Cock Prop(s) in *Lysistrata*

Aristophanes' comedy *Lysistrata* (411 BCE) tackles sex, war, and peace, wherein the phallus features preeminently both on and off text/script. Contrary to the assertion that on the Greek comic stage there are a "remarkably small number of comic scenes where there is an almost certain reference to the stage phallus" (Foley 2000), this paper argues that in this play, at least, the phallus figures as a key physical prop beyond its textual reference in the comic dialogue. In fact, its initial reference in any given scene often suggests a series of physical hijinks to come with the phallus, and not merely as the familiar appendage to the *somation*, the actor's body costume (Compton-Engle 2015), but in the form of dildoes and similarly penis-shaped ceramic or glass drinking vessels. Its multifaceted use as a prop multiplies the opportunity for slapstick humor in the service of the play's discussion about the existential threat to Athens due to recent conflict with allies and adversaries around the Sicilian disaster (415-413 BCE).

This paper closely examines the phallus as stage prop within the oath-taking scene of the prologue (194-237) to suggest the many ways it may have been used to bolster the use of irony, puns, and physical humor showcased throughout the scene. Following Lysistrata's declaration that Milesian six-inch dildoes (ὄλισβος ὀκτωδάκτυλος, 108) are nowhere to be found and that the war must end, Lysistrata announces her plan to her fellow female conspirers: refrain from cock! (Ἀφεκτέα τοίνυν ἐστὶν ἡμῖν τοῦ πέους, 124). Lysistrata demands that her co-conspirators swear an oath over a kylix of wine to uphold their promise to withhold sex from their husbands. Thereupon the stage antics commence marked by a series of puns: a Scythian slave brings on stage a collection of objects that are huge (ὁ κεραμὼν ὅσος, 200), provide pleasure while handling (ἡσθείη λαβών, 201), and gushes out its contents beautifully (κἀποπυτίζει καλῶς, 206).

The female accomplices all struggle for an opportunity to drink from the vessel, which Henderson notes reinforces the comic stereotype of the luxurious, drunken woman who enjoys her wine neat (Henderson 1987).

Yet, the struggle and the swearing of the oath-sacrifice spans over forty lines of dramatic dialogue, surely way too much dialogue and action to harvest cheap laughs from the sole joke about unsupervised drunken women, unless they drink the wine not from a regular kylix, but from a phallus-shaped drinking vessel or pitcher, and proceed to employ it in many suggestive ways. The archaeological record confirms the existence of such phallus-shaped vessels. Material evidence dated to 420 BCE reveals a red-figure stamnos with high-set horizontal handles, a rounded, broad-shouldered body, possessing a short neck, with a series of protruding penises (Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Ferrara). Another potential implement is the phallus-shaped rhyton, or drinking horn, whose elongated curvature culminates in a penis-spout, would surely have drawn laughs as each co-conspirator struggled to have its tip meet their lips (Archaeological Museum, Pella).

The scene fittingly climaxes with physical humor around the phallic prop. The formal solemnity of the oath-taking is undercut by the comical terms of the conditions, each oath of which can be enhanced by manipulation of the chosen phallic vessel. The oaths include several restrictions on sexual positions, including missionary and downward dog positions (227-232), that the female colluders mimic with prop positioned (in)appropriately. And, so, Lysistrata's conspiracy gains its official girth by performative phallic initiation on stage, the spirit of which taps into the comic revelry sanctioned by the god Dionysos and institution, the City Dionysia.

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