

## Ambiguity against Ambiguity: Anacreon 13 Again

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σφαίρη δηῦτέ με πορφυρῇ  
 βάλλων χρυσοκόμης Ἔρωσ  
 νήνι ποικιλοσαμβάλω  
 συμπαίζειν προκαλεῖται·  
 ἢ δ', ἐστὶν γὰρ ἀπ' εὐκτίτου  
 Λέσβου, τὴν μὲν ἐμὴν κόμην,  
 λευκὴ γάρ, καταμέμφεται,  
 πρὸς δ' ἄλλην τινὰ χάσκει.

In the 1993 volume of this journal Robert Renehan devoted an article to rebutting comments that I had made about an earlier article of his on Anacreon 13.<sup>1</sup> A particular complaint is that I misrepresented him in various ways. Some of these imputations are of no general interest, so I will address them here only in notes, if at all; the major charge of misrepresentation, however, raises some questions, significant for the interpretation of the poem, about types of ambiguity—by universal agreement a treacherous subject. In dealing with it, even so superficially as we will here, we travel over a spectrum encompassing trick oracles and the like, where the existence and “solution” of the hermeneutic problem are often clarified within the text itself, to ambiguities or potential ambiguities that are not overtly acknowledged in the texts thought to contain them, and thus remain forever obscure and disputable, if to varying degrees. As the definition and boundaries of such ambiguities tend to be both permeable and expansive, we have to take into account the possibility of their extending to include an interpreter’s ambivalences about ambiguities that he or she entertains and discusses as possible.

The quickest way to frame the issue as it is touched by Renehan’s and my discussions of Anacreon 13 is to quote Renehan’s recent criticism of me, and then compare to it the conclusion of his earlier article:

I wish to thank the editor and *ICS*’s anonymous referees for helpful criticisms and suggestions.

<sup>1</sup> R. Renehan, “On the Interpretation of a Poem of Anacreon,” *ICS* 18 (1993) 39–47, henceforth Renehan (1993). The earlier article (henceforth Renehan [1984]) is “Anacreon Fragment 13 Page,” *CP* 79 (1984) 28–32. My article (henceforth Pelliccia [1991]) is “Anacreon 13 (358 *PMG*),” *CP* 86 (1991) 30–36.

On page 31, in the course of analyzing the structure of verses 5–8, I stated in part: “When one then proceeds to πρὸς δ(ὲ) ἄλλην τινά (no further), it is all but unavoidable to supply mentally a corresponding κόμην.” Ignoring the crucial qualification “no further,” Pelliccia misrepresents me as arguing that “κόμην . . . must be supplied with πρὸς δ’ ἄλλην τινά.” My actual point was that, when one then goes on to the last word of the poem, one meets an unexpected verb which makes it quite likely that ἄλλην τινά does not after all refer to κόμην, but rather to another woman. . . I thought that I had made it clear in my *CP* paper that I preferred [this] interpretation, if an absolute choice had to be made (see below). Perhaps not.<sup>2</sup>

Now the final paragraphs of the earlier article:

There are two possibilities; they depend upon the meaning of ἐστὶν γὰρ ἀπ’ εὐκτίτου Λέσβου in lines 5–6. (1) If that statement is taken at face value as a complimentary allusion to the girl’s origins, then κόμην is to be understood with ἄλλην in line 6, and Anacreon’s revenge consists solely in the use of an unflattering expression (χάσκειν πρὸς) to describe her misdirected attentions (as he sees it). The poem is heterosexual on this reading;<sup>3</sup> the sense is acceptable. (2) If the statement that the girl is from Lesbos intimates that she is a lesbian—and that would not become apparent (deliberately so) until the final verse—then ἄλλην refers to a woman and the παρὰ προσδοκίαν is even more pronounced. If this interpretation is correct, Λέσβου and ἄλλην are each intentionally ambiguous: one should not then insist, with most scholars, that ἄλλην must refer *either* to “hair” *or* to “a girl” to the exclusion of the other. It may refer, at different levels, to *both*. In support of this reading of the poem is the fact that, if such were not Anacreon’s intention, it would be a remarkable coincidence that both Λέσβου and ἄλλην admit of such pointed ambiguity.

Nevertheless, when all is said and done, we shall never be quite sure of Anacreon’s meaning, for we are no longer in a position to know with certitude which of the two interpretations of ἐστὶν γὰρ ἀπ’ εὐκτίτου

<sup>2</sup> Renehan (1993) 40 f. Cf. S. T. Mace, “Amour, Encore! The Development of δηῶτε in Archaic Lyric,” *GRBS* 34 (1993) 335–64, at 348 n. 45: “[Renehan (1993)] discusses the issues well, but disappoints in failing to endorse either ‘a girl’ or ‘hair’ and suggesting some intentional ambiguity on the part of the poet.”

<sup>3</sup> “The poem is heterosexual”: *sic*. It is interesting that Renehan assumes that the only alternative to the lesbian-mocking interpretation of the poem is one in which the girl is heterosexual. But there is no reason why his interpretation (1) need touch the girl’s sexual orientation at all; all interpretation (1) requires is the *absence* from the poem of a slur against female homosexuality. In this connection some readers might find piquing the observation made to me by Michelle Kwintner that nothing in the text precludes the possibility that the speaker is a woman. Before dismissing this suggestion out of hand, we must think of Alcman’s poems written for female performers which include expressions of passion for other females (cf. Anacreon 40, Alcaeus 10B, and Theognis 257–60). Kwintner’s suggestion would turn Renehan’s conclusion (“one or the other of these two interpretations of the poem must be correct”) upside down: ἐστὶν γὰρ ἀπ’ εὐκτίτου Λέσβου would be “taken at face value as a complimentary allusion to the girl’s origins” and ἄλλην would “refer to a woman” and there would be no παρὰ προσδοκίαν joke involving female homosexuality.

Λέσβου is correct. And if such a *conclusion* [emphasis added] appear unsatisfactory to some, I can but refer them to Grotius: “nescire quaedam magna pars sapientiae est.” To end on a more positive note, it seems to me perfectly safe to assert that one or the other of these two interpretations of the poem must be correct. There is no *tertium quid*; all other proposals are to be rejected.<sup>4</sup>

It is clear that there is an inconsistency: Here in the earlier article Renehan speaks of two interpretations between which he says it is impossible on present knowledge to choose; in the more recent article, quoted first, he says he preferred one of the two all along.<sup>5</sup> Although I hesitate to suggest it, the possibility seems real (especially in the absence of alternatives) that Renehan has identified the expression of irresolvable ambivalence with which he concludes his first article (exemplifying what we can call “scholar’s ambiguity”) with the ambiguity which, immediately before in his possibility (2), he had ascribed to the meaning of ἄλλην τινά (which would be an example of poet’s ambiguity). It is perfectly clear, of course, that poetic ambiguity is not the same thing as the judicial or scholarly *non liquet*: To state that “this poem is ambiguous” is to take an unambiguous position; to state as your conclusion that “we shall never be quite sure of Anacreon’s meaning . . . [but] one or the other of these two interpretations of the poem must be correct” is to take an ambiguous position about the “correct” interpretation of a poem.

These points may or may not be relevant; it seems worth making them just in case they are. We can proceed now to the question of the existence and nature of poetic ambiguity in Anacreon 13 itself.

In the new article Renehan reformulates his (now espoused) interpretation (2) as follows:

As one goes through the sentence, ἐστὶν γὰρ ἀπ’ εὐκτίτου Λέσβου is first understood to refer to the girl’s illustrious homeland. (The epithet εὐκτίτου, because of its usual associations . . . , may itself be deceptive.) Then, especially because of the emphatic “centerpiece” of the sentence, τὴν μὲν ἐμὴν κόμην, one instinctively supplies κόμην with the contrasting πρὸς δὲ ἄλλην τινά—*until* one sees the unflattering verb χάσκει, at which point one realizes that ἐστὶν γὰρ ἀπ’ εὐκτίτου Λέσβου can admit of a quite different (lesbian) meaning and that κόμην need not be supplied, thereby making ἄλλην τινά refer to a *person*.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Renehan (1984) 32.

<sup>5</sup> With regard to the specific issue on which Renehan claims (in the passage from his second article quoted first) that I misrepresented him, it is evident that, in the final restatement of interpretation (1) in his first article (as quoted above), Renehan himself did not include “the crucial qualification ‘no further’” (i.e. “no further” than πρὸς δ’ ἄλλην τινά): The “heterosexual” interpretation which understands κόμην with ἄλλην τινά (and whose “sense is acceptable” when that is done) is actually formulated by him to *include* the words (χάσκειν πρὸς), which the “crucial qualification” was allegedly designed to *exclude*.

<sup>6</sup> Renehan (1993) 46; emphasis in the original.

This passage raises two separate issues that I want to address; the first is whether the interpretation works on its own terms; the second is whether espousing it (as Renehan now does and claims to have done all along) leaves logically open to the interpreter the option of saying that certain other interpretations—for example, Renehan’s interpretation (1) (in his earlier article)—are simultaneously possible.

As to the first question: In his interpretation (2) (as quoted immediately above and also as formulated in his first article) Renehan places his bets on a dramatic change that he thinks will be brought about *after* the words ἄλλην τινά by “the unflattering word χάσκει”: *Up to* the end of τινά the audience will be supplying κόμη; the rude word χάσκει, however, will make them realize that ἄλλην τινά can “refer to a person.” Is this plausible? No, it is not.

For unless we are to imagine that the scene unfolds in a wig emporium, the audience has thought of a person already if ἄλλην τινά makes them think of hair at all—because that is what hair comes attached to, persons. What is left to make them think that this person is female rather than male or vice versa? Only χάσκει, which contains nothing that can do this.

The argument from χάσκει is unsatisfactory. But let us grant for the sake of discussing my second question that χάσκει *could* do what Renehan claims: Where would that leave his interpretation (1) (as formulated at the end of his first article, quoted above)? Can the poem be understood all the way through in the straightforward, “heterosexual” way, or does χάσκει, as Renehan now claims, trigger the “lesbian” interpretation? Does it, or doesn’t it?

Renehan evades this crucial question, and so a crucial fact fails to emerge. Leaving aside Renehan’s ambiguous *conclusion* about which of the two interpretations posed by him is the right one, an even deeper ambiguity afflicts those two interpretations themselves: They actually number three, and one of these three (the one he now says he preferred all along) is incompatible with the other two.<sup>7</sup>

The three interpretations which Renehan presents as two are as follows:

(1) The poem proceeds on a single line of meaning: The clause ἐστὶν γὰρ ἄπ’ εὐκτίτου Λέσβου indicates that the girl is, as Lesbian women are generally reputed to be, beautiful, and so in a position to pick and choose;<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Renehan’s failure to acknowledge this fact renders his charge that I misrepresented his argument meaningless: He misrepresented it himself.

<sup>8</sup> See Renehan (1993) 44, “. . . a region associated with beautiful women. Such a woman might well assume a condescending air . . . She can do better,” and (1984) 30, “the girl can afford to pick and choose; she is beautiful.” That he regards this point as important is shown by his lengthy attempt to refute my arguments that there is no unambiguous evidence for a Lesbian reputation for female beauty (Renehan [1993] 44 n. 7). Renehan basically charges that my arguments are excessively logical; but such a criticism is self-refuting: Either my logic is correct, in which case there is no evidence for a Lesbian reputation for beauty, or the claimed evidence is such as not to admit the drawing of logical inferences from it, which is to say that the evidence is ambiguous. See further note 20 below. Incidentally, one way of defending the

κόμην is understood with ἄλλην τινά, and in the poem as a whole we have nothing more than a lament that the girl rejects the speaker for another, younger partner.<sup>9</sup>

(2a) Another line of meaning runs parallel to (1): “From Lesbos” can also mean lesbian, and ἄλλην τινά can also mean “another girl.” The ambiguity is complete: Nothing in the poem causes the two lines to intersect.

(2b) As in (2a) “from Lesbos” and ἄλλην τινά are both ambiguous, but χάσκει causes the two lines of meaning to intersect: The audience first understands (1), but then χάσκει directs them to re-interpret “from Lesbos” and ἄλλην τινά as “lesbian” and “another girl,” respectively, as per (2a).

Now if χάσκει<sup>10</sup> does what Renehan says it does, then it renders (1) and (2a) untenable. He presents (1) and (2b) as mutually compatible. But if (1) can be sustained in the unqualified way he says it is, then (2b) is not the case, and if (2b) can be sustained in the unqualified way he says it is, then (1) is not the case. You cannot have both simultaneously, at least not without appeal to some further hypothesis (such as that of different audience perceptions, entertained below), an appeal Renehan nowhere makes.<sup>11</sup>

use of *Il.* 9. 129 f. to support the theory of a widespread Lesbian reputation for female beauty that I have not seen attempted—a defense against my argument from the imperfect ἐνίκων in 9. 130—would be to identify that imperfect as either a “timeless imperfect” (on which see West on Hesiod, *Th.* 10 and H. Pelliccia, *The Structure of Archaic Greek Hymns* [diss. Yale 1985] 12 f. and 64 f.) or a timeless present “focalized” (i.e., I would say, “attracted”—see Wackernagel as cited in Pelliccia, *Structure* 64) to the temporal perspective of the events described (on which theory see A. Rijksbaron, “Euripides *Bacchae* 35–36,” *Mnemosyne* 48 [1995] 198–200).

<sup>9</sup> This interpretation has been advocated by, among others, M. L. West, “Melica,” *CQ* 20 (1970) 209.

<sup>10</sup> Or anything else. The important characteristic that distinguishes (2b) is the claim that there is something in the text that directs the audience to look for the “lesbian” interpretation, i.e. that causes the two lines of meaning to intersect.

<sup>11</sup> There is evidence that Renehan sensed the problem here: In both articles the incompatibles are kept apart from one another. In the concluding paragraphs of his first article (quoted above) this separation is achieved through two devices: (a) in presenting interpretation (1) he suppresses the source of the incompatibility, viz. the earlier argument from χάσκει (which he now chides me for failing to report), and (b) after following interpretation (1) with (2b), he immediately transforms (2b) into (2a), which is compatible with (1): “If the statement that the girl is from Lesbos intimates that she is a lesbian—and that would not become apparent (deliberately so) until the final verse [an oblique allusion to the now suppressed argument from χάσκει]—then ἄλλην refers to a woman.” This is interpretation (2b), the interpretation he now claims to have preferred all along. The immediately succeeding sentence effects the transformation into (2a): “If this interpretation is correct, Λέσβου and ἄλλην are each intentionally ambiguous: one should not then insist, with most scholars, that ἄλλην must refer either to ‘hair’ or to ‘a girl’ to the exclusion of the other. It may refer, at different levels, to both.” (Emphasis in the original, and note the logic: If the “correct” interpretation is that ἄλλην refers to a woman, then ἄλλην refers to both hair and a woman.) Contributing also to the evasion of these difficulties is the suppression of the earlier claim that the audience will have made satisfactory sense of the clause ἐστὶν γὰρ ἄπ’ εὐκτίτου Λέσβου as explaining the girl’s rejection of the speaker by telling us that she is beautiful and so in a position to pick and choose (see above, note 8). Renehan suppresses this claim when he is desirous of advocating the “lesbian” interpretation (2b). Thus in the concluding paragraphs of the first article (quoted above), when he is about to say that the “lesbian” interpretation is possible, his *previously* given interpretation of the clause (she is beautiful and can pick and choose) is watered down to

Insofar as Renehan now advocates (2b), he would seem to be in agreement with the position taken in my article about the structure of the poem (i.e. that, as per [2b], the lines of meaning are made to intersect). But where I argued that the anticipatory positioning of ἐστὶν γὰρ ἅπ' εὐκτίτου Λέσβου is what triggers the lesbian interpretation, Renehan assigns that task to χάσκει, which, as we have seen, however, cannot function in the way Renehan wants it to. I turn now to my arguments about the anticipatory γάρ-clause.

In his recent article Renehan complains that I did not do justice to his use of the parallel which he cited from Aristophanes, *Ecclesiazusae* 37–39: ὁ γὰρ ἀνὴρ, ᾧ φιλιτάτη, / Σαλαμίνιος γὰρ ἐστὶν ᾧ ζύνειμ' ἐγώ, / τὴν νύχθ' ὄλην ἤλαυνέ μ' ἐν τοῖς στρώμασιν.<sup>12</sup> Certainly one of the reasons I wrote my article was because I thought that there was more of interpretative value to be extracted from this parallel than I thought Renehan had done; thus it may be true that I underestimated his implicit suggestions. But it does appear from his new article that our ideas about the parallel differ considerably. I will quote from my earlier article the passages quoted by Renehan himself:

The function . . . of the interposed γάρ-clause . . . (“for he is from Salamis”) is perfectly clear: it provides the ethnic information that sets up and makes possible the obscene punchline. . . . The first γάρ-clause in Anacreon resembles that in Aristophanes in an even more significant way: both interrupt their sentences in order to tell the ethnic origin of the subject; in Aristophanes this ethnic information serves to set up the obscene punchline that follows, and that is its only purpose. There is an obvious point to be made from all this: an interposed or anticipatory γάρ-clause demands a “pay-off,” comic or otherwise; when the interposed clause contains ethnic information, the pay-off must present action associated with the ethnic group.<sup>13</sup>

Renehan represents my arguments as follows:

The reader will have observed that in the quotations from Pelliccia's paper just given he refers twice to “the obscene punchline” in the Aristophanes passage. The two passages from Anacreon and Aristophanes have in common 1) a parenthetical γάρ-clause and 2) an “ethnic” (perhaps better “geographic”) reference in this clause. Aristophanes also has 3) an

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“a complimentary allusion to the girl's origins.” In the second article he says, “as one goes through the sentence, ἐστὶν γὰρ ἅπ' εὐκτίτου Λέσβου is first understood to refer to the girl's illustrious homeland”—but what else could ἐστὶν ἅπ' εὐκτίτου Λέσβου possibly refer to? Anyone who doubts that we are witnessing a hedging operation here should consider Renehan's words in support of the “lesbian” interpretation in his next sentence: “. . . at which point [χάσκει] one realizes that ἐστὶν γὰρ ἅπ' εὐκτίτου Λέσβου can admit of a quite *different* (lesbian) meaning” (emphasis added)—“different” from what? Surely even with the “lesbian” meaning the words still refer to her “illustrious homeland”?

<sup>12</sup> Renehan (1993) 41–43.

<sup>13</sup> Pelliccia (1991) 31 f.

obscene ending. While Pelliccia does not quite say so in so many words, the reader naturally infers from his language that this is a third detail which the two passages must share, because such a γάρ-clause, specifically containing an ethnic or geographic reference and leading up to an *obscene* punchline, constitutes, as it were, a formal pattern. . . Parenthetical γάρ-clauses can be used for humorous effect and doubtless often were. The interesting presence in them, on occasion, of an ethnic word followed by an obscene ending does not prove that an obscene ending must always, or even usually, follow. The formal structure common to Anacreon 13 and Aristophanes *Ecclēsiāzusaē* 37–39 is neutral in this regard. It was of set purpose that I did not draw any further inferences along these lines.<sup>14</sup>

Renehan here conjures up an obviously false claim that anticipatory γάρ-clauses containing ethnic information “must always, or usually” be followed by “obscene punchlines,” and then sets about refuting it. The general principle that underlay my argument from the Aristophanes parallel was that conformity to a clearly defined and rhetorically effective structure, independently attested, can serve as a criterion for a correct reading.<sup>15</sup> In describing the structure that I perceived to be shared by the two passages I distinguished between “punchlines” and “pay-offs” as between sub-set (jokes, including obscene jokes) and set: All anticipatory γάρ-clauses must be followed by pay-offs, which is an analytic truth about “anticipatory γάρ-clauses”: They “anticipate” something, which I call the “pay-off.”<sup>16</sup> The structure which raises and exploits expectation in this way is as I observed “suitable” for the kind of sexual joke exemplified by the Aristophanes passage and the Anacreon poem on the “lesbian” interpretation.<sup>17</sup> But “pay-off” was explicitly characterized as “comic or otherwise,” and I illustrated the “otherwise” with a passage from Herodotus in which an anticipatory ethnic γάρ-clause is followed by a non-humorous and non-obscene pay-off exploiting the ethnic information earlier given, thus satisfying the expectations raised by the use of the anticipatory positioning of the γάρ-clause containing it.<sup>18</sup>

I conclude this section by stressing the point that the clause ἐστὶν γὰρ ἄπ’ εὐκτίτου Λέσβου cannot be demonstrated to have possessed any

<sup>14</sup> Renehan (1993) 42 f.

<sup>15</sup> My wording here borrows from that of *ICS*’s anonymous referee.

<sup>16</sup> Pelliccia (1991) 32.

<sup>17</sup> Pelliccia (1991) 33 n. 8.

<sup>18</sup> Pelliccia (1991) 32 n. 6. The presence of this example in my discussion makes clear the illegitimacy of Renehan’s assertion that I implicitly claimed “an obscene punchline” (or “obscene ending”) as a part of the structure described. Renehan complains ([1993] 41 f.) that what is good in my arguments here is already present in his (though I concealed this truth by misquoting his description of the Aristophanes passage as “an exactly parallel sentence-structure” with “-structure” omitted); the rest is not to his liking. But it is clear from Renehan’s errors discussed above in the text, and from the wholly irrelevant parallel “γάρ-clauses with an ethnic or geographic element” which he cites ([1993] 43), that he has misunderstood the nature and purpose of my terminology, and my arguments generally.

connotations (e.g. of Lesbian beauty or Lesbian lesbianism) that will have effectively guided the audience to an immediate understanding of what the girl is about to be revealed to do or why she does it. I suggest that this apparent defect is in fact a virtue—the virtue on which the poem’s whole effect depends. The hypothesis that the poet *meant* for the original audience not to take any immediately exploitable information from the words coheres with the larger one that the poem as a whole is a *παρά προσδοκίαν* joke. The clause’s initial contribution is on this argument a function of its being an anticipatory *γάρ*-clause: The relevance (in the pragmatic sense)<sup>19</sup> of the information it conveys (the girl’s place of origin) is, by the convention of this kind of clause, not perspicuous at the time it is communicated. But the ordinary assumption between speaker and audience is that *all* information conveyed *is* relevant: If, as with anticipatory *γάρ*-clauses, that relevance is not evident when the information is first provided, we assume, and actively expect, that it will emerge when the strands are tied together—at or no later than the pay-off. In the case of Anacreon 13, this expectation is not satisfied by the sentence relating the girl’s rejection of the speaker (τὴν μὲν ἐμὴν κόμην, / λευκὴ γάρ, καταμέμφεται), and Anacreon ensures that it is not by attaching to that clause its own explanation, independent of the girl’s place of origin: The speaker is old and has grey hair (λευκὴ γάρ). Since a young girl does not have to be from Lesbos—on one of Renehan’s intermittently advocated arguments, beautiful and stylish, and so able to pick and choose—to spurn the amatory advances of the elderly, so her rejection of the speaker will not satisfy the expectations aroused in the audience by the anticipatory *ἐστὶν γὰρ ἅπ’ εὐκτίτου Λέσβου*.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> As discussed, e.g. by H. P. Grice, *Studies in the Ways of Words* (Cambridge 1989) 28: “*Relation*. I expect a partner’s contribution to be appropriate to the immediate needs at each stage of the transaction. If I am mixing ingredients for a cake, I do not expect to be handed a good book.”

<sup>20</sup> There is a secondary question here that enters into Renehan’s complaints against me: Did Lesbian women have a reputation for lesbianism in the time of Anacreon? The answer is important for those who, like M. Marcovich (“Anacreon, 358 *PMG*,” *AJP* 104 [1983] 372–83) and me, want to find an overt reference to lesbianism in the poem. Obviously it is in Marcovich’s and my interest if there exists relevant evidence *outside* of the poem itself. Marcovich thought that the character and fame of Sappho’s poetry constituted this external evidence. I suggested (Pelliccia [1991] 33 n. 8) that, assuming the “lesbian” interpretation, the poem would not succeed as a joke “if the equation” between Lesbos and lesbianism were “so well established as to be automatic”—too much would be given away too soon: What is needed for that interpretation is not the reputation for lesbianism, but a basis for such a reputation, the raw materials out of which the malicious wit (Anacreon) can make the reputation-creating joke. As Marcovich says, Sappho’s poetry provides a basis for such. Renehan complains ([1993] 45) that I misrepresented him by saying that he rejected arguments like Marcovich’s as circular. I leave it to the interested reader to examine his original discussion in its entirety ([1984] 30) and to decide whether I misrepresented Renehan’s position, or he stated it in an unclear and self-contradictory way. The hard-to-support claim that the clause *ἐστὶν γὰρ ἅπ’ εὐκτίτου Λέσβου* can refer to a Lesbian reputation for female beauty (see above, note 8) raises another question: Both that interpretation and the one that has the audience eventually realize that the reference of the anticipatory *γάρ*-clause is to the supposed lesbianism of Lesbian women involve assumptions difficult to different degrees; why do I think the latter so much easier than the former? First, because it requires only a basis for a



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Renehan approaches the finish of his recent article with the following statement: "The problem of conscious ambiguities is of no little importance in poetry. Some twenty years ago the great American Pindaric scholar, Elroy Bundy, wrote of 'ambiguity of this sort' as 'being one of the most powerful instruments of meaning in poetry'."<sup>21</sup> If readers are conscious of a failure to live up to Bundy's pronouncement, they will find their sense of inadequacy alleviated by the discovery in a footnote that Bundy committed the quoted words to "an undated letter" to Renehan.<sup>22</sup> Renehan's presentation of this item from his personal correspondence leaves us with the impression that Bundy, who died in 1975, somehow endorsed the discovery of "ambiguity of this sort" in Anacreon 13 nine years later.<sup>23</sup> The question of genuine interest raised and skirted here is how "conscious ambiguity" is defined—for example, whose consciousness counts?

Renehan's long concluding paragraph is devoted to demonstrating the kinship of the ambiguity he now unambiguously discerns in Anacreon 13 to that of Sophocles, *OT* 337 f., where Tiresias says to Oedipus, ὀργὴν ἐμέμψω τὴν ἐμήν, τὴν σὴν δ' ὁμοῦ / ναίουσαν οὐ κατείδες, ἀλλ' ἐμὲ ψέγεις.<sup>24</sup> That the reference can be to anger or to Jocasta is obvious; but precisely how is this relevant to Renehan's now preferred (2b) interpretation

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reputation rather than the reputation itself and, second, because stereotypes are very easily formed on the basis of (alleged) *behavioral* characteristics, and very rarely (if ever) on the basis of beauty. That is true about both ancient and modern ethnic stereotyping. For example, in America, Californian women have the greatest reputation for beauty, and there are jokes that exploit this reputation. But in order for them to do so something in the context prior to the punchline must guide the listener to the idea of beauty. If, however, a joke gives no such guidance, but preposes the ethnic information (e.g. "I know this woman—she's from California—and she . . ."), unusually high beauty is not what will be inferred from it, but behavior associated with the group. (This is not to say that physical characteristics *in general* are never inferred, because they are; my point has to do with the claim that high beauty is ever generalized for entire ethnic groups or populations to the degree that mere mention of the ethnic identity alone immediately connotes that the given individual representative is "beautiful.") What is especially odd about the "beautiful Lesbians" interpretation of the γάρ-clause is its superfluosity: That the girl is elegant (her sandals) and attractive (the speaker's arousal) is already indicated in the first stanza; the γάρ-clause must be telling us something *else* about her. As to the immediate *effect* of the clause when first heard (but before being completed in the pay-off), I would say that the language (εὐκτίτου especially) instead of being meant to invoke a (not proven) Lesbian reputation for female beauty, is rather simply intended to sound epic—reminiscent of the way characters in Homer are identified or identify themselves upon first meeting others: "I hail from horse-nurturing Argos" or the like. It thus sets the girl up high for her impending fall.

<sup>21</sup> Renehan (1993) 46.

<sup>22</sup> Renehan (1993) 46 n. 9.

<sup>23</sup> Bundy's exoteric doctrine was somewhat different: "In general, common sense ought to tell us that one thing cannot be another . . . In the judgment of distinction of meaning . . . lies the critic's task" (E. L. Bundy, "The 'Quarrel between Kallimachos and Apollonios,'" *CSCA* 5 [1972] 90 n. 111).

<sup>24</sup> Renehan (1993) 46 f.

of Anacreon 13, in which the last word of the speaker's utterance (χάσκει) leads the hearers, according to Renehan, to the solution? Tiresias' retort exemplifies the ambiguity of the seer or oracle, here adapted to the purposes of "tragic" irony. The ambiguity is evident only to those who know what the two possible meanings are (Tiresias and the theatrical audience), and is not evident at all to the dramatic audience, including, especially, the addressee, for whom the surface meaning satisfies all the pragmatic requirements (i.e. there is nothing performing the function that Renehan assigns to χάσκει in Anacreon 13). By identifying Tiresias' ambiguity with that of Anacreon 13, Renehan would appear once again to be abandoning his (2b) interpretation of the latter in favor of (2a), whereby nothing overtly points to the possibility of an alternative meaning.

Anacreon 13—on Renehan's favored (2b) interpretation—seems to work differently. What (2b) and its congeners assume is that there are available to small-scaled, self-contained exercises other resources by means of which to stimulate the audience to look for ambiguity:<sup>25</sup> Creating an expectation that is not satisfied, at least not immediately on first hearing, is one of them. The anticipatory positioning of ἐστὶν γὰρ ἅπ' εὐκτίτου Λέσβου in Anacreon 13 indicates that there is something to be looked for: We accept on faith that such information is going to prove relevant, which sets us to look for that relevance. If by the poem's end the audience has not hit on something that makes use of the ethnic information, then the defeated expectation itself will incite them to go back and search for a solution.

It is out of these facts that we might construct a good argument that Anacreon 13 is ambiguous in something of the manner Renehan seems to want. The way to do so would be to forget Renehan's implausible argument from χάσκει, accept my point that ἐστὶν γὰρ ἅπ' εὐκτίτου Λέσβου conveys no immediately usable explanatory information, but only serves, by virtue of its being proposed, to make the audience sense that something is up and to expect a pay-off, and then just say, "Although this kind of thing cannot be demonstrated with any formal argument, it makes a better poem if we imagine the audience hearing the whole thing through, taking ἄλλην to refer to hair, and thinking at the end, 'Well . . . ? So what? So he's mad at the girl—where's the promised pay-off?,' and then imagine that, as they recur to the unsatisfied promise of ἐστὶν γὰρ ἅπ' εὐκτίτου Λέσβου and the bathetic flatness of the hair interpretation, it slowly dawns on them that famous Sappho of Lesbos famously liked girls, and so ἄλλην here might be

<sup>25</sup> When I distinguish Anacreon 13 from, e.g. *OT*, as being "self-contained" I am thinking in particular of the possibilities open to Anacreon in treating a trivial and unnoticed incident involving two anonymous private individuals, as opposed to the possibilities—for tragic ambiguities, e.g.—open to Sophocles in reworking a well-known legend about famous and well-established mythical characters.

a girl, and the first girl is identified as Lesbian in the sense of being 'like Sappho' in that respect."<sup>26</sup>

This interpretation seems to me to be attractive, but it raises the possibility that we might go further and posit different audience responses. Everyone has observed that some people are very highly attuned to witticisms and wit generally, while others are defective in this respect, sometimes not understanding a joke even when it is explained to them. Most people fall somewhere in between. In my earlier paper I pointed out that what led Renehan (and others) to supply κόμην with ἄλλην τινά was the assumption that since μέν has κόμην, it was therefore to be supplied with δέ also, and I cited passages illustrating how that kind of assumption about μέν and δέ could be defeated.<sup>27</sup> That evidence and argument were meant to explain how an audience might as soon as they heard it take ἄλλην τινά to refer to a girl; we can now add that the evidence might also and perhaps more plausibly be taken as indicating how a less quick-witted audience would understand the particles to work *after* they had gone back and unravelled the joke, in the manner described in the last paragraph: On the first, unsatisfying run-through they will supply "hair," on the second, "girl."

<sup>26</sup> I will illustrate my point about the lack of immediate connotation in the ethnic γάρ-clause with an example drawn from the modern world. As I said in my earlier paper, for the purposes of the joke it is necessary that the association of Lesbos with lesbianism must not be so well-established that it would give the joke away before it was concluded. I want to point out now that jokes can be constitutive of stereotypes that do not really exist before they make them exist. As my example I choose a scene from Woody Allen's film version of *Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Sex*. As I recall it, in the last skit of that movie we find ourselves present in the brain of a would-be male seducer out on a date with a young woman. The brain is depicted as a kind of NASA control center, with "scientists" walking around in white lab coats in front of various computers and things. They see their present job to be to assist with the seduction of the dinner companion, and they discuss whether or not the "mission" will be a success. An older scientist then says to a younger, "Have you taken a look at her?," and they move to some sort of viewing scope that lets them see across the dinner table to the woman, who at that moment says, "I'm a graduate of New York University." The scientists immediately laugh with pleasure, make the "thumbs up," and give other indications that this information suggests that the seduction is a done deal. The audience in the theater where I saw the movie in the early 70s found this joke on NYU women students immensely funny. This was in Berkeley, and I would imagine that most members of the audience, like me, came to the movie with absolutely no preconceptions along these lines about NYU students. I do not know to this day if the stereotype had any existence prior to this movie, or after it, and it does not matter if it had not: For those of us who had never heard of it, the joke simultaneously created and exploited the stereotype, and the stereotype did not survive after the joke was over. In other words, when the woman said the words "I'm a graduate of New York University" they had no connotation to us in the audience; but when the scientists reacted in the way they did, and did so in the context to which we were privy, we were able to supply her words retrospectively with the necessary connotation. In this case the joke created a stereotype by giving concrete (and ephemeral) expression to pre-existing general prejudices that large cities are home to sexual promiscuity, and a 1950s-era notion of a kind not uncommon in Allen's films that women who go to college are likely to be "fast" or "easy." Similarly, Anacreon's poem may have opportunistically put together an idea of general Lesbian lesbianism on the basis of Sappho's poetry.

<sup>27</sup> Pelliccia (1991) 35 f.

Three possible audiences correspond to the three character types described:

(A) The ready wit—in particular, the familiar sub-type who sees references to sex everywhere:<sup>28</sup> A hits on the joke as soon as the words ἄλλην τινά are pronounced.

(B) The majority: They do not see the joke so quickly as A does, but stimulated by the anticipatory γάρ-clause (as described above) they go back over the poem until they hit upon the solution.

(C) The obtusely humorless: Insensitive to the implications of the anticipatory γάρ-clause, C takes the poem as in interpretation (1) above (a simple lament that the girl prefers a younger partner); C cannot understand what everyone is laughing about (or, today, expressing indignation about).

B is the ideal audience, the mentality to which the composition has been geared (A might see the point even *too* quickly). C should not be disqualified from the discussion on the grounds that he or she misinterprets or fails to interpret. Before an audience comprising A, B, and C, the poet might derive the highest gratification from C.

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<sup>28</sup> Many today who have not earned membership in this category are assimilated into it by the historical accident that “from Lesbos” has implications or associations that would not have been automatic at the time of the poem’s composition.