It is probable that Semonides lived in the second half of the seventh century B.C. and migrated from his birthplace on Samos to the island of Amorgos in the southeastern Cyclades. He is reported to have written two books of elegies and at least two books of poems in iambic trimeter. In the ancient sources he is frequently confused with Simonides of Keos.

2. (Fr. 7)

  The god made women’s minds separately
  in the beginning. One he made from the bristly sow:
  everything in her house lies in disorder,
  smeared with dirt, and rolls about the floor,
  while she herself, unbathe, in unwashed clothes,
  sits upon the dung heap and grows fat.

  Another the god made from the wicked vixen,
  a woman who knows all things. Whether bad
  or good, nothing escapes her notice;
  for often she calls a good thing bad
  and a bad thing good; her mood keeps changing.

  Another is from the bitch, a mischief-maker just like her
  mother,
  who wants to hear all things and see all things.
  Peering and roaming everywhere, she yelps
  even when she sees no person there;
  and no man can stop her, either by uttering threats
  or, in a fit of rage, by knocking out her teeth
  with a stone, or yet by speaking to her gently,
  even if she happens to be sitting with guests—
  no, she keeps up her constant useless howling.

  Another the Olympians fashioned out of earth
  and gave to man with wits impaired; for such a woman
  understands nothing, bad or good.

  The only thing she knows how to do is eat:
  not even when the god brings on a bad winter
  does she feel the cold and draw her stool nearer to the fire.

  Another is from the sea: she has two minds.
  One day she smiles and beams with joy;
  a stranger, seeing her in the house, will praise her:

  “There is no woman more estimable than this
  among all humankind, nor one more beautiful.”
  The next day, though, she is unbearable to lay eyes on
  or to come near to; at that time she rages
  unapproachably, like a bitch with puppies,
  proving implacable and repulsive
  to everyone, enemies and friends alike.

  So too the sea often stands in unmoved
  calm, harmless, a great joy to sailors,
  in the summer season; but often too it rages,
  borne along by loud-thundering waves.

  This is what such a woman most resembles
  in mood; the sea too has its different natures.

  Another is from the ash-gray obstinate ass.
  Under compulsion and rebuke, reluctantly,
  she puts up with everything after all and does
  acceptable work; meanwhile, she eats in the innermost
  room
  all night and all day, and she eats beside the hearth;
  just so, as her companion in the act of love,
  she also welcomes any man who comes.

  Another is from the weasel, a wretched, miserable sort.
  She has nothing beautiful or charming
  about her, nothing delightful or lovely.
  She is mad for bed and lovemaking,
  but any man who lies with her she sickens with disgust.

  Her thieving does great harm to her neighbors,
  and she often eats up offerings left unburned.

  Another the delicate, long-maned mare brought forth.
  She turns away from menial tasks and trouble;
  she won’t lay a finger on a mill, nor pick up
  a sieve, nor throw the dung outside the house,
  nor, being anxious to avoid the soot, sit near
  the oven. Yet she compels a man to be her own:
  every day she washes herself clean
  twice, sometimes three times, and rubs herself with
  perfumes;

  she wears her mane of thick long hair
  well-combed and shadowy with flowers.

  A beautiful sight indeed is such a woman.
Semonides

to others; to her husband, though, she proves disastrous,
unless he is a tyrant or a sceptered king.

70 whose heart takes pride in such ornaments.

Another is from the ape. This is, above all others,
the greatest evil that Zeus has given to men.
Her face is ugly in the extreme: when such a woman
walks through the city, everyone laughs at her.

75 She’s short in the neck; she moves with difficulty;
she’s rumplestiltskin, nothing but legs. Pity the wretched man
who holds in his arms a calamity like that!
She knows all arts and wily ways,
just like an ape, and doesn’t mind being laughed at.

80 She won’t do anyone a kindness; all her attention,
all her planning throughout the day is fixed on this:
how can she do a person the greatest possible harm.

Another is from the bee. Happy is he who gets her,
for on her alone no censure settles.

85 In her care his property flourishes and prospers;
she grows old loving a husband who loves her,
a mother of noble and illustrious offspring.
She is conspicuous among all women,
and a godlike grace suffuses her.

90 She takes no pleasure sitting among women
in places where they tell tales of lovelmaking.
Such women are the best and wisest wives
that Zeus in his graciousness bestows on men.

All these other kinds, however, Zeus
95 has contrived to be with men and there remain.
No greater plague than this has Zeus created—
women. Even if they may seem to be of some service
to him who has them, to him above all they prove a
plague.

He who lives with a woman never passes through
an entire day in a state of cheerfulness;

100 nor will he quickly push away Hunger from his house,
that hated housemate, that malevolent god.
Whenever a man means to enjoy himself
at home, by divine dispensation or human favor,

105 she finds a reason to criticize him and arms herself for

Wherever a woman is, men cannot give a hearty welcome
even to a stranger who has come to the house.
She who seems to be most self-controlled
turns out to commit the greatest outrages:

110 as her husband stands there open-mouthed, the neighbors
take delight in seeing how yet another has gone astray.
Every man will do all he can to praise
his own wife and find fault with another’s,
but we fail to recognize that our lots are equal.

115 No greater plague than this has Zeus created,
and he has bound us to them with unbreakable shackles,
ever since Hades welcomed those
who fought a war for a woman’s sake. . . .

In both the Theogony (570–589) and the Works and Days (60–82) Hesiod tells
how Zeus, angered by Prometheus’ theft of fire, commanded the rest of the
Olympian gods to create the first woman (Pandora) as a punishment for
mankind, and how in so doing the different gods contributed different quali-
ties to her nature. While working in the same tradition of Greek misogyny,
Semonides here rings changes on Hesiod’s account by positing multiple acts
of creation producing ten distinct types of women, each fashioned from a
different element (earth, sea) or animal (sow, fox, dog, donkey, weasel, horse,
ape, bee). Of these only the last, the bee-woman, is portrayed in positive
terms.

118 a war for a woman’s sake i.e, the Trojan War, which was fought for
Helen.