

ΛΗΚΥΘΙΑ AND STYMPHALIAN BIRDS STILL IN THE AIR

ΛΗΚΥΘΙΟΝ ΑΠΩΛΕΣΕΝ
(and Theocritus ii 156)

With reference to Dr Graham Anderson's note on *ληκύθιον ἀπώλεσεν* (Ar. *Frogs* 1198–1248),¹ I would like to add the following remarks.

First, terracotta aryballoi fashioned and painted in the likeness of male genitals seem to have been widely distributed in archaic Greece. Examples are known from the East, Attica, Corinth, Sicily, and Tuscany.² It is difficult to believe that the analogy responsible for these objects no longer operated in Classical times.³

Secondly, turning to the Hellenistic era, I submit that only in the light of the equation *lekynthion* = genitals is it possible to understand Theocritus ii 156. Simaitha relates how she heard from a third party that it is Delphi's custom to take a 'strong draught of love' (151 f.) and then disappear. She compares this with her own experience:

155 ἦ γάρ μοι καὶ τρεῖς καὶ τετράκις ἄλλοκ' ἐφοίτη,
καὶ παρ' ἐμὴν ἐτίθει τὴν Δωρίδα πολλάκις ὄλπαν·
νῦν δέ τε δωδεκαταίος ἀφ' ᾧτέ νιν οὐδὲ ποτεῖδον.

Here *παρ' ἐμὴν ἐτίθει* means 'served me up', while *ὄλπαν*, of course, = *lekynthion*.⁴ Then *πολλάκις* makes sense. This combination of pre-Classical archaeological and post-Classical literary evidence seems to negate Henderson's objections.

Finally, I would prefer not to press *Frogs* 1203, *καὶ κωδάριον καὶ ληκύθιον καὶ θυλάκιον*, for anatomical distinctions as Anderson does ('*θυλάκιον* = scrotum, *lekynthion* = testicles').⁵ All three diminutives are meant as examples of the effeminately precious language used in this regard by a certain type of person—i.e., Euripides.

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¹ *JHS* ci (1981) 130 ff.

² See F. Johansen, *Meddelelser fra Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek* xxxiii (Copenhagen 1976) 85–101 (including photographs). I wish to thank the curator of the Carlsberg Glyptotek for generously supplying me with this reference in response to my inquiry.

³ Cf. B. Snell, *Hermes* cvii (1979) 133.

⁴ Cf. K. J. Dover, *Theocritus* (Basingstoke/London 1971) *ad loc.*, '... Theokritos's point may be not "the Dorian (type of) oil bottle" but "what Dorians call ὄλπα".'

⁵ Anderson (n. 1).

ΛΗΚΥΘΙΟΝ and ΑΥΤΟΛΗΚΥΘΟΣ

I read with pleasure Graham Anderson's learned and amusing note, but am unconvinced. One might question his methodology, in that he does not really go into the question of what shape or shapes the words mean at what times; and illustrates 'an aryballos' without indicating its date or place of origin (it turns out to be redrawn from an engraving after an archaic Etruscan tomb-painting). However, these are not, I think, points of substance. *λήκυθος* and *ληκύθιον* seem to have been loosely used over a long time and wide area for any form of portable oil-flask; and there is evidence for round aryballoi in fifth- and fourth-century Athens.

Also the expressions may have long been in common use, though for us they only surface in Aristophanes and Demosthenes. I cannot, though, myself see any force in Henderson's view that the standard shapes of *lekythia* do not resemble male genitals; not in detail, certainly, but the white *lekythos*, the *lekythos par excellence* in Aristophanes' Athens, is surely phallic enough. If one dreamed of one, Freud would be in no doubt what it meant.

It is the complexity of Anderson's interpretation that worries me. In the context of the dirty joke, there is one thing a man is liable to lose, and to raise a laugh by losing: not (unless he has Abelard's bad luck) his testicles, but his erection; and if *ληκύθιον ἀπώλεσεν* has a sexual connotation (as no doubt it has), 'lost his erection' is surely what Aristophanes' Aeschylus meant. A simple jest, but perhaps more effective in deflating Euripides than Anderson's elaborate construction.

As to *αὐτολήκυθος*, if the original meaning is 'carrying one's own flask' because too poor to keep a slave, the most natural sexual application is autoerotic, masturbator; but of course expressions like this change meaning, and Demosthenes' use may well be, as Anderson suggests, more complicated.

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The Stympthalian Birds

In the course of previous correspondence about Greek waterbirds¹ John Buxton refers to a report that Great Crested Grebes (*Podiceps cristatus*) still breed at Lake Stympphala in the central Peloponnese² for which I was responsible, though details have never been published. Since this is the site of the Fifth Labour of Heracles in which he fought with the birds it may be useful to place an ornithological appraisal of the situation on record.

The lake is an example of one of the main waterbird habitats of south-east Europe and Asia Minor, an internal drainage basin in the hills where silt from the surrounding deforested slopes has accumulated in the central lake which is filling up and has become largely covered in reeds, though there may have been more open water in antiquity. In addition to the birds already recorded by Mr J. K. Anderson, on 16th May 1958 I saw a pair of Great Crested Grebes with half-grown chicks and other individuals, a pair of Black-necked Grebes (*Podiceps nigricollis*), a number of Little Grebes (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*), at least three Night Herons (*Nycticorax nycticorax*), two Purple Herons (*Ardea purpurea*), a Squacco Heron (*Ardeola ralloides*), two Little Bitterns (*Ixobrychus minutus*), twenty-five Glossy Ibises (*Plegadis falcinellus*), several Ferruginous Duck (*Aythya nyroca*), four Pochard (*A. ferina*), three Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*), a number of Moorhens (*Gallinula chloropus*) and

¹ J. K. Anderson, *JHS* xcii (1972) 171, xcvi (1976) 146; Sylvia Benton, *JHS* xcii (1972) 172; John Buxton, *JHS* xciv (1974) 170; J. J. Hall, *JHS* xcix (1979) 163.

² A. Kanellis, *Catalogus Faunae Graeciae, Pars ii, Aves*, ed. M. Bauer, O. v. Herversen, M. Hodge, J. Martens (Thessaloniki 1969) 24.