the Citadel?

KINESIAS: Wash in the Klepsydra.

MYRRHINE: And my oath?

KINESIAS: Leave the oath to me./ After all, I'm the man.

MYRRHINE: Well. . .if you say so./ I'll go find a bed.

KINESIAS: Oh, bother a bed! The ground's good enough for me.

MYRRHINE: No. You're a bad man, but you deserve something better/ than dirt./ [*Exit MYRRHINE*]

KINESIAS: What a love she is! And how thoughtful!/ [*Re-enter MYRRHINE*]

MYRRHINE: Now let me get my clothes off./ But, good horrors!/ We haven't a mattress.

KINESIAS: Oh, forget the mattress!

MYRRHINE: No./ Just lying on blankets? Too sordid.

KINESIAS: Give me a kiss.

MYRRHINE: Just a second./ [*Exit MYRRHINE*]

KINESIAS: I swear, I'll explode!/ [*Re-enter MYRRHINE*]

MYRRHINE: Here's your mattress./ I'll just take my dress off./ But look—/ where's our pillow?

KINESIAS: I don't *need* a pillow!

MYRRHINE: Well, *I* do./ [*Exit MYRRHINE*]

KINESIAS: I don't suppose even Herakles/ would stand for this!/ [*Re-enter MYRRHINE*]

MYRRHINE: There we are. Ups-a-daisy!

KINESIAS: So we are. Well, come to bed.

MYRRHINE: But I wonder:/ is everything ready now?

KINESIAS: I can swear to that. Come, darling!

MYRRHINE: Just getting out of my girdle./ But remember, now,/ what you promised about the treaty.

KINESIAS: Yes, yes, yes!

MYRRHINE: But no coverlet!

KINESIAS: Damn it, I'll be/ your coverlet!

MYRRHINE: Be right back./ [*Exit MYRRHINE*]

KINESIAS: The girl and her coverlets/ will be the death of me.

MYRRHINE: Here we are. Up you go!

KINESIAS: Up? I've been up for ages.

MYRRHINE: Some perfume?

KINESIAS: No, by Apollo!

MYRRHINE: Yes, by Aphrodite!/ I don't care whether you want it or not./ *[Exit MYRRHINE]*

KINESIAS: For love's sake, hurry!/ *[Re-enter MYRRHINE]*

MYRRHINE: Here, in your hand. Rub it right in.

KINESIAS: Never cared for perfume./ And this is particularly strong. Still, here goes.

MYRRHINE: What a nitwit I am! I brought you the Rhodian bottle.

KINESIAS: Forget it.

MYRRHINE: No trouble at all. You just wait here./ *[Exit MYRRHINE]*

KINESIAS: God damn the man who invented perfume!/ *[Re-enter MYRRHINE]*

MYRRHINE: At last! The right bottle!

KINESIAS: I've got the rightest/ bottle of all, and it's right here waiting for you./ Darling, forget everything else. Do come to bed.

MYRRHINE: Just let me get my shoes off./ —And, by the way,/ you'll vote for the treaty?

KINESIAS: I'll think about it./ *[MYRRHINE runs away]*/ There! That's done it! The damned woman,/ she gets me all bothered, she half kills me,/ and off she runs! What'll I do? Where/ can I get laid?/ —And you, little prodding pal,/ who's going to take care of *you*? No, you and I/ had better get down to old Foxdog's Nursing Clinic.

The end of this scene, in our production, was followed by a video clip. Once Myrrhine ran out of the bedroom set, she ran down the aisle of the theatre and out the door. Cinesias then chased after her, the video screen came down on the set of "The Marcus Davenport

Show," and the audience watched a video of Cinesias chasing Myrrhine around MSU's campus and the downtown of East Lansing. The end of the video showed Myrrhine and Cinesias running back into the theatre, at which point they ran back down the aisle and onto the stage as the video screen flew out.

Appendix I

RESOLUTION (My version)

MARCUS: It's about time to wrap things up. Lysistrata, I want to thank you for coming on the show this evening.

LYSISTRATA: No, no, Marcus, thank you. This has been a hoot. I expect to be hearing from the local women, and your fiancée regarding the status of things soon.

(SOLDIERS and ALISA filter in from stage right in formation. MARCUS gestures over to them and to CARL as if to say, "What's up?" LYSISTRATA turns to look at what's going on.)

LYSISTRATA: Hey looks like we've got more company. Carl, we're not going over time are we? *(Gets up to approach the SOLDIERS)*

MARCUS: Last I checked, this was the Marcus Davenport Show. Carl, are we over time? *(MICHAEL is laughing)*

CARL: No sir. Let's roll. This should be good.

ALISA: *(Marches SOLDIERS to center stage, halts when LYSISTRATA reaches them, turns to men)* Gentlemen, present arms! Order arms! Sound off!

SOLDIERS: Hail Lysistrata!

LYSISTRATA: *(Laughing)* At ease, gentlemen.

ROBERT: Permission to speak freely, ma'am.

LYSISTRATA: Permission granted.

SOLDIERS: *(All break out at the same time saying various things like, "Uh, we've got to settle this woman thing" and "We need to talk to you about some things" and "We can't take it anymore" and "You're busting our balls, lady," etc.)*

LYSISTRATA: Whoa! One at a time fellas. *(Smacks down the line of phalluses)*

ALISA: They've come to try and solve this problem with their women.

(All WOMEN filter in from stage left and stand behind LYSISTRATA. The rest of the men, including improv members, filter in from behind the SOLDIERS)

LYSISTRATA: I see. Well, it's quite easy. I'm sure your significant others here *(gestures to WOMEN)* have told you what they've wanted. All you need to do is find a way to please them. Right ladies?

WOMEN: *(led by NESTELYNN in a gospel-like chant and bouncing from the knees)* Oh yeah. Laying it down. Time to give.

LYSISTRATA: *(while WOMEN are bouncing and humming)* We're all human here. There is a way! It's spring! No one should be without their lover. Give to your honey and you shall receive all they have to offer!

MEN: *(Start bouncing and humming with the women and begin choral chant)* We will give! We will give!

Dudley Fitts' Version (Scene V, 57–59)

AMBASSADOR: We propose to consider peace.

COMMISSIONER: Good. That's on our minds, too./ —Summon Lysistrata./ We'll never get anywhere without her.

AMBASSADOR: Lysistrata?/ Summon Lysis-anybody! Only, summon!

KORYPHAIOS^m: No need to summon:/ here she is herself./ *[Enter LYSISTRATA]*

COMMISSIONER: Lysistrata! Lion of women!/
This is you hour to be/ hard and yielding, outspoken and shy, austere and/ gentle. You see here/ the best brains of Hellas (confused, I admit,/ by your devious charming) met as one man/ to turn the future over to you.

LYSISTRATA: That's fair enough,/ unless you men take it into you heads/ to turn to each other instead of to us. But I'd know/ soon enough if you did./ —Where is Reconciliation?/ Go, some of you: bring her here./ *[Exeunt two women]*/ And now, women,/ lead the Spartan delegates to me: not roughly/ or insultingly, as our men handle them, but gently,/ politely, as ladies should. Take them by the hand,/ or by anything else if they won't give you their hands./ *[The SPARTANS are escorted over]*/ There. —The Athenians next, by any convenient handle./ *[The ATHENIANS are escorted]*/ Stand there, please. —Now, all of you, listen to me./ *[During the following speech the two women re-enter, carrying an enormous statue of a naked girl; this is RECONCILIATION.]*/ I'm only a woman, I know; but I've a mind,/ and, I think, not a bad one: I owe it to my father/ and to listening to the local politicians./ So much for that./ Now, gentlemen,/ since I have you here, I intend to give you a scolding./ We are all Greeks. Must I remind you of Thermopylai, of Olympia,/ of Delphoi? names deep in all

our hearts?/ Are they not a common heritage?/ Yet you men/ go raiding through the country from both sides,/ Greek killing Greek, storming down Greek cities—/ and all the time the Barbarian across the sea/ is waiting for his chance!/ —That's my first point.

AN ATHENIAN: Lord! I can hardly contain myself.

(Scene V, 60–61)

LYSISTRATA: Good.—But before you come inside/ to join your wives at supper, you must perform the usual lustration. Then we'll open/ our baskets for you, and all that we have is yours./ But you must promise upright good behavior/ from this day on. Then each man home with his woman!

AN ATHENIAN: Let's get it over with.

A SPARTAN: Lead on. Ah follow.

AN ATHENIAN: Quick as a cat can wink!

(Exodos, 64)

LYSISTRATA: All that will come in time./ But now, Lakonians,/ take home your wives. Athenians, take yours./ Each man be kind to his woman; and you, women,/ be equally kind. Never again, pray God,/ shall we lose our way in such madness.

KORYPHAIOS^a: And now/ let's dance our joy.

At the end of our production, as the men and women danced wildly together (the Soldiers tucking away their phalluses) to the band's rock music, Lysistrata took over Marcus' desk and closed the "talk-show."

Appendix J

SMALL PLANET SCENE

Throughout scene, women of cast are talking, laughing, flirting with men, drinking, smoking, and dancing.

LYSISTRATA: Okay, Marcus! I got my new friend Bob here (*Bob flips camera on himself and cheeses*) to help me show the absolutely pathetic behavior of lonely women, young and old, indigenous to the Lansing area. So here we are at the Small Planet and tonight is what they call "The Party Pit!" (*pan crowd and stage with caged dancers/ walks towards women sitting together near stage*) Ah! And here we have my star players! One word: Exemplification! Wave to the camera ladies! (*Women raise glasses, hoot and hollar, blow kisses, etc.*) Notice the style of dress—tight, short, risqué. Each outfit should come equipped with a neon banner that says, "I need to get some." (*To TRISHA, ERIN, JANEY, and POLINA*) How many times a week do you come here?

TRISHA: Lately? About three times. And then of course on "pit" nights! (*starts dancing excitedly*)

ERIN: (*Smoking a cigarette with "tough-girl" attitude*) Depends on the husband. If he's home, so am I. If he's not (*lifts drink and cigarette in same hand*), Salute! (*tosses back drink*)

JANEY AND POLINA: (*Speaking in unison, quite intoxicated, leaning on each other*) We jus' come whenever they come/ We go out to where they say they're going out to go (*both point to TRISHA and ERIN*)

JANEY: (*Pulling POLINA*) I gotta go bathroom. Can you help?

(*Pan over to EMILY, MELISSA, JOANNE, & ALISA, who are doing copious amounts of tequila slammers at the bar*)

EMILY: (*lifts glass*) A toast ladies! (*Everyone gathers drinks and lifts them in the air*) Here's to our home away from home, the Small Planet, to tear-away clothing, and our best friend, "The Tongue!" (*They slam their shots on the bar,*

toss back the drinks, and cheer loudly a mixture of, "I'll drink to that!" and "Cheers, sisters!")

LYSISTRATA: *(Laughing)* I hope this town has a dependable cab service! *(Walks over to LAMPITO, who is standing near the dance floor seriously flirting with two men)* I can't believe the amount of liquor! *(To LAMPITO)* Let me ask you, how many drinks do you get when you come here for your "ladies night?"

LAMPITO: *(well on her way to drunk)* I d'no. Six or seven mixers maybe. Unless someone buys us shots! Then it's balls out! It can get expensive. It's not worth it unless there's some meat to scope.

LYSISTRATA: Meat to scope?

LAMPITO: You know! Guys—meat! Tonight Planet's got our favorite dancer, Sergeant Sex.

ALL OTHER LADIES: *(Screams of delight, Mexican ai yai yai!)*

LAMPITO: Oh my god. Oh my god! He's coming on. I gotta go get some singles for the G-string!

LYSISTRATA: Do what you have to do, love. *(Back to camera)* I suppose now, Marcus, you'll get to see what these poor women are paying as a substitute for their lovers.

(Music gets louder, introduction of dancer by D.J. if possible)

This should be good!

(Camera on Steve. He dances and strips. Ladies are going wild while dancing beneath him, catching clothing, shoving dollar bills in his underwear. Steve comes down from stage and dances around each lady, flirting and teasing. As he does this, each lady yells to LYSISTRATA various things such as: "Isn't he hot?", "Lysistrata, you have to dance with us!" and to Steve, "Baby, you can strip search me any day!" LYSISTRATA responds to comments with, "Oh yeah, he's a hot one!" and "No, no. I'll just watch you!" After dance ends and Steve walks off stage, women whistle and go crazy, then begin to dance wildly to music and flirt with various men)

LYSISTRATA: Well, Marcus! I think you get the picture. Oh, but wait. Who's that I see? *(Walks over to NESTELYNN who is slumped into a chair, half passed-out with Steve's tear-away pants wrapped around her shoulders, and a hand full of dollar bills)*

Why, it looks like the woman who introduced herself earlier as *your* fiancée!
Wave to your honey, girlfriend! (*Walks behind NESTELYNN and manipulates
her hand in a wave like a puppet*)

NESTELYNN: (*barely lifts head, looks glazingly into the camera*) Hi bab. . .y.
(*her head slumps back down into her chest*)

LYSISTRATA: Enough said, sister! (*To camera*) And I believe enough shown,
Marcus! I bid you adieu, sweet thing! (*Blows kiss at camera*)

Appendix K



The Bill, Hillary, and Paula puppets

Appendix L

PUPPET SCENE

MARCUS: It doesn't seem to matter who you are, whether you're flipping burgers or mopping floors for a living, or if you're the Commander in Chief—if you're not getting any from the little woman at home, bad things *will* happen.

(Hail to the Chief *plays*)

(*PUPPETS of BILL and PAULA appear as music plays. BILL enters from the back of the house, walks down the aisle, shaking hands with patrons, then reaches the stage to greet PAULA*)

BILL: Now, Miss Jones, I understand we need to get a few things settled here.

PAULA: Whatever do you mean?

BILL: Well now, you're an intelligent woman. You can see that we can work out this little problem without all the legalities. (*Moves closer to her*) We can settle it, in. . . a more human way; you know what I mean?

PAULA: You're coming on to me again! You pervert! Picking on an innocent God-fearing southern gal like myself! I should record everything you say.

BILL: Hush, hush now little filly. The boss lady's on her way. Move along now, we'll settle this mess later. (*Pushes PAULA into the house right aisle*)

(*HILLARY PUPPET enters upstage*)

HILLARY: I can not believe your audacity, Bill. How dare you expose this tumult to the nation.

BILL: What was I to do, Hil? A man can only go for so long until something snaps!

HILLARY: You mean snaps open don't you? Flashing "Mr. Willy" to that little tramp? How vulgar, Bill. Really, the solution to our little sexual glitch was quite simple—all you had to do was allocate a few high-level governmental positions to me, *finally* make a quality real-estate deal, and violá! Sex was yours. But no, you forced me to use powers beyond the business realm, and because of your spineless, sniveling, desperate demeanor,

you broke! (*in speech mode*) This is not the way to succeed in our relationship! We must bear the forces that direct our natures--

PAULA: Excuse me! I am not vulgar! Just because I'm not some white-collar executive from the east coast, and just because I was born and bred in Arkansas, and just because I did that picture spread in *Penthouse* (*starts whimpering*) doesn't mean I'm some dim-witted, low-class, money-hungry tramp!

BILL: You are correct Miss Jones! All that means is that you were easy. And I can solemnly swear, as Commander in Chief of these United States, that I was damned lucky for that. I took one look at that short skirt, that long, curly hair, those cute, crooked teeth, and I said to myself, "God love the south!"

HILLARY: Bill! Calm yourself! I will eventually succeed in my mission, and don't worry, I may appoint you as Vice-President, but until then, we must remain stoic. And we must, for the sake of the nation and women everywhere, shut this woman up! Hillary Rodham-Clinton shall rise to the top, no matter what! (Hell, I've already got a Grammy!)

PAULA: (*Sobbing while saying, "I am not a tramp" and "I am telling the truth, you'll all see."*)

BILL: And I will rise. . .and rise. . .and rise (*music fades back in as BILL repeats line while laughing devilishly*)

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