

*ΛΗΚΥΘΙΟΝ and ΑΥΤΟΛΗΚΥΘΟΣ*

In recent years there have been several attempts to find support for a sexual interpretation of *ληκύθιον ἀπώλεσεν* at Aristophanes *Frogs* 1198–1248. It would add real point to the discomfiture of Euripides and his predictable prologues if his heroes were to lose their virility every time they lost their lekythia.<sup>1</sup> But the matter has been hotly contested, and the linking of this problem with the mysterious *αὐτολήκυθοι* of Demosthenes liv 14–17 has compounded confusion in both passages. I shall discuss them separately in the first instance.

## I

Two main objections are advanced by Jeffrey Henderson<sup>2</sup> to a phallic lekythion in the *Frogs*: apart from the absence of unequivocal literary parallels, the context does not call for it, and the standard shapes of lekythia do not resemble male genitals anyway. The former objection was removed by Bruno Snell just before this paper was completed: Aeschylus' extracts from Euripides, deflated by the loss of the lekythion, admit of convincing and consistent double entendre. The best of them is at 1238–9: *Οἶνέυς ποτ' ἐκ γῆς πολύμετρον λαβὼν στάχυν | θύων ἀπαρχὰς... ληκύθιον ἀπώλεσε*. Unfortunately Snell did not recognise the second problem, and has nothing to add concerning the precise nature of the lekythion. Henderson lays most stress on its shape, refusing to identify it with the alabastron which has a phallic appearance; for him neither the white-ground lekythos nor the spherical aryballos does.<sup>3</sup> Can we satisfy the requirements of the context, which will accommodate consistent sexual allusion (and could do with it), but at the same time do justice to Henderson's insistence that the lekythion does

<sup>1</sup> So C. Whitman, '*ΛΗΚΥΘΙΟΝ ΑΠΩΛΕΣΕΝ*', *HSCP* lxxiii (1969) 109–12; J. G. Griffith, '*ΛΗΚΥΘΙΟΝ ΑΠΩΛΕΣΕΝ*: a Postscript', *HSCP* lxxiv (1970) 43–4; J. T. Hooker, '*Αὐτολήκυθος*', *RhM* cxiii (1970) 164 n. 4; R. J. Penella, '*ΚΩΙΔΑΡΙΟΝ* in Aristophanes' *Frogs*', *Mnemos*<sup>4</sup> xxvi (1973) 337–41; *id.*, '*ΚΩΙΔΑΡΙΟΝ*: a comment', *Mnemos*<sup>4</sup> xxvii (1974) 295–7; and B. Snell, 'Lekythion', *Hermes* cvii.2 (1979) 129–33. The case against them is put by J. Henderson, 'The Lekythos and *Frogs* 1200–1248', *HSCP* lxxvi (1972) 133–43, and '*ΚΩΙΔΑΡΙΟΝ*: a reply', *Mnemos*<sup>4</sup> xxvii (1974) 293–5. In my view Snell has more than concluded the case for obscenity; but unawareness of Henderson has allowed him to remain imprecise about the *doubles entendres* in question; and that has to be settled before we can apply it to the problem in Demosthenes liv. (The above contributors are referred to hereafter by surname, with year where applicable).

<sup>2</sup> Henderson (1972) 138–41; 135–7.

<sup>3</sup> The equation had been made by D. F. W van Lenep, 'Atheense nozems' in *Hermeneus* xxx (1962) 192, who links the passage with the phallic alabastron at *Ar. Lys.* 947. Henderson seems unduly restrictive in his definitions of the lekythos: Daremberg-Saglio iii.2 1023 s.v. 'lekythus' already warns against too rigid a classification of such objects, and not all the literature Henderson cites in support of his claims turns out to endorse them: see J. D. Quincey, 'The metaphorical sense of *ΛΗΚΥΘΟΣ* and *Ampulla*', *CQ* xliii (1949) 35. But I accept Henderson's challenge that a common shape and function of lekythion are needed.

not itself suggest a phallos? In two cases Euripides' offending prologues have some potentially phallic suggestion before the loss of the lekythion: Dionysus starts off well with his thyrsos, then loses his lekythion (1211–13); Oeneus raises his *πολύμετρον στάχυν* before meeting the same fate (1238). The joke does not seem altogether satisfactory if the lekythion is one and the same as the thyrsus or *stachys*: it would be odd to say 'raising his cock, he lost his tool'; it seems preferable not to mix the metaphors. Moreover the *stachys* is *polymetros*: it is hardly likely to be the same as the diminutive lekythion. But one vessel, the aryballos, which Henderson accepts as a lekythos-type, does have a more promising shape:

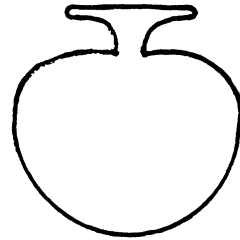


FIG. 1. An aryballos; after Daremberg-Saglio, s.v. fig. 544.

This would obviously suggest testicles rather than genitals as a whole. And it would fit the enigmatic assemblage at 1203: the first hero is to lose *καὶ κωδάριον καὶ ληκύθιον καὶ θυλάκιον*. All three can be connected with testicles rather than phallos: *κωδάριον* = sheepskin, woollen sack, the outer skin with pubic hair attached; *θυλάκιον* = scrotum (cf. *Vesp.* 314);<sup>4</sup> *lekythion* = testicles. We could then translate 'skin, balls and bag', 'wool, balls and bag', or the like: each hero is to keep his erection, but lose every other asset, down to the last particular. This solution retains the sexual metaphor, and does justice to Henderson's main objection regarding the shape of the lekythion.<sup>5</sup> It is also, I think, more amusing: Euripides' heroes put on a brave display of virility, but it only takes neat and minute sabotage by Aeschylus every time to immobilise them. This gives us the following version of Oeneus' plight: 'raising his great stalk, he lost his little bottle'.

## II

The shape and function of the lekythos also come

<sup>4</sup> Snell 129 equates *θυλάκιον* with 'Hodensack' and simply retains lekythion as nothing more specific than 'fläschchen'. Henderson (1974) 293–4 wrongly dismisses the evidence of *Hippiatrica Berlinensis* 50.1 f. explaining *θυλάκη* as scrotum; the late date of the treatise does not matter, provided that the meaning is not simply deduced from, or twisted to fit, that of lekythion.

<sup>5</sup> Snell points out in a postscript that an aryballos of sheep's testicles has actually been reported, by H. Hommel, 'Bocksbeutel und Aryballos', *Sitz. Heidel. Akad. Wiss. phil.-hist. Kl.* (1978) 21 n. 53. This weakens Henderson's contention that no literary parallels to the sexual identification of a lekythion have been advanced. It also encourages one to retain the meaning 'sheepskin' for *κωδάριον*, which Penella (1973) stretches to mean 'foreskin': Henderson (1974) 294 rightly objects.

into question in another allegedly phallic reference in Demosthenes liv 14–17<sup>6</sup>, where we find *αὐτολήκυθοι* linked with *ἰθύφαλλοι* in some escapades as vague as they are dubious. They have to be up to something that Demosthenes could reasonably have regarded as unmentionable; it has to be consistent with a common shape for the lekythos, and a possible force for the prefix *αὐτο-*; and their act may or may not have some bearing on Aristophanes' metaphor. Here again Henderson vigorously challenges the identification of lekythos with a phallos, contending that the *ἰθύφαλλοι* alone will cover the sexual exploits of the young men, leaving *αὐτολήκυθοι* to cover their rôle as 'slummers', a meaning apparently supported by Antiphanes *Athamas* fr. 16K, where interpretations include 'carrying one's own oil-flask', i.e. too poor to have a slave to do it, 'down-and-out'.<sup>7</sup> Penella rightly protested that Dem. liv 17 presents *αὐτολήκυθοι* and *ἰθύφαλλοι* in a much worse light—*οὗτοι γάρ εἰσιν οἱ τελούντες ἀλλήλους τῷ ἰθυφάλλῳ, καὶ τοιαῦτα ποιοῦντες ἃ πολλὴν αἰσχύνῃν ἔχει καὶ λέγειν, μὴ τί γε δὴ ποιεῖν ἀνθρώπους μετρίους*—but he admits that the case still falls short of demonstration.<sup>8</sup>

Scholars have not, however, paid sufficient attention to a passage where the context of *αὐτολήκυθοι* seems rather clearer. At Lucian *Lexiphanes* 10 we meet one Deinias, *ἐγκαψικίδαλος ἄνθρωπος τῶν αὐτολήκυθων καὶ τῶν αὐτοκαβδάλων*.<sup>9</sup> We can do nothing with *αὐτοκαβδάλων* ('improvisers' LSJ): they are apparently distinct from, but possibly parallel to, *αὐτολήκυθοι*, though the same man can obviously be both; the term would reasonably apply to any kind of sexual activity where no woman was available. We have a clearer idea of what an *ἐγκαψικίδαλος* does, not obscured by textual difficulty at this point: *Lexiphanes* is full of dubious *doubles entendres* and comic words which are clearly sexual in implication, so that any innocent meaning that can veil the term will not exclude an obscene one.<sup>10</sup> The innocuous emendation printed by Jacobitz is *ἐγκαψικίδαλοι* 'onion-guzzlers': if there is any doubt that a *glans penis* might be compared to an onion, the word was by the late second century phonetically almost homophonous with *ἐγκαψικήδαλος*,<sup>11</sup> and Hesychius glosses *κήδαλον* as *αἰδοῖον*.

<sup>6</sup> Griffith 43; Hooker 164 n. 4; Penella (1973) 338.

<sup>7</sup> Henderson (1974) 142–3.

<sup>8</sup> Penella (1973) 341; (1974) 295. Harpocration s.v. *αὐτολήκυθοι* offers both an obscene meaning and one connected with poverty: *ἀντὶ τοῦ εὐζώνους τινος καὶ ἐτοίμουσ πάν ὅτιοῦν ποιεῖν καὶ ὑπομένειν, ἢ ἀντὶ τοῦ πένητος καὶ μηδὲν ἄλλο κεκτημένους ἢ ληκύθους*. It is obviously the first of these that corresponds to the hints in Demosthenes: but it is even more vague.

<sup>9</sup> For Hooker 164 n. 5 this is 'a passage abounding in rare and extravagant formations', but that does not deprive the *αὐτολήκυθοι* themselves of meaning or precision. For Penella (1973) 339 n. 1 the term is 'an imperfectly understood revival of the censorious Attic epithet'. But that remains to be seen.

<sup>10</sup> E.g. *Lex.* 12: *Δίωνα τὸν καταπίνονα καὶ λακκοσχέαν, ἀναφλώντα καὶ βλιμάζοντα, ἦν τινα πείδη καὶ πύσθωνα αἰσθηταί; ἰβιδί. 9 ἄχρηστα ἱμάτια*: not just unused, unworn cloaks, but immoral ones (!)

<sup>11</sup> This is the reading of E and N printed by Harmon; *Ω*'s *ἐγκαψικίδαλος* is unintelligible, while *Γ*'s *ἐγκαψικήδαλος* 'bending the cock *inwards*' does not correspond to an obvious sexual activity. LSJ's needless *ἐγκαψιπήδαλος* would also have the same connotation: *πηδάλιον* carries this sense at Luc. *Pseudolog.* 27: *ὡσπερ ἢ Χάρυβδις αὐτοῖς ναῦταις καὶ πηδαλίοις καὶ ἰστίοις δλον ζητῶν καταπιεῖν τὸν Ὀδῆν*.

We are left with either a direct reference to *fellatio*, or a deliberate pun on the practice.

It remains to decide whether *fellatio* is an essential or incidental activity of Lucian's *αὐτολήκυθος*. On Henderson's reasoning it would be possible for Deinias to be an *ἐγκαψικίδαλος* who just happened to belong to the *αὐτολήκυθοι* and *αὐτοκάβδαλοι* as well. But this time the *αὐτολήκυθος* emerges a little more clearly. We find him engaging in the activities of an *ἐγκαψικίδαλος*, while both wearing his hair long and putting on women's shoes (*ἄει κουριῶν, ἐνδρομίδας ὑποδοῦμενος ἢ βαυκίδας*). We now have to test the passage against Demosthenes' description. Verdenius, Hooker and Penella<sup>12</sup> all wanted *his αὐτολήκυθος* to mean 'a phallus pure and simple'. Clearly this will not fit Lucian's *αὐτολήκυθος*; as a *fellator* practising oral sex with a phallos he is not likely to be one at the same time. The real crux comes when it does not fit the most explicit part of Demosthenes' account either: the *ἰθύφαλλοι* and *αὐτολήκυθοι* initiate each other *τῷ ἰθυφάλλῳ*. Some kind of homosexual activity is implied; if the rôles of these respective groups are to be distinctive, then they must be not synonymous but complementary; the *ἰθύφαλλοι* will be the active partners, the *αὐτολήκυθοι* some kind of passive homosexuals.<sup>13</sup> But what kind? Does the shape or function of a lekythos make it an appropriate term to apply to a *fellator* as such?

Again an aryballos would be consistent with his activities. Its wide flat rim surmounts a bulbous body; this could be seen as lips flattened outwards, with distended cheeks behind.<sup>14</sup> The prefix *αὐτο-* could be taken in one of two ways: either 'pure and simple', as Verdenius suggested, hence now 'a vessel pure and simple', 'all vessel'; or, since all the participants are males, 'supplying the vessel themselves', 'bringing their own vessels' without recourse to women.<sup>15</sup>

What these passages have in common, then, is that some other sexual explanation works better than a phallic one: We may be dealing with two different metaphors drawn from the same shape of the aryballos; in Aristophanes' case it would be distinguished by the diminutive. It appears that Euripides' heroes lose their little vessels, bags, or bottles; while Lucian's and Demosthenes' gentlemen are themselves vessels, bags or bottles. Deinias might be translated 'a cock-swallower/onion-guzzler of the do-it-yourself and bring-your-own-bottle clubs'; the *ἰθύφαλλοι* and *αὐτολήκυθοι* as 'screwdrivers' and 'toolbags' respectively.

There is an intriguing postscript. Given that even the puritanical Pliny possessed a slave with the dubious pet-name Encolpius, what are we to make of the

<sup>12</sup> W. J. Verdenius, '*Αὐτολήκυθοι*' in *Hermeneus* xxx (1962) 225; Hooker 164; Penella (1973) 339.

<sup>13</sup> The labels would be equally pointless if *ἰθύφαλλοι* were to initiate *ἰθύφαλλοι* and *αὐτολήκυθοι αὐτολήκυθοι*: there would then be complementary rôles within both classes. K. J. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality* (Oxford 1978) 87 n. 48 compares a scene of group activity; but the posture he describes would not readily occur to any accuser who truthfully professed respectable ignorance of such activities; and it does not enhance our knowledge of the meaning of *αὐτολήκυθος*.

<sup>14</sup> Quincey (n. 3) notes the same analogy with the lips and cheeks and the aryballos, and uses it to account for the well-attested metaphor of lekythoi for inflated rhetoric.

<sup>15</sup> This suggestion is consistent with both halves of Harpocration's gloss (n. 8).

favourite slave Autolekythos, ἄθυρμα of that notorious hermaphrodite Favorinus?<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Pliny *Ep.* viii 1.2; Philostr. *VS* 490.

### New Evidence for a Polyandrion in the Demosion Sema of Athens?

In 1967 Miss Olga Alexandri reported the discovery of ten trenches on the road from the Dipylon gate to the Academy.<sup>1</sup> The area into which the trenches were dug measures *c.* five by seven meters; the individual trenches measure 1.10–1.35 m in length, 0.35–0.65 m in width, and 0.80–1.05 m in depth. They are arranged to form two pairs and two further groups each of three trenches set one behind another. In attempting to interpret the trenches, the excavator was reminded of beddings for stelai such as are attested for the archaic period. Apt as this observation is, it does not help to explain the number ten nor the togetherness of the trenches.

In the introductory chapter to the Funeral oration by Perikles, Thukydides (ii 34) describes in general terms what the *patrios nomos*, the ceremony for the public burial of Athenian soldiers consisted of. The ceremony took place at the end of the Athenian campaigning season, the date corresponding roughly to a date in (our) late Fall. Ashes and bones of the dead soldiers were placed in ten larnakes of cypress wood; an eleventh larnax was carried in the burial procession for those soldiers whose remains could not be recovered. The ten larnakes corresponded in number to the ten tribes of Kleisthenes' constitution. The larnakes were duly buried in the *Demosion Sema*, the public burial ground which is identical with the 37–40 m wide road which leads from the Dipylon gate to the Academy, which is close to 1500 m long. At the beginning of this road, just outside the Dipylon gate, Perikles delivered his famous oration.

I propose that Miss Alexandri's discovery is to be connected with the public burial of the ten larnakes and the erection of ten stelai with casualty lists.

There are three considerations which render attractive the hypothesis that we deal here with a polyandrion for Athenian soldiers.

(i) The location of the trenches is on the (south)–west edge of the *Demosion Sema* road. Except for the polyandrion of the Spartans, the victims of war in 403 B.C., which is situated on the (south)–west edge at the very beginning of the road, and some adjacent tombs, both public and private, we have no evidence from excavations or literary sources about how precisely the polyandria were placed on the road to the Academy. However, the suggestion that the public tombs occupied the center of the road has been abandoned in favor of placing the tombs close to both edges of the *Demosion Sema* with a free passage in the middle of the road. If my further interpretation of the ten trenches is credible, their location corresponds to that of the Spartan

<sup>1</sup> *ADelt* xxii (1967) *Chron.* 86, site no. 40, figs 39–40. The exact location is at the intersection of Kerameikou and Plateon streets, a short distance north-west of the temple of Artemis Ariste and Kalliste.

polyandrion and the other tombs previously mentioned.<sup>2</sup>

(ii) Most Athenian casualty lists are unfortunately very fragmentary (among them, of interest in our context, *IG* i<sup>2</sup> 928<sup>3</sup>). There are two exceptions, *IG* i<sup>2</sup> 929 and 943. *IG* i<sup>2</sup> 943, from the year 447/6 B.C. consists of a single stele and is the most complete casualty list in the sense that it contains all the information which we expect ideally to find on such a list: the reference to the theaters of war which yields the clue for the date of the list and hence of the polyandrion; the listing of casualties by the ten tribes; the honoring of the dead which takes the form of an epigram—in the case of our memorial two distichs placed at the bottom of the stele.

*IG* i<sup>2</sup> 929 is also a single stele. Its smooth sides suggest that it was free standing, not contiguous with other stelai as is often the case in other memorials where three to five stelai form a sort of wall, the stelai being separated from each other only by sunken channels which have not the depth of the thickness of the stelai.<sup>4</sup> *IG* i<sup>2</sup> 929 is inscribed with a heading which names the first of the ten Athenian tribes, Erechtheis. Below the heading reference is made in smaller letters to the theaters of war, with mention of no less than six sites: Kypros, Egypt, Phoenicia, Halieis, Aegina, and Megara. Generals' names are among the casualties which occurred according to the inscription 'in the same year'. Among the casualties there is a reference to archers, and to a seer named Telenikos, losses resulting from the campaign in Egypt, as a second heading explicitly assures us. As in *IG* i<sup>2</sup> 943, the mention of sites is helpful for the dating of the list. It cannot be earlier than 460 B.C. The question is whether the list covers two campaigning seasons, that is some fifteen months. *IG* i<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The most detailed attempt to restore the *Demosion Sema* is by A. Brueckner, 'Kerameikos-Studien', *AthMitt* xxxv (1910) 183–234. He argued for a center-of-the-road disposition of the polyandria. Later attempts at restoration are dealt with by F. Jacoby, 'Patrios Nomos: State Burial in Athens and the Public Cemetery in the Kerameikos', *JHS* lxiv (1944) 37–66. The most recent discussion of the polyandrion of the Spartans and the adjacent tombs is by F. Willemsen, 'Zu den Lakedämoniergräbern im Kerameikos', *AthMitt* xcii (1977) 117–57. Excavation in the area with the trenches has yielded the following results. The ancient road to the Academy is attested by 4–5 layers, 2.20 m thick, dating from the (late) archaic to the Hellenistic period. The trenches encroach upon the west side of the road and were dug into its earliest level(s). In the north-east of the excavated plot was found tomb VIII, its date determined by two white-ground lekythoi from about 450–25 found in it. Other tombs (III–V) are located to the west of the ten trenches and are of Hellenistic date, as is a wall, running north–south, of which 4 m survives and which seems to have served as a peribolos wall for the tombs. Another tomb (II) is again of classical date. To the east of the wall a conduit of Hellenistic date, also running north–south, was dug deep down into the Academy road levels and cuts in part through the trenches. It becomes quite obvious from the excavation that the original site of the ten trenches was preserved intact for a maximum of *c.* 200 years; it coexisted with at least two private tombs. If one compares the life span of the site to that of the tomb of the Spartans of 403, which survived only for some 50 years, we probably have on our excavation site a characteristic feature which could apply to other public memorials along the Academy road.

<sup>3</sup> *IG* i<sup>2</sup> 928 consists of several fragments, some of them only known by nineteenth-century transcripts. See D. W. Bradeen, *Inscriptions. The Funerary Monuments, Athenian Agora xvii* (1974) no. 1. Bradeen's view that *IG* i<sup>2</sup> 928 consisted of ten stelai has remained unchallenged as far as I know.

<sup>4</sup> For such a stelai wall and the sunken channels see the reconstruction by Bradeen in *Hesp.* xxxiii (1964) 26, fig. 1.