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Archilochus and Lycambes, Alcman's 5 *PMGF* and Pindar's fr. 122 S-M: examples of manipulation of lyric poems by ancient writers and commentators

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Abstract

The inextricable relationship between poetry and power seems to appear as early as poetry itself.¹ This relationship usually appears in two forms: it concerns either power exercised to texts or power exercised through texts.² The aim of this paper is to examine how ancient commentators and writers exercised the power they had over the texts of archaic lyric poets and manipulated them in order to achieve their own purposes.

Introduction

The exercise of power and manipulation can take place on a mere intellectual level, just like in the following cases. This paper is divided in three parts. In the first part I examine the relationship between Archilochus' existing fragments and the rich biographical tradition regarding the famous Lycambes' episode, focusing on fragment 45 W. In the second case - as it is shown - Alcman is considered the composer of a cosmogonic poem by an anonymous commentator of the second century AD who saves and quotes this text, although this fragment seems to belong to a *partheneion*. Lastly, according to *testimonia*, Pindar had composed a poem about temple prostitutes (fr. 122 S-M) that was regarded as obscene and was self censored. The choice of these particular examples is indicative of the methods of 'manipulation' used by ancient writers and commentators and their choices of authors.

¹ Gold 1987: 36.

² Bowmann 1994: 6.

Archilochus and Lycambes

One of the most widely known cases in which the text of a lyric poet has been interpreted according to ancient *testimonia* is the famous Lycambes episode. The majority of the ancient sources claim that Lycambes had two daughters and at some point he started a conflict with Archilochus because he either did not approve of the amorous affairs between the poet and his daughters or because of his refusal to give his older daughter's hand to the poet. This fight resulted in the suicide of Lycambes' family. Our sources vary from ancient writers such as Horace (*Epod.* 6. 11, *Epist.* 1. 19. 23) and Ovid (*Ibis* 54) to epigrams of *Palatine Anthology* (7. 69, 7. 70, 7. 71, 7. 351, 7. 352) where the daughters appear to narrate their own story from the grave. Our showcase for this paper will be fragment 45 W (*kypsai anti tou apagxasthai Arhilochos kypantes hybrin athroēn apeflysan*), a quotation made by Photius who mentions a gloss.³

Although this story was famous in later antiquity the writers of the fourth and fifth century BC seem to ignore it.⁴ This story probably begins from a misinterpretation of Archilochus' own texts and especially of fr. 45 W (hanging [] they spewed out all their arrogant pride) which is a gloss found in Photius of the verb *kyptō* that is used in one of Archilochus' poems. The verb *kyptō* in Archilochus' times usually means 'hang my head in shame' rather than 'hang myself'.⁵ This verb is used in Homer (*Il.* 4 468, 18. 621, etc.) with the meaning 'bend'. Apart from this passage, the verb *kyptō* is used only once in ancient Greek lyric poetry, thus in Hipponax 17 W: *kypsasa gar moi pros to lyxnon Arētē* (bending down to me over the bed Arete) where it clearly belongs to a sexual context.⁶ This verb is widely used in comedy, but without having sexual connotations. In Aristophanes it means either doing anything excessively (Aristophanes *Frogs* 1091, *Ecclesiazusae* 863) or bending my head in shame (*Knights* 1354, *Thesmophoriazusae* 930). Modern scholars usually interpret this fragment of Archilochus as being misunderstood by Photius, so they

³ Photius lex. s. v. *κύψαι ἀντι τοῦ ἀπάγξασθαι Ἀρχίλοχος κύψαντες ὕβριν ἀθρόην ἀπέφλυσαν.*

⁴ Hauvette 1905: 68.

⁵ Hendrikson 1925: 101, Rankin 1979: 51.

⁶ Easterling 1989: 119, Bowie 2002: 10.

reject the gloss as mistaken.⁷ A conclusion can be drawn only if we briefly examine the rest of Archilochus' fragments that mention this story along with the ancient tradition.

The first ancient writer who refers to the Lycambes episode is Horace. He mentions that Lycambes committed suicide because of Archilochus and nothing more (*Epist.* 1. 19. 25, *Epist.* 1. 19. 31). Scholia to Horace mention that Lycambes committed suicide for the same reason (Schol. Ad Horatium, *Epod.* 6.13 Keller), and that his daughter followed him to his death. According to the *Palatine Anthology* Lycambes killed himself because his daughters died (7. 71, 351). The truth is that we do not know anything about this incident before Horace's times.

The *lemma* in Photius assures us that the method of their suicide was hanging. According to the rest of the ancient tradition the way of his death varies. Ovid and Martial connect Lycambes' name with bloodshed (Martial 7. 12. 6 = test. 106 Tarditi, Ovid, *Ibis* 53 = test. 119 Tarditi). In the *Palatine Anthology* it is only mentioned once that the Lycambides hanged themselves (7. 351). This tradition would have been completely isolated, if it was not for the ancient testimonies of the scholiast of Hephaestion (Schol. B 5. 12 = test. 154 Tarditi), the scholiast of Ovid (*Schol. Ovid, ad Ibin* 54 = test. 159 Tarditi) and of Eustathius (in *Odyss.* 11. 277 = test. 64 Tarditi). However, before deciding whether this *lemma* is correct or not we should draw as much information we can for this episode from the Archilochus' fragments as well.

If we combine all these fragments that mention Lycambes and his daughters the summary of this story is as follows: Archilochus was in love with Neoboule, the eldest sister (38, 196a W) but for an unknown reason he had a conflict with the father to whom he dedicated a series of songs (172-181 W). This fight had something to do with broken vows or promises (173, 177 W). Then he had an affair with the younger sister (196a W). There is nothing in Archilochus' surviving fragments that mentions this or any other way of

⁷ Rankin 1979: 50 - 51, cf. Carey 1986: 60.

suicide. If we return to the text of fragment 45 W, we will see that nothing connects the participle (in male plural) with Lycambides. Even if we regard the verb *kyptō* as an equivalent of *apaghō* in Archilochus' time - though it was not - it is a misinterpretation to connect this verb with Lycambes. Nothing connects this *lemma* to that story except the interpretation of ancient and modern scholars. It is equally dangerous to try to read Archilochus' remaining fragments about Lycambes and his daughters in the light of this *lemma*. Eustathius mentions (*in Odyss.*11. 277) that, after reading Archilochus' poetry, many people hanged themselves because of sorrow like the daughters of Lycambes according to the old tale (*kata tin palaian historian*). We have to agree with him that this is an old tale and to remark that, according to ancient tradition, many other people have hanged themselves as well.

One has to remember the effect that Hipponax's poems had on the sculptor Bupalus according to the scholiast of Horace (Ps-Acron, *ad Horace, Epod.* 6. 13 Keller). The same Bupalus appears in Hipponax's poetry to have a sexual relationship with his mother (12 W) and Arete, maybe a relative of his. Hipponax has also sexual encounters with this woman (13, 14, 16, 17 W). Arete is accused of infidelity because, according to Hipponax, she shared her bed with Bupalus (15 W). The only two instances that the verb *kyptō*, a verb later extensively used by comedy, appears in ancient Greek lyric poetry is in the iambic fragments of Archilochus (45 W) and Hipponax (17 W). The two fragments may have more in common than just this one word. The subjects of *kypsantes* are said to spew out someone's or their mighty *hybris*. The verb *phlyō* or *apophlyō* means spill, vomit or allow / cause something to flow.⁸ According to some modern scholars *apephlysan* here was a double entendre.⁹ The object of *apephlysan* is the noun *hybris* accompanied with an adverb that means plenty or continuous.¹⁰ The word *hybris* was also used to denote immense sexual lust in ancient Greek lyric poetry (Theognis 379 W) or a libidinous violent act (Pindar, *Pyth.* 2. 52). In ancient Greek oratory *hybris* seems to have a very specific meaning and that is the act of adultery (Lysias

⁸ LSJ s.v. *ἀποφλύζω*.

⁹ Irwin 1998: 181, n. 33.

¹⁰ LSJ s.v. *ἄθρόος*.

92. 4, Aischines 16. 25, 26. 41). The subject of *kypsantes* and *apephlysan* might be or might not be Lycambes and his daughters, but what we have here is possibly the description of a sexual scene, as other scholars also claim.¹¹ But the question still remains without an answer: why is Photius relating this fragment with the Lycambides and their suicide?

The ancient *Lives* of poets along with the short biographical anecdotes¹² are fictitious to a certain degree¹³ and were probably created within the oral tradition of the archaic times.¹⁴ As a part of the oral culture they consist of many formulaic elements. One can attribute the formation of this story to the ancient biographical tradition. The story of Archilochus' poems causing Lycambes and then his family to commit suicide became very popular in Roman times and maybe it was a theme of ancient Greek comedy as well.¹⁵ A similar story existed for the poet Hipponax, Bupalus and Arete. This Archilocheian fragment could have belonged to an erotic context, just like fragment 17 W where the verb *kyptō* clearly has sexual connotations. Photius must have related this fragment with the story of Archilochus and Hipponax causing someone to hang himself. But this not a sheer guess. Photius was probably influenced by the tradition behind these fragments and squeezed the meaning of this fragment in order to fit his interpretation of this gloss. Modern scholars agree that Photius was a discriminating judge of literature,¹⁶ not a highly reliable source,¹⁷ and that he had a rather negative view on ancient Greek poetry.¹⁸ What is more, Archilochus was regarded by Christian writers as an outstanding bad example of character.¹⁹ All these could have led Photius to interpret Archilochus' 45 W exactly the way he did.

¹¹ Irwin 1998: 181.

¹² Or statements according to some scholars cf. Kivilo 2010: 1-2.

¹³ Lefkowitz 1978: 459, Graziosi 2002: 2, Beercroft: 2010: 18.

¹⁴ Kivilo 2010: 5, 225.

¹⁵ Kivilo 2010: 105-106.

¹⁶ Van Hook 1907: 41.

¹⁷ Morales 2009: 3.

¹⁸ Van Hook 1907: 41, Jenkins 1968: 37-52, Baldwin 1978: 9-14.

¹⁹ Hendrikson 1925: 135, n. 37, Rankin 1979: 7. It is remarkable, as Hägg (Hägg 2006: 134) notes, that even Julian the Apostate, who was influenced by Christian ethics, warns pagan priests against Archilochus' and Hipponax's licentiousness (Epist. 80, 89. 15-20 Bidez).

Alcman's 5 PMGF

Alcman is considered the composer of *partheneia* par excellence. According to the ancient tradition he is also the composer of other poetic genres such as iambic songs (Hesychius s. v. *klepsiamboi*) and matrimonial songs (*AP* 7. 19, *Suda* s.v. *hymenaion*). Fragment 5 *PMGF* though is a special case. In this particular fragment a cosmogony, which appears to have been written by the choral poet of the seventh century BC, is described. This cosmogony is preserved in a papyrus coming from the second century AD (P. Oxy. 2390).²⁰ Modern scholars usually classify this poem as *partheneion*.²¹ But if we want to give an answer that is closer to the truth regarding the genre of this fragment we have to find out its position in the poem where it belonged. The question that emerges, if we suppose that this fragment belonged to a *partheneion*, is why this cosmological account is found in such a song.

The commentator mentions a chorus of maidens (5 fr. 2 col. i, lines 24-25)²² and calls this poem *ode* (5 fr. 2 col. i, line 26). He also provides the opening lines of this *ode* (*Mō]sa lissomai t[ē si]ōn malista*) that contain an invocation to the Muses. An invocation to the Muses is a common way to begin a *partheneion*²³ as well as other choral songs. Then he provides information regarding the Muses origin from Gaia according to Mimnermus (13 W) and, possibly, according to Alcman too. Alcman usually calls the Muses 'daughters of Zeus' (27, 28 and, possibly, 43 *PMGF*), but according to Diodorus Siculus (Diod. Sic. iv 7. 1. 1) he is among the poets who believe that the Muses are the daughters of Gaia and Uranus. Scholars believe that the Muses here are called daughters of earth because the composer of this cosmogony wishes to underline their prophetic power.²⁴ The commentator on Pindar (*Schol. Pind. Nem.* iii 16b, iii 43 Dr.) also testifies that Alcman and Mimnermus believed that the Muse was the daughter of Uranus and not Zeus'. It is likely that Diodorus was referring to the poem that this fragment belonged to. The commentator

²⁰ Yasumura 2001 : 1, Sorel 2002: 57, Steiner 2003: 21.

²¹ Calame 1983: 442, Most 1987: 10, 12, Steiner 2003: 30.

²² τῆς τ[]ντιδων φυλ[- χ]ορός (ἔστι) / Δύμα[ῖναι ὧν πά]τρα Δυμᾶ[νες].

²³ 3. 1-5, 14a, 27, 28, 30, 43 *PMGF* and 1, 21 C.

²⁴ Rangos 2003: 91.

mentions a certain maiden chorus (Dymainai). This means that he also believes that it was probably performed by this chorus. Thus, Alcman did not use the poetic form to compose a cosmogony as others did. He claims that Alcman *physiologeí* and that he will expose his experience in addition to that of *loipōn*.

The first world that we should consider is *physiologeí*. Usually it is used by Aristotle and his pupils and it means: 'to examine natural causes, being a natural philosopher or talking about nature'.²⁵ The problem that we are facing is that we have no other testimony that Alcman was a philosopher of any kind or that he was interested in these matters. It is likely that, as others scholars believe, the commentator uses this verb as a technical term to describe the allegorical interpretation of a certain poem that seems to include a myth that supposedly has a hidden philosophical meaning.²⁶ With this word ancient commentators and grammarians describe either their own work when they interpret a text and find its 'secret meaning' or the work of the poet himself.²⁷ In our case it seems that the commentator describes the supposed activity of Alcman himself. Many scholars find in his vocabulary a Stoic, Orphic or Pythagorean coloring.²⁸

The cosmogony itself described in Alcman's 5 *PMGF* bears a lot of similarities with other Greek and Near Eastern cosmogonies. Its basic points are the following: 1) the initial state of the world was that of the shapeless and confused material; 2) Thetis is a kind of a demiurgic force; 3) Poros, Tekmor (the differentiation) and Darkness appear; 4) now that the differential power exists (Tekmor) day is followed by night, the moon and the stars. In addition to this, Thetis has the nature of the craftsman and the undifferentiated matter has the nature of bronze. These indications may allow us to compare this cosmogony to others coming both from the Greek and the Oriental world.

²⁵ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1. 8, 1 and *De Anima* 1. 3, 13a.

²⁶ Most 1987: 7.

²⁷ Most 1987: 7.

²⁸ West 1967: 14 -15, Detienne - Vernant 1978: 156 -157.

The material from which the world is made of in 5 *PMGF* is an unformed condition, thus *atelēs kai apoietos* or *apoetos*. We do not have such an example in any other early Greek cosmogony. According to many Greek cosmogonical accounts the world or man is made out of earth and water (Hom. *Il.* 7. 99, Hes. *Theog.* 571, Hes. *Op.* 61, Xenophanes 21 B29, 31 D-K, Parmenides 28 B15a D-K). The only thing close to that situation can be Hesiodic and, mostly, orphic Chaos.²⁹ In many Greek cosmogonies what comes before the creative process is the appearance or the creation of a creative force, such as is Thetis in Alcman's fragment. In Hesiod there is Gaia and Uranos (*Theogony* 90-170). In Pherecydes a special place is given to Zeus and to the couple of Chronos and Chtonie (DK 7 B7, DK 7 B5). In Pindar's 140d S-M there seems to be a creative power (*theos*) that the poet identifies with everything (*to pan*). In an Orphic text which is classified in the Aristotelic corpus (*DE Mundo* 401 a 27 - b 7) we have the following unusual case: Zeus is the source and creator of everything and he is both a male god and an immortal nympe.³⁰

In our fragment Poros and Tekmor set the boundaries of the world. In Homer Oceanus sets these boundaries (*Il.* 18. 606-607).³¹ In Hesiod the birth of Uranos seems to be the beginning of the whole creative process (*Theogony* 125-130).³² In fragment 5 *PMGF* the alteration of light and dark plays an important role. The same situation appears in Hesiod (*Theogony* 120-130), in orphic cosmogonies (Aristophanes, *Birds* 693-702 = OF 1, 619 F Bernabé) and in Pythagorean philosophy.³³

The cosmogony described in 5 *PMGF* seems to bear many similarities with many Near Eastern cosmogonies like *Genesis*, Babylonian *Enuma Elish* and *Atrahasis*. According to West Thetis' role in this fragment is similar to that of

²⁹ An example of the appearance of the motif of the derivation of differentiated matter from undifferentiated one comes from texts classified as orphic (Ap. Rhod. 1. 496 and Diodorus Siculus 1. 7. 1), see Sorel 2002: 110-111.

³⁰ Sorel 2002: 86 - 87.

³¹ Sorel 2002: 12 - 13.

³² Sorel 2002: 24 - 25.

³³ For the similarities of this fragment with Pythagorean philosophy see West 1967: 7, 14.

Tiamat in *Enuma Elish*, though they don't seem to serve the same function.³⁴ In *Enuma Elish* undifferentiated matter appears as a part of a water chaos and the creative powers are the couple of Apsu and Tiamat.³⁵ This babyloniatic cosmogonical account has been written many years before Alcman's poetry (12-14 century BC) and it would be very appealing but risky to recognize linear influence of this poem to Alcman's 5 *PMGF*. Another deity who has similar function to Thetis in an oriental cosmogony is Bellet Illi in *Atrahasis*. She creates man from clay to help Gods get rid of everyday labour (tablet 1). A remarkable feature of Alcman's 5 *PMGF* is the role of craftsman which is attributed to Thetis. People of Semitic origin believe that the sky was made out of bronze.³⁶ Thetis' relationship with water and its important role in this particular cosmogony has led many scholars to search for parallels in many Near Eastern cosmogonies where the world is initially described as a water chaos.³⁷

Fragment 5 *PMGF* bears many similarities with Genesis as well.³⁸ There God creates the first material and he exists independently of that. The initial state of the world is that of undifferentiated material covered by darkness (Gen. 1: 4-6). At some point we have the creation of light (Gen. 1: 14-18). The same may apply to fragment 5 *PMGF*. On the same grounds we can find a lot of similarities with the cosmological account of the Sibylline Oracles, a collection of oracular utterances composed in hexameters ascribed to the Sibyls, written anytime between the 2nd century BD and the 5th AD. The literary background of this collection varies from Hesiod and pseudo-pagan gnomology to early Christian documents.³⁹ The core of the cosmogonical account of the Sibylline Oracles is found in the first and second books of this collection. The part that has a lot in common with Alcman's 5 *PMGF* belongs to the first book (1. 5-20). A demiurge force (God) first establishes the earth over or besides the waters of Tartarus. The first thing that God creates is light. Then Heaven is created along with the stars. In contrast to the cosmogonical accounts of *Genesis* -

³⁴ West 1967: 6.

³⁵ Clifford 1994: 83.

³⁶ West 1997: 525.

³⁷ West 1997: 525, et. al.

³⁸ West 1997: 525.

³⁹ Lightfoot 2007: xi.

and Alcman - we have no mention of the moon or of the fact that the word before God's intervention was without form.⁴⁰ Modern scholars consider that the composer of this cosmological account has drawn on material of widely differing character accessible to him and that he was a Christian living in the second century AD or later.⁴¹

We cannot deny the fact that the cosmogony described in 5 *PMGF* has much in common with other cosmogonies, especially with those coming from the Near East. Many scholars claim that Alcman wrote his cosmogony influenced by these accounts.⁴² The influence of early Christian cosmogonical accounts on this fragment is also important. However, the only thing we can actually learn from the commentator about the poem is that he is going to interpret it unlike others, and we have indications that he uses the method of allegorical interpretation in order to discover the hidden meaning in Alcman's song.

It would be interesting to underline what kind of poems or excerpts were interpreted in this way and how important or not that could have been for Alcman's poem. Allegorical interpretation was mainly used to explain the lines of a poem in which the poet talked about the gods. These particular verses could be taken as obscene or insulting.⁴³ Allegorists' curiosity was ignited by ambiguities that only they could trace in a poem because they were close to their personal and literary experience.⁴⁴ Allegorical interpretation was usually used to explain myths.⁴⁵

The conclusions we can draw regarding the poetic genre of this poem are many. Alcman could have written something about a deity that could have been perceived by the commentator as blasphemous. The only name of a deity that can be found in the papyrus is that of Thetis. Taking into account the fact that allegorical interpretation was used to interpret myths and fragment 5 *PMGF* probably belongs to a *partheneion* here we may have the mythical part

⁴⁰ Lightfoot 2007: 324.

⁴¹ Lightfoot 2007: 149.

⁴² West 1967: 6, et al.

⁴³ Griffiths 1967: 79, Tate 1972: 214.

⁴⁴ Tate 1972: 2.

⁴⁵ Tate 1972: 214, Russel 2005: passim.

of a *partheneion*. What the commentator interpreted may have been close to his personal experience and interest. If we wish to take this argument further, he may have used Alcman as an authoritative figure in order to prove one of his own theories.

Such a myth like that concerning Thetis actually appears in ancient Greek literature and is the story of her abduction and her transformations. The summary of this myth is as follows: Thetis is given to Peleus as a bride because Zeus is afraid that she is going to give birth to offspring mightier than him. In almost every version of this myth Thetis is against the wedding, she threatens Peleus and transforms herself into various shapes. It is highly possible, according to other scholars as well, that Alcman had composed a *partheneion* for the chorus of *Dymaina*⁴⁶ and that the abduction of Thetis and her metamorphoses were mentioned in its mythical part.⁴⁷ Probably the ancient commentator on this text tried to justify the attitude of a certain deity in this poem (maybe Zeus' or Hera's). He believed that Alcman's poem had a well-hidden philosophical meaning and that his mission was to reveal it, unlike other commentators before him.

The strings that attach our commentator to various philosophical schools are many. He uses Aristotelian terminology. He refers to specific terms of Aristotelian terminology such as matter, beginning, end. Some scholars believe that he is using Aristotelian four causes in order to describe the creation of the world (matter = *hylē*, Thetis = *arhē tēs kinēseōs*, Tekmor = *to ou eneka kai to agathon, telos*, Poros = *to ti ēn, arhē*).⁴⁸ Although we have some cosmogonical accounts coming from the Aristotelian school (like the ones composed by Straton of Lampsakus, fr. 84-91 Wehrli) the cosmogony described barely bears any similarities with these accounts besides the common use of some words such as matter (*hylē*). Other scholars also find similarities with Orphic cosmogonies and with Pythagorean cosmological

⁴⁶ Calame 1983: 442, Most 1987: 10, 12, Steiner 2003: 30.

⁴⁷ For the opinion that the myth of the abduction of Thetis was used in the mythical part of the *partheneion* that this fragment belonged to see Most 1987: 12-23. Nevertheless, any myth concerning, probably, Thetis that could have been thought as obscene by the commentator may have been mentioned in the mythical part of the *partheneion*.

⁴⁸ Rangos 2003: 94.

thought.⁴⁹ The cosmogony found in this papyrus has many Near Eastern parallels and if we assume that it belongs to the commentator and not to Alcman, we can assume that he seems really familiar with this terminology. There are also many similarities with Genesis and with the Sibylline Oracles.

Unfortunately we cannot know with certainty what the exact content of Alcman's original poem was, not even what the exact content of this papyrus was due to its poor condition. We can only be sure of one thing. Alcman never composed a cosmogonic poem with the sense we attribute to that world today. That was the work of the commentator who used this text, maybe among others, in order to support a cosmogonical theory of a philosophical movement at the end of the second century AD. The allegorical interpretation of poetry was a wide spread methodological tool in this period.⁵⁰ From the many philosophical streams that existed in the second century AD there was one that combined all these elements. That was Neoplatonism. The Neoplatonic curriculum included Aristotle.⁵¹ Syncretism was one of the core elements of this philosophical movement.⁵² Neoplatonists combined elements from Orphism, Pythagoreanism and Stoicism and Near Eastern doctrines. They used on a regular basis allegorical interpretation as a methodological tool. This particular movement was not completely developed at the time when our commentator composed this text but was beginning to being created. The very beginning of Neoplatonic thought is the cosmological exegesis of Plato's *Timaeus* and the allegorical interpretation of *Genesis*. Cosmological exegesis played a central role in the Neoplatonic thought. So, it is not unlikely that our commentator and the composer of this cosmogony was a forerunner of this philosophic movement that used one *partheneion* to support his theories.

⁴⁹ Rangos 2003: 103.

⁵⁰ Other examples of allegorical interpretation of poetry include Cornutus treatment of a scholium in ll. 1. 399-400 in *Theologiae Graecae Compendium* (17) where he believes that this was a Homeric cosmological account.

⁵¹ Lloyd 1955: 4.

⁵² Lloyd 1955: 30.

Pindar's fr. 122 S-M

Athenaeus, a third century writer, quotes in the thirteenth book of *Scholars at Dinner* extracts of a poem written by Pindar (13. 557d-85f). This is fragment 122 S-M. Athenaeus uses this fragment as a proof of temple prostitution in Corinth. Modern scholars tend to do the same using this fragment as evidence either for or against the existence of sacred prostitution.⁵³

Pindar himself in line 14 characterizes the poem that this fragment belonged to as a *skolion*, thus a drinking song performed in a symposium. In Pindar's time poetry was not so much defined by its genre as by its occasion, so a *skolion* is a *skolion* simply because its occasion is a symposium.⁵⁴ The information that we can draw about this song from the use of the word *skolion* is merely that it was sung in a symposium and not that Pindar had to follow any clearly defined and very specific set of themes or words while he was composing this song to honor Xenophon.⁵⁵ In fact *skolia* might have been a subdivision of Pindar's book of *Enkomia*.⁵⁶ Athenaeus also mentions that it is clear from the poem that Pindar was afraid that the Corinthians could blame him for choosing this specific subject but he wrote the poem because he was confident in his poetic prowess as it is showed in this poem. There has been a lot of debate among modern scholars about this fragment and all its implications but in order to figure out what this poem is about we must distinguish first what Pindar is saying from what Athenaeus is claiming about it.

Athenaeus says that Xenophon of Corinth after winning in the Olympic Games ordered Pindar to write a praise song about his victory⁵⁷ and after that a drinking song about him and the courtesans he supposedly dedicated to Aphrodite. He proceeds to mention two lines of the dedication of the

⁵³ Budin 2008a: 113, Burnett 2011: 49.

⁵⁴ Budin 2008a: 117.

⁵⁵ Budin 2008a: 116.

⁵⁶ Vetta 1983: xxvii, D' Alessio 2000: <http://bmcr.brynmawr.edu/2000/2000-01-24.html>, Budin 2008a: 115.

⁵⁷ This song is *Olymp.* 13.

courtesans to the goddess and then he quotes two *strophes* of this poem. At the end he comments that Pindar was anxious about how the subject would appear to the Corinthians, but he claimed that his poetic ability would rescue him from disgrace. Athenaeus is probably implying that Pindar censored himself. Some modern scholars agree with him.⁵⁸

The poem seems to be divided in two parts. The first is addressed to the courtesans and the second to the symposiasts. Pindar seems to be sympathetic to the prostitutes. He calls them 'young ones welcoming many strangers' (line 1) and 'handmaids of persuasion' (line 1-2). He thinks that their thoughts often fly to Aphrodite when they perform a kind of ritual (lines 3-5). It is their fate to give sexual services to youth and they cannot be blamed for that (*aneu apagorias*, line 6). He ends this part of the poem, as far as we can tell from Athenaeus quotation, with a gnomic phrase describing their services 'with necessity all is lovely' (line 9). In the second part of the poem he addresses the masters of the Isthmus, thus the symposiasts. He wonders what they will think about him because at the beginning of this *skolion* he is 'joining himself with common women'. In the last lines quoted by Athenaeus he calls these women a herd of animals. Modern scholars believe that Pindar, by using the two phrases 'with necessity all is lovely' and 'we teach the quality of gold with pure touchstone', is trying to distinguish and alienate himself from the prostitutes, or even that he feels ashamed of his subject.⁵⁹ The only thing that is certain is that he is, if we believe Athenaeus, concerned with his subject and the opinion Corinthians will have of him, as he declares in lines 13-15. Athenaeus not only seems to omit some lines addressed to the courtesans but even implies that Pindar did something to restrain himself to talk more about this subject.

This song has a lot in common with other drinking songs, though the term *skolion* used here refers mostly to the occasion and not to the context of this song. The invocation of Aphrodite brings to the mind of the reader the invocation of Aphrodite and of other goddesses in the opening lines of other

⁵⁸ Fränkel 1975: 470, et.al.

⁵⁹ Van Groningen 1960: 49, Kurke 1996: 56.

poems such as Sappho's (1. 5 V, 2 V) or Anacreon's (348, 357 *PMGF*). The phrase that Pindar supposedly uses in order to describe the profession of these prostitutes (*en eunais malsakas hōras apo kairon drepesthai*) is almost identical with a phrase used in another Pindaric *skolion* / *enkomion* (fr. 123 S-M). Fragment 123 S-M comes from a song dedicated to Theoxenus and begins with the gnomic phrase 'you must heap the fruits of love when you are young'. Other fragments that belong to the Ionic or Aeolic lyric symposiastic tradition are characterized by their witty and lighthearted spirit (like Anacreon 358, 417 *PMGF*).

Pindar has mentioned sexual matters more than once in his poetry. Modern scholars emphasize the presence of the erotic element even in his victory odes.⁶⁰ He does not hesitate to talk about Poseidon's relationship with Pelops in *Olymp.* 1. 23-55 and mentions Zeus affair with Ganymede in the same victory ode (*Olymp.* 1. 43-45). In *Pythian* 9 Apollo appears to have a dialogue with Cheiron about whether it is legitimate to abduct and have sex with the nymph Kyrene (lines 30-75). Cheiron agrees on the condition that Apollo will bring the nymph to Libya. Pindar even describes Apollo's desire for Kyrene (lines 34-37) and shortly their sexual union (66-70). Cheiron mentions Peitho (lines 38-41). According to him she has hidden keys that open the holly loves because both mortals and Gods hesitate to have a taste of the sweet love-making for the first time. Pindar adds erotic undertones in epinician odes written about Xenocrates of Acragantas when he refers to his son Thrasyboulus (*Pythian* 6. 12-15, 43-53 and *Isthmian* 2. 1-15). In *Isthmian* 2 he mentions that now the Muse has become fond of money (lines 6-12) and describes his own profession with terms that could have described the act of prostitution. He composes an *enkomion* about the same Thrasyboulus (fr. 124a S-M) with a clearly sympotic tone. His *enkomion* for Theoxenus is full of erotic references (fr. 123 S-M). There he describes the melting effect that the desire about young Theoxenus has to the speaker. He also mentions Peitho who, along with Charis, is the companion of this young man. From all this we

⁶⁰ Instone 1990: 30.

can assume that Pindar cannot be very genuine when he speaks about his hesitation to handle this improper subject.

This declaration of his innocence and of the supposed difficulty in handling this 'delicate' matter seems to be said in a playful rather than a serious way.⁶¹ Pindar seems rather to tease his patrons and audience of aristocrats than to talk seriously about his difficult subject. His embarrassment is nothing more than a poetic device. Modern scholars who believe that animalizing these women is something that underlines their social status⁶² can be proved wrong by a series of examples where high status women are equated with animals.⁶³ Athenaeus has probably drawn his material from Chamaeleon's treatise on Pindar,⁶⁴ he might have omitted himself some lines, and he has used the 'useful' part to prove the existence of temple prostitution in Corinth. At the same time he supposes that Pindar self-censored because he was anxious about his subject. It seems that none of Athenaeus' claims can be proved from the fragment itself.

Athenaeus's source is Chamaeleon's treatise on Pindar. Athenaeus cites this fragment along with a piece of Simonides, that has probably been taken from Chamaeleon as well,⁶⁵ and a fragment from Alexis' comedy *Loving Woman*. The reason Athenaeus cites these three fragments together is quite different from Chamaeleon's use of Simonides' epigram and Pindar's fr. 122 S-M. Probably Chamaeleon invoked a hypothetical Corinthian custom (that of ancient prostitution) in order to shed light on both poems, and especially on Pindar's *skolion*.⁶⁶

Athenaeus cites these two fragments in order to speak about prostitutes in Corinth and the supposedly ancient custom of employing as many prostitutes as possible in order to join the supplication to Aphrodite wherever the city addresses a supplication to this deity. He quotes fr. 122 S-M as a piece of

⁶¹ Budin 2008a: 135.

⁶² Van Groningen 1960: 41, Burnett 2011: 57.

⁶³ Budin 2008a: 124.

⁶⁴ Van Groningen 1960: 19, Burnett 2011: 49.

⁶⁵ Budin 2008b: 338, 348.

⁶⁶ Budin 2008b: 348, 352.

evidence for the custom of individuals to dedicate prostitutes to Aphrodite. He tries to reinforce his argument by using not a fragment coming from the same period as the other two, but some lines taken from Middle comedy. Alexis' fragment (389 K), according to Athenaeus, indicates that Corinthian courtesans celebrated a festival at their own, but according to a custom all courtesans during the festival should feast in common with free men. So, Simonides' poem is used as a proof for courtesans' supplications to Aphrodite for the good of the city, Pindar's fr. 122 S-M is used as a proof for the private dedication of prostitutes and of the custom of the common sacrificial meals of free people and courtesans, and Alexis' fragment, supposedly, reinforces this reading of Pindar's fr. 122 S-M. Chamaeleon, without any doubt, is an unreliable source that probably invented an ancient custom in order to elucidate a poem,⁶⁷ but what Athenaeus does is quite the opposite. He uses two fragments taken from a treatise written by someone that invented an ancient custom in order to explain them as proof for the existence of a custom invented (or used) in order to explain them. Athenaeus' treatment of this fragment is an example of circular reading.

Conclusions

We have seen in our three cases that any ancient commentator or writer who transmits a poem of a lyric poet some centuries later can manipulate it in order to make it serve his own purposes. In our first example scholars start from a gloss in Photius and interpret Archilochus' poems, and others start from the poems and interpret the gloss as referring to Lycambes. Nothing in the rest of the tradition or in Archilochus' poetry connects Lycambes and his daughters with this method of suicide. In the second case an anonymous scholiast of the second century AD quotes no more than five lines of the mythical part of a *partheneion*, probably in order to use it as evidence to support his own cosmogonical theory, and calls it a part of a cosmogonical poem. In our last example Athenaeus, who takes this text from Chamaeleon's commentary on Pindar, thinks that Pindar self-censored because he could not

⁶⁷ Budin 2008b: 352.

talk in an open way about prostitution. He also uses this fragment as evidence for sacred prostitution. Pindar seems to complain about his subject only in a playful way and does not mention in this fragment sacred prostitution. The most impressive thing of all is that these fragments had a similar fate in modern times, causing much controversy among modern scholars.

These three fragments, each coming from a different writer, each having a different commentator and each having a different subject, clearly demonstrate the power that a commentator can have over any text. An ancient writer or scholar can choose any part of a poem taking it either from an edition or from another writer, omit many lines, and use it either to interpret other poems or to support a theory or to reinforce his arguments. Athenaeus' citation of both Simonides' and Pindar's fragments in order to talk about an ancient custom of Corinthians is a fine example of this tactic. Alcman's 5 *PMGF* allegorical interpretation is another one. Other examples can include Plato's use of a poem of Simonides (542 *PMGF*) in order to reinforce his argument in *Protagoras* (*Protagoras* 339ab-347a) and many other citations of lyric poems. A whole series of speculations and misinterpretations can start as well from a lemma in a lexicon, like in Archilochus' case. The tendency of ancient writers and scholiasts to draw conclusions about any poet's life based on his or her poetry is exemplified in Archilochus' case as well. Other well-known examples of this include the entire biographical tradition regarding Sappho's immorality,⁶⁸ Hipponax's enmity with Bupalus and many other notorious cases. The questions that rise from these observations are the following: why did ancient commentators and scholars choose to exercise their power in these texts and, secondly, if their readings are almost useless for the interpretation of a certain poem, why should we be concerned with them?

It is well known that when the corpus of lyric poetry and lyric poets started to become the object of ancient philology this corpus was already fragmentary.⁶⁹ But it was not just the fragmentarity of that corpus that ignited the curiosity of

⁶⁸ Yatromanolakis 2008: 1-7.

⁶⁹ Hummel 1997: 53 - 54.

ancient erudition. It was mostly the nature of this poetic genre. One of the most eminent characteristics of this genre is its diversity as concerns both its form and content. It seems that lyric poetry was a genre that symbolized the other for ancient scholars and prose writers,⁷⁰ and that is why it needed an explanation.

Even If all these narratives and comments about ancient poets or specific poems cannot be read as literary history they can still reveal something useful, not about ancient Greek lyric poetry, but about their own composers.⁷¹ These texts give us an insight in their reception mechanisms of lyric poetry, a genre considered the other par excellence by classical and postclassical philological orthodoxy, and nothing more. These ancient readings of Greek lyric poetry should make us consider carefully our own readings too. Maybe ancient scholars were not the only ones trying to exercise their power over a rather fragmentary, diverse and distant corpus. We all should be careful in order not to commit the same error.

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⁷⁰ Hummel 1997: 83, 253.

⁷¹ Graziosi 2002: 3, Yatromanolakis 2008: 41 - 42, Beercroft 2010: 2, 18.

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