

A History of Alcman's Early Reception

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Female-Voiced Nightingales

By

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INTRODUCTION

1) The Choice of the Poet

The Athenocentric character of ancient Greek literature is undisputed. It is also true that many of the most illustrious samples of ancient Greek literary production, at least from the Classical times and on,¹ have been composed in Attic–Ionic dialect in Athens. In this context Archaic lyric poetry, a non-Athenian genre par excellence, appeared as the genre of the Other.² Lyric poetry was considered more epichoric than epic poetry, and it has been used as an example of digression from the epic prototypes penned by many ancient writers.³ Its blossom was short. Even in antiquity, the attitude of many authors towards lyric poetry was undermining. Some of them faced lyric as a form that belonged to the past, or as the poetry of the Other. Keeping all of this in mind, we can gain a clearer sense of how different from the norm the choral poetry of a seventh century Spartan poet could have appeared in the eyes of the “classics”. This renders the study of the history of Alcman’s early reception exceptionally interesting per se. Nevertheless, the history of Alcman’s reception could also reveal the receptional filters of each writer and each period.

2) Methodology or a History of Receptions

The title of this book contains the term “reception”. However, the method used for the study of the early reception of Alcman has little to do with reception theory. Instead, it has a closer affinity to intertextuality. The term “reception” is adopted because it is extremely challenging to find a more suitable replacement. Most of the terms used to describe the relationship between two or more texts are equally or even more problematic. The term “influence”⁴ was used in the past to describe a willing subject – the writer

¹ Apart from the samples of epic poetry that are considered “classics”, especially Homer’s and Hesiod *oeuvres*.

² See Beecroft (2010) 13.

³ See Graziosi (2009) 109-110.

⁴ See Holub (1984) xii.

– who voluntarily⁵ echoes the text of another writer, hence the term “allusion”.⁶ Intertextuality, on the other hand, emerges when we have two or more texts and seek a one-to-one relationship between them.⁷ Nevertheless, that term is sometimes used in this book.

To be accurate, we cannot speak of the existence of texts, that is, written texts, in Greece’s Archaic period. Even though writing was used (mainly for the composition of lyric poetry),⁸⁹ we should bear in mind that we have to do with an oral society or with a “song culture”, as it is sometimes called, with its own compositional rules. An Archaic epic or lyric poem is not, primarily, a written text. It is mainly an oral performance of a song composed for a specific occasion. It is extremely difficult – perilous, even – to use any text-based method to study the reception of Alcman prior to the Hellenistic edition of his works.

Nonetheless, the term “reception” has frequently been used without adopting the strict meaning reserved therefor in other cases.¹⁰ Nagy uses the term in a similar way when he refers to poems composed during the Archaic era and belonging to an oral society.¹¹ He also underlines that it is necessary to expand the meaning of this term and that we ought to link the study of the reception of Archaic texts with the study of their transmission.¹² Tsagalis is of the opinion that even the term intertextuality, which is occasionally used in this study,¹³ “has been well-established in Homeric studies” and

⁵ See Conte (1986) 24-26 for the emphasis placed on the intentionality of the author concerning the existing similarities between two or more texts.

⁶ Rosenmeyer (1997) 124-126 makes the same observations regarding the relationship between Sappho’s poems and Homeric poetry. See also Irwin (2001) 287-297.

⁷ See Barker (2006) 13-24. For a better understanding of the terms allusion and intertextuality and their use in classical studies see Conte (1986) 23-24 and Hinds (1998) xi, 19, 21-25.

⁸ See on this Ford (2003) 19-20.

⁹ See Herington (1985) 3-5.

¹⁰ For reception as a term used to “highlight the active role played by the readers conferring meaning on a text” see Martindale (2006) 11. For more bibliography on the use of the term reception in classics see Priestley (2014) 13, n. 3. See also Priestley (2014) 15 for a discussion of and bibliography on the dangers of dividing historical or cultural events within chronological limits as an organising practice for the study of the history of the early reception of any ancient author.

¹¹ Mainly in Nagy (2009) and in Nagy (2011).

¹² See Nagy (2009) 282-283; Nagy (2011) 281.

¹³ I often use the term intertextual allusion to refer to the relationship between Alcman’s compositions and written texts (especially texts written during the Hellenistic period).

that it can be used in the study of any other oral text.¹⁴ Pucci declares that he prefers the term “intertextuality” to the term “allusion” when studying oral texts because “it imparts ... a less forceful idea of authorial intentionality and referentiality”.¹⁵ Nagy uses the same term to describe the relationship between oral texts.¹⁶ Indeed, many contemporary scholars argue that the use of the term “intertextuality” as a means to study the reception of any oral text is appropriate.¹⁷

Although the terms “reception” and “intertextuality” appear throughout this study, there are some facets of the ancient audience’s response to Alcman and his work that cannot be described by any existing intertextual model. I loosely adopt certain aspects of the model devised by Genette,¹⁸ mainly because it approaches intertextuality as a tool for the production of meaning and not as a characteristic of language capable of undermining the existence of a solid meaning, as most meta-structuralist models do.¹⁹ As I consider that Alcman’s songs belong – to a certain degree – to oral poetry, most of the cases examined here fall into the category of architextuality,²⁰ according to Genette’s taxonomy. Prior to the Hellenistic period, we encounter only a few cases of hypertextuality, as defined by Genette.²¹ All

¹⁴ See Tsagalis (2008) xii.

¹⁵ See Pucci (1979) 29, n. 30.

¹⁶ See Nagy (1989) 34. Nagy uses the term “intertextuality” to explain the relationship between the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* and between the *Theogony* and the *Works and the Days*.

¹⁷ An alternative term which describes the relationship between oral texts is interdiscursivity. On the use of this term within the discipline of classics see Yatromanolakis (2003), (2008b).

¹⁸ For the use of this model in a study of the reception of ancient Greek texts see Alexander (2010). See also Hubbard (1998) 7-10 for its advantages, compared to many post-structuralist models, for the study of ancient Greek literature.

¹⁹ For an overview of the post-structuralist receptional models see Schmitz (2007) 80 ff.

²⁰ Architextuality “involves a relationship that is completely silent, articulated at most by a paratextual mention, which can be titular (...) or most often subtitled (...), but which remains in any case of a purely taxonomic nature. When this relationship is unarticulated, it may be because of a refusal to underscore the obvious or, conversely, an intent to reject or elude any kind of classification. In all cases, however, the text itself is not supposed to know, and consequently, not meant to declare, its generic quality”. See Genette (1997) 4.

²¹ Hypertextuality is a term which describes “any relationship uniting a text B (which I shall call the hypertext) to an earlier text A (I shall, of course, call it the hypotext), upon which is “grafted” in a manner that is not that of commentary. (...) To view things differently, let us posit the general notion of a text in the second degree (...), a text derived from another preexistent text. This derivation can be of a

the commentaries on Alcman's text and some of the *testimonia* of Alcman's work fall into the category of metatextuality.²² I also use the concept of resonance to describe the relationship between Alcman's compositions and a larger tradition that includes all the extant works attributed to Homer, Hesiod, and other Archaic epic and lyric poets.²³ I consider material art as a means for the expression of ancient people's reception of the figure of Alcman, and I include samples thereof in the history of Alcman's early reception.

3) Songs or Poems?

Even with an expanded definition of the term "reception" and with the acceptance of the fact that it can be applied to oral, or primarily oral, texts, we should first examine whether or not such an Alcmatic text existed during the Archaic period.

I will argue more consistently and systematically in chapter 3 that Alcman's "text" was not solely a written one. The premise behind this book is that Alcman's text is an oral text – thus, a text composed not as an independent unit but as a text connected with other texts or contexts that were already known to the audience, and using an oral mode of composition.²⁴ The use of writing as a facilitating medium, either in the phase of composition or the phase of preservation that follows, is not contrary to the oral nature of Alcman's songs. Most Archaic lyric poems began to function as texts from the late fifth century onward.²⁵ We will see that Alcman's songs were no exception to this rule. Nevertheless, his poetry ceased being oral only after the Hellenistic period.

descriptive or intellectual kind, where a metatext (...) speaks about a second text (...). It may yet be of another kind such as text B not speaking of text A at all but being unable to exist, as such, without A, from which it originates through a process I shall provisionally call transformation". See Genette (1997) 5.

²² Metatextuality is "the relationship most often labeled "commentary". It unites a given text to another, of which it speaks without necessarily citing it (...) in fact sometimes without naming it". See Genette (1997) 4.

²³ Graziosi and Haubold coined this term to refer to the epic's ability to evoke a web of associations and implications by referring to the wider epic tradition (see Graziosi (2005) 9). A parallel to this formulation is Foley's "traditional referentiality" which Foley uses to describe how the collective tradition as a whole resonates through each and every example of an utterance, whether a word, phrase, motif or story pattern (see Foley (1999b) 33-34).

²⁴ For a definition of "oral texts" see Schmitz (2007) 99-102. For composition in performance see Lord (2003) 1-12.

²⁵ On this see Ford (2003) 19-20.

4) Female-Voiced Nightingales or the Tradition of *Partheneia*

I argued above for the legitimacy of using the term “reception” for the study of oral texts. I also suggested that it is acceptable to apply intertextual methods to such texts. Budelmann and Haubold nevertheless warn us that, whenever we have to deal with the term “reception”, we must usually also deal with the often misunderstood term “tradition”.²⁶ The authors cite several examples of the use of the term “tradition” (such as the epicurean tradition, the tradition of the *Anacreontea*), stating that “All these traditions are of course also cases of reception, usually of whole strings of reception” and examine what traditions have to offer students of reception.²⁷ They believe that tradition may help us understand the dynamics of reception in the context of early Greek epic.²⁸ According to Budelmann and Haubold, for traditional texts, we ought to follow a different model of reception from those used for the modern reception of ancient literature or from that used for the study of the relationship between Greek texts and Latin texts.²⁹ The study of the reception of oral poetry must take into account tradition. If Alcman's songs are oral poems, they indeed belong to a tradition, and we are compelled to take account of this when evaluating their early reception. Yet, which tradition could this be?

To me, the answer is self-apparent. If we consider Alcman's poetry as a principally oral one, then we can regard it as belonging to the tradition of Archaic lyric poetry. As modern scholars have noted,³⁰ in Alcman's time, this tradition had not drawn clear lines between itself and epic, an issue discussed in more detail in chapter 3. We can also suppose that Alcman's songs, or at least the vast majority of them, belonged to a tradition of *partheneia*. But do we have strong indications that Alcman's *partheneia* themselves belonged to a narrower tradition? *Was* there a tradition of *partheneia* when Alcman composed his songs?

Different scholars have given similar answers to these questions. I will start by quoting Calame's:³¹

²⁶ See Budelmann (2008) 13-14.

²⁷ See Budelmann (2008) 14.

²⁸ See Budelmann (2008) 22.

²⁹ See Budelmann (2008) 22-23.

³⁰ See the approaches of Nagy (1990); Martin (1997); Irwin (2005); Aloni (2009) 185-187; Graziosi (2009) 95-113.

³¹ See Calame (1997) 3. Calame has also dedicated a small chapter with the title (*Le parthénée comme genre littéraire*) in the second volume of his monumental for Alcmanic studies book. See Calame (1983a) 149-176.

“the category of *partheneia* was probably not defined before the Alexandrian period, and only when confronted, for editorial reasons, with the necessity of dividing the poems of the Archaic lyricists among several books, did scholars begin to speak of the *partheneia*, meaning a literary genre. Before this, a few elusive references in Aristophanes and Aristoxenus show that they were aware of the distinctive character of the poems sung by choruses of young women, without being more precise about the contents. It is therefore not possible to speak of a true literary genre before the Archaic period, and even when the Alexandrians used the term *partheneion*, its definition remained very general: the *partheneion* is nothing but a poem sung by a chorus of adolescent girls for adolescent girls ...”.

Calame believes that songs that were sung by maiden choruses within antiquity were not *partheneia* in the strict sense of the term, but rather encompassed a variety of choral songs. In his study of the performances of women’s choruses, he divides the songs they sang into six categories (hymns, paeans, *dithyramboi*, *citharodic nomoi*, *threnoi* and *epithalamia*). He concludes that the poems performed by female choruses did not constitute a well-defined genre but were instead composed and performed in response to different occasions.³² He believes that the Alexandrians invented the term *partheneion* to classify a choral production that was otherwise difficult to classify. Nevertheless, he admits that “the judgments of Dionysius of Halicarnassus and of Aristoxenus on the particular style and tone of the *partheneia* allow us to recognize at least a certain distinctiveness”.³³

Klinck has repeatedly classified *partheneia* as a category of “woman’s song” along with other choral songs. Although she believes that *partheneia* as a genre were created in the Hellenistic period, she suggests that the definitions “elaborated by the Alexandrians go back to concepts formulated in the Classical period, and knowledge of the genre can be traced at least as far as Plato”.³⁴ Klinck believes that Archaic poets of *partheneia* “were conscious of composing within a very specific genre”.³⁵ Bowman attempts to offer counterarguments to the idea of a “segregated female poetic tradition”, as she calls it,³⁶ which has remnants in literature, so that it may be reconstructed. She denies that the remaining *partheneia* can be used as evidence for the existence of this segregated women’s poetic tradition, since

³² See Calame (1997) 88.

³³ See Calame (1997) 88.

³⁴ See Klinck (2008) 24-25.

³⁵ See Klinck (2008) 25.

³⁶ See Bowman (2004) 10.

they were probably performed in front of the entire community,³⁷ and were male-authored.³⁸ According to Bowman, if there was something traditional about *partheneia*, it was the existence of choirs of unmarried women as a cultural institution in many places in the Archaic and Classical Greek world.

More recently, Swift underlined the definitional problems of the genre, arguing that “any song which was sung by a maiden chorus” is too broad, vague and eventually inaccurate to be used as a criterion.³⁹ Believing that *partheneia* ought to be identified by their functional role, Swift attempts to identify any characteristic traits and motifs of the remaining *partheneia* in order to spot them in other texts.⁴⁰ Her criterion is a thematic one: “it should have some connection with the fact that it is performed by *parthenoi*, and in particular with their transition from being girls to being mature women”.⁴¹ She notes that what distinguishes *partheneia* from the other genres is the fact that their distinctive features have to do with the status of the performers and not with the occasion, because the performers and the ritual they are experiencing are not responses to an external event but rather themselves are the event in honour of which the community is gathered. This aspect renders *partheneia* automatically self-referential.

We cannot deny the simple fact that the Alexandrians created *partheneia* as a distinctive literary genre. This does not necessarily mean that the poems composed during the Archaic period and classified as *partheneia* during the Hellenistic period lacked any generic features. Gentili has noted that all ancient genre theory was “the bookish work of a literate age”.⁴² Even the more well-defined Archaic lyric genres, which have very distinctive features, were created during the Hellenistic period.⁴³ If we must offer a one-word answer to the first question set above, we are compelled to follow Calame's line of argument: *partheneion* as a literary genre did not exist during the Archaic or Classical age. This does not mean that their composers (mainly Alcman) and their audiences were not conscious of composing

³⁷ Stehle is also of the opinion that Alcman's *partheneia* must have been performed in front of the whole community and not in the presence of an all-female audience (see Stehle (1997) 73-93). There are also intratextual indications that the performance of 3 *PMGF* was public (3.8 *PMGF*). On the latter see also De Martino (1996) 168; Peponi (2007) 354.

³⁸ See Bowman (2004) 12-14.

³⁹ See Swift (2010) 174-175.

⁴⁰ See Swift (2010) 185.

⁴¹ See Swift (2010) 185.

⁴² See Gentili (1988) 37.

⁴³ Yatromanolakis notes that we should be hesitant to adopt clearly demarcated genre taxonomies to describe Archaic lyric genres. See Yatromanolakis (2008b) 170-175.

songs to be performed for specific occasions (genre in a broad sense, as defined by Nagy).⁴⁴ This view is based both on *testimonia* on the genre⁴⁵ and on the study of the extant *partheneia*.⁴⁶ We must, as Calame does, distinguish between *partheneia* and songs performed by choruses of young girls. We can only speak of a tradition of choruses of young girls performing songs with a certain degree of generic quality. We will see in chapter 3 that this tradition both predates and survives Alcman.⁴⁷ This tradition of songs performed by maiden choruses used language, themes and motifs that we encounter throughout Archaic epic and lyric poetry.

If any Archaic genre is defined by its performative occasion, then it can be argued that *partheneia*, at least at an early stage, were defined by their performative occasion, that is, the transition experienced by the maiden chorus occurring during the performance. It is not by accident that the later definition of *partheneion* is limited only to the observation that it is a song composed for, and sung by, a maiden chorus. The maidens are the occasion and therefore the markers of the genre. The tradition of *partheneia* existed before and after Alcman. This tradition was not a strictly defined one, and its existence does not allow us to explain all of the similarities between Alcman's poems and other texts (oral or written). Nevertheless, its existence influenced Alcman's early reception.

⁴⁴ Nagy defines genre as the set of rules that generate a given speech act and equates it with the occasion, the context of this speech act. See Nagy (1994) 13-14.

⁴⁵ The adjective *partheneios*, long before it was used to categorize a specific poetic genre, was used to describe choral songs as Calame notes. See Calame (1983a) 150-151.

⁴⁶ As regards the extant fragments that can be considered to belong to *partheneia*, we can only refer to two poets, thus to Alcman and Pindar.

⁴⁷ Webster (see Webster (1970) 6-7) suggests that, probably, Sacadas of Argos, a sixth century BC poet who was according to Ps-Plutarch (*About Music* 1134b-c) part of the second musical organization (*κατάστασις*) of Sparta, could have been a poet of *partheneia*. We know that Sacadas composed for choruses performing *nomoi* (Ps-Plutarch, *About Music* 1134a-b) and according to Nobili (see Nobili (2011) 36-46), there are indications that Sacadas could have composed elegies to be performed during the Spartan festival of the *Gymnopaedia*. Nevertheless, we have no clues that he composed songs for a maiden chorus. According to Lucian (*Verae Historiae* 2.15), Eunomos of Locrus, Arion, Anacreon and Stesichorus were composers of choral songs destined to be performed by young men or by young women. Arion was considered a pupil of Alcman, according to the *Lexicon of Suda* (s.v. *Ἀρίων*). For Anacreon see chapter two.

5) Scope

Nagy notes that a poet can be absorbed by a tradition; thus, even historical figures can be transformed into generic ones, and a poet can be identified and even equated with a poetic tradition. Graziosi's *Inventing Homer* is, in a sense, a history of the reception of the interaction of the tradition of epic with the figure of Homer. However, was the tradition of *partheneia* strong enough to transform Alcman into a generic figure?

In his enlightening article on the early reception of Alcman entitled *Alcman from Laconia to Alexandria*, Carey briefly examines a short fragment from Pindar which comes from a *daphnephoricon*, a subcategory of *partheneion*. He notes the similarities between this fragment and Alcman's *partheneia* and finds in it a "confirmation within the lyric tradition" that Alcman "was an acknowledged classic".⁴⁸ He admits that, if we were "to suppose a generic motif", we would not be obliged to assume that Pindar was well aware of Alcman's *partheneia*, but he rejects this line of reasoning because of the lack of extant *partheneia*, which hampers attempts at determining the characteristics of this genre.⁴⁹ He continues by stating that, even if we do suppose the existence of a generic motif instead of an intertextual allusion to Alcman, it is of little importance for his argument: "Whether the inspiration comes directly from Alcman or mediated through a tradition influenced by Alcman is ultimately immaterial. Alcman is there in the intertextual background".⁵⁰

The above phrase was one of the catalysts for writing this book. Although I agree with Carey's main points (that Alcman's poems hover in the intertextual background of Pindar's *partheneia* and that Alcman had gained the status of a "classic" poet during Pindar's time), I disagree with this particular phrase. The existence of a tradition of *partheneia* is not ultimately irrelevant – it is material, if not to Carey's argument, then to Alcman's early reception. This book aims to construct a history of Alcman's early reception (from its composition until its first attested systematic edition) taking into account the existence of this tradition of *partheneia* and its implications for Alcman's early reception. The book is divided into six chapters.

In chapter 1, *Exploring the biographical tradition*, I attempt to draw conclusions regarding the ancient reception of Alcman's persona and poetry based on the ancient biographical material. I examine ancient *testimonia* regarding Alcman's name, origins, date, personal life, poems and their genre

⁴⁸ See Carey (2011) 445.

⁴⁹ See Carey (2011) 445.

⁵⁰ See Carey (2011) 445.

and classification, his entry into the canon of the nine lyric poets and his dialect, while bearing in mind that the ancient *testimonia* are more valuable sources of information about Alcman's ancient reception than about his life and work. In this chapter, I also pay attention to autobiographical references encountered in Alcman's poems, examining whether or not the poet attempted to establish a connection with a specific audience and a specific performative context through them and, more specifically, whether these references formed part of a premeditated poetic plan to gain Panhellenic reception, as Carey has suggested.

In chapter 2 (*Seeing Alcman: The iconographical evidence*), I review the scarce iconographical evidence and the literary evidence regarding the existence of iconographical material concerning the poet.

In chapter 3 (*Alcman and his text*), I deal with the relationship between tradition and reception and its possible implications for the early reception of Alcman. My premise is that, when we have a traditional text, we should follow a different model of reception than those used for the modern reception of ancient literature or those used for the study of the relationship between Greek and Latin texts.⁵¹ An oral text is *ipso facto* a traditional one; therefore, the study of the reception of oral poetry ought to consider tradition. If we suppose that Alcman's poetic compositions were oral poems and formed part of a broader tradition, then we should take this into account in the study of their reception.

What I attempt to prove in this chapter is that Alcman's "text" is a highly traditional one, so the study of its reception must take this into consideration. I base my arguments on the examination of Alcman's fragments and their relationship with other oral poems (Archaic epic or lyric). I also attempt to answer the critical issue of whether we have strong indications that Alcman's *partheneia* themselves belonged to a narrower tradition. Was there a tradition of *partheneia* when Alcman composed his songs, and how did this fact influence their reception? Was this tradition of *partheneia* strong enough to swallow Alcman, thus transforming him into a generic figure, as Nagy has suggested was the fate of other poets? I conclude that this is not accurate in Alcman's case for reasons I specify in the chapter.

The title of chapter 4 summarises its content: *The Classical Alcman, or Alcman the Classic*. A more analytical title could have been: "The reception of Alcman during the Classical period or Alcman's attainment of classical status during the same period". The premise behind this chapter is that Carey's observations regarding the reception of Alcman, and his views on the importance of the concept of Panhellenism to the understanding of the

⁵¹ See on this Budelmann (2008) 22-23.

transmission and reception of Alcman, are accurate.⁵² As he notes, Alcman had achieved, against all odds, Panhellenic status.⁵³ If we combine this argument with Nagy's observation about the use of writing to preserve a text that has been judged as "classic" (and one that is necessarily of Panhellenic interest), we can argue that, in most cases, once the work of a poet has been considered classic, then appears the need for its preservation.⁵⁴ I will argue in this chapter that, in the Classical period, we are offered a glimpse of the process of the transformation of the oral and traditional poetry of Alcman into a "classic" – that is, a written – text. Classical Alcman thus gradually becomes a "classic". I focus my examination on Alcman's reception in the single intellectual center during the Classical period that could attribute classical status to Alcman and his poetry: Athens. I do not neglect Hinge's hypothesis⁵⁵ about the different transmission and reception of Alcman's *partheneia* and Alcman's other poems, expressing my doubts in that regard.

Chapter 5 is entitled *The Hellenistic Alcman*. I continue to examine the reception of Alcman's poetic compositions par excellence, his *partheneia*, during the Hellenistic period. I conclude that the tradition of *partheneia* was continued in the Hellenistic period, mainly in Sparta, Alexandria and Boeotia, by the reperformance of Alcman's poems (Sparta), the composition of Alexandrian *partheneia* influenced by Alcman's poems, and by the composition of Corinna's *partheneia* in Boeotia. I continue by examining Alcman's Hellenistic reception per se in the intellectual centers of the time, Athens, Alexandria and Pergamon, and in his home town, Sparta. I use evidence from both Hellenistic scholarship and Hellenistic poetry (mainly from Callimachus, Theocritus, and Apollonius of Rhodes).

The final chapter is dedicated to conclusions about Alcman's reception and transmission. I reject certain aspects of Hinge's receptional model. In its place, I propose that a transcription of Alcman's poems could have existed even within Alcman's own lifetime, though the primary medium of Alcman's transmission and reception until the Hellenistic period seems to be an oral one, namely the reperformance of his songs. Through these reperformances, Alcman's poetry gradually lost its epichoric quality and became increasingly generic and therefore more Panhellenic. During the Hellenistic period, Alcman is received as a Panhellenic poet. Nevertheless, the focus gradually changes, as I will later demonstrate. Hellenistic scholars became more preoccupied with the genre to which his poems belonged and

⁵² See Carey (2011) 440, n. 12.

⁵³ See Carey (2011) 444.

⁵⁴ See Nagy (1989) 73.

⁵⁵ See Hinge (2006).

with his text, and less with Alcman's life.⁵⁶ Even the intertextual allusions to his poems undergo a transformation. We begin to more frequently encounter allusions to Alcman's *partheneia* than references to the tradition of *partheneia* exemplified by Alcman's compositions.

Can we suggest, in Alcman's case, that the emerging book culture led to the demise of the "song culture"? Was Alcman an archetype of an Archaic genre who was regarded as a historical figure from the edition of his fragments, or did the tradition of female choruses absorb a historical figure? The tradition of *partheneia* was never powerful enough, especially outside Sparta, to completely absorb the poet. However, any history of Alcman's early reception has to be a history of the reception of the tradition of the performance of maiden choruses. As we will see, it is the emerging "book culture" which creates the tradition of *partheneia*, which has as its predecessor the tradition of female choruses (or the tradition of *partheneia*). Alcman's *θηλυμελεις ἀηδόνες* (female-voiced nightingales) were put in a cage; they were confined within the pages of a book, but this only served to reinforce their generic quality.

⁵⁶ I have to underline that this scholarly tendency started from the Peripatus. On the relationship between the scholarship of the Peripatus and Hellenistic scholarship see the arguments of Arrighetti (1987).

CHAPTER ONE

EXPLORING THE BIOGRAPHICAL TRADITION

The *testimonia* concerning Alcman's life and *oeuvre* span several centuries. They begin in the fourth century BC and continue appearing until the twelfth century AD. The majority of these date from the Hellenistic era onward.⁵⁷ We possess nothing from the Archaic period, nor do we have a Hellenistic life (*Bioç*) of the poet. Regardless of their correspondence to the historical truth about Alcman and his poetry, *testimonia* are essential to the study of Alcman's early reception.⁵⁸ It is for this reason that their examination can find a place in the study of the ancient reception of the poet and his work.

Recently, Kivilo suggested that these considerably later biographical statements and anecdotes about Archaic lyric poets can be revealing about ancient views on the poets.⁵⁹ She claims that they are the remains of a broad and well-developed ancient biographical tradition which began to take shape just after the death of each poet, or even during his life.⁶⁰ As we will later see, most of the biographical material concerning Alcman and his life confirms Kivilo's assumptions. The testimonies are structured in a traditional form, and their writers or composers use formulaic motifs and literary *topoi*.

⁵⁷ Apart from the fragments of the Peripatetics concerning Alcman.

⁵⁸ As Graziosi puts it: "Precisely because they are fictional, early speculations about the author of the Homeric poems must ultimately derive from an encounter between the poems and their ancient audiences. For this reason, they constitute evidence concerning the reception of Homeric poems at a time in which their reputation was still in the making". See Graziosi (2002) 3. Beecroft (see Beecroft (2010) 2) believes that the biographical anecdotes offer a glimpse of what he calls the "implied poetics" of these poetic compositions, that is, of the implicit ancient theories of literature embedded in them.

⁵⁹ See Kivilo (2010) 5.

⁶⁰ Nagy (see Nagy (1989) 38) is of the opinion that the poet attains a quasi-mythological dimension. According to him, these stories begin to circulate, once the poet has lost control over the performance of his/her compositions.

1) The Name of the Poet

According to the majority of the ancient *testimonia*, the name of the poet was Alcman. Many ancient writers, grammarians and lexicographers, beginning in the Classical period and ending in the Byzantine, quote and comment on excerpts of Alcman's poems using this name.⁶¹ The grammarian Aelius Herodianus in many of his works seems to use this name as an example of the formation of the cases of other nouns with the same ending. Eustathius does the same while attempting to trace the etymology of Alcman's name. Eustathius believes (*Scholia to the Iliad* 335.15) that the name Alcman derived from the advert *ἄλκιμος* (stout, brave) or that it was a contracted form of the name *Ἀλκμῶων*.

The same name appears in Latin literature. One notable exception is the name Alcmeon, which appears in the *Chronicle* of Eusebius (30.3), translated into Latin by Hieronymus. The name appears in almost identical form in one Greek source, the Byzantine writer George Syncellus (*Extract of Chronography* 402), who believes that the poet *Ἀλκμῶων* was a contemporary of the composer of the *Little Iliad*.

The double tradition of Alcman's name that first appears in the Byzantine era led to the poet Alcman being confused with the astronomer Alcmaeon.⁶² It is not impossible that the confusion of Alcman with Alcaeus, which was common in antiquity, had the same cause.⁶³ Christodorus, a poet of the sixth century AD, seems to be familiar with this double tradition and exploits it in an epigram contained in the *Greek Anthology* (2.1.393-397) by stating that the statue which exists in Zeuxippus' portico in Constantinople was possibly created in honour of a prophet named *Ἀλκμῶων* rather than the poet Alcman, but that he is not making the same mistake. He makes the poet, not the prophet, the subject of his epigram.

2) Alcman and the Canon

Most ancient writers refer to Alcman using the term *ποιητής* (Aristotle *History of Animals* 557a; Ps-Plutarch *About Music* 1136b; Athenaeus, *Scholars at Dinner* 416c-d). According to other *testimonia*, Alcman was not a *ποιητής* but a *μελοποιός* (e.g., *Scholia to the Iliad* 13.588). The *Greek*

⁶¹ See Aelius Herodianus (*General Prosody* 1.12.4, 1.13.8, 1.13.33, 1.14.6, 1.153.17, 1.534.19, *On Anceps Vowels* 282, *On Modifications of Words* 492), and Eustathius' *Scholia to the Iliad* 335.15.

⁶² See Davies (1991) 15.

⁶³ See Davies (1991) 15.

Anthology (7.18) and the *Lexicon of Suda* (s.v. *Ἀλκμάν*) attribute to him an adjective which describes his poetic activity, namely *ὑμνοπόλος* (composing hymns, or songs of praise). We can be certain that, from the time of Plutarch onward, Alcman was seen as one of the wise men of an earlier age, or at least someone who belonged to an earlier epoch than that of the writer.⁶⁴ The adjective *λυρικός* describes a person who plays the lyre or something that belongs to a lyre. It probably gained the meaning that we attribute to this word today no later than the Hellenistic period.⁶⁵ It often appears to accompany the noun *μοῦσα* or *λύρα* or the names of certain poets.

Many ancient testimonies explain why individual poems and certain poets were called *λυρικά* and *λυρικοί*.⁶⁶ The attribution of the qualities of *λυρικός* to Alcman is significant to our understanding of the reception of the poet. The frequent use of the term *λυρικός* to describe both poets and poetry began in the first century AD – the same period in which the canon of the nine lyric poets appeared.⁶⁷ The early use of this word in reference to the poet is an indication of Alcman's early inclusion in this canon. In several instances, Alcman appears to hold the prime position in the canon.⁶⁸ One possible explanation is that the names of the poets were placed in either alphabetical or chronological order. Alcman is always included in the canon until the Byzantine era, when the canon ceases to appear.

Many epigrams contained in the *Greek Anthology* refer to the nine lyric poets. The information that they provide regarding Alcman is limited to characterisations (such as *γλυκὺς*, 9.571, meaning merry or pleasant) that probably have more to do with the subject of his poetry or descriptions of his whole poetic production as songs composed solely for female choruses.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ See Plutarch, *On the Malice of Herodotus* 857f.

⁶⁵ LSJ s.v. *λυρικός*; Pfeiffer (1968) 182-183; De Martino (1996) 12-14.

⁶⁶ See for example Scholia to Pindar 1.2 Drachmann and *Anecdota Graeca* 3.1461 Bekker.

⁶⁷ See Pfeiffer (1968) 205-206.

⁶⁸ See for example Scholia to Pindar 1.2 Drachmann; Scholia to Pindar 3.310 Drachmann; *Anecdota Graeca* 4.458 Boissonade.

⁶⁹ Acosta-Hughes (see Acosta-Hughes (2010) 216) believes that this phrase describes Alcman's poetic voice and the collection of his poems, therefore, that Alcman's *θηλυμελεῖς ἀηδόνες* "evokes both the singers of his *partheneia* and the *partheneia* as the collection of his works".

3) Origin

It seems that the problem of Alcman's origin began to trouble scholars as early as in Aristotle's lifetime, as we can clearly see in a papyrial fragment (*P. Oxy.* XXIV 2389, fr. 9, col. I) featuring an ancient Scholion concerning Alcman. From this source, we learn that Alcman had a rival (*ἀντίφαριν*). According to the commentator, the poet was Laconian (*Λάκων εἶη*), and Aristotle and all the others (likely his pupils) were mistaken in regarding him as Lydian (*σύ]μψηφοι ἀπατηθέντες*). The *Lexicon of Suda* (s.v. *Ἀλκμάν*) is of the same opinion and adds the information that Alcman was from Messoa, a town in Sparta. It attributes the characterisation of Alcman as Lydian to Crates rather than Aristotle.

Although many contemporary scholars, along with the anonymous commentator on lyric poets (*P. Oxy.* XXIX 2506), the scholiast of Pindar (*Scholia Vetera in Pindari Carmina* 1.10) and the *Lexicon of Suda* (s.v. *Ἀλκμάν*), believe Alcman to have hailed from Sparta, we should be cautious. A handful of contemporary scholars are of the opinion that Alcman was either of Lydian origin and Spartan citizenship or that he might have been born in Lydia but was the offspring of Spartans.⁷⁰ This is nothing more than a series of plausible hypotheses based on a handful of clues.

It would be even riskier to support the account of Alcman's Lydian origin, which seems to be based on two stereotypes adopted by certain ancient scholars. The first of these is linked to the difficulty of believing that Sparta could have been the home town of a poet, particularly one who composed songs for maiden choruses. Indicative of this attitude towards Sparta are the *testimonia* of Velleius Paterculus (*Historiae* 1.18.2) and Aelian (*Collection of Wonderful Tales* 12.50.8), which exclude the possibility that Sparta had produced anything significant in the fields of art and literature. The second stereotype was based on the tendency of biographers, especially those of the Peripatetic school, to read the work of every poet to trace autobiographical details and to view the poet as always speaking in the first person about himself. One proof of this kind of reading of Alcman's poems is the belief of many writers, from the Hellenistic era and beyond, that Alcman was referring to himself when he used the first person in fr. 16 *PMGF*.⁷¹ These scholars, who include Chrysippus, Strabo,

⁷⁰ For more bibliography on this see Garzya (1963) 14.

⁷¹ More specifically Chrysippus (*Dialogues of Philosophers* 180.21), Strabo (*Geographica* 10.2.22.2) and Stephanus (s.v. *Ἐποσίγη*). Even if Alcman speaks in propria persona in this fragment, he could have referred to only a certain period of his stay in Sardes. It is likely that Sardes in this passage is not mentioned as

and Stephanus of Byzantium, also suggest that the chorus in the same fragment refers to his Lydian origin.

The use of this particular fragment as a source of information about Alcman's origin is indicative of the attitude of ancient writers towards Alcman's poems. These writers probably used the fragments to draw conclusions about the poet's life. The account of his Lydian origin may also have derived from the phrase *μίτρα Λυδία* used in fr. 1 *PMGF* or from certain geographical regions or ancient peoples mentioned in his poetry that have to do with Lydia.⁷² Of particular interest is the third century AD *P. Oxy.* L 3542. According to the commentator, Alcman left Lydia with his father and came to Sparta at a young age. Nevertheless, nothing can be proved.

Two other issues which have tantalised scholars since antiquity are likely related to the problem of Alcman's origin. The first of these is Alcman's paternity. *P. Oxy.* L 3542 has reignited the debate regarding Alcman's parentage. According to this papyrus, the poet's father was named either *Δάμας* or *Τίταρος*. According to the Pindar Scholia, *Δάμας* was Alcman's father. The *Lexicon of Suda* (s.v. *Ἀλκμάν*) doubts whether *Δάμας* or *Τίταρος* was Alcman's father. *Δάμας* is a common Laconian name, but the same cannot be said about *Τίταρος*.⁷³ It is possible that, even in this case, Alcman's fr. 109 *PMGF* (a. *Σάμβας* / b. *Ἄδων* / c. *Τῆλος*), which mentions three players of aulos sporting Phrygian names, was misinterpreted.⁷⁴ It is likely that both the name *Δάμας* and the name *Τίταρος* appeared among these. If this is true, the noun *πατέρες* would have referred to them in the context of this song, but was instead interpreted by ancient scholars as the poet referring to his own father.⁷⁵ The non-Greek form of the name Titaros, or the names of the aulos players, may be related to Alcman's supposed origins in Lydia.

The second problem linked to Alcman's birthplace is the hypothesis that the poet was a servant emancipated as a consequence of his poetic ability (*εὐφροίας*). The Peripatetic philosopher Heraclides of Pontus mentions that his master was a person named Agesidas (*The Constitution of Athenians* = Aristotle fr. 611.9 Rose). The *Lexicon of Suda* concurs (s.v. *Ἀλκμάν*), without mentioning Alcman's master by his name. As Calame suggests, this assumption should be ignored and attributed to the vivid imagination of the

Alcman's home town but rather as the place of origin of his song, not unlike Pindar's (*Nem.* 8.15), as Lefkowitz has suggested (see Lefkowitz 1981, 35).

⁷² See for example fr. 90, 109, 126, 152, 154, 156 *PMGF*.

⁷³ On this see Davison (1968) 175.

⁷⁴ For a discussion regarding this fragment see Calame (1983b) 607-608.

⁷⁵ This is what Davison believes (see Davison (1968) 175).

biographical tradition.⁷⁶ Without a doubt, it is related to the belief in Alcman's Lydian origin, which seems to have been created by the successors of Aristotle. The fact that the assumption originates with Heraclides is a strong indication of its Peripatetic roots.

According to ancient *testimonia*, Alcman not only had two places of birth and two fathers, he was also more than one person. The *Lexicon of Suda* (s.v. *Ἀλκμάν*) informs us that there were two "Alcmans" (*Ἀλκμᾶνες*), one from Messina and the other from Messoa, a Spartan town. Recently, *P. Oxy.* XXXVII 2802 has reignited this debate. A similar "division" has been assumed for Theognis, as well.⁷⁷ Calame believes that it is very likely that this issue of Alcman's double origin in the *Lexicon of Suda* has its roots in a misunderstanding of the word "Messoas".⁷⁸ Another explanation is that it was created by the confusion of the poet Alcman with the poet Alcaeus, as Davison suggests.⁷⁹ This version is probably adopted from the *Lexicon of Suda* because it offers a convenient solution to the problem of Alcman's double origin from Lydia and Sparta.⁸⁰

4) Date

The second significant problem which has concerned scholars from the Hellenistic era onward is that of Alcman's date. The publication of *P. Oxy.* XXIV 2390 shed new light on this problem. The commentator of the papyrus provides details concerning the royal families of Sparta mentioned by Alcman in his poems.

Three different dates are attested by ancient sources. The first – the thirtieth Olympiad –⁸¹ comes from Eusebius through the *Chronicle* of Hieronymus (30.3). From the same source comes another potential date (Hieronymus, *Chronicle* 42.4), that of the forty-second Olympiad. According to the *Lexicon of Suda* (s.v. *Ἀλκμάν*), Alcman's *floruit* coincides with the reign of Ardys, father of Alyattes, and thus with the twenty-seventh Olympiad (609 or 611 BC). As noted by West, two of these dates overlap with the seven-year reign of Ardys in Lydia, according to different systems of time measurement.⁸² West also notes that Alcman in one of his poems

⁷⁶ See Calame (1983b) xvi.

⁷⁷ On this issue see Tsantsanoglou (1973) 111.

⁷⁸ See Calame (1983b) xv.

⁷⁹ See Davison (1968) 178.

⁸⁰ This is a suggestion of Tsantsanoglou (1973) 111. More recently Beecroft ended to a similar conclusion (see Beecroft (2010) 124).

⁸¹ 658 BC.

⁸² See West (1965) 194.

allegedly mentions an incident that happened during the seventh year of Ardys' reign (646/647). Although we cannot exclude this possibility, we should bear in mind that the *Lexicon of Suda* calls Ardys the father of Alyattes. As Davison correctly remarks,⁸³ Alcman's poem may have referred not to the father (Ardys) but rather to the son (Alyattes); consequently, it was composed under Alyattes' reign.

The poet is linked in some ancient *testimonia* with a series of people in relation to whom we have little information. In the *Extract of Chronography* 403 of George Syncellus and in Eusebius (via Hieronymus' *Chronicle* 30.3) Alcman is related to someone named Lesches, one of the potential composers of the *Little Iliad*. According to the *Lexicon of Suda* (s.v. *Ἀρίων*), Alcman was Arion's teacher. Suda dates Arion to the thirty-eighth Olympiad and claims that Alcman was older than Stesichorus (s.v. *Στησίχορος*). According to Heraclides of Lembus, who quotes a great part of the *Constitution of the Athenians* of Aristotle (fr. 611.9 Rose), Alcman was the servant of someone named Agesidas. In *P. Oxy.* L 3542, mention is made of someone named Lycurgus. The poet himself talks about Polymnestus of Corinth.⁸⁴

The truth is that we have extraordinarily little, sometimes no, information about these people and can consequently draw no final conclusions about Alcman's date. Nevertheless, we can speculate. We know nothing about Lesches other than that the epic poem attributed to him was composed during the seventh century BC. Arion flourished at approximately 600 BC. Stesichorus must have lived from the end of the seventh to the beginning of the sixth centuries BC. We do not know whether Agesidas existed at all, and the same applies to Lycurgus. The first win of Polymnestus at the festival of Pythia dates to roughly 582 BC.⁸⁵ Polymnestus was a famous aulos player and a composer of elegies. We know that he moved from Colophon to Sparta and that, according to Ps-Plutarch (*About Music* 1134b-c) he was part of the second organization of music in Sparta (*κατάστασις*).⁸⁶

I tend to agree with West's assumptions about Alcman's date: Alcman lived during the seventh century BC, at some point during which the second

⁸³ See Davison (1968) 176.

⁸⁴ Calame (see Calame 1983b) xv) notes that Alcman refers to Polymnestus in fr. 145 *PMGF* (or fr. 225 Calame). The fragment is a quotation of Ps-Plutarch's *About Music*. There the writer states that Pindar (in fr. 188 S-M), Alcman and the other lyric poets composed poems for this Polymnestus.

⁸⁵ See Calame (1983b) xv.

⁸⁶ Nobili claims that the composers of elegies, such as Polymnestus, played a part in the musical renovation of the festival of the *Gymnopaedia* (see Nobili (2011)).

Messenian war began.⁸⁷ Unfortunately, we cannot be more precise, if we wish to be accurate about Alcman's date. Harvey, after the publication of *P. Oxy.* XXIV 2390, is in favour of the latest date attested by Eusebius (611/610).⁸⁸ Other scholars agree that Alcman lived at the end of the seventh century.⁸⁹ However, the matter remains uncertain.⁹⁰

According to Antigonus of Carystus (*Collection of Wonderful Tales* 88), Alcman was at a very advanced age when he composed fr. 26 *PMGF*. Aristotle (*History of Animals* 5.31), Antigonus (*Collection of Wonderful Tales* 88), Plinius Junior (*Historia Naturalis* 11.113) and Plutarch (*Life of Sulla* 36.5) agree that Alcman died by a lice infestation. Pausanias (*Description of Greece* 3.15.2) claims that Alcman's tomb was situated in the region of Plane-Tree Grove, next to the altar of Helen and the shrine of Heracles. According to his description, the temple dedicated to Heracles contained a statue of the hero, who was depicted as armed and ready for battle. In Pausanias' opinion, he was ready to fight the sons of Hippocoon. According to a work belonging to the Hippocratic corpus (*Epidemics* 7.1.62), Alcman suffered from a non-fatal liver disease.

Even if several clues lead us to believe that Alcman lived at the end of the seventh century, many doubts remain even after the publication of *P.*

⁸⁷ See West (1965) 188

⁸⁸ See Harvey (1967) 69.

⁸⁹ See West (1965) 188-194; Calame (1983b) xiv; Hutchinson (2001) 71; Ferrari (2008) 1; Krummen (2009) 190.

⁹⁰ As West notes (see West (1967) 1-7) the royal names that Alcman mentioned, according to the commentator, might have been corrupted. We know little about the date of royal houses in Sparta. Even the editor of the papyrus (Lobel (1957) 49) declares that the information provided by the papyrus is not very helpful regarding Alcman's date. The arguments that the majority of modern scholars accepts regarding the content of this papyrus are based on the following assumptions, as Calame remarks (see Calame (1983b) xvi): (1) the genealogical trees of the Agiads and the Euripontides that Herodotus quotes are accurate enough, (2) Alcman referred to the Euricratides (dynasty of the Agiades, mid-seventh century BC) and to the Leotychides (dynasty of the Euripontides, end of the seventh century BC). Davison (see Davison (1968) 176) is of the opinion that the Leotychides by the time Alcman composed this song would have been dead. He bases his assumption on the use of the word *δαίμων*. The later date is possible according to another line of argumentation too. Not only this poem that referred to the royal houses of Sparta cannot have been composed before 620 BC, but Alcman's poetry has much in common with the *Arimaspeia* of Aristeas that was composed during the seventh century BC. West (see West (1965) 193-194) suggests that if Alcman was contemporary of Sappho and Alcaeus, he could have known Aristeas' *Arimaspeia*. For the possible relationship between Alcman and *Arimaspeia* see also Devereux (1965) 183 and Bowra (1990) 73, n. 2.

Oxy. XXIV 2390. Even if Alcman was referring to an incident that had taken place during the seventh year of Ardys' reign, it remains possible that he could have written this at 600 BC if we consider Antigonus' testimony about his longevity, as West notes.⁹¹ Furthermore, the poet's alleged cause of death may be very far from the truth, being a cause for mortality commonly ascribed to other poets and also used for the tyrant Sulla. It might be an entirely fictional story with its roots in the content of some of Alcman's poems. In addition to Alcman and Sulla, another victim of this usually non-fatal disease was Pherekydes, who was one of the "mixed theologists" (*μειγμένους θεολόγους*), according to Aristotle (*Metaphysics* 1091b). Rangos believes that there exist other similarities between Alcman and Pherekydes besides this unusual cause of death.⁹² West connects the cosmogonic views of Pherekydes with those of Alcman, and the Babylonian *Enûma Eliš* with the possible, according to him, diffusion of Pythagorean ideas in Sparta and Babylon.⁹³ Davies' opinion – that this cause of death was attributed not to the poet Alcman but instead to the philosopher Alcmaeon – is therefore likely to be correct.⁹⁴ The connection of Alcman's tomb with the temples of Heracles (especially a Heracles armed against the Hippocoontides) and Helen seems very interesting, particularly if we relate this testimony with fr. 1 *PMGF*. Perhaps this *partheneion* was sung in honour of Helen.⁹⁵ It is also highly probable that the lost section of the mythical part of this poem was dedicated to the description of the battle of Heracles against the sons of Hippocoön.⁹⁶ From Pausanias' *testimonium*, we can make one of two assumptions: (1) The worship of Helen and Heracles was related in Sparta with the battle of the hero against the sons of Hippocoön. It is for this reason that Alcman mentions the conflict in his *partheneion*.⁹⁷ We can suppose that, when the poet died, he was buried next

⁹¹ See West (1965) 194, n. 2.

⁹² See Rangos (2003) 88.

⁹³ See West (1967) 15. He proceeds this argument further by connecting Pythagoras and Sparta and by explaining the ancient tradition according to which Pherekydes was a teacher of Pythagoras.

⁹⁴ See Davies (1991) 15-16.

⁹⁵ On this see Calame (1983b) 313.

⁹⁶ As Calame (see Calame (1983b) 313) and other scholars believe.

⁹⁷ Cagliari (see Cagliari (2009) 26) believes that the zone described by Pausanias is characterised by monuments connected to the myth of Heracles and the sons of Hippocoön, where they were also shrines of the heroes referred to in the first part of 1 *PMGF*, so that the mythical elements narrated probably had an extratextual background. He also suggests that the speaker of 1 *PMGF* narrated what he observed during the procession (see Cagliari (2009) 27) and attempted to reconstruct the ceremony (see Cagliari (2009) 45).

to them to be honoured. Alternatively, (2) the Louvre *partheneion* may have referred to this particular battle between Heracles and the sons of Hippocoon and to Helen. In this understanding, Pausanias was influenced by the poem to identify the place of Alcman's burial with their altars, though this deduction was not accurate.

5) Poetry and Life: A Common Biographical Fallacy

Testimonia like those of Athenaeus (*Scholars at Dinner* 600f) or Apuleius (*Apology* 9)⁹⁸ and of the *Lexicon of Suda* (s.v. *Ἀλκμάν*) not only attribute an erotic character to Alcman's work but even designate Alcman as the inventor of erotic poetry. However, we have additional information regarding Alcman's personal life. According to Athenaeus (*Scholars at Dinner* 600f), Archytas described Alcman as “*καταφερῆς περὶ τὰς γυναῖκας*” and was of the opinion that women were one of the major themes of his poetry. Archytas calls Alcman's songs licentious (*ἀκόλαστον*), and gives an example of these immoral verses. Athenaeus also notes that Alcman was in love with another poet, a woman named Megalostрата, for whom he had composed the verses he quotes. Apuleius claims that various abusive and erotically charged (*ludicri et amatorii*) verses were composed by someone from Teos (apparently by Anacreon), someone from Lacedaemon (probably by Alcman), someone from Keos (possibly by Simonides), and by a woman from Lesbos (whom we can safely assume to be Sappho).⁹⁹ Is it true that the erotic element in Alcman's poems was so explicit? Was Alcman the inventor of ancient Greek erotic poetry? Is it possible that Alcman was “extremely concerned with love” not only in his poetry but also in his life? It is nearly impossible to provide a conclusive answer to these questions.

Contemporary scholars believe that, judging from Alcman's fragments, his poems must have had a rather strong erotic colouring.¹⁰⁰ However, the fragment quoted by Athenaeus as an example of a licentious song does not belong to personal poetry, but to choral lyric,¹⁰¹ and possibly to a *partheneion*.¹⁰² Modern scholars, as early as the time of Janni,¹⁰³ have suggested that Alcman's love for the female poet Megalostрата may have

⁹⁸ However, Alcman is not mentioned by name.

⁹⁹ See Lucius Apuleius Madaurensis, *Apologia* 9.

¹⁰⁰ See Pavese (1967) 134; Klinck (1994) 27; Calame (1983a) 86-89; Dover (1989) 180.

¹⁰¹ This is Bowra's opinion (see Bowra (1961) 110).

¹⁰² See Frankel (1975) 162; Calame (1983b) 558.

¹⁰³ See Janni (1965) 110.