Robert L. Fowler

Alkman *PMGF* 1.45: A Reprise

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In a book of studies on early Greek lyric published in 1987 I advanced reasons for read-ing αὔτα in Alkman *PMGF* 1.45.[1] Since then, several important works have appeared, but have taken no notice;[2] these works are likely to form the basis of discussion for a long time. If the reason for this neglect were silent dismissal, I would acquiesce in the knowledge that I had failed to convince these learned authorities; but since in at least two of these cases I know the reason to be simple oversight, it may be worth re-stating and elaborating the arguments.

Here is the text:

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40   ὁρῶ
Ϝ᾽ ὥτ᾽ ἄλιον, ὅνπερ ἇμιν
Ἀγιδὼ μαρτύρεται
φαίνην· ἐμὲ δ᾽ οὔτ᾽ ἐπαινῆν
οὔτε μωμήϲθαι νιν ἁ κλεννὰ χοραγὸϲ
45 οὐδ᾽ ἁμῶϲ ἐῆι· δοκεῖ γὰρ ἤμεν ΑΥΤΑ
ἐκπρεπὴϲ τὼϲ ὥπερ αἴτιϲ
ἐν βοτοῖϲ ϲτάϲειεν ἵππον
παγὸν ἀεθλοφόρον καναχάποδα
τῶν ὑποπετριδίων ὀνείρων.

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50 ἦ οὐχ ὁρῆιϲ; ὁ μὲν κέληϲ
Ἐνετικόϲ· ἁ δὲ χαίτα
τᾶϲ ἐμᾶϲ ἀνεψιᾶϲ
Ἁγηϲιχόραϲ ἐπανθεῖ
χρυϲὸϲ [ὡ]ϲ ἀκήρατοϲ·
55 τό τ᾽ ἀργύριον πρόϲωπον,
διαφάδαν τί τοι λέγω;
Ἁγηϲιχόρα μὲν αὔτα·
ἁ δὲ δευτέρα πεδ᾽ Ἀγιδὼ τὸ Ϝεῖδοϲ
ἵπποϲ Ἰβηνῶι Κολαξαῖοϲ δραμήται.

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[1] R. L. Fowler, The Nature of Early Greek Lyric: Three Preliminary Studies, Toronto 1987, 71 f.

[2] M. Davies, PMGF; C. O. Pavese, Il grande Partenio di Alcmane, Amsterdam 1992; E. Robbins, "Alc-man's Partheneion: Legend and Choral Ceremony", CQ 44, 1994, 7-16. D. A. Campbell, Greek Lyric II, Cam-bridge., Mass. and London, 1988, also takes no notice, but my book probably appeared too late for him.

Before considering the problems of the passage and the reading in line 45, one fact may be stated: "neither praise nor blame" in 43 f. is a polar expression that denotes "say nothing".[3] This in turn can only mean that words are unnecessary or insufficient, since the girl's beauty is obvious and in itself sufficiently eloquent. Such an understanding is supported by the pronoun *"me"*, emphatic in both form and position; the chorus, ever modest (cf. 78 ff.), acknowledges its own inadequacy to the task at hand – a familiar *topos* of epic and lyric alike.

Accents, of course, are not part of the tradition. The word left in capital letters may be either αὐτά or αὔτα. Editors almost without exception prefer the former. The sense will be: "Agido is very beautiful (40 ff.); but our famous choregos (44) does not permit *me* either to praise or to blame her (νιν, 44; Agido is the only possible referent), since (γάρ, 45) she 'herself' is very beautiful." Who is the choregos; what is the force of "permit"; and what is the force of "herself"?

Assuming for the moment that αὐτά is the right reading in 45, how might one understand the rest of the passage? Four interpretations might be attempted. First, that Hagesichora is the choregos, and jealously forbids the chorus to speak of Agido, because she "herself" is beautiful. This view can definitely be ruled out: one might possibly argue that in the polar expression "blame" is added only as a polite afterthought – "praise (or blame, for that matter)" – so that the phrase really means only "praise"; but this would be special pleading, and in any case the reading still runs foul of the emphatic "me", Furthermore, the idea of jealousy is fatally contradicted by the rest of the poem, in which Agido and Hagesichora are depicted not as rivals but as partners.

Secondly, there is Mario Puelma's interpretation:[4] Agido is the subject throughout, and also the object, νιν being used in place of a reflexive; "herself" means "(all) by herself", i.e. without need of further assistance from me (cf. 85). οὐδ᾽ ἀμῶς ἐῆι is not to be understood literally as "forbids", as if Agido herself issued a prohibition, but more metaphorically as "makes it impossible" (because she is as she is). This seems to me a perfectly possible interpretation against which no cogent objections have been raised; it will be a question, then, whether the interpretation I shall propose brings with it greater advantages than Puelma's.

Thirdly, one might retain Puelma's understanding of οὐδ᾽ ἀμῶς ἐῆι as "makes it impossible", but understand Hagesichora to be the choregos, and the subject of δοκεῖ: she is so beautiful herself that she "forbids" or puts a stop to the chorus' praise of Agido the moment they think of her.[5] This reading is still very difficult to reconcile with a correct understanding of the polar expression: it still effectively stresses only the "praise" part of the equation. It makes the chorus say that Hagesichora is appreciably more beautiful than Agido, if she can drive all thoughts of her out of the mind so quickly; this sits ill with the careful balance

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[3] References provided in my earlier discussion; this seems now to be agreed by everyone.

[4] "Die Selbstbeschreibung des Chores in Alkmans großem Partheneion-Fragment", MH 34, 1977, 1–55 at 24 ff.

[5] H. Eisenberger, Philologus 135, 1991, 278; C. Calame, Alcman, Rome 1983, 326 f.

between them preserved throughout the rest of the poem. The reading is difficult to recon-cile with the emphatic "me": how is the γάρ of 45 to be explained? The continuation of "*I am unable to praise her*" is not "for there's someone else I just thought of praising" but "for she is beyond praise". Furthermore, poor Agido, after a very grand entrance at the beginning of the poem's second half, is ousted at once; this must be thought ill-judged by the poet, and in effect reduces her to the status of foil for Hagesichora. Finally, this interpretation, assigning the whole of 44-49 to Hagesichora, renders the progression of 49 ff. extremely bumpy, as we move through several decisive changes in focus in the space of a few lines, from Hagesichora to Agido (50 f.; it must surely be agreed that the μέν – δέ is to be so read) and back to Hagesichora again.

Fourthly, in a pinch, one might still understand Hagesichora to be the choregos, and keep Puelma's reading of "herself": Hagesichora does not permit praise or blame of Agido, because she (Agido) is "(all by) herself" beautiful. "Does not permit" pleasantly attributes to Hagesichora a jealous (in a good sense) intervention on behalf of her friend. But αὐτά on this reading is dangerously ambiguous; the audience might think Hagesichora was meant without an indication that the subject has changed – an indication that might be provided, for instance, by a demonstrative pronoun such as αὔτα.

If αὐτά is read in 45, we must follow Puelma and identify the choregos as Agido.[6] But leaving aside the reading of 45 for a moment, is there any other reason to think that the cho-regos is Agido? Puelma advances three reasons. First he says that the definite article is demonstrative and must denote someone already mentioned. This is to press the article too hard; even in Homer such a doctrine cannot be maintained. The article is there to give the adjective attributive position, and might also be used to denote someone well-known (κλεν-νά!) to everyone at the occasion. Translate "our". Secondly, he says that Hagesichora ought to be named when she first appears, not obliquely described; not to do so runs counter to the style of a sphragis. But this is not a sphragis, and one might in any case argue that her name is all but mentioned in the term "choregos". Anyway everybody knows who she is. Thirdly, Puelma finds it unlikely that the chorus, having introduced Agido, would immediately distract the attention of the audience by referring to Hagesichora. If it is thought that the whole of 44–49 refers to Hagesichora, then I agree, as just explained. But there is no diffi-culty in supposing a quick sideways glance at Hagesichora in 44 while keeping the attention firmly focused on Agido. It is observable throughout the poem that the poet does not let us forget the other leader while the attention is fixed on one, as if he wants to give neither the upper hand. (Depending on the interpretation of other difficult passages and what might have stood in the lost ending of the poem, it might be the case that Hagesichora has a slight edge over Agido in terms of amount of space given to her, but no more than that.)

Thus there is no obstacle to thinking that the choregos of 44 is Hagesichora; but if that is the case, αὔτα must be read in 45. Understand "does not permit" as described above under

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[6] Pavese, op. cit. (n. 2) 51, thinks that the choregos is an anonymous person, neither Agido nor Hagesi-chora; this reading, which does not persuade me for several reasons, is also vulnerable to the objection raised in the last paragraph.

the fourth interpretation of αὐτά. The chorus indicates Agido with a gesture (lyric loves deixis); the audience would inevitably follow the swishing movement of eleven pairs of hands, and look at Agido. The implicit rhetoric of the gesture is, "turn your gaze in this direction, and you will see for yourself how conspicuously (ἐκπρεπής) beautiful Agido is; no words of mine are required. Just look at her." And indeed that is what they say in the very next sentence: "Don't you see?"

Further support for this reading may be found in the attractive parallel of thought and language that confronts us immediately when the chorus turns to discuss Hagesichora. In 56 the chorus declares that they need hardly resort to words to describe the girl's silvery visage; then they say: "this (swish!) is Hagesichora". More deixis; and once again the poet is careful to give both girls equal treatment.

A very welcome consequence of both mine and Puelma's interpretation is to give the poem a pleasingly regular structure in which sense-pause and stanza are neatly coordinated. After five stanzas of myth, a gnomic pivot at the beginning of the sixth stanza leads to praise of Agido, itself occupying a stanza. At the beginning of the next stanza, a pivot signalled by a μέν-clause takes us to Hagesichora. At the end of this stanza, Agido and Hagesichora share the stage together, and provide a pivot to the description of the chorus, which occupies the whole of the next stanza. At the end of that stanza, a mention of Hagesichora (77) acts as a pivot to the next one in which the chorus confesses its inadequacy over against its leaders; their remarks end with a reference to Hagesichora at 90, which is once again a pivot to the following, final stanza. This last stanza (depending on what came in the gap) appears to be taken up with both chorus leaders, first Hagesichora, then Agido. The architecture of the poem, including the careful placing of pivots either at the beginning or end of stanzas and the distribution of material evenly over those stanzas, only becomes clear if 43 ff. are correctly understood. It was, in fact, consideration of the poem's organization in the light of typical procedures in other poems of the period that led me to realize the inadequacy of any interpretation that makes Hagesichora the subject of 45 ff., and thus to query the reading of the pronoun in 45. Early archaic lyric displays a stronger tendency than later lyric to organize its material by stanzas – not, indeed, slavishly or mechanically, but in just such a manner as Alkman does here.

These, then, are the only two defensible readings of the passage, in the current state of knowledge. It is to be hoped that further discussion will find a way of choosing between them.

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