MISCELLANEA

ΚΩΙΔΑΠΙΟΝ: A REPLY

In a recent article published in this journal 1) Mr. Robert J. Penella resurrects Prof. Cedric Whitman’s notion 2) that in the well-known scene in Aristophanes’ Frogs (1198 ff.), where Aeschylus ruins six Euripidean prologues with a ληφάδηνον, ληφάδηνον is a double-entendre referring secondarily to the phallus. I have attempted elsewhere 3) to demonstrate at length both the utter lack of evidence for this interpretation and its dramatic inappropriateness for the scene in question, and so I shall not repeat my earlier arguments here. But since Mr. Penella has called some of my conclusions into question, I would like to offer a few clarifications.

1) Penella, following Whitman, asserts that Aristophanes intended the phallic connotations of ληφάδηνον as a “criticism of the emasculated new tragedy”: each Euripidean prologue “loses his masculinity”. Since the ληφάδηνον is associated with athletes it would be a “symbol of masculinity” 4). Penella says that “this is precisely how ληφάδηνος is employed in the Thesmophoriazusae, 139, where it is opposed to στρόφιον (brassiere), used here as a symbol of femininity”. But that is not “precisely” how it is used in Thesmophoriazusae: there the oil-flask and brassiere appear in a catalogue of clothing and in the presence of the outlandishly costumed transvestite, Cleisthenes, and are therefore obvious (dramatically functional) symbols. It is, however, much more difficult to visualize how Aristophanes would have conveyed the symbolism suggested by Penella here, especially since there is no mention or even hint of unmasculinity anywhere else in the scene. Aristophanes, had he wished to make this criticism of Euripides, would surely have been as explicit about it here as he always was elsewhere.

2) Since there is no evidence for ληφάδηνον in a phallic meaning anywhere in Greek, Penella continues the attempt to discover contextual corroboration for Whitman’s theory. In line 1203 he points to κωδάριον and θυλάκιον as possible double-entendres, respectively for ‘foreskin’ and ‘scrotum’. Neither of these double meanings is found in classical Greek. Penella’s citation of θυλάκιη =

1) ΚΩΙΔΑΠΙΟΝ in Aristophanes’ Frogs, Mnemos. IV 26 (1973), 337 ff.
4) See my remarks, op. cit., 134 f.

Mnemosyne, Vol. XXVII, Fasc. 3
scrotum comes from the *Hippiatrica Berolinensia* 50, 1 f., where it appears in a discussion of equine hernia. But the authors of this passage are Apsyrtus of Prusa (or Nicomedia) and Hierocles, who wrote nearly one thousand years after the production of *Frogs* and are therefore no evidence at all for fifth century usage. We may as well try to fit to line 1203 any number of better-attested metaphorical uses of words in θηλασ-, such as 'bread basket' (*Ar. Frag.* 545), 'medicine ball' (*Antyll. ap. Orib.* 6.32.12), or 'baggy pants' (*Eur. Cyc.* 182, *Ar. Vesp.* 1087). As for κυδόμοιν, Penella's demonstration is entirely fanciful and can be refuted simply by telling what it is: Hesychius glosses κυδόν as σκύλον: ἡ δέρμα προβάτου; τὸ σκύλος in *Nic. Al.* 270 = the outer husk of a nut; βάλανος can mean glans penis; therefore, κυδόμον must = foreskin. βάλανος is the only term in this list (again spanning the thousand year period separating Aristophanes from Hesychius) attested with a genital meaning. Penella has arbitrarily thrust it into a series of entirely innocent and unrelated words in order to make them appear to be harboring similar double meanings. Hesychius merely uses a synonym, σκύλον, to say that κυδόν is an animal's skin, which is true, and Nicander merely uses τὸ σκύλος, animal's skin, metaphorically. But there is no evidence here that κυδόν can be used to mean the outer husk of a nut, or that Nicander's σκύλος is the outer husk of a βάλανος, whether nut or glans penis. In other words, there is absolutely no reason to think that κυδόμον could have had the metaphorical meaning Penella wants it to have, to think that Aristophanes' audience would have been thinking of anything else but animal skins at *Ran.* 1203—indeed, a lekythos, a towel and a purse would naturally call to mind only the most usual associations: going to the bath or the palaestra (*Poll.* 3, 155; 10, 64). In the absence of any corroboration it is difficult to derive from *Ran.* 1203 a woolly foreskin on a lekythoid phallus, and even more difficult to see where its dramatic utility would lie. Penella's remark that Latin *degлubere* is obscene in Ausonius (*Epigr.* 71, 1) is of course irrelevant. It is curious that Penella is ignorant of the similar use in Greek comedy of λέσνεν 5), although that, too, does nothing to further his interpretation.

(3) The term αὐτολήκωνα, used as a name for a club composed of rowdy young aristocrats (*Demosthenes, Against Conon* 14), has been pressed into service as a possible support for the phallic sense

5) See, for example, *Lysistrata* 736, and compare δέσεων: *Vesp.* 430, *Lys.* 158, 739, 953, *Frag.* 320, 5. A full account of these and other sexual terms is given in my book on obscene language in Attic Comedy, forthcoming from Yale University Press.