TWO NOTES ON ARISTOPHANES

1. Equites: 259—263.

κάποσυκάζεις πιέζων τούς υπευθύνους, σκοπών
οίτις αὐτῶν ὁμός ἐστὶν ἢ πέτσων ἢ μὴ πέτσων
κἀν τι' αὐτῶν γνώς ἀπράγμον' ὑντα καὶ κεχηνότα,
καταγαγών ἐκ Χερρονήσου, διαλαβὼν, ἀγκυρίσας,
ἐπὶ ἀποστρέψας τὸν ὄμον αὐτὸν ἐνεκολῆβας.

In these verses there appears to be an abrupt change of metaphor from 'figs' to 'wrestling' which has been noted before but not adequately explained.¹ Yet there need be no difficulty, provided one realises that Aristophanes is being obscene.

Two preliminary points need to be made before details are discussed. First, the fig was an image of the vagina or the anus;² second, wrestling was frequently a metaphor for sexual intercourse.³ There is constant play between the bribing of auditors who must pass the public accounts of those magistrates recently in office or the squeezing, throttling, and knocking down of a country-bumpkin — country metaphors of farmers testing fruit to see if it is ripe and knocking a lamb on the head to provide meat for a meal — and crude sexual foreplay before violent rape. Consideration of the vocabulary makes this clear.

άποσυκάζεις: (i) squeezing figs; (ii) having sexual intercourse.

Cf. συκάζουσαν Strattis fr. 3.⁴

ἐνεκολῆβας: explained, on the evidence of the Scholiast and Hesychius as 'to gulp down'. The Scholiast, however, has not noticed the obscene play in the passage and has probably derived the word from κόλον and βαίνω (cf. Suidas s. v. ἐκολαβήσας).⁵ Moreover,

¹ See, for example, B. B. Rogers' notes ad locum in his edition of the play.
⁴ I suspect there is double entendre in Aristophanes: Pax 1324—5; cf. 1346, 1350: and that Ameipsias, fr. 33 may have been part of a similar joke.
⁵ Rogers' note: "Having got his antagonist into this helpless attitude, what does Paphlagon do with him? He opens his mouth and swallows him down whole at a gulp, just as a boaconstrictor disposes of his victim."
the transition from wrestling to feeding is very abrupt. If one suggests κολέον = sheath, scabbard, and βαίνω as an alternative, the natural sequence of wrestling/intercourse is preserved.6

I therefore paraphrase the passage thus. „You squeeze and touch up the audit committee, trying to find out which of them is virgin territory, which one is open to corruption, and which is uncorrupted. If you discover one who is inexperienced but wide open to it, you fetch him in from the Back of Beyond,7 noble him, pin him down with your ‘hook’, pull his shoulders back, then ram him right down to the gut.“


έστι δ’ εν Φαναίσι πρός τῇ
Κλεψύδρα πανούργον ἐγ-
γλωττογαστόρων γένος,
οὐθερίζουσιν τε καὶ σπει-
ρουσι συκάζουσι τε·
βάρβαρο δ’ εϊσιν γένος,
Γοργία τε καὶ Φιλίπποι.
καίτο τῶν ἐγγλωττογαστό-
ρων ἐκείνων τῶν Φιλίππων
πανταχóου τῆς ’Αττικῆς ἡ
γλώττα χωρίς τέμνεται.

Once again, the joke depends upon two points. Γλωττίζειν means to fellate [A nth.  G r a e c. 5.129 (Automedon)], and συκάζουσι here means not only to gather figs but to have sexual intercourse. One must remember how many Greek terms for sexual activity are metaphors from farming — ἀρώσιμος, ἀροτήρ, ἀροτος, ἀροτρον, ἀρόω, to go no further, are all capable of a sexual connotation. Gardens, orchards, meadows, may be terms for the M o n s  V e n e r i s.8 Cropping harvest, sowing seed, gathering fruit with the tongue, ‘figging’, therefore, constitute a well-known type of slander on the hated foreigner. He is loud-mouthed, makes a fortune at our expense, and is disgustingly over-sexed.*

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6 Cf. ἕγκολεήσατο = sheathed his sword, Hesychius and Suidas. Notice further what Suidas has to say about ἐκολάβησας He uses terms of violence and wrestling first — προσέκρουσας, κατεπάλαισας before going on to ἵνα δὲ ἡ γα-
στήρ’ Gulping down may have been suggested by verse 258 — τὰ κοινὰ πρὸν λα-
χείν κατεβήσεις.

7 Literally, ‘out of Chersonese.’ I take it that this is meant to imply that the man is a provincial booby.

8 See M. Marcovich: „A new poem of Archilochus: P. Colon, inv. 7511,“ GRBS 16 (1975), 12 — his note on line 16 and the other passages there cited. Clanak 6a

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