

Poetics and Precedents in Archilochus' Erotic Imagery

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In recent years, scholars working on archaic poetry have become increasingly interested in how these texts position themselves relative to the wider tradition from which they originate. The goal of this paper is to apply this approach to Archilochus' use of metaphor, with particular reference to erotic language. As we shall see, Archilochus' imagery is imaginative, yet draws on deep roots, for he uses conventional motifs in a way which plays on and undercuts their usual role in the poetic tradition. As such, his approach to imagery is similar to his use of Homeric language: we find close engagement with traditional material, yet the pre-existing tropes are reworked to distinctively Archilochean ends.¹ Archilochus selects types of imagery with a rich heritage in the Greek cultural tradition, and presents them in a way which assumes audience knowledge of their conventional associations. These connotations are then reworked, frequently in ways which are humorous or provocative, and so fit Archilochus' self-positioning as an iambic poet.

Archilochus' imagery is at its richest in his erotic fragments, which draw on long-established metaphors associated with sexuality and desire. The most pervasive of these, both in Archilochus and the wider Greek tradition, is the use of metaphor derived from the natural world to represent female sexuality. Whereas Archilochus seems to favour animal imagery for moments which are outright obscene (perhaps parodying the epic use of animal similes in heroic contexts), in poems whose eroticism is more subtle it is the world of plants which comes to the fore.² In particular, Archilochus makes much of the association between human and natural fertility, and of the tradition of likening the female body to the natural landscape. This article will examine a series of fragments which engage richly with this theme (fr. 30-31, 188, and 196aW), and will argue that our understanding of these poems is enhanced by reading them through the filter of the Greek *locus amoenus* or 'meadow of love'.

The association between the female body and natural fertility is a long-established trope in Greek literature, and one which is found in almost all erotic lyric. Women's bodies, and their potential for child-bearing, are likened to the fertility of the earth, and hence descriptions of fertile landscapes and the fruit and flowers they produce become erotically charged symbols. In literary terms we can trace the origins of this device back to the Iliadic *Hieros Gamos* (Il. 14.346-51) where the intercourse of Zeus and Hera is mirrored by the growth which surrounds them, or the abduction of Persephone in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (1-18), where Persephone's sexual ripeness is reflected in the lush surroundings she plays in, and her

¹ On Archilochus' close linguistic engagement with epic cf. e.g. Tarditi (1958); Page (1964); Scherer (1964); Aloni (1981) 21-64; Fowler (1987) 13-33; Létoublon (2008). Archilochus' use of Homeric ethics, and whether we should see him as 'subverting' traditional values, is much discussed: see e.g. Fraenkel (1975) ch. 4; Snell (1953) ch. 3; Dover (1964) 196-8; Russo (1974); Burnett (1983) 38-42; Barker and Christensen (2006); Swift (2012).

² Erotic animal imagery: fr. 41, 43, 189. For discussions see West (1974) 123-4 (on fr. 41); Gerber (1973) and Corrêa (2002) (on fr. 189), and esp. Corrêa (2010) who discusses all these fragments, and also includes a suggestion by Ewen Bowie that fr. 201 may come from an erotic context (175).

readiness for ‘plucking’ is shown by her picking of the flower which transforms into the gateway to Hades and so marriage.³ The conceit that flower-picking in a rural setting leads to seduction is a commonplace of Greek literature and myth:⁴ moreover, real girls emulated their mythological prototypes by participating in the flower-picking festivals which we know to have occurred in historical Greece as a form of *rite-de-passage*.⁵ Indeed, the prevalence of the motif in myth and ritual shows that it is not just a literary trope but something integral to Greek perceptions of the world:⁶ for example, we find the association between sex and agricultural activity in Athenian wedding ritual, where the bride is given ‘for the ploughing of legitimate children’ and in the ceremony carries a vessel for roasting barley.⁷ Similarly, the bride was showered with fruit and nuts on her arrival into her new home, symbolising the fertility she was expected to bring to the household.⁸

If married women are symbolised by cultivated ploughland, the wild growth of the uncultivated meadow comes to represent the titillating virginity of the *parthenos*, whose sexuality is burgeoning but not yet claimed.⁹ Erotic scenes in poetry, therefore, are regularly set in meadows filled with fruit, flowers, flowing waters, and shady foliage, all symbols of fertility and growth, and this causes the boundary between the seduction and the setting to become blurred. This strand of imagery is used repeatedly by lyric authors, so its appearance in Archilochus is not surprising.¹⁰ However, when we examine Archilochus’ use of this motif, we find that he plays upon its very conventionality. Archilochus deliberately inverts or reworks the *topos* to achieve striking poetic effects, a technique which relies upon audience familiarity with the motif, as the gap between the typical and the Archilochean usage comes to take on poetic significance. On analysis, Archilochus’ use of nature imagery is rarely straightforward but usually has a sly or provocative subtext.

The body as meadow: fr. 30 and 31 W

The most superficially conventional use of nature imagery occurs in fragments 30 and 31 W, both passages which describe a beautiful young girl and draw on the conventions of the *locus amoenus* to do so. Though we have few clues to help us with the fragments’ original context, many scholars have suggested that the fragments came from the same poem, perhaps even as a continuous passage.¹¹ In fact, the shared use of imagery evocative of the *locus amoenus*

³ See Richardson (1974) 140-2; Foley (1994) 33-4. For similar imagery in the Near Eastern tradition see also Kramer (1969) 59.

⁴ Cf. e.g. [Hes]. *Cat.* fr. 140; Eur. *Ion* 887-96, *Hel.* 244-9; Theoc. 11.25-7, Mosch. *Eur.* 63-71, and see Lefkowitz (1993); Deacy (1997) 44-5.

⁵ See Strabo 6.1.5.33-8; Pollux 1.37; Paus. 2.35.5; Schol. Ar. *Ran.* 344 = Soph. fr. 89.

⁶ On ritual connections between sexual and agricultural fertility see Harrison (1922) 549-51; West (1966) 423

⁷ On the betrothal wording cf. e.g. Men., *Dysc.* 844, *Mis.* 444, *Pk.* 1013-14, *Sam.* 727; Luc. *Tim.* 17; Chariton 3.2.2.3: for earlier metaphors comparing marriage to ploughing cf. Aesch. *Eum.* 658-61; Soph. *Ant.* 569; Eur. *Phoen.* 18. On the marriage ceremony Pollux 1.246, 3.37-8; Zenobius 3.99; *Suda* 3971 = ii.491.20 Adler; Harpokration s.v. λικνοφόρος. For discussion see Carson (1990) 152-3; Winkler (1990) 181-3.

⁸ See Pomeroy (1997) 71.

⁹ See e.g. Bremer (1975); Vernant (1983) 135-42; Haß (1998); Swift (2009).

¹⁰ Cf. e.g. Sapph. fr. 2, 96 V (and cf. Demetrius *On Style* 136, where he claims that the motif is pervasive in Sappho’s poetry); Anacr. fr. 346, 417 PMG; Ibyc. fr. 186 PMGF; Pind. *Pyth.* 9.37, fr. 122 SM: see Heirman (2012) 86-112.

¹¹ Cf. Bergk (1882); Lasserre and Bonnard (1958); Skiadas (1979); Adrados (1990); West (1993b).

strengthens the case for attributing these fragments to a single poem, since both fragments allude to the sexual overtones of nature imagery and use the motif to similar ends. The text, including the testimonia which preserve the fragments, reads as follows:¹²

fr. 30: Ps.-Ammonius *de adfin. vocab. diff.* 431 (p. 111 Nickau)

ρόδον καὶ ροδωνιά καὶ ροδῆ διαφέρει. ρόδον μὲν γὰρ τὸ ἄνθος, ροδωνιά δὲ ὁ τόπος, ροδῆ δὲ τὸ φυτόν. Ἀρχίλοχος·

ἔχουσα θαλλὸν μυρσίνης ἐτέρπετο
ροδῆς τε καλὸν ἄνθος.

Fr. 31: Synes. *laudatio calvitii* 11 p. 75b (*Opusc.* p. 211.12 Terzaghi)

οὐκοῦν ἅπαντες οἴονται τε καὶ λέγουσιν αὐτοφυῆς εἶναι σκιάδειον τὴν κόμην· καὶ ὁ κάλλιστος ποιητῶν Ἀρχίλοχος ἐπαινέσας αὐτήν, ἐπαινεῖ μὲν οὔσαν ἐν ἑταίρας σώματι, λέγει δὲ οὕτως·

ἢ δέ οἱ κόμη
ῶμους κατεσκίαζε καὶ μετάφρενα.

Fr. 30 “ρόδον” and “ροδωνιά” and “ροδῆ” are different. For ρόδον is the rose flower, ροδωνιά the place where roses grow, and ροδῆ is the rose bush. Cf. Archilochus:

She delighted in holding a sprig of myrtle and the lovely flower of the rose bush.

Fr. 31 And so everyone thinks and says that hair is a natural sunshade. And the best of poets, Archilochus, praises it on a prostitute’s body, and says the following:

and her hair shaded her shoulders and back

The flowers which the girl holds in fr. 30 evoke the wild-flowers usually present in the erotic meadow, as well as the act of flower-plucking which is often a precursor to seduction, while the verb κατεσκίαζε used of the girl’s hair in fr. 31 suggests the shade usually provided by foliage in the meadow scene.¹³ The verb must be a striking one to use in this context, since it provides Synesius with motivation to quote the fragment, in order to demonstrate that ‘hair is a sunshade’ (εἶναι σκιάδειον τὴν κόμην). Archilochus reverses the usual poetic trope of describing the wilderness in terms which evoke human eroticism, and instead presents the girl’s body as a representation of nature, as she provides the features of shade and flowers normally generated by the land itself.

¹² The text of Archilochus is my own, and is based on, but not always identical to, West’s *IEG*². I discuss points of difference *ad loc* in the footnotes. Translations are mine.

¹³ For σκιάζω/σκιερός as a key term in descriptions of the erotic meadow cf. Sapph. fr. 2.7 V; Ibyc. fr. 286.5 *PMGF*; Thgn. 1252, and cf. also Sem. fr. 7.66 W where the woman’s hair is ‘shaded with flowers’ (ἀνθέμοισιν ἐσκιασμένην), a phrase which draws on the word’s connections with natural foliage.

Yet Synesius' description of the girl in fr. 31 as a *hetaira* suggests that Archilochus' use of the imagery differs from its typical use to describe the defloration of a chaste *parthenos*.¹⁴ Whoever the girl is, we can infer that Archilochus described her or her behaviour in a way which suggests at the least promiscuity, if not professional prostitution. Thus while the image of a young girl with long hair holding flowers might normally simply suggest her desirability (as found commonly in archaic *kourai*), here we find a wry mismatch between what the girl appears to be and what she actually is. When we look more closely at the flowers she carries, we find a more lewd association here too, for while roses are associated with Aphrodite and so are used to represent erotic desire in general terms,¹⁵ the combination of rose and myrtle evokes the use of these two plants as slang for the female genitals.¹⁶ Given the likely sympotic context for the performance of Archilochus' erotic poetry, the sprig of myrtle also suggests the tradition of passing the myrtle branch around the symposiasts, and so alludes to the associated pleasures of drinking and lovemaking. Its presence in the girl's hand hints that she is not a chaste maiden but the sort of woman who might herself be present at a symposium. Archilochus thus redeploys imagery conventionally associated with virginity to indicate the sexual accessibility of this particular woman. Rather than seeing the girl in the act of plucking the flowers (a motif which indicates her own deflowering), we are presented with someone who carries around pre-cut flowers, a point stressed in the details of the language. The girl carries a *θαλλόν* of myrtle, a sprig taken from the plant, and rather than holding a *ρόδον*, the usual word for rose, we are told that she carries *ρόδῆς ἄνθος* ('a flower of the rose-bush'). Ps-Ammonius' comments suggest that this is a noteworthy way to put it, and it is a phraseology which encourages the audience to remember that the rose has been removed from its bush, and so that it too is a flower already plucked.

In this description, then, Archilochus draws on the typical features of the *locus amoenus* as a poetic type to create an erotically charged image, which redeploys language normally used of virginity to present the girl in more suggestive terms. We see a similar technique in fr. 48, where we find a blending of virginal and sexually suggestive features in a description of girls usually thought to be the Lycambids:¹⁷

¹⁴ Scholars have suggested that the fragments describe Neoboule but it seems unlikely that Synesius would confuse the girl in fr. 31 with an unnamed prostitute given the fame of her relationship with Archilochus. Although Neoboule was Archilochus' most famous victim, we should not fall into the trap of associating every erotic description with her, since Archilochus doubtless presented a number of girls in his erotic narratives. We are given no information about the girl in fr. 30. For discussion of this issue see Costanza (1950); Marzullo (1957).

¹⁵ Roses in *locus amoenus* descriptions: *HHDem.* 6; Sapph. fr. 2.6, 96.13 V; for association with Aphrodite/Eros cf. also Cypria fr. 4 Bernabé; Ibyc. fr. 288, S257(a) fr. 1 *PMGF*; Bacch. 17.116; Anacreont. fr. 6, 35, 44; Eur. *Med.* 841. See Murr (1890) 79-80

¹⁶ Myrtle: Archil. fr. 32 W; Aristoph. *Lys.* 1004, Pl. Com. 188.14 KA (and for *τό μύρρινον* of the penis Aristoph. *Knights* 964); rose: Pherecr. 113.29, Crat. 116.2 KA: see Henderson (1975) 134-5. For the more general erotic connotations of myrtle see Murr (1890) 85.

¹⁷ Although we should not rush to assume that any erotic narrative in Archilochus must involve the Lycambids, in this instance it seems very likely. We know that story is told in the first person (*ἐβουλόμην*, 18, *ἐγώ*, 32), that he addresses his confidant Glaucus (7), and the Lycambids are closely connected with the poet's own persona; the fact that there is more than one girl is also suggestive, since the later tradition presents them together. Moreover, the fact that the girls are under the charge of a nurse (5) indicates that they are free-born maidens.

τροφὸς κατῆ[γεν] ἰέσμουριχμένας κόμας¹⁸ (5)
καὶ στήθος, ἰὼς ἄν καὶ γέρων ἠράσσατο.
ὦ Γλαῦκε [

'The nurse (led?) them, their hair and breasts anointed with perfume, so that even an old man would have desired them. O Glaucus...'

The presence of the nurse reminds us of conventional morality: young girls should be modest and protected by a chaperone.¹⁹ Yet set against this is the description of the girls themselves with perfumed hair and breasts. Anointing oneself with perfume is a sexually charged activity and is associated with preparations for intercourse, and this is compounded by the focus on their hair and breasts, both of which carry erotic connotations.²⁰ This portrayal suggests that the girls, despite the presence of their chaperone, are no innocents, and that they seek male attention. Again we find Archilochus evoking traditional patterns of female erotic behaviour to characterise the women in his poetry, and to suggest that they are sexually available and perhaps even promiscuous, despite the parthenaic trappings that surround them.

An iambic meadow: fr. 188 W

Archilochus takes his refashioning of the *locus amoenus* further in fr. 188, a poem which deploys the imagery for abuse instead of praise. Whereas nature imagery is conventionally used to convey the desirability of a young woman ripe for marriage, here Archilochus instead draws on the the language of wintry decay to taunt an older woman for the loss of her youth.²¹ The *topos* is given an iambic spin, geared towards abuse instead of seduction:

⊗ οὐκέθ' ὁμῶς θάλλεις ἀπαλὸν χροῶ· κάρφετα, ἰ γὰρ ἦδη
ὄγμο,σ, κακοῦ δὲ γήραος καθαιρεῖ
....], ἄφ' ἡμερτοῦ δὲ θορῶν γλυκὺς ἴμερος π[ροσώπου
βέβη]κεν· ἦ γὰρ πολλὰ δὴ σ' ἐπῆιξεν
πνεύμ]ατα χειμερίων ἀνέμων μάλα· πολλακίς δ' ε [

¹⁸ I print the transmitted text κόμας, in contrast to West's *IEG* where he prints κόμην on the grounds that Archilochus uses the singular in fr. 31, and that he finds the combination of plural κόμας and singular στήθος problematic within an internal accusative (see West (1974) 125. However, these objections do not seem to me strong enough to justify changing the transmitted text: cf. Bossi (1990) 142, and see also Young (1973) 222.

¹⁹ Exactly what the nurse is doing is unclear: I print West's suggestion κατῆ[γεν] (supported by Bossi (2000) 99), on the grounds that it is relatively neutral yet makes good sense within the narrative. Chris Carey also points out that the verb could imply movement down from the women's quarters. Another option is to assume a verb which means that the nurse is restraining the girls or containing them in the house: hence κατέ[σχεν] (Peek), κατέ[ἴχεν] (Lasserre-Bonnard), κατέ[ἴργεν] (West). This would present the girls' behaviour as still more provocative, needing to be actively restrained by their nurse, yet it seems rather strong. Gärtner (2008) 4 suggests κατέ[ἴσεν] and argues that the nurse is sending the girls out to be prostitutes, but this seems too extreme a position: even in the debauched family of Lycambes, it would be surprising to find the nurse acting as so brazenly.

²⁰ For perfuming prior to sex cf. Aristoph. *Lys.* 938, *Wealth* 529; for hair as an erotic symbol cf. *HHDem.* 177-8; Sem. fr. 7.57-66 W, and note how Helen in Eur. *Or.* 128-9 cuts her hair by the minimum in order to preserve her beauty. See also Levine (1995) 95-6.

²¹ For the vegetal metaphors in the poem, see also Carey (2009b) 155-6.

No longer does your skin flourish with soft bloom, for your furrow is dried up. The ... of vile old age is ruining you, and sweet desire [has gone] rushing from your desirable face ... Indeed, many blasts of wintry winds have assaulted you and many times ...

From the first line, Archilochus foregrounds the usual association between nature and youth with the verb θάλλεις, which evokes the growth of young plants combined with ἀπαλόν, a tactile word suggesting softness and often used of descriptions of young girls.²² Yet this typical description of beauty is negated from the start, for the poem's first word, οὐκέθ', makes it clear that we are looking back at a time of blooming which has now passed, a point reinforced by ἤδη in the next clause, which highlights the contrast between past and present. The following line develops this idea further, through the agricultural metaphor implicit in ὄγμος, which draws on the association between the female body and fertile ploughland.²³ Whereas Greek poetry and ritual normally contrasts the 'untamed' life of the *parthenos* with the 'civilised' life of the wife, we here find an opposition set up between the woman in her sexual prime, and the one who has passed it. If the bride is fertile land ready to be ploughed, then by implication the older woman, sexually experienced but no longer desirable, is land which has previously been ploughed, but is now dried up and unsuitable for agricultural activity. The image of the *locus amoenus* dried up in winter rather than blossoming in spring thus taunts the woman by hinting at her own dwindling fertility, and so the loss of what, in Greek eyes, would be considered the purpose of her existence.

The nature imagery continues in lines 4-5, where the woman is said to have been assaulted by blasts of wintry winds (πνεύμ]ατα χειμερίων ἀνέμων, 5). While youthful beauty is a garden sheltered from the elements and cooled by gentle breezes, the woman here is exposed to violent gales, whose 'wintry' nature forms a contrast with the usual spring-time setting of the meadow of love.²⁴ The image of the wintry storm winds also draws on two other poetic *topoi*: first the idea that human life is like the passing of the seasons, with spring the time of youth and love;²⁵ second, that desire is like a storm.²⁶ Hence the wintry winds develop the theme that the woman is too old to feel or inspire desire, and suggests the decay and withering of

²² For ἀπαλός used in erotic descriptions cf. Alc. fr. 3.10, 3.68, 3.80 *PMGF*; Sapph. fr. 81, 82, 94.16, 122, 126 V.

²³ I print the transmitted text ὄγμος rather than adopting Snell's emendation ὄγμοις (as printed by the editions of Lasserre and West; conversely Bergk, Diehl, Edmonds, Tarditi stick to the *paradosis*). While there is much debate as to which is correct, for my argument here it makes little difference, since either reading draws on the same metaphor and presents the woman as dried up old ploughland rather than fertile earth. If we read ὄγμοις, it means the woman's sexuality in general terms; if ὄγμος, the line refers more specifically to the withering of her skin. For a defence of ὄγμος, see Gallavotti (1973-4) 30; Medaglia (1977) 9; Brown and Gerber (1993); Brown (1995). For arguments in favour of ὄγμοις see Slings (1987) 64-5; Bowie (1987) 15; Slings (1995); Nicolosi (2007) 260-3.

²⁴ Gentle breezes: cf. Sapph. fr. 2.7 V. A similar contrast is found at Soph. *Trach.* 144-9, where Deianeira describes virginity as a garden protected from the extremes of weather and wind. For *locus amoenus* as a spring-time scene cf. Sapph. fr. 2.10 V; Alc. 286b.3 V; Ibyc. fr. 286.1 *PMGF*; Thgn. 1275-6; Cypria fr. 4 Bernabé: see Heirman (2012) 98.

²⁵ Human life as seasons: cf. *Il.* 6.146-9, 21.462-6, *Mimn.* fr. 2, 5 W.

²⁶ Cf. Sapph. fr. 47 V, Ibyc. fr. 286.8-10 *PMGF*.

her body. Moreover, the blasts of the storm hint at the idea that she is no innocent virgin but someone who has frequently experienced the ravages of *eros*.²⁷

In this fragment, then, knowledge of the conventional use of nature imagery is essential to understanding the poem's cruel humour. A listener who is aware that natural growth is normally associated with beautiful young girls is able to appreciate the irony of its inversion to abuse an older woman. The fact the nature imagery is such a common way to describe the female body makes this reversal particularly effective, for she becomes a kind of anti-*parthenos*, portrayed as the opposite of all that conventionally makes a woman desirable. Yet the most complex use of nature imagery is found in Archilochus' first *Cologne Epode* (fr. 196a W), a poem in which the erotic language of fr. 30 and the invective use of fr. 188 are blended to powerful effect.

Rethinking the grassy gardens (fr. 196a W)

As various scholars have noted, the Cologne Epode draws on traditional motifs associated with seduction scenes in terms of its structure and the details of its language.²⁸ Yet while the presence of these motifs is well known, less attention has been paid to how they actually operate within the poem. On analysis, Archilochus does not passively follow convention, but reworks it to achieve his own ends, for here too, it is the places where Archilochus differs from his poetic predecessors that provides us with a rich interpretative seam:

πάμπαν ἀποσχόμενος·
ἴσον δὲ τόλμ[
εἰ δ' ὦν ἐπείγεται καὶ σε θυμὸς ἰθύει,
ἔστιν ἐν ἡμετέρου
ἢ νῦν μέγ' ἰμείρε[ι (5)
καλὴ τέρεινα παρθένος· δοκέω δέ μιν
εἶδος ἄμωμον ἔχειν·
τὴν δὴ σὺ ποίη[σαι φίλην.”
τοσαῦτ' ἐφώνει· τὴν δ' ἐγώντανταμει[βόμεν·
“Ἀμφιμεδοῦς θύγατερ (10)
ἐσθλῆς τε καὶ [
γυναικός, ἦν νῦν γῆ κατ' εὐρώεσσ' ἔχει,
τέρψιδες εἰσι θεῆς
πολλὰ νεοῖσιν ἀνδ[ράσιν
παρὲς τὸ θεῖον χρῆμα· τῶν τις ἀρκέσει. (15)
ταῦτα δ' ἐπ' ἡσυχίης
εὔτ' ἂν μελανθ' ἦ[
ἐ]γὼ τε καὶ σὺ ἐν θεῶι βουλευόμεν·

²⁷ This idea is further developed in fr. 189W if we accept (as is likely) that they come from the same poem: see Bowie (1987) 17. For the sexual interpretation of fr. 189 W, see also Gerber (1973); West (1974) 134; Corrêa (2002).

²⁸ See Henderson (1976); Lefkowitz (1976) 186; van Sickle (1975) 126, and on recurring motifs in epic seduction scenes (many of which are found in the Cologne Epode) see Forsyth (1979); Janko (1992) 170-1.

π]είσομαι ὥς με κέλευαι·
πολλόν μ' ε[(20)

θρ]ιγκοῦ δ' ἔνερθε καὶ πυλέων ὑποφ[
μ]ή τι μέγαιρε φίλη·
σχήσω γὰρ ἐς προη[φόρους
κ]ήπους. τὸ δὴ νῦν γνῶθι· Νεοβούλη[ν
ἄ]λλος ἀνήρ ἐχέτω· (25)

αἰαῖ πέπειρα δις ἔ τὸση,
ἄν]θος δ' ἀπερρύηκε παρθενήιον
κ]αὶ χάρις ἣ πρὶν ἐπῆν·
κόρον γὰρ οὐκ[
]ης δὲ μέτρ' ἔφηνε μαινόλις γυνή· (30)

ἐς] κόρακας ἄπεχε·
μὴ τοῦτ' ἔφ' ἴτ' ἀν[
ὄ]πως ἐγὼ γυναιῖκα τ[ο]ιούτην ἔχων
γεί]τοσι χάρμ' ἔσομαι·
πολλόν σὲ βούλο[μαι πάρος· (35)

σὺ] μὲν γὰρ οὔτ' ἄπιστος οὔτε διπλόη,
ἣ δ]ὲ μάλ' ὀξυτέρη,
πολλοὺς δὲ ποιεῖτα[ι φίλους
δέ]δοιχ' ὅπως μὴ τυφλὰ κάλιτήμερα
σπ]ουδῆι ἐπειγόμενος (40)

τὼς ὥσπερ ἡ κ[ύων τέκω.”
τοσ]αῦτ' ἐφώνεον· παρθένον δ' ἐν ἄνθε[σιν
τηλ]εθάεσσι λαβῶν
ἔκλινα, μαλθακῆι δ[έ μιν
χλαί]νηι καλύψας, αὐχέν' ἀγκάλης ἔχω[ν, (45)

δεί]ματι παυ[σ]αμένην
τὼς ὥστε νέβρ[
μαζ]ῶν τε χερσὶν ἠπίως ἐφηψάμην
ἦιπε]ρ ἔφαινε νέον
ἦβης ἐπήλυσι χροῶ (50)

ἅπαν τ]ε σῶμα καλὸν ἀμφαφώμενος
λευκ]ὸν ἀφῆκα μένος
ξανθῆς ἐπιψαύ[ων τριχός.

‘abstaining completely, and bring yourself likewise (?) But if you are in haste and your spirit urges you on, in our house there is a maiden, lovely and tender, who greatly desires (you?); I think she has a faultless figure. Make her your (girlfriend).’ So she spoke, and I replied to her: “Daughter of Amphimedo, that good and ... lady whom the mouldering earth now holds, there are many pleasures of the goddess for young men besides the divine thing: let one of them suffice. But you and I will discuss these things at leisure when ... grows dark. I shall do as you ask me. Much ... beneath the coping stone and ... the gates Do not begrudge me my dear: I shall steer my course for (?) the grassy gardens. But be sure of this:

let some other man have Neoboule. Goodness, she's overripe, twice your age; her maidenly flower has dropped off, and the charm she had before. She couldn't get enough (?) ... that crazed woman has shown the measure of her ... To hell with her! Let (noone ask this)? ... that I should have a woman like that and be a laughing-stock to my [neigh]bours. I much prefer you: [you] are not unreliable or two-faced, but (she) is sharp and makes many (men her friends). I am afraid lest, pressing on in haste (I may beget) blind and premature offspring like the bitch." So I spoke. And I took the girl and laid her down in the blossoming flowers, and covered her with a soft (cloak), cradling her neck in my arm, as she ceased (trembling in fear?), just like a fawn. I gently took hold of her breasts in my hands, (just where) the young flesh became visible, the bewitchment of her youth, and caressing (all) her lovely body I let go my (white) might, just touching blonde (hair).

Archilochus makes extensive use of nature imagery throughout the poem, and we find it used to achieve the same invective contrast between youth and old age as in fr. 188. The imagery is first introduced in the girl's speech, with which the surviving section of the poem begins, as she suggests that if the speaker cannot control himself to abstain entirely (1-2), he should have sex with an alternative girl (3-7). This substitute girl, who must be Neoboule, is described by her sister as being 'a lovely tender maiden' (καλή τέρεινα παρθένος, 6).²⁹ τέρεινα is a significant word in this context, since it has strong associations with the natural world, and so invites us to imagine the girl as being like a young plant.³⁰ The man picks up on this imagery when he rejects her offer in his speech: far from being young and tender, Neoboule is 'overripe' (πέπειρα, 26) and the 'flower of her maidenhood' is described as having dropped off (ἀν]θος δ' ἀπερρύηκε παρθενήιον, 27). Whereas imagery of ripe fruit is often used to suggest female readiness for marriage, πέπειρα suggests that Neoboule's 'fruit' has now passed its natural best.³¹ If ripeness normally carries connotations of the succulence of youthful flesh, πέπειρα conjures up the flaccid texture of over-ripe fruit, perhaps with a hint of rottenness of corruption, while the emotional αἰαῖ which starts the line expresses the speaker's disgust. We therefore find the same basic idea as in fr. 188 - nature imagery reworked to suggest a woman past her prime – but the imagery is given a different type of twist. The claim that Neoboule's flower has 'dropped off' rather than being plucked is a further dig, since it implies that she (and her family) has allowed her youth to be frittered

²⁹ The idea that Neoboule is the substitute was proposed by the original editors (see Merkelbach and West (1974) 102-3) Some scholars have challenged this view, e.g. Ebert and Luppe (1975) 223-4 Lefkowitz (1976); Burnett (1983); Eckerman (2011), but it still remains the most plausible option. The substitute girl is described as belonging to the same household as the girl in the poem (ἐν ἡμετέρου, 4), and the man in the poem clearly thinks that Neoboule is meant, since he names her at 24-5 as the alternative he wishes to reject. Moreover, the man's criticism of Neoboule is structured so as to reflect the girl's speech, which further encourages us to identify her with the girl offered here: cf. Slings (1987) 31.

³⁰ Used of plants e.g. *Il.* 13.180; *Od.* 9.449, 12.357; *HHDem.* 209; *Ibyc.* fr. 34.2 *PMG*; used of youthful beauty with explicitly vegetal symbolism at *Hes. Thg.* 988; *HHHerm.* 375.

³¹ For female sexuality as a fruit, cf. *Sapph.* fr. 105aV; *Aesch. Suppl.* 998, 1015, and for fruit as an erotic motif cf. *Sapph.* fr. 2.3 V; *Ibyc.* fr. 286.2 *PMGF*, *Stes.* fr. 187 *PMGF*. See Trumpf (1960); Faraone (1999) 69-80. For overripeness as a term of erotic abuse cf. *Anacr.* 5W, *Theocr.* 7.120-1: on the Archilochean intertexts in the latter, see Henrichs (1980).

away rather than being properly ‘plucked’ in marriage.³² At the extreme end of this cycle of growth followed by decay comes the oldest woman of all, the dead Amphimedon, whose corpse is described as being held in the ‘mouldering’ earth γῆ κατ’ εὐρώεσσ’ ἔ[χει (12).³³ Thus the idea of decay as the natural endpoint for the female body not only forms the basis of his rejection of Neoboule, but also part of his rhetorical argument for seducing the girl, since it acts as a reminder that the time of youthful flowering is short, and should be enjoyed while it lasts.³⁴ This association between youth and natural blooming is reinforced at the end of the poem, where the narrator lays the girl down among the flowers (42): implicitly contrasting her with Neoboule who has lost her maidenly flower (27). Placing παρθένον as the first word of the description of the erotic action which begins at 42 emphasises this theme, as the poet returns to the flower imagery to draw our attention to the virginal state of the girl, and so contrasts her with the sexually experienced Neoboule.³⁵

The nature imagery which runs throughout the Epode is both romantic and invective in effect, as we see the poet using it to simultaneously praise the beauty of the young girl and to attack her sister. Since this is a poem whose purpose is part erotic fantasy and part attack on the Lycambids, this mixed use of the imagery is relevant to Archilochus’ wider goals. Yet we also find nature imagery used in a more confusing way in the poem, when the speaker tells the girl that he will ‘steer course for the grassy gardens’ (σχήσω γὰρ ἐς πῶη[φόρους / κ]ήπους, 23-4). This phrase, along with the lines that immediately precede it, is one of the most controversial passages, and scholars have debated whether the ‘grassy gardens’ should be taken to mean the girl’s pubic hair (and thus he does not ask to have full sex with her), is a general metaphor for her virginity (suggesting that he intends full penetration), or whether the grassy gardens should be taken less suggestively as referring to the rural location the couple are actually in: valid parallels for all of these interpretations can be found.³⁶ The problem is exacerbated by the fact that the poem’s final scene, which could provide the answer, ends abruptly and with little clarity as to what is going on: we are invited to visualise the act of ejaculation (52), yet the poet is vague as to precisely how this is achieved, and a huge range of activities has been suggested.³⁷

³² Casadio (1973-4) and Slings (1987) 41-2 are wrong to reject any reference to the loss of her virginity as a Romano-Christian anachronism, for as discussed above, the association between flower-picking and the ending of maidenhood is a well established idea in archaic literature, the *locus classicus* being *HHDem.* 2-16. The use of the imagery in epithalamia (cf. Sapph. fr. 105ab) further suggests a sexual reference here. For ἀπορρέω used of the falling out of leaves or fruit, cf. Arist. *GA* 783b14.

³³ Highly epic phraseology: εὐρώεις is the Homeric epithet for the realm of Hades (*Il.* 20.65, *Od.* 10.512, 23.322, 24.10); κατέχω is the verb used of the earth covering corpses (e.g. *Il.* 3.243, 16.629, 18.332): see Campbell (1976) 152-3

³⁴ Cf. the description of sexual pleasure as an activity for νέοι ἄνδρες (‘young men’) at 13.

³⁵ Cf. cf. Slings (1987) 45.

³⁶ E.g. Pind. *Pyth.* 9.37 clearly uses meadow language to mean penetration in delicate terms; Hesych. κ 2529 suggests that κῆπος can mean the genitals; and Ar. *Lys.* 88 uses the close equivalent πεδῖον still more specifically of the *mons Veneris* and pubic hair. σχήσω too is capable of bearing multiple interpretations, as it could mean ‘change my course towards’, ‘hold back from’ (cf. Slings (1975)), ‘land on’ (Marcovich (1975) 12); or ‘hold my course for’ (Campbell (1976), each of which suggests a different sexual outcome.

³⁷ Full intercourse: Henderson (1976); Casanova (1976); Koenen (1980); *coitus interruptus*: West (1975); Marcovich (1975); masturbation: Calder (1979); ejaculation over the girl’s genitalia: van Sickle (1975); Rubin (1978-9); premature ejaculation: Lloyd-Jones (1975) 99; Calder (1979)); intercrural sex: Latacz (1992); *fellatio*: Eckerman (2011).

We get further in interpreting the ‘grassy gardens’, however, if we treat them as a deliberately veiled metaphor rather than as a puzzle to be decoded. At this point in the poem, the man uses metaphor to describe his sexual intentions, and the vegetal language he uses draws on its familiarity as an erotic symbol. However, it is the way in which the metaphors are used in this passage which is unusual: Archilochus combines a level of vulgarity with a degree of ambiguity which is unparalleled in other rural seduction scenes. An instructive parallel is the Iliadic *Hieros Gamos*, which like the Cologne Epode uses nature imagery for erotic effect, but uses it to express sexual contact by means of euphemism rather than to create uncertainty. After Zeus takes Hera in his arms, we are told of the blooming flowers and golden dew-cloud that surround the couple (14.347-51): the act itself is described with the delicate phrase ‘there they went to bed’ (τῶ ἐνι λεξάσθην, 350), yet the imagery of natural fertility allows us to supply the details, which are then confirmed by the later statement that Zeus is ‘laid low by sleep and passion’ (ὑπνω καὶ φιλότητι δαμείς, 353).³⁸ In the Homeric passage, the audience is at no point invited to consider the possibility that it is anything other than intercourse. Conversely, Archilochus’ speaker uses the term ‘grassy gardens’ in the context of negotiating sexual boundaries, and this encourages speculation as to how we should interpret the metaphor’s reference.³⁹ The statement σχήσω γὰρ ἐς προη[φόρους / κ]ήπους turns the image of the body as meadow from a general metaphor into a specific location, hinting at sexual precision and yet leaving it crucially vague as to what the speaker really intends. The fact that modern scholars have found so many divergent parallels for the connotations of garden imagery suggests that a Greek audience would have found it equally open-ended. The ambiguity is further enhanced by the fact that in these lines speaker combines imagery drawn from the natural world with metaphors of architecture (θρ]ιγκοῦ, πυλέων 21) and seafaring (σχήσω, 23). The mixed metaphors are a strategy designed to confuse: the man purports to make his intentions clear, but in fact clouds them in language which disorientates the listener as it switches from one field of reference to another.

Thus the purpose of the ‘grassy gardens’ imagery is to create ambiguity and so keep the audience in a state of suspense: we are invited to debate exactly what is being promised. It also allows the speaker an element of decorum and sensitivity in his dealings with a young girl, but it leaves the question open as to whether the girl herself will come to the same conclusion as the listener as to what is being requested. This ambiguity is reinforced by the poem’s ending: after a tantalising build up (44-51) Archilochus concludes with an image which is sexually graphic (λευκ]ὸν ἀφῆκα μένος, ‘I released my white might’, 52) yet leaves the crucial details ambiguous, and ends the poem on this abrupt note. Had Archilochus

³⁸ See Janko (1992) 206. Similarly in *HHaph.* despite a titillating build-up (161-5), the act itself is described in euphemistic terms, but ones that leave no doubt that full sex is intended: ‘a mortal, he lay with an immortal goddess’ (ἀθανάτη παρέλεκτο θεᾶ βροτός, 167). On the varying ways of describing sex acts in epic, see Faulkner (2008) 222-3.

³⁹ Cf. ‘the divine thing’ (τὸ θεῖον χρῆμα) at 15, which has been taken to mean either sex or marriage, each of which could be said to be the ultimate expression of sexual urges in a Greek context. This too, I would argue, is meant to bear more than one interpretation, and the suspense and humour derives from likelihood that the ultimate sexual goal for a young girl may not be the same as for a man: see van Sickle (1975) 136-7; Morrone (1976).

wanted the nature of the sex act to be clear, he could have made it so without difficulty: his other erotic fragments show that he hardly shies away from sexual descriptions, and even if he wished to avoid coarse language in this context, the epic parallels demonstrate that one can be clear without being crude.⁴⁰ Rather, the ambiguity at lines 21-4 and 51-3 should be understood as mutually reinforcing, and as part of a strategy to titillate: Archilochus teases his audience by hinting at sexually explicit material, yet leaves the listener to engage his own erotic imagination to piece together the details. In doing so, Archilochus allows him to become more emotionally implicated in the poem than would be achieved by a straightforward description. In a sympotic performance context, a poem which prompted erotically charged discussion would be more satisfying than one which gave cut and dried answers. Moreover, insofar as part of the poem's purpose is to abuse the Lycambids, a poem which invites its listeners to debate exactly what the girl did or did not do acts as further sullyng of her reputation.⁴¹ Indeed, the fact that modern scholars have spent so long debating the nature of the sexual climax is itself testament to the technique's effectiveness.

Thus in the Cologne Epode, Archilochus relies on his audience's familiarity with nature imagery to create suspense through his refashioning of its symbolism. We find a similar invective twist to fr. 188, where nature imagery is used to mock the passing of youth as well as to praise its flowering: through the cycle of female aging described in the process *τέρεινα* – *πέπειρα* – *εὐρώεσσα* ('tender' – 'overripe' – 'mouldering'), the girl is both praised for her current beauty, but reminded of the horrible fate that awaits her. Yet Archilochus turns his poem from a typical meadow seduction scene into something much more suggestive, by redeploying the imagery of the 'grassy gardens' as a specific negotiation point in the discussion between man and girl, rather than as figurative backdrop. Thus poetic and cultural precedent is essential to understanding the way imagery works in this poem, and when we read the fragment in the light of literary conventions, we find that these provide us with a great deal of interpretative assistance.

Conclusion

A study of Archilochus' use of imagery shows it to be rich and varied: the poet draws on deep-seated cultural assumptions regarding the usual associations of a particular metaphor or image, and can then choose to redirect these associations for his own purposes. Since the poems we have examined are likely to have been performed in a sympotic context, we can assume a relatively educated audience, used to hearing poetry and in a position to notice when convention is breached. The metaphors in question are not limited to particular literary genres: so, for example, we need not posit an audience with a detailed familiarity with the texts of the Homeric poems. Rather, these are *topoi* which are connected to fundamental Greek perceptions about sexuality, gender-relations, and the natural world around them, and so move easily between poetic forms. Nevertheless, the sophistication with which Archilochus manipulates these tropes suggests that a seventh-century Parian or Thasian

⁴⁰ On the ambiguity at the end, see Slings (1980) 300-4; Slings (1987) 51.

⁴¹ On the invective subtext of the sexual description, cf. Carey (2009b) 157: 'in a world where a female's chastity is vital to her family's honour, her behaviour is shameful for a free woman'. See also Stoessl (1976) 247-8.

audience would have a good feeling for poetic convention, and that they had extensive experience of the poetic tradition.

Moreover, this technique of reworking traditional material is far from limited to imagery, and it would be fair to call it a distinctive feature of Archilochus' style. On a linguistic level, Archilochus borrows much of his language from epic, yet he reuses Homeric formulae creatively, applying them in unexpected contexts or creating new formulations based on traditional patterns.⁴² Archilochus' narratological techniques are equally creative: we find him reworking or parodying traditional forms, such as the mock-prayer in fr. 177 W, the humorous use of the conventional *anelpton* motif in fr. 122 W, or the parody of the moralising *gnomē* in fr. 25 W.⁴³ These techniques are beneficial in creating the strong 'personal' voice apparent in Archilochus' poetry, for by creating the sense of convention overturned, the poet increases the individuality of his own persona. Moreover, his ability to revitalise well-worn images and use them to provocative effect, is crucial to his self-positioning as poet operating in a genre which seeks to tell narrative in a subversive, humorous, and unexpected way. Archilochus' creativity with imagery, then, gives us insight into what is new and imaginative about his work: a Greek audience, more steeped in these traditions that we are, would be in a position to appreciate his originality still more. The bold and vivid images that he creates go some way to explaining his undisputed ranking in antiquity as a poet to rival Homer and Hesiod.

⁴² For the epic borrowings and parodies in the Cologne Epode, see Swift (forthcoming a).

⁴³ I discuss these latter two examples in more detail at Swift (forthcoming b).