Something Old, Something Lewd: Depictions of Old Women in *Lysistrata*

1. Aristophanes, *Lysistrata* 821-828

Γυ: τὴν γνάθον βούλει θένω;

Γε: μηδαμῶς· ἔδεισά γε.

Γυ: ἀλλὰ κρούσω τῷ σκέλει;

Γε: **τὸν σάκανδρον** ἐκφανεῖς.

Γυ: ἀλλ᾿ ὅμως ἂν οὐκ ἴδοις

καίπερ οὔσης γραὸς ὄντ᾿ **αὐ-**

**τὸν** κομήτην, ἀλλ᾿ ἀπεψι-

λωμένον τῷ λύχνῳ.

*Female Chorus Leader*: Do you want me to hit your jaw?

*Male Chorus Leader*: Not at all! I’m scared.

Female: Then should I kick you with my leg?

*Male*: You’ll show yourpussy!

*Female*: But even so, you won’t see it long-haired, even though I’m an old woman, but plucked with a lamp!1

2a. *Ly.* 360-363

Γε: εἰ νὴ Δί᾿ ἤδη τὰς γνάθους τούτων τις ἢ δὶς ἢ τρὶς ἔκοψεν ὥσπερ Βουπάλου, φωνὴν ἂν οὐκ ἂν εἶχον.

Γυ: καὶ μὴν ἰδού· παταξάτω τις· στᾶσ᾿ ἐγὼ παρέξω,

κοὐ μή ποτ᾿ ἄλλη σου κύων **τῶν ὄρχεων** λάβηται.

*Male Chorus Leader*: By Zeus, if someone had hit her in the jaw two or three times, just like Boupalus, she wouldn’t have a voice!

*Female Chorus Leader*: Okay, look here; let someone hit me; standing here I’ll receive it, but then no other bitch than me would ever grab you by the balls!

2b. *Ly*. 366-7

Γε: τί δ᾿, ἢν σποδῶ τοῖς κονδύλοις; τί μ᾿ ἐργάσει

τὸ δεινόν;

Γυ: βρύκουσά σου **τοὺς πλεύμονας καὶ τἄντερ᾿**

**ἐξαμήσω.**

*Male Chorus Leader*: What if I pound you with my knuckles? What terrible thing will you do to me then?

*Female Chorus Leader*: Chomping into you, I’ll rip out your lungs and guts.

3. *Ly.* 439-448

Γρ.α εἰ τἄρα νὴ τὴν Πάνδροσον ταύτῃ μόνον

τὴν χεῖρ᾿ ἐπιβαλεῖς, **ἐπιχεσεῖ** πατούμενος.

Πρ. **ἰδού γ᾿** **ἐπιχεσεῖ**. ποῦ ᾿στιν ἕτερος τοξότης;

ταύτην προτέραν ξύνδησον, ὁτιὴ καὶ λαλεῖ.

Γρ.β εἰ τἄρα νὴ τὴν Φωσφόρον τὴν χεῖρ᾿ ἄκραν

ταύτῃ προσοίσεις, κύαθον αἰτήσεις τάχα.

Πρ. τουτὶ τί ἦν; ποῦ τοξότης; ταύτης ἔχου.

παύσω τιν᾿ ὑμῶν τῆσδ᾿ ἐγὼ τῆς ἐξόδου.

Γρ.γ εἰ τἄρα νὴ τὴν Ταυροπόλον ταύτῃ πρόσει,

ἐκκοκκιῶ σου τὰς στενοκωκύτους τρίχας.

*First Old Woman*: If you even lay a hand on her, by Pandrosus, I’ll make you shit your pantsand step in it!

*Proboulos*: *You’ll* make me shit my pants? Where’s another archer? Help tie up this one first, because she’s also prattling.

*Second Old Woman*: If you even put the tip of your finger on her, by Phosphorus, you’ll soon ask for a ladle!

*Proboulos*: What is this? Where’s the archer? Grab her! I’ll stop some of you from this campaign!

*Third Old Woman*: If you approach her, by Tauropolos, I’ll rip out your hair until you squeal!

4. *Ly.* 456-8 (Lysistrata speaking)

ὦ ξύμμαχοι γυναῖκες, ἐκθεῖτ᾿ ἔνδοθεν,

ὦ σπερμαγοραιολεκιθολαχανο**πώλιδες**,

ὦ σκοροδοπανδοκευτριαρτο**πώλιδες**…

Oh my lady allies, come on out, you marketplace vendors of eggs and veggies, you landlady vendors of garlic bread!

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1 Text is from Henderson (1987a). All translations are my own.

5. *Ly.* 638-647 (Chorus of Old Women speaking)

ἡμεῖς γάρ, ὦ πάντες ἀστοί, λόγων

κατάρχομεν τῇ πόλει χρησίμων·

εἰκότως, ἐπεὶ χλιδῶσαν ἀγλαῶς ἔθρεψέ με·

ἑπτὰ μὲν ἔτη γεγῶσ᾿ εὐθὺς **ἠρρηφόρουν**·

εἶτ᾿ **ἀλετρὶς ἦ** δεκέτις οὖσα **τἀρχηγέτι**,

καὶ χέουσα τὸν κροκωτὸν **ἄρκτος ἦ**

**Βραυρωνίοις**·

**κἀκανηφόρουν** ποτ᾿ οὖσα παῖς καλὴ **᾿χουσ᾿**

**ἰσχάδων ὁρμαθόν.**

All you townspeople, we begin by providing advice for the city; fittingly, since she reared me splendidly in luxury. Right when I turned seven years old I served as an Arrephoros; and then when I was ten I was a corn grinder for the founder, and then shedding my saffron-dyed robe I was a bear at the rites of Brauron; and once when I was a beautiful girl I carried the sacred basket, wearing a necklace of dried figs.

6. Addresses to/about Scythians

*Ly.* 433 (Pr.): ποῦ ᾿στὶ τοξότης; Where’s the archer?

*Ly.* 445 (Pr.): τουτὶ τί ἦν; ποῦ τοξότης; What is this? Where’s an archer?

*Ly.* 426-427 (Pr.):

τί κέχηνας, ὦ δύστηνε; **ποῖ δ᾿ αὖ σὺ βλέπεις,**

οὐδὲν ποιῶν ἀλλ᾿ ἢ καπηλεῖον σκοπῶν;

Why are you gaping, you dumb wretch? Where are

you looking, doing nothing but eyeing for a tavern?

*Ly*. 184 (Ly.): ποῦ ᾿σθ᾿ ἡ Σκύθαινα; **ποῖ βλέπεις;** Where’s the Scythian girl? Where are you looking?

7. *Thes.* 1098-1104

Ευ: ὦ θεοί, τίν᾿ ἐς γῆν βαρβάρων ἀφίγμεθα

ταχεῖ πεδίλῳ; διὰ μέσου γὰρ αἰθέρος

τέμνων κέλευθον πόδα τίθημ᾿ ὑπόπτερον

Περσεὺς πρὸς Ἄργος ναυστολῶν, **τὸ Γοργόνος**

κάρα κομίζων.

Το: τί λέγι; τὴ **Γόργος** πέρι

τὸ γραμματέο σὺ τὴ κεπαλή;

Ευ: **τὴν Γοργόνος** / ἔγωγέ φημι.

Το: **Γόργο** τοι κἀγὼ λέγι.

*Euripides*: O gods, to what barbarian land have I come, with swift sandal? Cutting a path through the middle aether I, Perseus, place my winged foot, conveying and conducting hither to Argos the Gorgon’s head.

*Archer*: What did ya say? Ya got the head of Gorgos, the writer?

*Euripides*: The Gorgon’s, I say!

*Archer*: Yeah, Gorgos, what I said.

8. *Ly.* 459-61 (Lysistrata speaking)

οὐχ ἕλξετ᾿, οὐ παιήσετ᾿, οὐκ ἀράξετε,

οὐ λοιδορήσετ᾿, οὐκ ἀναισχυντήσετε;

παύσασθ᾿, ἐπαναχωρεῖτε, **μὴ σκυλεύετε**.

Won’t you tear them to pieces, strike them, smite them, abuse them and treat them shamelessly?! Stop, come back, don’t strip their corpses!

9. *Ly.* 435-436 (Lysistrata speaking)

εἰ τἄρα νὴ τὴν Ἄρτεμιν τὴν χεῖρά μοι

ἄκραν προσοίσει **δημόσιος ὤν**, κλαύσεται…

If he so much as put the tip of his finger on me, by Artemis, since he’s a public servant, he will cry out…

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