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SOME FUNCTIONS OF THE ENCLOSED INVECTIVE
IN ARCHILOCHUS' EROTIC FRAGMENT

τὸ δὴ νῦν γινώθι· Νεοβούλη[ν δέ τις]	16
[ἄ]λλος ἀνὴρ ἐχέτω· αἰαὶ πέπειρα δὴ[έστι ,]	
[ἀν]θος δ' ἀπερρύηκε παρθενήϊον	
[κ]αὶ χάρις ἦ πρὶν ἐπῆν· κόρον γὰρ οὐ κ[ατέσχε πω,]	
[ἦβ]ης δὲ μέτρ' ἔφηνε μαινόλις γυνή·	20
[ές] κόρακας· ἀπεχε· μὴ τοῦτο ἐφοιτ' ἀν[αξ θεῶν]	
[ὄ]πως ἐγὼ γυναῖκα τ[ο]ιαύτην ἔχων	
[γεί]τοσι χάρμ' ἔσομαι· πολλὸν σέ βούλο[μαι πάρος·]	
[σὺ] μὲν γὰρ οὔτ' ἀπιστος οὔτε διπλόη,	24
[ἡ δ]ὲ μάλ' ὄξυτέρη· πολλοὺς δὲ ποιείτα[ι φίλους·]	
[δέ]δοιχ' ὅπως μὴ τυφλὰ κάλιτήμερα	
[σπ]ουδῆ ἐπειγόμενος τῶς ὥσπερ ἡ κ[ύων τέκω.]"	

“Count on this now! Let some other man
possess Neobule! My god, she is overripe,
her girlhood bloom has withered and dropped off,
also the grace of before: she’s never yet kept down her lust—
a frenzied slut that’s shown her woman’s prime.

Out to the crows! Keep her off! May never he who rules the gods
decree that I—possessed of such a wife—
stand as a neighborhood butt. Instead, I much prefer you,
for you are neither faithless nor two-faced:
but she is very piercing, makes many men her ‘very own’;
I fear lest, by acting in a rush I (just like the bitch)
may beget blind and untimely things.”

(following Van Sickle’s translation¹
with minor modifications)

In this study I argue that the embedded invective against Neobule in Archilochus’ erotic fragment (P. Colon. inv. 7511)² allows for a development in

Citations in parentheses follow the text of the ed. pr., R. Merkelbach et M.L. West, *Zeitschr. f. Pap. u. Epigr.* 14 (1974) 97-113. Divergences from the first edition follow Van Sickle (see note 2 below, [c] 128-131).

I would like to thank John Van Sickle and Mary R. Lefkowitz for helpful critiques on an earlier version of this paper.

¹John Van Sickle, [a] “Archilochus: A New Fragment of an Epode,” *CJ* 71 (1975) 2 .

²For a review of the pertinent literature see John Van Sickle [a], 1-15 (note 1 above); [b] “The New Erotic Fragment of Archilochus,” *QUCC* 20 (1975) 123-156 and references cited there; and

the male narrator from potentially unrestrained to restrained by (1) providing a legitimate, almost cathartic, outlet for his emotional excess and by (2) allowing him to objectify and disown certain character traits ascribed to Neobule. Without doubt the invective is integral to the poem; Nagy even suggests that this enclosure may itself have determined the narrative, that the verbal exchange and interaction between the narrator and the daughter of Amphimedo frame and thus perhaps highlight the abusive rejection of Neobule.³ But surely the *function* of the poem is not invective. Language and *topoi* place it in the genre of love poetry.⁴ Perhaps in the seventh century B.C., as later in the Latin elegiac, abuse of a former beloved suited the genre of erotic poetry; perhaps too the negative romance was sometimes the controlling one. Yet, in Archilochus' poem, the focus is clearly on the more recent and positive "event".⁵ What then is the impact of the Neobule passage on the structure and meaning of the poem?

Some have shown how Neobule functions on the rhetorical plane as poetic foil, providing an antithesis and an appropriate contrast to the maiden presently desired; this view is argued, for example, by Van Sickle, who finds however that the maiden, by the end of the poem, betrays the "aristocratic ideal of restraint which she appears to enunciate" earlier in the encounter.⁶ Henderson too believes that "for the reflective reader the poet allows a glimpse of the beginning of that progress into womanhood which Neobule has already taken."⁷ This suggestion that the maiden indeed compromises herself and hence risks becoming an overripe Neobule possibly explains the inclusion of the Neobule passage. That would imply that the poet includes the enclosure either as a warning to the maiden (a negative exemplum) or simply as an interesting description of two maidens in parallel situations; the parallel need not entail or emphasize value judgement.

An explanation quite different from the above merits consideration. It emerges from the application of narrative or plot structure analysis⁸ to the narrator's "interactions" with the maiden and with Neobule. This approach to the two narrative interactions as narrative syntagms or chains circumvents the

[c] "The New Archilochus. Introduction," *Arethusa* 9 (1976) 133-147, esp. 149-150 (select bibliography). The Fall 1976 issue of *Arethusa* is a thematic issue on the fragment; see also the important presentation of the text and discussion by H. Flashar, Th. Gelzer, L. Koenen, K. Maurer, W. Theiler, and M.L. West, "Ein wiedergefundenes Archilochos-Gedicht?" *Poetica* 6 (1974) 468-512. No literature after Dec., 1976, has been consulted.

³Gregory Nagy, "Iambos: Typologies of Invective and Praise," *Arethusa* 9 (1976) 192.

⁴For discussions of erotic diction and *topoi* see Jeffrey Henderson, "The Cologne Epode and the Conventions of Early Greek Erotic Poetry," *Arethusa* 9 (1976) 159-180 and Francois Lasserre, "Ornements Érotiques dans La Poesie Lyrique Archaïque" in *Serta Turyniana. Studies in Greek Literature and Palaeography in honor of Alexander Turyn*, ed. by John L. Heller (Urbana 1974) 5-33.

⁵This is clear, for example, from the number of lines devoted to each interaction, from the presence of the one maiden as opposed to the absence of the other, and from the immediacy and vividness of the narrator's account of the action that culminated his dialogue with Amphimedo's daughter.

⁶Van Sickle (note 1 above [a]) 11.

⁷Henderson (note 4 above) 174.

⁸For a thorough bibliography on plot structure studies, see Umberto Eco's concise list (*A Theory of Semiotics* [Bloomington, London 1976]) 12. I have used a very simple model adapted from C. Bremond, *Le Logique du récit* (Paris 1973). The narrative syntagm begins with the possibility of an

controversial issue of biography vs. fiction,⁹ and highlights a new dimension in our understanding of the function of the embedded invective. The narrator/maiden relationship is counterpoised against that of the narrator and Neobule. The latter is a negative relationship. The invective through which it is made accessible to us captures only a moment in what appears to be (or to have been) an ongoing interaction. Any past incidents in this interaction must be reconstructed and must remain hypothetical.

The two narrative syntagms are as follows. For the narrator with the present maiden desire leads to request and action which leads either to complete fulfillment if his desire is viewed as limited or moderate, or to partial fulfillment if his desire is for full intercourse. In the case of the narrator with Neobule, his mention of an earlier *charis* (22: *charis hê prin epên*) implies that at one time she was desirable;¹⁰ the maiden's offer of the girl within the house raises the possibility of a present relationship with her. This other girl, who must be Neobule, is purported to desire him now (3: *hê nûn meg himeirei*). The narrator rejects this possibility through a vehement and abusive attack on Neobule's character.

Thus the possibility of a relationship in one case is fulfilled (either partially or completely), while in the other it is completely rejected (though it might once have been desirable); but in each case there is a definite linear or narrativel chain moving from a possibility to some end-point. The narrator engages in two different types of relationship. Perhaps he can be viewed as participating or having participated in a whole spectrum of relationships. He may have been excessive at times, either with Neobule in the past, or, as Van Sickle speculates,¹¹ with the maiden herself in the lost opening of the epode. In any case, one senses that his excessive verbal abuse of Neobule may correlate with a

achievement and ends with fulfillment or non-fulfillment or partial fulfillment of that possibility. Complex or convoluted syntagms can, of course, exist, and the Initial, Procedural, and Terminal Events may be symbolized (e.g., by a, b, and c). However, in the Archilochus fragment the action proceeds along rather straightforward pathways. Hence it was not necessary to convert the syntagms to symbolic language.

⁹See M.L. West in "Ein wiedergefundenes Archilochus-Gedicht?" (note 2 above) 481-5. Cf. Mary R. Lefkowitz, "Fictions in Literary Biography: The New Poem and the Archilochus Legend," *Arethusa* 9 (1976) 181-190. In a strong attack on the biographical approach to literary criticism she concedes that: "Nonetheless, the fictional biographies deserve our attention because they derive primarily from the author's work and thus preserve at least the names and narrative patterns of poetry now lost to us." (182). It may well be, as K.J. Dover implies by his agnosticism in "The Poetry of Archilochus," *Entretiens sur L'Antiquite Classique* 10: *Archiloque* (Fondation Hardt, Geneva 1964) 197-206, that our material is too scanty for a narrative reconstruction to be possible.

¹⁰This implication is supported by the narrator's use of *apistos* and *diploê* with a form of double negation to describe "bad qualities which the girl does not have." Presumably, by contrast (see Van Sickle [a] 8), Neobule is "faithless" and "two-faced". Imputation of such negative qualities to Neobule would imply a more than passing knowledge of her, and thus support the hypothesis of a prior relationship between her and the narrator.

¹¹See the conjectured reconstruction of Van Sickle ([b] espec. 130ff.), which entails a statement by the narrator to the effect that "I desire you and the sweet longing grips me to share with you the delights of Aphrodite here and now". This statement would occur in the lost beginning of the epode, its reconstruction based on *topoi* comparisons especially with passages from the *apatê* of Zeus. (esp. Ξ . 329ff).

former excessive passion, whether fictive or historical. In contrast, he is cautious and somewhat restrained toward the maiden, at least in the extant lines of the text.

The contrast between this restraint and his excesses elsewhere (either in abusiveness or ardor) becomes especially clear through an examination of the language of the fragment. For example, his verbal relation with the absent Neobule utterly lacks restraint. Against her he releases violent abuse: he does not “hold himself back.” The very intensity of his present abuse would suggest earlier excess of emotional fervor, such a vehement response does she stir in him now. Moreover, the theme of control vs. release is not alien to the poetry of Archilochus: elsewhere too he argues for moderation, most notably in addressing a bereaved companion (Diehl 7) and his own troubled *thumos* (Diehl 67a).¹²

In vv. 26-27 of the fragment the narrator expresses fear of his own impetuosity: “I fear lest, by acting in a rush, I (like the bitch) may beget blind and untimely things.” Clearly he fears not the birth of bastard children, but the products of untimeliness and haste, namely, another relationship like the one with Neobule or a renewed relationship with Neobule. Moreover, total loss of control, total abandonment to passion, would equate him with “Neobule now”, which he, the narrator, has set up as the most negative of extremes. Neobule is, he claims, *mal' oxuterê*, “extremely piercing”.¹³ She is *mainolis* and does not hold back insolence (*koros*). Thus on the spectrum from control to release Neobule occupies the one extreme. The daughter of Amphimedo, in contrast, starts near the other,¹⁴ but moves toward a compromising center. The narrator himself, unrestrained with regard to Neobule (perhaps once in action, now in words), will fit (by both action and words) somewhere in the middle of the continuum with regard to the maiden. This is brought out by *parex* (10), *kêpous* (16), *epipsauôn* (35), and also, to be shown below, by *epêlusin* (33). Unmistakably the pursuer, he is *not* unrestrainedly aggressive—he does not force full intercourse on the maiden; moreover, he completes his part of the dialogue with an expression of anxiety lest *he* be guilty of the same excesses for which he has just reviled Neobule.

So far, then, two functions served by the invective have emerged. First, it enables the narrator to contrast a past or possible relationship with Neobule to

¹²For a discussion of this theme in Archilochus' poetry see Helen North, *Sophrosyne. Self-Knowledge and Self-Restraint in Greek Literature* (Ithaca 1966) 22 and Rudolph Pfeiffer, “Gotttheit und Individuum in der frühgriechischen Lyrik,” *Philologus* 84 (1928) 137-152. Van Sickle ([a] 11) calls “control” (or total restraint) an aristocratic ethos and “release” (or loss of control) a deviation from that ethos.

¹³*Oxuterê* is an odd and therefore striking adjective to apply to a woman. Associated by Pindar with frenzies for unattainable desires (*Nem. XI.47-8: kerdeôn de chrê metron thêreumen aprosikôn d' erôtôn oxuterai maniai*), it seems elsewhere to describe anything that moves across or through a boundary: a weapon, the rays of the sun, mental perception. On a connotative level, it epitomizes the inappropriately aggressive qualities of Neobule, who is said to actively desire the narrator (*himeirei* in v. 3) and to make many men her own. The narrator, though himself male and therefore appropriately the sexual aggressor, avoids the excesses connoted by *oxuterê*: he does not cross barriers, does not penetrate the maiden's tender skin.

¹⁴Van Sickle ([a] 10ff) documents this with passages from the text. The “aristocratic ideal” of utter restraint most likely functions as a kind of foil for the poem's more earthy point of view. Certainly the tone of the epode is not stringently moralistic.

his more recent interaction with the maiden. He uses Neobule as poetic foil, exaggerating her faults in order to enhance the praise of the maiden.¹⁵ Second and perhaps more important, it offers a negative exemplum of excess for the narrator, who separates or isolates himself from Neobule's excesses. By seeing Neobule as object the narrator is able to identify her lack of restraint as unattractive, unhealthy, and destructive. This recognition may enable him to act with more restraint. The last lines he speaks before he takes action would indicate as much (26-27).

Before suggesting a third, related function, I would like to elucidate how the narrator is depicted showing restraint toward the young maiden. The dialogue between pursuer and pursued is, in contrast to the enclosed invective, orderly and tightly logical.¹⁶ The narrator states his goal or intention (15): *schêsô gar es poêphorous kêpous*, "For I shall put in at the grassy gardens."¹⁷ The preceding *mê ti megaire*, "do not begrudge me at all", is a plea for her confidence, a plea based on or explained by *gar*. His stated expectations are limited: he will be satisfied with one of the delights of the goddess (9), apart from the divine thing (10). [I follow Van Sickle and West in interpreting these lines, accepting Hesychius' gloss of *exô iês mixeôs* for *parex to theion*]¹⁸.

There follows a series of actions—none of them violent. Even if the maiden is subject of *ephen* (33), her unveiling would not necessarily, as Henderson asserts, signify her willingness to experience full intercourse.¹⁹ It may merely indicate that, perhaps trusting in his earlier promises (15 ff), she is ready to enjoy some of the pleasures of Aphrodite. The metaphor *hêbês epêlusin*, an apposition to *neon chroa* and the direct object of *ephen*, may well be polysemantic.²⁰ One suggested interpretation, "approach", is especially suitable: "she (or I) revealed her tender skin, approach to her Womanhood." *Epêlusin* as "approach" makes the genitive noun *hêbês* more concrete, resonates with the gate metaphor (14) (emphasizing the skin as the passageway or port of entry), and delicately underscores the fact that the maiden's skin (and thus, by metonymy, the maiden) is still intact.²¹ Moreover, these acts and

¹⁵This rhetorical technique is a natural one for erotic poetry; cf., for example, Catullus 86. Dr. Phyllis Katz has pointed out to me the role that exaggeration plays in Archilochus' use of poetic foil in the fragment.

¹⁶Ludwig Koenen, "Ein Wiedergefunden Archilochos-Gedicht?" *Poetica* (1974) 499ff, and Van Sickle ([a] and [c] 137) elucidate this regularity.

¹⁷S.R. Slings, "Three Notes on the New Archilochus," *ZPE* 18 (1975) 170, convincingly interprets the nautical expression *schêsô es* as intransitive in this sense. The action depicted in this metaphorical expression is indecisive: the narrator promises no penetration will take place.

¹⁸E. Dagani, "*Parex to Theion Chrêma* nel nuovo Archiloco di Colonia," *QUCC* 20 (1975) 229, was first to discover this gloss.

¹⁹Henderson (note 4 above, 173-4) assumes that "actual penetration . . . must follow the one action of the girl, namely her uncovering herself." He sees this "defloration" as a "combination of gentleness and compulsion." He argues, from other erotic contexts, that *labôn eklina* and *auchen' angkaleis echôn* both indicate sexual force and compulsion. His main passage for comparison is the *apatê* of Zeus passage in Ξ , but Hera in that scene is hardly a helpless, innocent maiden! Moreover, Henderson's notion that a "pretty girl overtaken in the meadows by a healthy young Greek cannot expect any sort of malthusian compromise or tender solicitude about her virginity" (169) is hardly consistent with what we know of Archaic Greek poetry.

²⁰So Van Sickle argues ([b] 145-6).

²¹See my note 14 above and Van Sickle (*ibid.* 145), who states: the word *chroa* often refers to

expressions function together to heighten expectation and tension. Then the unexpected though promised release *ante portas* becomes even more poignant: "I let go my? (or my white?) life-force, just touching her tawny hair." The delicate participle *epispauôn* further assures that no penetration has taken place. It contrasts with erotic verbs of a more decisive timbre, such as *apokeirai* and *apodrepsai* in Pindar's *Pythian* 9.²²

By the poem's end the male pursuer is revealed as not *oxuteros*, not duplicitous and untrustworthy, not *mainolis* or *epigomenos* or guilty of *koros*. He is defined in terms of what he is not. He set out toward and reached his moderate goal, or perhaps modified his aims while en route; in either case, the goal as stated in the extant lines of the poem is a moderate one. The invective which occurs in an enclosed and tightly demarcated section²³ dramatically releases him from resentments and excesses connected with Neobule, both in the actions he imputes to her and in his own interactions with her.²⁴ In this sense the invective is cathartic for the abuser, enabling him to act (within the poem) in moderation. Thus the enclosed invective has at least three important functions: a rhetorical function through providing poetic foil for the narrator's arguments; a cognitive function through allowing the narrator to objectify and disown certain character traits ascribed to Neobule; and an emotional function through affording the narrator a cathartic outlet for his excessive feelings, whatever their cause.

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"the beautiful appearance of the skin of a woman or young person, or the tender flesh about to be pierced in battle." Expectation that this young maiden's tender skin, gateway to her womanhood, is about to be pierced (penetrated, violated) heightens the dramatic tension; the narrator's release *ante portas* is our release as well. His depiction of the maiden as vulnerable and delicate has won her our empathy.

²²In *The Maculate Muse. Obscene Language In Attic Comedy* (New Haven 1975) Jeffrey Henderson lists verbs for sexual intercourse found in comedy (see summary, 44) and in iambic poetry (21-22). None is weak like *epispauôn*. In his article, to support his notion of violence and compulsion he takes *xanthês epispauôn trichos* as "stroking" [with his hand] her tawny [cephalic] hair" rather than as "touching her tawny [pubic] hair". I follow Van Sickle ([b] 149) in the latter interpretation, which seems more natural to the situation.

²³The section is set off between what appear to be conventional transitional devices, a direct address to his interlocutor (16) and a warning to himself (26-27).

²⁴See Van Sickle's citation ([b] 141, fn. 28) of "Professor Burnett's view of the poem (and genre) as an almost ritual purgation". This is in reference to the proverbial expression "To the crows! Keep her off!" (21)—an expression of rejecting and distancing from the realm of magic (*ibid.* 141). For an interesting discussion of the close association between invective and ridicule (including the Archilochian satiric iamb) and magic, see Robert C. Elliot, *The Power of Satire: Magic, Ritual, Art* (Princeton, NJ 1960). I am grateful to Ms. Harriet M. Deal for this citation.