Alcmanic Hexameters and Early Hexametric Poetry: Alcman's Poetry in its Oral Context

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THE COMPLEX RELATIONSHIP between archaic epic and archaic lyric poetry has always been a thorny issue for classicists. The traditional approach was to attribute all the formative or thematic similarities between a lyric and an epic composition to the 'imitation' of the epic poem by the lyric poet or the 'influence' of the epic poet on the lyric poet. Examples of this approach can be found for almost any archaic Greek poet and his relationship to epic material.[1] That approach presupposes that archaic lyric poetry derived from epic poetry in general or even just from Homeric poetry, thus from the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, the Homeric poems par excellence. This view is challenged by recent scholarship in the field.[2]

As a consequence, this traditional philological method for assessing the relationship between epic and lyric—a word-for-word comparison between a lyric and an epic poem in order to attribute similarities to 'epic' or 'Homeric influence'—is put in question. What is difficult, however, is to find a different

[1] See C. Calame, *Alcman* (Rome 1983) xxxiii n.3, for bibliography; cf. J. A. Davison, *From Archilochus to Pindar*, *Papers on Greek Literature of the Archaic Period* (London 1968) 84–85.

[2] Davison, *From Archilochus* 84; P. A. Miller, *Lyric Texts and Lyric Consciousness: The Birth of a Genre from Archaic Greece to Augustian Rome* (London 1994) 9; R. Fowler, "On the Shoulders of Giants: Intertextuality and Classical Studies," *MD* 39 (1997) 13–34; B. Graziosi and J. Haubold, "Greek Lyric and Early Greek Literary History," in F. Budelmann, *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Lyric* (Cambridge 2009) 96–97.

Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies 53 (2013) 420–440

theoretical approach that will be methodologically more accurate and effective. What is equally difficult is to find new terms to describe the relationship between epic and lyric poetry. The terms that have been used, e.g. imitation, influence, allusion, intertextuality, cannot easily be applied to the relationship between a lyric and an epic poem. The terms imitation or influence[3] were used in the past to describe a willing subject, the writer, who echoes the text of another writer voluntarily,[4] and so too the term allusion.[5] Intertextuality can be manifested when we have two or more texts and seek a one-to-one relationship between the two.[6] To be accurate we cannot speak of the existence of texts, i.e. written texts, in the archaic period. Even though writing was used in this period (even for aiding the composition of lyric poetry, according to some scholars)[7] we should bear in mind that we have to do with an oral society or a "song culture," as some call it,[8] that has its own compositional rules. An archaic epic or lyric poem is not, primarily, a written text. It is mainly an oral

[3] R. C. Holub, *Reception Theory, A Critical Introduction* (London 1984) xii.

[4] See G. B. Conte, *The Rhetoric of Imitation: Genre and Poetic Memory in Virgil and Other Latin Poets* (Ithaca 1986) 24–26, for the emphasis put on the intentionality of the author concerning similarities between two or more texts.

[5] P. A. Rosenmeyer, "Her Master's Voice: Sappho's Dialogue with Homer," *MD* 39 (1997) 124–126; W. Irwin, "What Is an Allusion?" *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 59 (2001) 287–297.

[6] E. Barker and J. Christensen, "Flight Club: The New Archilochus and its Resonance with Homeric Epic," *MD* 57 (2006) 13–14. For a better understanding of the terms imitation, allusion, intertextuality, and their use in classical studies see Conte, *The Rhetoric of Imitation* 23–28; S. Hinds, *Allusion and Intertext: Dynamics of Appropriation in Roman Poetry* (Cambridge 1998) xi, 19, 21–25.

[7] A. Ford, "From Letters to Literature: Reading the 'Song Culture' of Classical Greece," in H. Yunis, *Written Texts and the Rise of Literate Culture in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge/New York 2003) 19–20.

[8] C. J. Herington, *Poetry into Drama: Early Tragedy and the Greek Poetic Tradition* (Berkeley 1985) 3–5. On this issue see also R. Fowler, *The Nature of Early Greek Lyric: Three Preliminary Studies* (Toronto 1987).

performance of a song composed for a specific occasion. Archaic genres are above all defined by the occasion for which they were composed.[9]

If we cannot use text-based methods for the study of the complex relationship between archaic epic and archaic lyric, one may ask what method we are entitled to use in order to investigate this controversial issue. The answer is that we can take advantage of some of the arguments of oral theory. It is true that calling a poem oral may create more problems than it solves,[10] but we cannot do otherwise. This is the approach used in this paper to study the relationship between Alcman's hexameters and early hexametric poetry. The aim of the paper is to examine the relationship between a group of seven Alcmanic fragments written in dactylic hexameter (26, 28, 43, 77, 80, 104, and 107 *PMG*)[11] and archaic epic and lyric poetry. I examine the metrical, linguistic, and thematic similarities between this group of fragments and epic poetry and I try to reconstruct his position within his oral context, which is a wider epic and lyric context and a narrower context of citharodic preludes to choral songs.

Epic meter and epic language

Alcman used 'epic meter', thus the dactylic hexameter, in some of his poems as is obvious from these fragments.[12] The use of dactylic hexameter it is not in itself a strong indication of an 'intertextual relationship' of any kind between Alcman's songs and epic. In his time when a lyric poet composed his

[9] G. Nagy, *Pindar's Homer: The Lyric Possession of an Epic Past* (Baltimore 1990) 362, *Poetry as Performance: Homer and Beyond* (Cambridge/New York 1996) 9, 84, and "A Second Look at the Poetics of Re-enactment in *Ode* 13 of Bacchylides," in L. Athanassaki and E. Bowie, *Archaic and Classical Choral Song: Performance, Politics and Dissemination* (Berlin 2011) 174, 183.

[10] J. M. Foley, *Homer's Traditional Art* (University Park 1999) 13.

[11] I follow the edition of D. Page, *Poetae Melici Graeci* (Oxford 1962).

[12] Some editors do not think that 28 was in hexameters (see Calame, *Alcman* 121). A. Garzya, *Alcmane. I frammenti* (Naples 1954) 113, believes that it was in choriambic dimeter, a meter suitable for a *paian* as he notes.

poems in dactylic hexameter no one would have thought that he was imitating Homer or that he had composed epic poetry, because the genre of a poem was determined by its performative context.[13] As a consequence, these seven fragments do not belong to epic poetry. We cannot be sure, however, if Alcman used this meter because they belonged to a specific poetic genre distinct from his other, non-hexametric poems. The vocabulary in these fragments has much in common with epic poetry. To determine whether using this meter was an indication that Alcman composed a special kind of poetry that belonged to a particular genre and whether his choice of vocabulary was an indication that he sought to resonate with or emulate Homeric poetry, we must examine these hexametric fragments closely.

As to their metric structure, all lines fall into three parts, as do most Homeric hexameters, according to Fränkel's scheme. As scholars have noted, one of the characteristics of oral poetry is the regularity with which it partitions its phraseology into formulaic semantic units.[14] Alcman's hexameters are divided into three formulaic semantic units, like the Homeric hexameters, thus like lines that belong to epic poetry.

We begin with fr.26:

οὔ μ' ἔτι, παρσενικαὶ μελιγάρυες ἰαρόφωνοι,
γυῖα φέρην δύναται· βάλε δὴ βάλε κηρύλος εἴην,
ὅς τ' ἐπὶ κύματος ἄνθος ἅμ' ἀλκυόνεσσι ποτήται
νηδεὲς ἦτορ ἔχων, ἁλιπόρφυρος ἰαρὸς ὄρνις.

No longer, honey-toned, strong-voiced girls, can my limbs carry me. If only, if only I were a cerylus, who flies along with the halcyons over the flower of the wave with resolute heart, strong, sea-blue bird.[15]

This is one of his most famous fragments. It is quoted by

[13] G. Nagy, "Genre and Occasion," *Métis* 9 (1994) 11–25.

[14] S. Garner, "Oral Tradition and Sappho," *Oral Tradition* 26 (2011) 417–418.

[15] Transl. D. A. Campbell, *Greek Lyric Poetry* II (Cambridge [Mass.] 1988).

Antigonus of Carystus, Apollonius Dyscolus, and ancient lexicographers.[16] Some scholars classify this fragment with *partheneia*,[17] i.e. songs written for and sung by a chorus of maidens. Others believe that it probably belonged to a citharodic prelude of a *partheneion*.[18]

Alcman's language, examined closely, proves highly traditional, even formulaic. The word μελιγάρυες is in Homer (*Od.* 12.187 of the Sirens), the *Homeric Hymns* (3.519 of song), and Pindar (*Ol.* 11.4, *Pyth.* 3.64, *Isth.* 2.3 of hymns). γυῖα is a common epic noun, found only in plural in the Homeric epics.[19] The phrase νηδεὲς ἦτορ ἔχων is very similar to the Homeric formula νηλεὲς ἦτορ (e.g. *Il.* 9.497 χρῆ νηλεὲς ἦτορ ἔχειν) or ἀδεὲς ἦτορ. It is a hapax according to Garzya, or should be emended to νηλεὲς ἦτορ according to Calame.[20] ἀλιπόρφυρος is Homeric[21] but is used by many archaic lyric poets as well.[22] The only true Doric form that we have here is the verb ποτήται.

The next hexameter fragment to be considered is 28:

Μῶσα Διὸς θύγατερ λίγ' ἀείσομαι ὠρανίαφι

Muse, daughter of Zeus, I shall sing clearly, heavenly one(?)

This probably comes from the beginning of a *partheneion*, because this was the usual place of the invocation of the Muse in *partheneia*. It is quoted by many ancient scholars (a scholiast of the *Iliad* among others) as an example of the use of the ending

[16] Page, *PMG* p.41.

[17] H. W. Smyth, *Greek Melic Poets* (London 1906) 190; G. Huxley, "Studies in Early Greek Poetry," *GRBS* 5 (1964) 27–28.

[18] D. E. Gerber, *Euterpe*: *An Anthology of Early Greek Lyric*, *Elegiac and Iambic Poetry* (Amsterdam 1970) 98–99; C. M. Bowra, *Greek Lyric Poetry*[2] (Oxford 1961) 23–24; F. De Martino and O. Vox, *Lirica greca* I (Bari 1996) 182; G. Vesterheim, "Alcman fr.26: A Wish for Fame," *GRBS* 44 (2004) 13.

[19] Calame, *Alcman* 475.

[20] Garzya, *Alcmane* 145; Calame, *Alcman* 478.

[21] Calame, *Alcman* 478.

[22] For example Anac. fr.447, fr. adesp. 939.19 *PMG*.

-φι for the formation of vocative in Alcman. Garzya agrees with Kodzu that this line is a mere imitation of Homeric language, even though Alcman had lost the criterion to distinguish between the declensions that could be formed by -φι, because vocative was never among them.[23] λιγύς was widely used in both epic and lyric (*Il.* 9.186, *Od.* 24.62 of the Muses, Pind. *Ol.* 9.72) and so was οὐράνιος of gods (Pind. *Pyth.* 2.70, *Hymn.Hom.* 2.55).[24] One Doric characteristic of the language is the substitution of ου with ω in Μῶσα.

Our next hexametric fragment (43) also has something to do with the Muse:

οὐ γὰρ ἐγώνγα ϝάνασσα Διὸς θύγατερ

For I, lady, daughter of Zeus … not …

This line probably comes from the beginning of a *partheneion*[25] or of another choral song. It is quoted by Apollonius Dyscolus as an example of the Doric ἐγώνγα. Alcman uses Διὸς θύγατερ par excellence for the Muse (fr.27, 28). In epic the phrase is usually applied to Aphrodite (*Od.* 22.505, 24.502, *Il.* 2.547).[26]

Fr.77 has an epic subject, is composed in dactylic hexameter, and its vocabulary offers an epic twist:

Δύσπαρις, Αἰνόπαρις κακὸν Ἑλλάδι βωτιανείρᾳ

Paris the Evil, Paris the Grim, a disaster for Greece, that nurse of men

This is quoted by Eustathius and a scholiast of Homer as an example of the use of the noun Δύσπαρις. Calame thinks that it probably comes from a prelude of a choral song.[27] There is no good reason to doubt this. As to its language, Δύσπαρις is indeed Homeric (*Il.* 3.39, 13.769). Αἰνόπαρις is a compound

[23] Garzya, *Alcmane* 113.

[24] Cf. Calame, *Alcman* 465.

[25] Garzya, *Alcmane* 101.

[26] Calame, *Alcman* 507, believes that the "daughter of Zeus" is not the Muse but Athena.

[27] Calame, *Alcman* 489.

from his name and the epic word αἰνός 'terrible'. βωτιάνειρα is found in epic (*Il.* 1.155, *Hymn.Hom.* 3.363, Hes. fr.165.16 M.-W.).

Fragment 80 comes from Iliadic scholia:

καὶ ποκ' Ὀδυσσῆος ταλασίφρονος ὥατ' ἑταίρων
Κίρκα ἐπαλείψασα

And once Circe anointing the ears of the companions of stout-hearted Odysseus

Alcman here uses two different Homeric formulae,[28] καὶ τότ' Ὀδυσσῆος (*Od.* 5.297, 5.406, 22.147) and Ὀδυσσῆος ταλασίφρονος. ταλασίφρων characterizes Odysseus not only in Homer but in other epic poems as well (e.g. Hes. *Theog.* 1012). Alcman probably is describing Odysseus' stopping his companions' with wax before meeting the Sirens.[29] Homer uses almost the same words (*Od.* 12.47–48, ἐπὶ οὔατ' ἀλεῖψαι ἑταίρων / κηρὸν δεψήσας). The participle ἐπαλείψασα, as Calame notes, should have followed the Aeolic form in -αίσα. What we in fact have here is a different formation, and it is possible that it comes from another poetic tradition and not that of Ionic epic.[30]

We do not have much information concerning fr.104:

τίς ἂν τίς πόκα ῥὰι ἄλλα νόον ἀνδρὸς ἐπίσποι

Who, who could ever tell easily the mind of another man?

It is quoted by Apollonius Dyscolus as an example of the form ῥάι; ῥεία/ῥέα is more common in epic.[31] The form πόκα is Doric. The content of the fragment is gnomological. It is not impossible that it comes from a *partheneion*, since Alcman's *partheneia* had such elements.[32]

Fragment 107 is quoted by the orator Aristeides:

[28] Calame, *Alcman* 496.

[29] Garzya, *Alcmane* 137; Calame, *Alcman* 495–496.

[30] Calame, *Alcman* 496.

[31] Garzya, *Alcmane* 139.

[32] See for example fr.1.15–20, 36–38.

Πολλαλέγων ὄνυμ' ἀνδρί, γυναικὶ δὲ Πασιχάρηα.

Say-much is the man's name, Happy-with-all the woman's.

Garzya insisted that this has a satirical twist, mainly because χάρις and πασι- as compounds are widely used in iambic poetry (e.g. Archilochus 168 W.). He tries to reinforce his argument by claiming that dactylic hexameter was also used for a satirical poem by Hipponax (128 W.).[33] Though his arguments are not entirely compelling, I think that he stresses an important fact: dactylic hexametrical poems could have been composed for many occasions other that the performance of epic poetry. Calame notes that the name Πασιχάρηα is found in masculine form in inscriptions and so it is not certain that these are nicknames invented with a supposedly satirical intent.[34] We cannot in fact guess what this fragment was about and whether Alcman composed satirical poetry or not. One thing is certain: the content of this poem has nothing to do with Homeric poetry.

Scholars recognize that Alcman did not compose in a straightforward or pure Laconian dialect.[35] His language was heavily influenced by a common poetic tradition that existed before and developed simultaneously with what we today call Homeric or epic poetry or the Ionian epos. The distinction between epic and lyric poetry was far from clear during the seventh century B.C. Genre was determined by the occasion of the performance. This common poetic tradition had its own

[33] Garzya, *Alcmane* 153.

[34] Calame, *Alcman* 565–566. Calame thinks that Πασιχάρηα means "the one whom everybody likes" like Astymeloisa, a leader of an Alcmanic *partheneion* (fr.3).

[35] Calame, *Alcman* xxix–xxx. See also G. Hinge, "Cultic Persona and the Transmission of the Partheneions," in J. Jensen et al. (eds.), *Aspects of Ancient Greek Cult: Context, Ritual and Iconography* (Aarhus 2009) 215–236. For more on Alcman's language see C. Carey, "Alcman from Laconia to Alexandria," in Athanassaki and Bowie, *Archaic and Classical Choral Song* 439–443, and G. B. D'Alessio, "Language and Pragmatics," in Budelmann, *Cambridge Companion to Lyric Poetry* 124–127.

language. Its composition and transmission depended on the oral tradition and its rules. Without any doubt Alcman's dialect is full of inconsistencies, if we suppose that he should have written in the vernacular Doric of his time. These inconsistencies are found in many fragments that have an epic theme or meter. Alcman's dialect is full of what scholars like to call 'reminiscences' or 'allusions to' or 'imitations of' what we call Homeric language. His hexameters could not be an exception to this rule. As we have seen, they are full of Homeric 'allusions' on the linguistic level. Alcman in fact uses words, phrases, epithets, and formulae that are not Homeric, and some of them are widely used in lyric poetry. This argument is supported by numerous examples in his non-hexametric poems and chiefly his *partheneia*.[36]

Epic 'themes'

One of the criteria on which many scholars have based their arguments about 'Homeric allusions' or imitation is the presence of epic (usually Homeric) 'themes'[37] in Alcman's work. What I will try to show is that in these Alcmanic hexameters we do encounter at least four alleged Homeric themes: the invocation of the Muse, ornithological references, the story of Circe, Odysseus, and the Sirens, and an accusation against

[36] Some instances: fr.1.3 ποδώκη, an epithet used in Homer (e.g. *Il.* 10.316, 18.234) but in lyric poetry too (Carm. conv. 894.3 *PMG*); 1.10 κλόνον, used in Homer (*Il.* 5.167, 16.331) and the Hesiodic *Scutum* (148); 1.71 σιειδής, in Homer (*Il.* 24.217, *Od.* 14.173) but also in Hesiod (*Theog.* 350); 1.78 κ[α]λλίσφυρος, in Homer (*Il.* 14.319, *Od.* 5.333) but also Hesiod (*Theog.* 386, etc.); 3.1 Ὀλυμπιάδες, of the Muses in Homer (*Il.* 2.491), Hesiod (*Theog.* 25, 52), and *Hymn.Hom.* 4.450; 3.1 περί με φρένας, in Homer (*Il.* 10.139, 11.89, *Od.* 9.362) and *Hymn.Hom.* 3.461; 3.4 ὀπός, used in Homer and in lyric to describe the voice of a person singing (*Il.* 1.604, *Od.* 10.221, Pind. *Nem.* 7.83, Bacch. 17.129, etc.); 3.7 γλυκύς, used of sleep (*Od.* 2.395, Pind. *Pyth.* 9. 23); 1.10 ἀπαλοὶ πόδες (*Il.* 19.92, *Hymn.Hom.* 2.287, 4.273, etc.).

[37] For a definition of the term as a thematic analogue to the formula see A. B. Lord, "Composition by Theme in Homer and Southslavic Epos," *TAPA* 82 (1951) 71–80.

Paris—but these themes are not proof that Alcman imitated Homer. The very existence of these themes (recurrent elements of narrative or description) is a strong characteristic of oral poetry.[38]

In fr.26 we encounter ornithological references. These are very common in Alcman's poetry. He uses them to describe either himself and the process of poetic composition (39 ϝέπη τάδε καὶ μέλος Ἀλκμὰν / εὗρε γεγλωσσαμέναν / κακκαβίδων ὅπα συνθέμενος, 40 ϝοῖδα δ' ὀρνίχων νόμως / παντῶν) or a member of the chorus and, usually, the member's role in the performance (1.60 ταὶ Πεληάδες, 1.86–87 παρσένος μάταν ἀπὸ θράνω λέλακα / γλαύξ, 1.101 κύκνος, 82 λῦσαν δ' ἄπρακτα νεάνιδες ὤ/τ' ὄρνις ϝιέρακος ὑπερπταμένω).

Ornithological images are not Alcman's or Homers' invention. Many archaic lyric poets use them for the same reasons, describing a person or referring to themselves and the process of poetic composition. Alcaeus uses such images to describe the effect of fear in a battle context,[39] not unlike Alcman in 82. Archilochus describes the effect of fear in the same way (fr.224 W.). Anacreon describes a woman as a melodic and gracious χελιδόνα (fr.394a *PMG*), and claims that he drives himself away from a female like a κόκκυξ (437); in 453 he calls someone κωτίλην χελιδών.[40] Pratinas characterizes a bird as ἀδύφωνον (711 *PMG*).

Ornithological references are not only used of persons but also of the compositional process, especially in Pindar and Bacchylides, e.g. Pind. *Ol.* 2.86–88 σοφὸς ὁ πολλὰ εἰδὼς φυᾷ. / μαθόντες δὲ λάβροι / παγγλωσσίᾳ κόρακες ὡς ἄκραντα γαρυέτων / Διὸς πρὸς ὄρνιχα θεῖον, Bacch. 4.7–8 ἔλακε δ'

[38] Lord, *TAPA* 82 (1951) 73.

[39] E.-M. Voight, *Sappho and Alcaeus* (Amsterdam 1971): Alcaeus (52 V.) or fr. incertum (10 V.).

[40] Anacreon, according to the ancient tradition, was a composer of *partheneia* (Athen. 600D, Lucian *Ver.hist.* 2.15), so it is not impossible that fr.437 and 453 could be choral songs and that a maiden is compared to a bird as in Alcman's *partheneia*.

ἀδυεπὴς ἀ[να/ξιφόρ]μιγγος Οὐρ[αν]ίας ἀλέκτωρ, 5.19–23 αἰετὸς εὐρυάνακτος ἄγγελος / Ζηνὸς ἐρισφαράγου (…) πτάσσοντι δ' ὄρνι/χες λιγύφθογγοι φόβῳ. The specific bird that Alcman refers to in fr.26 is the halcyon, whose myth of giving birth during winter was a common lyric theme (Stesich. fr.248 *PMG*, Ibyc. 265, Sappho Test. 195 V., etc.)[41] and was not merely a Homeric one.

Two of our fragments (28, 43) have invocations of the Muse. This is one of the most prominent motifs of Alcman's poetry. The Muses, or just one Muse, are invoked several times in his other poems (3.1–5, 5, perhaps 8, 14a, 27, 28, 30, and probably 1 Calame), and not only in his hexameters. The invocation of the Muse was a prominent theme of epic poetry, but was also used in many different lyric compositions.

In fr.28 an anonymous subject declares his or her intention to sing about the Muse, the daughter of Zeus. Both 27 and 28 are thought to come from choral songs.[42] Διὸς θύγατερ is found in the hexameter fr.43, which belongs either to a *partheneion*[43] or to a sympotic context. What is remarkable here is that, as Calame notes, the poet is the subject of choral activity and not the Muse as is usual in Homeric epic (e.g. *Il.* 1.1, 2.484, *Od.* 1.1).[44] Homer is not the only poet who begins his hexametric poems with an invocation to the Muse. Hesiod too calls upon the Muse for inspiration (ταῦτά μοι ἔσπετε Μοῦσαι Ὀλύμπια δώματ' ἔχουσαι, *Theog.* 114), as do the poets of the *Homeric*

[41] Calame, *Alcman* 474–475.

[42] Calame, *Alcman* 462, 465; De Martino, *Lirica* 172

[43] Calame, *Alcman* 221, 506–507.

[44] Calame, *Alcman* 466. As G. Scafoglio notes, "Two Fragments of the Epic Cycle," *GRBS* 46 (2006) 6–7, this kind of invocation to the Muse is usual in lyric poetry and not unusual in cyclic poetry. Scafoglio mentions as an example the proem of the *Ilias Parva* (fr.1 Bernabé = 2 dub. Davies) where the poet speaks in the first person and claims authorship for his poetry (Μοῦσά μοι ἔνεππε κεῖνα, / τὰ μήτ' ἐγένοντο πάροιχθε / μήτ' ἔσται μετόπισθεν). He holds that the call to the Muse for inspiration and the willingness of the poet to present himself as the subject of poetic activity do exist at least in the *Ilias Parva* and maybe in other non-Homeric epic.

Hymns (5.1, 19.1). In Hesiod and in the *Hymns*, and even in the *Odyssey* in comparison with the *Iliad*, the poet uses the first person, as in Alcman's hexameters, thus showing a special level of self-awareness.

The opening invocation of the Muses appears from Homeric epic and onwards and can be found in many victory odes of Pindar (e.g *Ol.* 3.3–4, *Nem.* 9.1), in Stesichorus (fr.33 *PMG*), and in other lyric poets. Thus the invocation of the Muse is not a clear indication that Alcman had in mind or imitated any kind of early hexametric poetry or that the work belonged to a specific kind of poetry quite distinct from his *partheneia*.

A low opinion of Paris is expressed in fr.77: but that is a *topos* of the whole Greek poetic tradition.[45] A clear illustration of this can be seen in tragedy (Aes. *Ag.* 713, Eur. *Hel.* 1120, *Hec.* 944 ff.). It is obvious that we are not dealing with mere imitation of epic poetry.

Garzya holds that many of these fragments have an epic coloring. When he refers to epic he usually means Homeric, that is, what we find in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* that we have today. Commenting on fr.80, Garzya claims that some fragments in Alcman's corpus concern Odysseus: 70c, 74, 80, 81, 84.[46] He does not suggest that Alcman imitated Homer's *Odyssey*, but if his hypothesis is right this can be an indication of an intertextual relationship of any kind between these fragments and the *Odyssey* or pre-*Odyssey*. To assess this we need to examine closely this 'influenced by the *Odyssey*' group of fragments before returning to fr.80. What we will find is not that they are definitely not influenced by the *Odyssey*, but that they are not a group.

Fr.70c, σὲ γὰρ ἄζομαι, "for I stand in awe of you," is quoted by Apollonius Dyscolus. Calame thinks that this may not be-

[45] Calame, *Alcman* 490.

[46] Garzya, *Alcmane* 137: "Evidente richiamo al noto episodio dell' Odissea (XII 37ss.; v. 47: ἐπὶ δ' οὗατ' ἀλεῖψαι ἑταίρων); frr. probabilmente riguardanti Odisseo 13, 40, 64, 66."

long to Alcman and assigns it to *fragmenta dubia*.[47] Page includes it as Alcman, but makes clear that it is "sine nome auctoris." The meter is *Kurzvers*.[48] Apollonius says only that Δωριεῖς use τε instead of σε, so we are entitled to be in doubt about authorship.

A grammarian quotes fr.74, ἦσκέ τις Καφεὺς ϝανάσσων. The possible connection between the *Odyssey* or epic genre and this fragment depends, mainly, on the reading of Καφεύς. Garzya suggests that we read σκαφεύς, as in the MSS. (he translates "signore della nave" = captain).[49] In this way he states that is not impossible to connect this fragment with Odysseus' journey. But even if we read σκαφεύς there is no reason to relate fr.74 to Odysseus. He was certainly not the first and only Greek hero who had connections with the sea and travel.[50] Calame suggests that either of two Greek kings with the name Κηφεύς—Kepheus of Tegea who may have taken part along with Heracles in the battle against the sons of Hippocoon (Apollod. 2.7.3) or Kepheus of Ethiopia, the father of Andromeda—could be the subject of the fragment and notes that the meter (trochaics) is the same as in fr.68, which he believes relates to the *Aithiopis*; so if fr.74 refers to Kepheus of Ethiopia it probably belongs to the same poem as 68 and surely to the same context.[51] We cannot know much about the context of fr.74, but what we can say is that it need not be connected to Odysseus and his travels.

Fr.81, Ζεῦ πάτερ, αἰ γὰρ ἐμοὸς πόσις εἴη, may have an Odyssean prototype. It was sung by a maiden chorus (so either a *partheneion* or a wedding song) and has many lyric parallels. Garzya and Janni believe that Alcman was heavily influenced

[47] Calame, *Alcman* 205.

[48] Garzya, *Alcmane* 117.

[49] Garzya, *Alcmane* 138–139.

[50] Alcman mentions boats and navigation even in connection to Dionysus in fr.93. On this see Calame, *Alcman* 495.

[51] Calame, *Alcman* 487, 496.

by *Odyssey* 6 in composing this, and they note that the line is almost identical to 6.244.[52] A scholiast to the *Odyssey* highlights that Ἀλκμὰν αὐτὸν μετέβαλε παρθένους λέγουσας εἰσάγων, Alcman changed his Odyssean prototype by putting these words in the mouth of the maidens of the chorus: the speaker is not Nausicaa but the maidens of the chorus, so this fragment belongs most probably to a *partheneion*. Garzya and Calame[53] accept that Alcman's literary prototype was *Od.* 6.244, αἲ γὰρ ἐμοὶ τοιόσδε πόσις κεκλημένος εἴη, "Would that a man such as he might be called my husband." Nausicaa addresses these words to the maiden servants of the palace who accompany her. Calame notes that similar prayers can be found in Alcman 1.70 and in 3.81, but there in a homoerotic context.[54] We also encounter them in Archilochus (177, 197 W.), Hipponax (38 W.), and Alcaeus (691 V.). Calame suggests that Alcman combined *Od.* 6.244 with an expression found in *Od.* 7.311 (αἲ γὰρ, Ζεῦ πάτερ). He holds that this fragment belonged to a wedding song, because the context does not seem homoerotic.[55] The meter is dactylic tetrameter (alcmanicum).[56]

Fr.84 is quoted by Eustathius: ἐπ' ἀριστερὰ χηρὸς ἔχων, "having upon his left hand." We cannot be certain of its context. Bergk adds a preceding <ἄρκτον δ'>, relying on *Od.* 5.275–276, ἄνωγε Καλυψώ, δῖα θεάων, ποντοπορευέμεναι ἐπ' ἀριστερὰ χειρὸς ἔχοντα ("for this star Calypso, the beautiful goddess, had bidden him to keep on the left hand as he sailed over the sea").[57] He believes that this part of the poem had something to do with Odysseus wanting to leave Scheria. Garzya thinks that the line is in dactylic meter, probably

[52] Garzya, *Alcmane* 94; P. Janni, *La cultura di Sparta Arcaica: Richerce* II (Rome 1970) 63–64.

[53] Garzya, *Alcmane* 94; Calame, *Alcman* 563.

[54] Calame, *Alcman* 563.

[55] Calame, *Alcman* 563–564.

[56] Garzya, *Alcmane* 94; Calame, *Alcman* 223.

[57] Transl. A. T. Murray, *Homer. The Odyssey* (Cambridge [Mass.] 1919).

hexameter.[58] Calame disagrees and thinks that it has the same meter as 93 (anapaestic).[59] It is interesting that 93, quoted by Ammonius, is also preserved in P.Med.inv. 72.10 (fr.160 Calame), which probably belongs to a Dionysiac context.[60] The papyrus has the word ἱστοπέδαις, so we can be sure that this fragment mentioned the sea and ships. But having the same meter and a reference to the sea is not enough to build an argument that 84 and 93 (or fr.160 Calame) belong to the same poem, and to suppose that 84 is a mere imitation or a creative adaption of *Od.* 5.276 is equally wrong. The subject of ἔχων can be anyone, from a person of myth to a male chorus leader of a *partheneion*.

As to fr.80, it is almost impossible that it belongs to a particular group of poems that imitated a specific Odyssean passage. All we have is a similarity between one Odyssean line and a line that is preserved from Alcman's poem. Alcman wrote a hexametrical poem or some lines in hexameters in a poem with combined meters, speaking about a traditional subject, Odysseus' encounter with the Sirens. We do not have decisive proof that the similarity between these lines and the *Odyssey* is a mere coincidence. It is also true that anyone who wishes to declare that this is more than mere coincidence does not have compelling evidence.

Alcman's hexameters and their oral context

The elements that link Alcman and Homer in these fragments are the following: the adjectives μελιγάρυες and ἁλιπόρφυρος (26), λίγειος and οὐράνιος (28), Δύσπαρις and βωτιάνειρα (77), ταλασίφρων (80), the noun γυῖα (26), and the quasi-Homeric formulae νηδεὲς ἦτορ ἔχων (26), Διὸς θύγατερ (43), καί πόκ' Ὀδυσσῆος ταλασίφρων (80). I will begin with the formulae, explaining why I characterize them as quasi-Homeric.

[58] Garzya, *Alcmane* 140.

[59] Calame, *Alcman* 223.

[60] Cf. Calame, *Alcman* 582.

The phrase νηλεὲς ἦτορ ἔχων is a common Homeric formula for the spirit of a warrior (e.g. *Il.* 9.497). It seems that Alcman slightly altered this formula, which describes the rigidness of the heart of a warrior, to describe the spirit of an aged kingfisher who wants to be carried away by the young females of his species. We can assume that this new formulation was a false epicism with comic connotations. Other words here are also used in the *Homeric Hymns*, in Anacreon, and in Pindar and not only in Homer. Moreover, the weakened limbs of old age connects Alcman to Sappho (58 V.). As we saw above, the ornithological references, very common among Alcman's *partheneia*, are also found in Alcaeus, Archilochus, Anacreon, Pindar, and Bacchylides. In fr.28, although Alcman seems 'influenced' by Homeric language he has lost the criterion of distinguishing between the declensions (adding -φι to the vocative). He uses words that appear not only in epic but also in lyric. Διὸς θύγατερ (fr.43) is used no longer for Aphrodite as in epic. The invocation of the Muse is found in other lyric poems. The vocabulary of fr.77 has an epic twist, but this can be true for its content.

Fr.80 has a new formation derived from two 'Homeric' formulae; one of them is also found in the *Theogony*. Alcman adds his own twist both to the story and to the language. As we have seen, this fragment does not belong to a group of other fragments that describe a particular Odyssean story or imitate a particular Odyssean passage. On the contrary, the other fragments that supposedly are linked to this one and to the *Odyssey* point in different directions: they are connected to the *Aithiopis* (maybe fr.74), to lyric poetry (81), and maybe to a Dionysiac context (84). Fr.104 has the Doric form πόκα and the non-epic ῥάι. From fr.107 all we can deduce is that a hexametric poem can have a distinctly non-epic content and even a satirical one, as in Hipponax.

Homeric adjectives used by Alcman in his hexameters are not all Homeric. They are used by many other epic and lyric poets (with the exception of Δύσπαρις). Alcman in his hexameters uses Doric forms not found in Homer or in other Ionic

epic. He does not always use epic words when he has the chance. The language and 'epic themes' of his *partheneia*, as known both from direct and indirect tradition, are connected equally to Homeric and to Hesiodic poetry, to the *Homeric Hymns*, and to the compositions of other choral poets like Pindar and Bacchylides, and in some fragments to the epic cycle (*Aithiopis*, *Arimaspeia*).[61]

One may ask why these poems are written in dactylic hexameter, if not in order to allude to Homeric poetry or to epic poetry in general. Are they choral? Could they belong to cultic or to non-cultic songs? Could they be sung by a chorus of maidens like Alcman's *partheneia*? Are they preludes to choral songs? Can a reading within their oral context lead to any decisive conclusions? Unfortunately we cannot give a certain answer to these questions. All we can do is to make some tentatives based on our observations.

Regarding Alcman's hexameters, Bowra made the attractive suggestion that some (including fr.26 and 77) were like the *prooimia* attributed to Terpander.[62] Recently Power expressed an interesting view which is close to Bowra's. He claimed that 26 probably came from a *prooimion* sung solely by the cithara player and that 38 and 39, though not hexametrical, may come from similar songs.[63] He also suggested that Sappho takes a similar role in a fragment that possibly belonged to a *prooimion*

[61] C. M. Bowra, *On Greek Margins* (Oxford 1990) 73 n.2 and 85 n.1, links the Scythian horse of fr.1.59 (a *partheneion*) and the Scythian mountain of 90 with the *Arimaspeia* of Aristeas, although Aristeas might have composed a little later than Alcman. G. Devereux, "The Kolaxaian Horse of Alkman's *Partheneion*," *CQ* 15 (1965) 183, also thinks that Alcman was influenced by the *Arimaspeia* as to the names of the horses in fr.1.

[62] Bowra, *Greek Lyric* 22–25; in suggesting that fr.77 might be a *prooimion*, he assumed that these preludes had many mythological references. He thought that these Alcmanic *prooimia* were closer to lyric than to epic, mainly because of their subject-matter, and secondly because he believed that they probably were sung and not recited, given the "regularity of the metric system" (in his view Alcman uses pure dactyls and no spondees).

[63] T. Power, *The Culture of Kitharoidia* (Cambridge [Mass.] 2010) 202.

(58 V.): the speaker declares that old age has made her knees weak, so they cannot lift her body's weight, as in Alcman 26—both fragments have the theme of the weakness of the speaker due to old age. Power thinks that this may have been a common theme of these *prooimia* that excused the limited role of the cithara player in the performance. He also suggests that Alcman 107 may have be from a *prooimion*. He thinks that other non-hexametrical fragments (14, 27, 29) were abbreviated proemial invocations sung by the chorus to mark the start of their own singing and were self-consciously distinct from the ensuing *prooimia*. What these choral *prooimia* have in common with our fragments is the invocation of the Muse (14a,[64] 27), a reference to Zeus (29), a probable description of the occasion of the performance (rites of the cult of Helen in Therapne, 14b),[65] and a possible reference to a hero like Odysseus (which led Calame to attribute this fragment to the mythical part of a song inspired somehow by *Odyssey* 5).[66] It would be very interesting, then, to treat all these hexametrical fragments as parts of *prooimia* and read them within that generic context. We do not have decisive indications for this, but it is a possibility to be considered.

Thus, fr.26 is taken to be a prelude to a *partheneion* by many scholars. A chorus of maidens is indeed mentioned. The fragment is built on a series of traditional *topoi*:[67] the theme of old age, the theme of the halcyon, and the parallelism of a poet to a bird. Alcman's contribution is the combination of these themes. Fr.28 and 43 clearly come from the beginning of a song, and probably a choral one. They belong to the traditional (epic and lyric) theme of the invocation of the Muse. Alcman differentiates himself from epic not only by the use of

[64] As Calame notes (*Alcman* 349), the subject of the choral activity here is not the Muse, but the maidens of the chorus.

[65] Calame, *Alcman* 353–354.

[66] Calame, *Alcman* 355.

[67] By traditional we mean *topoi* that belong to complementary, and almost undistinguishable in Alcman's time, epic and lyric traditions.

Doric forms, but by making the poet (or the chorus) and not the Muse herself the subject of the choral activity. Fr.77 is embedded in the traditional rhetoric on the unmanliness of Paris. If it belongs to a *partheneion* it must come from the mythic part of the song situated in the first lines (cf. 1.1–39). The same can be said of fr.80: it takes up the traditional theme of Odysseus' encounter with the Sirens. We do not have many parallels. but, to judge from the *Odyssey*, we can see that Alcman differentiates himself by making Circe and not Odysseus the one who fills the ears with wax. This element can even be regarded as an indication that these lines belonged to a *partheneion*.[68] Fr.104 might belong to the end of the first part of a *partheneion*, because after the mythic section, a gnomological sentiment usually occurs (e.g. 1.35–37). It uses the theme of the swift change of mind. As for the supposedly satirical fr.107, we can compare Pindar's *daphephorikon* (94b S.-M.) where at the beginning he mentions the names of the family-members who participate in the choral performance (lines 9–10). It is not impossible that these were real names—perhaps the parents of a maiden or participants in the choral performance of a *partheneion* or another choral song—but we cannot make further assumptions about fr.107.

As we have seen, these hexameters do not belong to the epic tradition and do not imitate or allude to Homeric poetry. They are not a mere imitation of Homer, but are knitted in a complex oral web that includes a wider epic tradition, clearly wider than Homer and wider than the Ionic epic. This poetical tradition included not only epic poetry, but lyric as well. To use a phrase from scholarship on epic, we can speak of 'traditional referentiality'—the collective tradition (a common epic and lyric tradition) as a whole resonates through each and every example of an utterance, whether a word, phrase, motif, or

[68] Corinna fr.654 *PMG* has been considered a *partheneion* on similar arguments: D. J. Rayor, "Korinna: Gender and the Narrative Tradition," *Arethusa* 26 (1993) 224, 228.

story pattern.[69] If these fragments were indeed *prooimia* of choral songs (most likely of *partheneia*) then we should not only reckon the thematic and linguistic affinities between them and the wide lyric and epic tradition, but also should try to discern the implications that this categorization may have for reading them.

The only references to citharodic preludes of choral songs are in Thucydides (3.104.3–6) and in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* (156–174). Power suggested that Sappho fr.58 V. may have belonged to the same category. Thucydides informs us that the *Hymn to Apollo* was a prelude to the song sung by a maiden chorus for Apollo on Delos and cites the lines of this *prooimium*. Here the poet speaks for himself and asks the maidens to remember him and mention him when they are asked who is the best local *aoidos*. He says that the maidens, after praising the gods and then the heroes, sing a song that imitates all the human voices and sounds (160–164):

μνησάμεναι ἀνδρῶν τε παλαιῶν ἠδὲ γυναικῶν
ὕμνον ἀείδουσιν, θέλγουσι δὲ φῦλ' ἀνθρώπων.
πάντων δ' ἀνθρώπων φωνὰς καὶ κρεμβαλιαστὺν
μιμεῖσθ' ἴσασιν· φαίη δέ κεν αὐτὸς ἕκαστος
φθέγγεσθ'· οὕτω σφιν καλὴ συνάρηρεν ἀοιδή.

All we can deduce from the extremely fragmentary 58 V. is that the speaker (possibly Sappho, if this is a prelude to a song) speaks about her gray hair and her old age that makes her knees weak and so makes it difficult to take part in the choral performance.

If we read Alcman's hexameters in this context we can see

[69] Foley, *Homer's Traditional Art* 33–34; B. Graziosi and J. Haubold, *Homer: The Resonance of Epic* (London 2005) 9. Rosenmeyer, *MD* 39 (1997) 142, expresses a similar idea about Sappho's relationship with Homeric poetry, citing Helen in 16 V.: "With one brief allusion to Helen, an entire epic cycle is evoked, other words, other texts, a counterpoint for Sappho's lyrical ellipses. Neither Sappho nor Helen can be 'contained,' but expand to include countless variations on their stories, looking simultaneously to the past and to the future."

that they exhibit some of the characteristics of the genre described by Thucydides and exemplified by the *Homeric Hymn* and possibly by Sappho: they praise or invoke the gods (or other divinities like the Muses), they refer to figures of myth, and they offer the theme of the weakness of the cithara player that prevents him from an active part in choral performance. We can also assume that after the mythic references a moral conclusion was drawn or that the names (generic or real) of some of the chorus members were mentioned. We get the same image from fragments that Power regards as choral *prooimia*. We can conclude that Alcman adopted a quasi-epic linguistic, metrical, and thematic register especially in preludes of *partheneia* and that he let resonate through them the full tradition of citharodic preludes. Whether or not these hexametric poems were recited by a solo cithara player or by the chorus, what is important here is that the poems exploit the whole tradition of hexametric preludes to choral songs sung by a maiden chorus.

April, 2013

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