

ignorare l'autore, perché non riconoscere la stessa possibilità per i frammenti fiorentini? Anch'essi sono frammenti di un anonimo. Dello stesso? Non ci sono elementi per affermarlo, e naturalmente nemmeno per escluderlo; così come è possibile – non più che possibile – che entrambi i gruppi di frammenti, o solo i fiorentini o solo i londinesi, siano dovuti, per esempio, ad uno degli storici evocati dai critici moderni.

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AN ELUCIDATION OF MACHON  
FR. 5 (GOW)

In his edition of the fragments of Machon, Cambridge 1965, Gow's fifth narrates an episode concerning the behaviour of Archephon the Athenian parasite at the table of King Ptolemy of Egypt. A great variety of fishes was placed before the guests, and Arch. cheerfully helped himself to everything except the gobies, *κωβιοί*. We are told of his baffling reactions to this dish at 37-45:

*τῶν κωβιῶν δ' ἀπέσχετ' ἐγκρατέστατα.  
πάνν δὴ παραδόξον γενομένου τοῦ πράγματος  
καὶ τοῦ βασιλέως πυθόμενον τὰ λκλήγορος,  
Μὴ παρεόρακεν Ἀρχεφῶν τοὺς κωβιούς;  
ὁ κυρτὸς εἶπε, Πάνν μὲν οὖν τοῦναντίον,  
Πτολεμαί', ἑώρακε πρῶτος, ἀλλ' οὐχ ἄπτεται,  
τοῦψον δὲ σέβεται τοῦτο καὶ δέδοικέ πως,  
οὐδ' ἐστὶν αὐτῷ πάτριον ὄντ' ἀσύμβολον  
ἰχθὺν ἔχοντα ψῆφον ἀδικεῖν οὐδένα.*

The clarification of the joke depends on the meaning of the key-phrase *ἔχοντα ψῆφον* at line 45, but there are some general considerations to which we should first attend.

In the crucial final line we find *ἀδικεῖν*. It seems very likely that we have to do with legal implications here, and it would be useful to trace the gradual build-up on the concept of disrespect and legal wrongdoing of which the last verse is the culmination. At 42-3 we are told that Arch. was the first to see the gobies; but he does not touch them since he has great regard for them and even feels a tinge of fear. Arch., according to Ptolemy's

witty informant, would not eat the gobies because he considers it a violation of respect to lay hold of them. We find in *LSJ* that *ἄπτεσθαι* can be used, as it most certainly is here, in the sense of "to assault." At 40 *παρεόρακεν* is ambiguous. It may mean "to fail to see." But it is obvious that Alcenor takes Ptolemy to have asked whether Arch. had passed over the gobies *out of disdain*, since he feels it necessary to underscore the notion that Arch. does indeed hold these fishes in high esteem<sup>1</sup>).

Now Ptolemy is surprised when Arch. abstains from the gobies, — *πάνυ δὴ παραδόξου γενομένου τοῦ πράγματος* (38). He would not have been baffled unless he had expected the parasite to fall upon the fishes with the same relish which the other guests evinced. Arch.'s reaction is anomalous. This means that we have to take *κατεπλάγησαν* (32) as expressing the expected reaction of the guests to the gobies; a reaction opposite to that which the king feared was Arch.'s. Thus the word does not refer to the disappointment of the guests, but to their pleasant surprise at a choice dish. Arch.'s apparent dislike for the gobies proved puzzling to the royal host precisely because his other guests greeted their appearance with exclamations of joy. There is nothing strange in the use of *καταπλήσσω* for a pleasant surprise. At line 280 of Gow's fragments we find *καταπλεγείς* used to express the delight of Diphilus when he received a bowl of wine that was colder than usual, and at 199 the girl Melitta is called *καταπληκτικός*, "a stunner," again a pleasant surprise for the onlooker. We may compare as well Chariton, *Chaireas and Callirhoe*, I. 14. 1-2: *ὁ δὲ Λεωνᾶς καὶ πάντες οἱ ἔνδον ἐπιστάσης αἰφνίδιον κατεπλάγησαν, οἱ μὲν δοκοῦντες θεὰν ἑωρακέναι....*

Barigazzi, with more imagination than logic, takes the king to have carefully planned a trick aimed at Arch., "uno scherzo del re preparato al parassita" (op. cit. 340), so that the gobies should be served up as though they were delicacies, knowing

1) There is really no need to suppose with G. Giangrande in his review of Gow's edition in *Class. Rev.* 15, 1965, 277, that the gobies were exceptionally large, and that this is the reason for the king's question 'Surely Arch. has not overlooked them?' and for the surprise registered by the other guests as the fishes were brought in. This would suggest that we are to see a contrast between Egyptians accustomed to only small gobies, and Athenians brought up on huge ones and unperturbed at the sight of unusually large Egyptian specimens. A. Barigazzi, in *Riv. Fil. Istr. Class.* 95, 1967, 340, interprets the king's question to refer to the smallness of these fishes: "Alla piccolezza della portata allude anche il verbo *ὄραω* nel v. 42." We shall see that the joke does not pivot on the size of the gobies.

full well that they were not. However attractive this suggestion seems in itself, it is untenable. If the king had planned such a trick in the full knowledge that gobies were worthless in the eyes of an Athenian, he would have found it quite natural that Arch. ignored them when he could have availed himself of better fare. But we are specifically told that Arch.'s refraining from them proved a puzzlement for the king (39). In the absence of even a hint that the king was merely pretending to be surprised at Arch.'s conduct and had arranged beforehand with Alcenor to poke fun at him, we must take the king's surprise to be real and genuine.

Let us now turn to the crux of the entire joke. What exactly do the two last verses mean? At the very outset of this quest we must beware of that trap into which Gow, for instance, falls. He remarks, *op. cit.* 69: "In what sense however the fish ἔχει ψῆφον is highly obscure." Richard Kannicht rightly observes that ἰχθὺν in the final verse is a comic twist for some such word as ξέρον<sup>2)</sup>. This means that the real-life situation of which the phrase ἔχει ψῆφον is a parody would represent a person, not a fish, who can be said "to have a ψῆφος." From the parodic end of our joke, then, we can derive what the real-life circumstances would be. At the close of the joke, we pass from the convivial sphere into the legal. In this latter, we would in actual life have *two classes of people*, – those who are ἀσύμβολοι and those who have ψῆφοι. This antithesis in the legal sphere must be parallel to that in the convivial sphere, whence the joke took its origin. Thus in the legal sphere as well, an ἀσύμβολος must be in an inferior position to a man who is said ἔχειν ψῆφον. In both spheres, then, persons who are ἀσύμβολοι, i. e. without σύμβολα<sup>3)</sup> or συμβολαί, should not do wrong to their superiors and betters who do have these possessions. But the opposite of the ἀσύμβολος is, in our fragment, the person who has a ψῆφος. The conclusion must be that ψῆφοι are to be considered the equivalent of συμβολα or συμβολαί. The crucial question, the answer to which will provide us with a solution to all of our difficulties, is therefore this: when are σύμβολα or συμβολαί the same as ψῆφοι? The answer I suggest is, – when they mean a *ring*. Now ψῆφος means a precious stone,

2) In his review in *Gnomon*, 38, 1966, 552.

3) I do not find in *LSJ* any instance of ἀσύμβολος meaning "without σύμβολα", but the joke here demands that the word should cover both σύμβολα and συμβολαί, since both the legal and the convivial spheres must be included.

but the word is used especially of precious stones set in rings and it comes by metonymy to mean a ring (see *LSJ* s.v.). Rings have a common and important role in pledges, and they often serve as a means of establishing a person's identity and his legal status. These two functions of rings are well brought out in Menander, Epitr. 326–31. The *hetaira chreste* Habrotonon has in her possession the ring of Charisius, but she must guard against the rash assumption that it must necessarily function as a recognition-token, since it can equally well have been given as a pledge for a gambling-debt or for a dinner-party.<sup>4)</sup> Thus *ψῆφος* = *ring* would serve equally well in both the convivial and the legal spheres.<sup>5)</sup> Perhaps it would be useful to arrange in schematic form the two spheres in which the joke operates:

*Convivial:*

Those who have contributions for dinner-parties in the form of rings, i.e. *ψῆφοι*, and are of superior standing to those who have no contributions and are *ἀσύμβολοι*.

*Legal:*

Those who have recognition-tokens in the form of rings, i.e. *ψῆφοι*, and are of superior standing to those who have no such *σύμβολα* and may be called *ἀσύμβολοι*.

One of the surest ways of protecting a person from assault and battery was to claim the privileges adhering to Attic citizenship. It is within this framework that Alcenor's joke operates. He suggests that Athenians are so nervously preoccupied with legal status and consider it so grave a crime to assault a person who is wearing a ring (*ἔχειν* often = "to be wearing") which can prove his citizen status, that Archephon hesitates to lay hold of even a fish which has a ring. This of course does not imply that there is some real way in which a fish may be said to have a *ψῆφος*. We have already remarked that the phrase *ἰχθὺν ἔχοντα ψῆφον* (45) is a comic twist of the idea of a *person* who has a *ψῆφος*. I find it strange that Kannicht who so rightly called atten-

4) For the motif of a ring given as a pledge for a dinner-party we may also compare Ter. Eun. 539f. (quoted by Gow ad 44f.), and Lucian, Dial. Meretr. 7. 296, *ὄχι ἔχοντι αὐτῶν καταθεῖναι συμβολὴν τὸν δακτύλιον δέδωκας*.

5) Barigazzi, op. cit. 341, pertinently observes: "ma per la netta contrapposizione a *ὄντ' ἀσύμβολον* sarà da pensare ad un riferimento ai pegni lasciati dai partecipanti ad un banchetto come garanzia del pagamento, cioè *ψῆφοι* = *σύμβολαί* ... che spesso erano anelli." Unfortunately he does not see how the joke turns on the possession of recognition-tokens in the form of rings and the consequent legal implications.

tion to this feature, should pointlessly explore the possibility of a serious meaning for this phrase. He says, *op. cit.* 552: "...entweder: 'der so kostbar ist, dass auf ihm eine ψῆφος liegt' ... vielleicht richtiger: 'der beziffert (oder berechnet, kalkuliert) ist.'" The goby which is here an Egyptian delicacy will evidently involve a pledge. But it must be emphasised that when Alcenor says of the fish "it has a ψῆφος," he is not interested in conveying this piece of information; that the goby was highly prized in Egypt is the tacit but obvious assumption of the joke. There are three clearly discernible stages in the progress of thought in this joke. 1) The fish is personified. The importance of the much appreciated goby here makes the personification easy and understandable. 2) There is an identification of the thing towards which the contribution is made, i. e. the fish, with the contributor himself. Thus it is that in the eyes of the witty Alcenor, Archephon sees the fish itself, rather than a contributing guest, possessing a ring. 3) There is a transference from the sphere of the dinner-party to that of legal status and its implications. There is therefore no need to put ἰχθὺν ἔχοντα ψῆφον upon any exquisite grammatical rack and force it to mean "a fish involving a pledge." It means quite straightforwardly "a (personified) fish wearing or possessing a ring."

Alcenor's witticism is aimed at the foreigner Archephon. It is not given by way of offence, but in defence. The πάτριον of line 44 points up the contrast between Egyptians and Athenians. The setting of the joke is therefore not otiose. Arch. is away from his homeland and its customs. The goby which, as it emerges from our passage, was prized in Egypt, was accounted of little value in Athens (*cf.* Gow ad line 31). When all of Ptolemy's guests had welcomed the choice dish with expressions of delight, Arch. the foreigner ignored the gobies. The manner in which they had been served, too, would have suggested to a sensitive guest at the court of a foreign king that in that country at least gobies were a delicacy, and that he should behave appropriately. But Arch. was evidently not the man to observe such niceties of conduct. His behaviour suggests that Athens obviously knows best, and if gobies are held in contempt there, then so should they be elsewhere. Arch. therefore insults the Egyptians and their customs, and Alcenor with consummate dexterity turns the tables on him at an equally national level by exposing the ridiculous lengths to which Athenians will go in their deference to citizen status.

Finally, on a point of detail. At line 29, we read *καράβων τ'ἀληθινῶν*. Giangrande (op. cit. 277) disagrees with Gow's remark that the adjective presents "grave difficulties", and he takes it to mean "of good quality". Barigazzi's interpretation (op. cit. 340) is essentially the same, but he adds some dramatic flavour. Arch. is used to cheap food, not to the exquisite dishes laid on by Ptolemy. The crayfish are themselves among the best; "perciò sono detti ἀληθινοί", says Barigazzi, "ottimi, come se il parassita non credesse ai suoi occhi". This seems to be overdoing it somewhat. Such a meaning would perhaps fit better the utterance of an excited parasite than the objective narrative introducing the joke. I would like to suggest that ἀληθινός is far more functional than it has been so far suggested. It seems to me that it looks forward to the mention of Alcenor as ὁ κροτός, "the hunchback", at line 41. We find that a type of crayfish, the *καρίς*, is coupled with the adjectives *κροτή*, *κροτή*, *καμπύλη*<sup>6</sup>), and a certain parasite Callimedon was in fact nicknamed *Κάραβος* (see Gow ad line 29), presumably because he had a hump such as Alcenor's. It is therefore reasonable to believe that the narrator of our fragment, conscious of (a) the fact that *καραβος* could be taken as a nickname or at least as alluding to a hunchback, and of (b) Alcenor's hump, may have thought it wise to make it clear from the start that the point of this anecdote did not turn on "human crayfish", hunchbacks, but on "real fishes." In jokes based on double entendre, there should be no non-functional ambiguities.

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### ZUM MOTIV DER „ÜBERLISTUNG EINES JENSEITIGEN“

In der Gedenkschrift für Wilhelm Brandenstein<sup>1)</sup> behandelt F. R. Schröder S. 325 ff. das Motiv vom überlisteten Dämon, der durch (meist selbstverschuldete) Berausung gefangen und dann zu einer hilfreichen Aussage gezwungen wird. Schröder

6) See P. Chantraine, *Le fragment 26 de Sophron et les noms grecs de la crevette*, *Maia* 15, 1963, 136-42.

1) *Studien zur Sprachwissenschaft und Kulturkunde* (Innsbrucker Beiträge zur Kulturwissenschaft 14), Innsbruck 1968, hrsg. von M. Mayrhofer.