

VARIA SEMONIDEA

DOUGLAS E. GERBER

Fr. 1.18

οἱ δ' ἀγχόνην ἄψαντο δυστήνῳ μόρῳ

BABUT ARGUES: “ἀγχόνη semble avoir toujours eu le sens abstrait (‘action de se pendre’, ‘motif pour se pendre’) . . . ; il faut donc construire ἄψασθαι avec δυστήνῳ μόρῳ . . . et considérer ἀγχόνην comme un accusatif de qualification (‘parvenir à la mort funeste en se pendant’).”¹ This is harsh and unnecessary. For ἀγχόνη in the sense of “noose” cf. especially Aesch. fr. 474.14 *Mette, ἀγχόνην ἄρ' ἄψομαι*. See also Fraenkel on Aesch. *Agam.* 1008 ff. and P. T. Stevens, *Colloquial Expressions in Euripides* (Wiesbaden 1976) 10.

Fr. 7.24

ἔργων δὲ μόνον ἐσθίειν ἐπίσταται.

On this and vv. 46–47 cf. Epicrates fr. 2, 3.5–7 Kock: αὕτη δὲ Λαῖς ἀργός ἐστι καὶ πότις, / τὸ καθ' ἡμέραν ὀρώσα πίνειν κάσθιεν / μόνον.

Fr. 7.53–54

εὐνῆς δ' ἀληνῆς ἐστὶν ἀφροδισίης,
τὸν δ' ἄνδρα τὸν παρεόντα ναυσίῃ διδοῖ.

West's resuscitation of the old emendation ἀδηνῆς for ἀληνῆς proposed by Winterton has been rightly rejected by Lloyd-Jones² and Verdenius.³ ἀδηνῆς, “unskilful,” fits poorly with the following verse and with the evidence of Hesychius γαλιώσης· ἀκολασταινούσης and Aelian (*NA* 15.11) who claims that ἡ χερσαία γαλῆ was once a human being who δεινῶς ἀκόλαστος ἦν καὶ ἀφροδίτην παράνομον ἐνόσει.⁴ Semonides might have said that a woman unskilled in sexual matters is displeasing, but he would hardly say that she is nauseating. Even if ἀληνῆς, which appears elsewhere only in Hesychius who glosses it with μαινόμενος, is corrupt, the context seems to demand some word with essentially the meaning Hesychius gives to his gloss.⁵

¹D. Babut, “Sémonide et Mimnerme,” *REG* 84 (1971) 19, note 14.

²H. Lloyd-Jones, *Females of the Species. Semonides on Women* (London 1975) 77–78.

³W. J. Verdenius, “Epilegomena zu Semonides Fr. 7,” *Mnemosyne* 4.30 (1977) 6.

⁴On the lustful nature of the weasel see also W. Marg, “Zum Wieseltyp in Semonides' Weiberjambos,” *Hermes* 102 (1974) 151–156, esp. 153. For the weasel in association with Aphrodite see O. Keller, *Die Antike Tierwelt* 1 (Leipzig 1909) 168–169.

⁵M. L. West, *Studies in Greek Elegy and Iambus* (Berlin 1974) 178, argues that if Hesychius had understood ἀληνῆς to mean “possessed by mad lust for,” he would not have glossed it with μαινόμενος. But in view of passages such as Sapph. fr. 1.18, Pind. *P.* 4.216 and Theoc. 10.31, this does not seem to be a valid criticism.

In v. 54 Renner's correction of the Attic *παρόντα* is the only alteration required. In some contexts Schneidewin's *πειρώντα* or West's *περώντα* might well be an improvement, but in view of Semonides' statement in vv. 51–52 that there is nothing *καλόν*, *ἐπίμερον*, *τερπνόν*, or *ἐράσμιον* in the weasel-woman, we do not expect a man to make any sexual advances towards her at all. As Lloyd-Jones states, *τὸν ἄνδρα τὸν παρόντα* means either "whatever husband she has for the time being" or "whatever man is with her" (cf. Theognis 1368, *ἀλλ' αἰεὶ τὸν παρόντα φιλεῖ*, where the subject is also a woman), and the reason for his nausea is presumably her foul smell. Semonides does not specifically mention the weasel's stink, but since this was such a well-known characteristic of the weasel (cf., e.g., Ar. *Ach.* 254–256, *Plut.* 693), there was no need for him to be more explicit.⁶ Loraux, apparently adopting West's *περώντα*, argues that "le 'mal de mer' réfère bien entendu à la mauvaise odeur de la belette, mais correspond aussi à un usage érotique des métaphores maritimes dans la comédie," but "seasickness" is hardly comparable to the other examples of maritime sexual imagery.⁷

Fr. 7.62

ἀνάγκη δ' ἄνδρα ποιεῖται φίλον.

In my interpretation of this passage given in *Phoenix* 28 (1974) 251–253 I argued for the meaning "she forces a man (or her husband) to love her." At that time I had not noticed the parallel provided by Parthenius 18.2, *καὶ οὕτως, πολλὰ ἐπαγωγὰ ποιούσης, ἡναγκάσθη μιγῆναι αὐτῇ*. In both passages the woman is so alluring that the man cannot resist her sexual advances, however much he may wish to do so.⁸ If the commonly accepted supplement *πολλοὺς δὲ ποιεῖται [ἐφίλους]* is correct in v. 25 of the Cologne Archilochus, we have a good parallel for Semonides' *ἄνδρα ποιεῖται φίλον*, except

⁶For the weasel's bad smell see also S. Lilja, *The Treatment of Odours in the Poetry of Antiquity* (Helsinki 1972) 153. Lilja cites numerous examples of the revulsion inspired by malodorous women, e.g., Plaut. *Asin.* 894–895, *nauseum/bibere malum, si necessum sit, quam illam oscularier*, and Ovid *Rem. Am.* 355–356, *illa tuas redolent, Phineu, medicamina mensas:/non semel hinc stomacho nausea facta meo*.

B. Marzullo, *MCr* 8–9 (1973–1974) 51, defending Schneidewin's *πειρώντα* and apparently adopting the reading *ἀδηνῆς* in v. 53, argues that she is "una donna frigida" and that "la nausea . . . appare perfettamente giustificata dagli infelici, defatiganti tentativi." For the reasons given above I do not see how the weasel-woman can be seen as "frigida."

⁷N. Loraux, "Sur la Race des Femmes et Quelques-unes de ses Tribus," *Arethusa* 11 (1978) 84, note 155. West (above, note 5) 178 gives his emendation "the double sense 'penetrate' . . . and 'cross over' as on a ferry," but the one example known to me of *περάω* in a sexual sense (*Anth. Pal.* 5.242.5) has no maritime association.

On both the literal and figurative use of *ναυτία* and similar words see H. Oldehr, *Seekrankheit in der Antike* (Düsseldorf 1977).

⁸Similarly West 178.

that in Archilochus it is the girl's promiscuity which is stressed rather than her seductiveness.⁹

Verdenius prefers to treat *φίλον* in the neutral sense of "partner,"¹⁰ but in view of the lustfulness commonly attributed to mares, the frequent use of equine imagery in erotic poetry, and the subsequent verses describing the elaborate pains this woman takes to make herself attractive, it seems more natural to translate the word by "loving" or "lover." Verdenius also argues that no "erotische Färbung" should be given to *ἀνάγκη*, but since *ἀνάγκη* is common in erotic contexts (cf. *ἡναγκάσθη* in Parthenius above),¹¹ since the context here is surely erotic, and since *τὸ ἀναγκαῖον* alone could designate the "penis" (cf. Artemidorus 1.45 and 1.79), an "erotische Färbung" is at least highly probable.

Fr. 7.63–64

λοῦται δὲ πάσης ἡμέρης ἀπο ρύπον
δῖς, ἄλλοτε τρίς, καὶ μύροις ἀλείφεται.

Cf. Dio Chrysostom 4.101–102, where among the many vices attributed to a devotee of 'Ἡδονή we find *λουτρῶν τε ὁσμέραι θερμῶν, μᾶλλον δὲ δῖς τῆς ἡμέρας, καὶ χρисέων οὐ κάματον ἰωμένων*. Dio then goes on to state that such people have unbridled sexual desires.

Fr. 7.75–77

ἐπ' αὐχένα βραχεῖα· κινεῖται μόγισ'
ἄπυγος, αὐτόκωλος. ἃ τάλας ἀνήρ
ὅστις κακὸν τοιοῦτον ἀγκαλίζεται.

Lloyd-Jones states that *ἄπυγος* appears only here and as restored in Plato Comicus fr. 184.3 Kock, but cf. *Anth. Pal.* 11.327.1–2, *τὴν ξηρὴν ἐπὶ νῶτα Λυκαινίδα, τὴν Ἀφροδίτης / λώβην, τὴν ἐλάφου παντὸς ἀπυγοτέρην*. The first part also provides a good parallel for Semonides' use of *ἐπὶ* in v. 75. For v. 77 cf. Alciphron 4.12.3, *αἶ αἶ, γυμνὴν περιβαλεῖν ἐκείνην οἶόν ἐστιν*, and Aristaenetus 1.12.25–26 Mazal, *ἀναφρόδιτοι γὰρ αἱ δυσειδεῖς γυναῖκες, καὶ ἡδονῆς ἐν ἐκείναις οὐκ ἀρχὴν οὐ τέλος εὔροι τις ἄν*.

Fr. 7.84

κείνη γὰρ οὔτῃ μῶμος οὐ προσιζάνει.

Verdenius¹² objects to those who think that *προσιζάνει* was chosen because of its appropriateness for a bee-woman, but cf. Arist. *HA* 535a2,

⁹The supplement, however, cannot be considered certain. See M. G. Bonanno, "Note al nuovo Archiloco," *MCr* 8–9 (1973–1974) 13, who argues that *δόλους* suits the context better.

¹⁰Verdenius (above, note 3) 7.

¹¹See H. Schrekenberg, *Ananke. Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Wortgebrauchs* (Munich 1964) 59–60, Loraux (above, note 7) 84, note 157, and K. J. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality* (London 1978) 61–62.

¹²Verdenius (above, note 3) 9.

ἡ μέλιττα πρὸς οὐδὲν προσιζάνει σαπρόν, a parallel noted also by M. S. Silk, *Interaction in Poetic Imagery* (Cambridge 1974) 236–237. On μῶμος and women see K. Kost, *Musaïos, Hero und Leander* (Bonn 1971) 191–192, and E. Degani, *Poeti greci giambici ed elegiaci* (Milan 1977) 20.

Fr. 7.86

φίλη δὲ σὺν φιλέοντι γηράσκει πόσει

Lloyd-Jones quotes some sources illustrating the mutual love of husband and wife in ancient Greece,¹³ but none contains the anaphora found in Semonides. For this cf. Theoc. 17.42, ὅπποτε κεν φιλέων βαινῇ λέχος ἐς φιλεούσης, and Peek, *GVI* 1387.2, φιλοῦντα ἀντιφιλοῦσα τὸν ἄνδρα.

Fr. 7.90–91

οὐδ' ἐν γυναιξιν ἥδεται καθήμενῃ
ἔκου λέγουσιν ἀφροδισίους λόγους.

Cf. Philemon fr. 169 Kock, ἐὰν γυνὴ γυναικὶ κατ' ἰδίαν ὀμιλεῖ, / μεγάλων κακῶν θησαυρὸς ἐξορύσσεται, and Musaeus 33–34, σαοφροσύνη δὲ καὶ αἰδοῦ/ οὐδέποτ' ἀγρομένησι συνωμίλησε γυναιξίν. The impression one gets from Semonides is that such women gather together simply to talk about their love affairs, but perhaps more than mere gossip is involved: cf. Nonnus 42.214–216, καὶ γὰρ ὅτ' ἀλλήλησι πόθων ἐνέπουσιν ἀνάγκην, / λυσιπόνους δάροισιν ὑποκλέπτουσι μερίμνας / Κυπριδίας.

Fr. 8

ὥσπερ ἔγχελυς κατὰ γλοιοῦ.

According to West this is “doubtless from a sexual context.”¹⁴ I should prefer to be less dogmatic and to say “possibly from a sexual context.” West states that “eel = penis” in Arch. fr. 189, an interpretation which I have defended elsewhere,¹⁵ but a parallel for γλοιοῦ in a sexual context is more difficult to find. We might, however, compare Ar. *Vesp.* 259 where C. Ruck, “Euripides’ Mother: Vegetables and the Phallos in Aristophanes,” *Arion* n.s. 2 (1975) 38, may well be right in arguing that βόρβορος refers to “anal rape.” βόρβορος and γλοιός might be virtually synonymous in some contexts. Another approach would be to see a reference to the manner in which eels were thought to procreate. Athenaeus 7.298c, on the authority of Aristotle, explains their method as follows: ὀχέονται δὲ συμπλεκόμεναι κᾶτ' ἀφᾶσι γλοιῶδες (*vel* γλινῶδες) ἐξ αὐτῶν, ὃ γινόμενον ἐν τῇ ἰλύι

¹³For many more examples see P. W. van der Horst, *The Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides* (Leiden 1978) 241–242.

¹⁴West (above, note 5) 179.

¹⁵See my “Eels in Archilochus,” *QUCC* 16 (1973) 105–109, and E. Degani, “Note archilochée,” *QUCC* 21 (1976) 23–24.

ζωογονείται. A third approach would be to give the meaning “mud” or “muddy water” to γλοιού and to explain the passage as a reference to the practice adopted by eel-fishers who stirred up the mud until the eels suffocated.¹⁶ If this is correct, the simile would presumably describe someone who is in severe straits. LSJ give the meaning “*oily sediment* in baths” for Semonides’ γλοιού and Knox in his Loeb edition of Hipponax (page 61) translates “like an eel on oil-scrappings,” neither of which seems very likely. The complete lack of a context, however, prevents any explanation from being more than mere speculation.

Dietel¹⁷ argues on metrical grounds that κατά γλοιού is not part of the fragment, but was added in order to show that ἐγχευς denotes a person who is γλοιός, i.e. “wily” (see the *Suda*, s.v. γλοιός). It is unlikely, however, that γλοιός, extremely rare in a metaphorical sense, would have been used as a gloss, and internal correction, though not common in the iambic poets, occurs in fr. 7.70¹⁸ and Hipponax fr. 36.4.

Fr. 10a

καὶ μήτ' ἄλουτος γαυρία σύ, μήτ' ὕδωρ
θαύμαζε, μηδὲ [κο]υρία γενειάδα,
μηδὲ ρύπῳ χιτῶνος ἔντυε χροά.

West remarks: “It emerges that the stock type of the unwashed, unkempt, unlaundered ascetic was already established by 600 B.C.”¹⁹ Perhaps however, more than mere asceticism lies behind these lines. Cf. the recently discovered fragment of Philaenis (P. Oxy. 2891, fr. 1, col. ii), δεῖ τοίνυν τὸν πειρῶντα ἀκαλλώπιστον . . . καὶ ἀκτένιστον, ὅπως ἂν τῇ γυναικὶ μὴ [δοκῇ] ἔπεργος εἶναι, and Lobel’s comment *ad loc.*, “The seducer should neglect his appearance so that his intentions are concealed from their object.”

Fr. 19

ἢ τυφλὸς ἢ τις σκνιπὸς ἢ μέγα βλέπων.

West emends μέγα to μόγισ, a risky alteration in view of the lack of a context. Rather than assuming that all three expressions denote blindness or near-blindness, we could just as legitimately argue that they represent an ascending scale from no vision to poor vision to excellent vision. West’s emendation makes σκνιπὸς and μόγισ βλέπων virtually tautological, whereas the apparently deliberate expansion of each segment following

¹⁶For the sources see D’A. W. Thompson, *A Glossary of Greek Fishes* (London 1947) 60. It must be stressed, however, that there do not seem to be any examples of γλοιός with the meaning “mud,” although since the word denotes essentially any sticky substance, such a meaning cannot be ruled out.

¹⁷K. Dietel, *Das Gleichnis in der frühen griechischen Lyrik* (Würzburg 1939) 77–78.

¹⁸See Verdenius (above, note 3) 8.

¹⁹M. L. West, *Maia* 20 (1968) 197.

the disjunctives suggests that a clear distinction is intended.²⁰ One of the reasons for the numerous emendations²¹ of μέγα may have been the feeling that “staring” or “looking hard” does not fit well with the rest of the verse, but although this seems to be the meaning present in *Il.* 20.342, μέγ’ ἐξιδεν, in Eur. fr. 1007c. 2,²² τοὺς μείζονα βλέποντας ἀνθρώπων θεούς, “gods can see farther than, have better vision than, men,” we have a meaning which is appropriate for Semonides’ line (cf. Göbel’s translation, “Ein Blinder oder einer, der nicht gut sieht, oder einer mit guten Augen”²³).

UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO

²⁰Note that two syllables follow the first ῥ, three the second and four the third, a splendid example of the so-called “Gesetz der wachsenden Glieder,” on which see E. Thummer, *Pindar, Die Isthmischen Gedichte* 1 (Heidelberg 1968) 148, note 131.

²¹E.g., μέλαν (Fick), κνέφας (Hartung), ὠλιγγα (Bergk), λεπτά (Schmidt), λέγα (Edmonds).

²²In Snell’s supplement to the 1964 reprint of Nauck’s *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*.

²³F. Göbel, *Formen und Formeln der epischen Drieheit in der griechischen Dichtung* (Stuttgart 1935) 54.