

strange shape of Dionysus' head and his familiarity with this feature as a stock-characteristic of the comic presentation of this politician. Perhaps Pericles was also named in this play, in the parabasis or elsewhere. But, if my argument is correct, this is not essential: the caricature-shorthand 'onion-head' and some remarks drawing attention to it would be sufficient to ensure the identification without explicit mention of the real name.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> I am indebted to an anonymous referee for forcing me to clarify my general remarks on disguise in comedy.

#### A Wedding Scene? Notes on Akropolis 6471\*

Acorn lekythos attributed to Aison, found in 1956 in a grave near Syntagma Square; 0.182 m high; c. 420 BC (Beazley, *Delivorrias*) or c. 410-400 BC (Brouskari); Athens Akropolis Museum no. 6471. *ARV*<sup>2</sup> 1175, 11, with Beazley *Addenda*<sup>2</sup> 339; M. Brouskari, *The Akropolis Museum: a descriptive catalogue* (Athens 1974) 111, pls. 219-20. A. Delivorrias with G. Berger-Doer and A. Kossatz-Deissmann, *LIMC* II s.v. 'Aphrodite' 210 (pl.).

The iconography of this well-preserved lekythos (PLATE III) has provoked little discussion.<sup>1</sup> Beazley enters it as an 'unexplained subject' and declines to identify any of the figures; Brouskari and Delivorrias read it as a 'wedding scene', identifying the female standing at the far right as Aphrodite. Commenting on the Berlin amphoriskos by the Heimarmene Painter (Plate IV),<sup>2</sup> Shapiro notes that Aison's lekythos offers a close parallel for the group of Helen and Aphrodite, but he takes the observation no further.<sup>3</sup> Elements of the scene do indeed fit into the 'adornment of the bride' iconography, documented in Oakley and Sinos' collection of images of the Athenian wedding.<sup>4</sup> But a number of points suggest that it is strongly influenced by a 'persuasion of Helen' typology, in the tradition explored

by Kahil.<sup>5</sup> In addition, there are two problematic elements not explained by either wedding or abduction scenario: the outdoor setting and the female at the far left watering plants. The absence of inscriptions makes any interpretation debatable, but I should like to offer a few observations which I hope will prompt renewed discussion of this intriguing vase.

The whole scene is reminiscent of that on the slightly earlier Berlin amphoriskos (c. 430 BC): the central group represents two female figures seated together, apparently in earnest communication, with another standing behind in attendance; to the right, Eros attends a naked youth; the scene is framed by standing female figures. On the Berlin vase inscriptions identify the central female group as Helen, seated on Aphrodite's lap, attended by Peitho, and the youth as Paris, with Himeros. On our lekythos 'Aphrodite' is seated on 'Helen's' lap, rather than *vice versa*, but this is paralleled in several other representations of the persuasion of Helen collected in Kahil, and the reversal does not affect the basic message of close association.<sup>6</sup> A seated Helen with Aphrodite calls to mind the episode in *Iliad* iii where the goddess, having led Helen to Paris' bedroom, draws up a chair for her; Helen's contempt for Paris, beaten in combat by Menelaos, is quickly overcome by concern for his life, and the scene ends in love-making.<sup>7</sup> In the absence of inscriptions, we should perhaps not actually identify our seated pair as Helen and Aphrodite, but even at a mundane level a young woman's sitting on another's lap would indicate affection and trust between the two. A parallel is provided by a red-figure lebes gamikos by the Painter of Athens 1454, in what is unequivocally a wedding preparation context: a woman holds the bride on her lap as she crowns her with the bridal *stephane*, while Eros hovers above, holding out a wreath above each woman's head. The woman has often been identified as Aphrodite, but, as Oakley and Sinos point out, she need only be the mortal *nympheutria* putting the finishing touches to the bride's adornment.<sup>8</sup>

The female standing immediately behind our seated pair is linked with the hovering Eros, looking and gesturing towards him with her left hand, while he looks back over his shoulder at her.<sup>9</sup> She is well placed to fasten the seated figure's necklace, a stage further for-

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<sup>1</sup> U. Knigge uses the figure of the youth on the Akropolis lekythos in her argument that Aison should be identified with the young Meidias Painter, but does not offer an interpretation of the whole scene: 'Aison, der Meidiasmaler? Zu einer rotfigurigen Oinochoe aus dem Kerameikos', *AM* 90 (1975) 123-43, pl. 51. For a summary of this argument and points against it see L. Burn, *The Meidias painter* (Oxford 1987) 12-13.

<sup>2</sup> Berlin inv.30036. Kahil (n.5) pl.8.2-3.

<sup>3</sup> H.A. Shapiro, 'The origins of allegory in Greek art', *Boreas* 9 (1986) 11 n.42. He takes this to be a 'preparation of a bride' scene, and the Berlin amphoriskos to be an adaptation of the genre.

<sup>4</sup> J.H. Oakley and R.H. Sinos, *The wedding in ancient Athens* (Wisconsin 1993).

<sup>5</sup> The lekythos was not found until after the publication of L.B. Ghali-Kahil's *Les enlèvements et le retour d'Hélène* (Paris 1955) which supplies many of my parallels (henceforth 'Kahil').

<sup>6</sup> Kahil pls.34.1 (Naples relief 6682) and 2 (Conservatori kraeter 39G), 35.4 (Vatican relief, Cortile del Belvedere 58d), 37.1 (Pompeii mural, Casa di Amantes, Casa Reg. I 7.7). Cf. Alkibiades on Nemea's lap, (Athen. xii 534d, Plut. *Alk.* xvi 199; cf. Pind. *Isthm.* 2.25-6). On the lap-sitting motif, see M. Robertson, *The art of vase-painting in Classical Athens* (Cambridge 1992) 237 and n.9 (Alkibiades and Nemea), 239 (Paidia and Hygieia on a hydria by the Meidias Painter, *ARV*<sup>2</sup> 1322, 1), and 146-7 (Berlin amphoriskos).

<sup>7</sup> *Il.* iii 421-47; this is a reminiscence of Paris' original seduction of Helen. On the elements of wedding imagery in the scene, see S. Constantinidou, 'Evidence for marriage ritual in *Iliad* iii', *Dodona*, 1990.2, 47-59: 'the details mentioned above present the couple's sexual union as an actual wedding' (57).

<sup>8</sup> Athens NM 1454; Oakley and Sinos (n.4) 18, figs. 28-9.

<sup>9</sup> Brouskari describes her as 'pointing at' Eros, but if so no one is paying any attention.

ward in the action than the Peitho on the Berlin amphoriskos, who is carrying a jewellery box. This necklace must be significant, as it is the focal point of the scene, our attention drawn to it by the fact that it is held in the central woman's hands rather than being in its proper place around her neck. Such a focus calls to mind the story of Eriphyle, bribed by Polyneikes with a necklace of divine origins to send her husband Amphiaros to his death with the expedition against Thebes— another case of wifely treachery leading to a great war.<sup>10</sup> The object Eros is holding could also be a necklace, although as it has ribbon ends rather than a clasp Brouskari may be right in calling it a taenia. In either case, the woman and the youth seem to be linked, since both are about to have something fastened around their neck or head. We might compare another vase associated with the Heimarrene Painter, an oinochoe in the Vatican, which represents the reuniting of Helen with Menelaos. Aphrodite has intervened between Helen, fleeing towards a statue of Athena to the right, and Menelaos, whose sword drops out of his hand as he runs; visible indication of Aphrodite's effect on the hero is provided by a small Eros, who flies towards him, holding out a necklace or taenia.<sup>11</sup> The iconographic origin for Eros' gesture must be Nike holding out a taenia or wreath, symbol of the success she bestows; appropriated by Eros, the taenia represents the victory of love, rather than victory itself.<sup>12</sup>

The central group of female figures could indeed belong to a bridal preparation scene; the presence of the naked youth to the right, however, needs explaining. And what is his connection with the female figure to the far right, who appears to be leaning against a rock, which would indicate an outdoor setting? Delivorrias identifies the standing female as Aphrodite, on two considerations: that her pose, leaning on one elbow, has numerous parallels,<sup>13</sup> and that the youth appears to be pouring a libation to her. The first of these is hardly con-

clusive, as Aphrodite has many typical stances, and just as good a case can be made out for the seated figure. The second seems a most unlikely reading of the group, as libations are poured onto the ground, whereas this youth is clearly pouring something into his outstretched left hand, and the vessel he is pouring from is an *aryballos*, usually used for perfume or oil.<sup>14</sup> A more probable identification of the figure is a lover in the process of anointing himself prior to pursuing his suit, or a bridegroom preparing for his wedding; in the latter case, his intrusion might be explained by the synchronicity observable in many wedding scenes.<sup>15</sup>

Alternatively, returning to the parallel of the Berlin amphoriskos, we might take the whole scene to be one of the 'young man visiting a woman in the *gynaikon*', a popular motif in the last third of the fifth century; Kahil comments on the conflation of such scenes with the 'Paris in front of Helen' type, and Shapiro remarks that 'Paris and Helen may seem unlikely role-models' for the bride and groom.<sup>16</sup> Yet it is not entirely clear where the 'visit' fits in to the wedding process. It might seem reasonable to expect the prospective groom to visit his betrothed at some point prior to the wedding itself, but at least symbolically the *anakalypteria*, the unveiling at the height of the wedding itself, is meant to be the couple's first introduction, which would preclude any formally instituted meeting between them before the wedding itself; such meeting would in any case surely have been closely supervised by the girl's father or guardian, and no older male figure is present in the scenes Kahil and Shapiro have in mind.<sup>17</sup> An unsupervised *informal* visit can almost certainly be ruled out, given the strict care taken to ensure that women did not come into contact with men from outside the immediate family, even if they did have relative freedom of movement within the house.<sup>18</sup> Further suggestive of irregularity in the case of our lekythos is the courtyard setting, indicated by the combination of the rock to the far right and the indoor furniture, a space within the boundaries

<sup>10</sup> Apoll. iii 4.2 and 6.2, Diod. Sik. iv 65.5 and v 49.1, Paus. v 17.7; the bribing is depicted on a pelike by the Chicago Painter, ARV<sup>2</sup> 629.23. Eriphyle's necklace was originally a wedding gift to Harmonia from the gods, specifically her mother Aphrodite in Diodoros' version. The seated figure on our lekythos bears a strong resemblance to the seated Aphrodite on the Eretria Painter's contemporary epinetron, who is apparently examining a necklace she holds in her hands, in a scene representing the preparation of the bride Harmonia (Athens NM 1629, Oakley and Sinos (n.4) fig. 128). For divine gifts of necklaces with subversive import, cf. Pandora, decked in golden necklaces by the Charites and Peitho and garlanded with flowers by the Horai, before being sent as a punishment to men (Hes. *Op.* 73-4).

<sup>11</sup> Vatican H 525, ARV<sup>2</sup> 1173, Kahil no.72 pl.66, c. 430-425 BC. Cf. a lekythos by the Painter of Leningrad 702 in the Hermitage (ex-Botkin) for a similar scene, where Eros hovers with a phiale, instead of a necklace, from which he is pouring the contents on to Menelaos (ARV<sup>2</sup> 1194, 7, Kahil no.70 pl.62, 3). On the name-vase of the Painter of Berlin 2536, in a Judgement of Paris scene, Aphrodite holds Eros in her hand, who again reaches out towards Paris with a taenia, as if to bind him to the goddess' will, although Hermes stands in the way (ARV<sup>2</sup> 1287, 1).

<sup>12</sup> In a wedding context the bride or groom is often indicated by an Eros holding out a wreath above their heads: Oakley and Sinos (n.4) 12, e.g. figs. 2, 24, 28, 37, 60, 72, 74, 106.

<sup>13</sup> LIMC II s.v. 'Aphrodite' 185-224.

<sup>14</sup> Beazley and Knigge (n.1): the youth is 'pouring oil into his palm'. Brouskari: the bridegroom is 'pouring out a libation'.

<sup>15</sup> See Oakley and Sinos (n.4) 16 and n.42 for myrrh as usual perfume for bridegroom, and figs. 10-3 for a rare example of the groom's pre-wedding ablutions. Synchronicity: *ibid.* 8, and see 39 on conflation of bridal preparation with *epaulia* scenes; see fig. 44 for a naked youth included in what is clearly a wedding-preparation scene, identified by the authors as the 'future son-in-law' (23).

<sup>16</sup> Kahil 176; Shapiro 1993 (n.10) 195, with n.441. On the literary portrayal of Paris and Helen's adulterous union as a marriage, see Constantinidou (n.8) and R. Seaford, 'The tragic wedding', *JHS* cvii (1987) 123-7.

<sup>17</sup> *Anakalypteria*: Oakley and Sinos (n.4) 25, with nn.17-18. They do not include 'the visit to the *gynaikon*' in their catalogue of wedding imagery.

<sup>18</sup> See L. Nevett, 'Separation or seclusion? Towards an archaeological approach to investigating women in the Greek household in the fifth to third centuries BC', in M. Parker Pearson and C. Richards, *Architecture and order: approaches to social space* (London and New York 1994) with bibliography.

of the house but less secure than indoors proper.<sup>19</sup> The young man and central woman are clearly shown as occupying this liminal space together, their feet overlapping, in a transgression of vase-painting's conventional distinction between indoors and outdoors as the proper spheres for women and men respectively.<sup>20</sup> The Berlin amphoriskos is again a helpful parallel, as it too has an outdoor setting, its Aphrodite and Helen being seated on what can best be identified as a rock. Altogether then, the scenario of an illicit visit of lover to mistress would seem to make more sense of our lekythos than any more 'respectable' explanation.

A further possible indication of an outdoor setting, and its potential impropriety, is provided by the female figure to the far left of the scene. She is obviously watering plants, which Beazley suggests are 'Adonis plants', by which he presumably means 'gardens of Adonis', grown as part of the celebration of the Adonia at Athens. Against this interpretation, literary references for the Adonia all suggest that it was celebrated on the rooftops, where the 'gardens' of lettuce and fennel were forced in the hot sun of late July. While our scene does appear to be out of doors, there is no indication of the festival's unusual setting, whereas on other vase representations this is suggested by the presence of ladders.<sup>21</sup> However, the three plant pots are of unusual shape, the middle one having very oddly placed handles, and they make most sense as the up-ended necks of broken amphorae, just such as those depicted containing gardens of Adonis on a lekythos in Karlsruhe.<sup>22</sup> I think a reference to this cult *should* be understood, especially given the vase's date in the last two decades of the fifth century, consonant with our scanty sources on the date of the Adonia's introduction to Athens.<sup>23</sup> The Adonia was of eastern origins, was celebrated exclusively by women, and was not in the official religious calendar but was a private, informal affair. Reference to such a disturbing combination of factors would be extremely inappropriate to a representation of the conservative institution of the wedding, whereas one only has to think of Menander's *Samian Girl* for an association between

celebration of the Adonia and sexual licence.<sup>24</sup>

As an overall interpretation, then, the label 'a wedding scene' is clearly inadequate; Beazley's cautious 'unexplained subject', while unhelpful, is less misleading. I would suggest rather that this is the visit of a lover to his mistress' courtyard, influenced by the Helen and Paris type represented by the Berlin amphoriskos, but also commenting on the newly popular cult of Adonis. At a literal level, the lover is taking advantage of preparations for the Adonia to gain access to his beloved, and has brought her the gift of a necklace. At a symbolic level, the scene is an image of the perceived dangers of a women's festival: if women are left unsupervised, illicit love and even wifely treachery are bound to follow. Whether the lekythos belonged to a man or a woman (the sex of the grave's occupant is not reported), the choice of subject must have been made by the male painter and/or his (presumably male) customer. As ever, therefore, we have to make do with a male perspective, but the scene does constitute a small addition to our meagre stock of sources for women in the home and for the Adonia. In its apparent tolerance for and romanticisation of irregular sexual behaviour it shows the same sort of escapism as can be seen in contemporary representations of Paris and Helen, and more generally in the body of work associated with the Meidias Painter.<sup>25</sup> Whatever the official/practical situation with regard to extra-marital relationships amongst the painted-pottery-owning classes of late fifth-century Athens, there was clearly plenty of scope for romantic fantasy.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> See e.g. the Dema House at Ano Liossia for a courtyard which must have been crossed by 'outsider' men on their way to the *andron*: S. Walker, 'Women and housing in Classical Greece: the archaeological evidence', in A. Cameron and A. Kuhrt, *Images of women in antiquity*<sup>2</sup>, (London and New York 1993), fig. 6.3. Cf. Demosthenes 47.52-61 for the reluctance of a respectable male neighbour to intrude on the women and children of a household, who are lunching in the courtyard while the master of the house is away.

<sup>20</sup> E.g. Xen. *Oec.* 7.30; S. Blundell, 'In and out of the *gynaikion*: women's spaces in Attic vase-painting', unpublished paper, Classical Association AGM (Nottingham 1996).

<sup>21</sup> See *LIMC* I s.v. 'Adonis' 45-9 for possible representations of the Adonia. See Oakley and Sinos (n.4) 39-40, with nn.7-8, on ladders in a wedding context, perhaps indicative of a bridal chamber on the first floor.

<sup>22</sup> Red-figure lekythos, Karlsruhe, Bad. Landesmuseum B39 (287), circle of the Meidias Painter, c. 390 BC; *LIMC* I s.v. 'Adonis' 47.

<sup>23</sup> Aristoph. *Lys.* 389-96, Plut. *Nik.* xiii 7. The vase representations are all late fifth- or early fourth-century; *LIMC* I s.v. 'Adonis'. Adonis himself appears on a squat lekythos attributed to Aison (Louvre MNB 2109, *ABV*<sup>2</sup> 1175, 7).

<sup>24</sup> Menand. *Samia* 38-48; see A.W. Gomme and F.H. Sandbach, *Menander: a commentary* (Oxford 1973) ad 39-46. D.M. Bain comments *ad loc.*: 'The generally relaxed conditions of an orgiastic rite and a lack of the usual protection of the maiden would have given the young man his opportunities' (*Menander: Samia*, Warminster 1983). On gardens of Adonis see J.J. Winkler, *The Constraints of Desire* (New York 1990) ch.7, esp. 189-93, where he lists the literary evidence.

<sup>25</sup> See Burn (n.1) 12-3 on the possible master-pupil relationship between Aison and the Meidias Painter, and *ibid.* 32-44 on romantic escapism in the latter's depiction of personifications, Adonis and Phaon.

<sup>26</sup> On vase-painting as reflecting 'the attitudes and preoccupations' of Athenian society c. 430-400, see L. Burn, 'The art of the state in late fifth-century Athens', in M.M. Mackenzie and C. Roueché (eds.), *Images of Authority*, PCPS suppl. 16 (1989) 62-81.



Akropolis 6471.  
Attic red-figure acorn lekythos  
attributed to Aison  
(Photograph courtesy of the  
Akropolis Museum)





Attic red-figure amphoriskos by the Heimarmene Painter: the Persuasion of Helen  
 (Berlin inv. 30036; photograph by Isolde Luckert, reproduced by permission of the Antikensammlung,  
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