Women and Humor in Classical Greece examines the role of women as producers of joking speech, especially within cults of Demeter. This speech, sometimes known as *aischrologia*, had considerable weight and vitality within its cultic context. It also shaped literary traditions, notably iambic and Attic old comedy, which have traditionally been regarded as entirely male. The misogyny for which ancient iambic is infamous derives in part from an oral world in which women's derisive joking voices reverberated. O'Higgins considers this speech from its mythical origins in the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter*, through the reactive iambic tradition and into old comedy. She also examines the poems of Sappho and Corinna as literary jokers, responding in part to their own experience of joking women. The book concludes with a fresh appraisal of the three great “women's” plays of Aristophanes: *Lysistrata*, *Thesmophoriazousae*, and *Ecclesiazousae*.

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Women and Humor in Classical Greece

LAURIE O’HIGGINS
Bates College
In memory of my father, Frank O'Higgins, 1932–1990.
For my husband, Jim Richter
And in loving tribute to our eloquent little daughter, Ellen Richter,

_Do mhúchas léan le gáire_
You have quenched grief with laughter
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3. Grotesque, clothed old woman with swollen belly (Demeter?). Published with permission from the State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg. BB 164.
5. Statuette of an old woman, holding her chiton and himation in front of her. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1913 (13.225.17). Published with permission from the Metropolitan Museum of Art.