

ΔΙΑΙΠΕΤΗΣ IN *ALCMAN*

Ἄ[σ]τυμέλοισα δέ μ' οὐδὲν ἀμείβεται
 ἀλλὰ τὸν πυλεῶν' ἔχουσα
 [ῶ] τις αἰγυλά[ε]ντος ἀστήρ
 ὠρανῶ διαίπετής
 ἢ χρύσειον ἔρνος ἢ ἀπαλδ[ν ψίλ]ον

(Alcman frag. 3. 64-68 Page)

The new *Supplement* to *LSJ* has the following entry:
 “*διαίπετής*, ἓς, (*διαίπτω*) *falling through*, ἀστήρ ὠρανῶ δ. Alcman. 3. *Fr.* 3. ii. 67 P.: less prob. *διαίπέτης*, (*διαπέτομαι*) *flying through*.”
διαίπετής occurs nowhere else; neither the form (on the above interpretation) nor the meaning is free from suspicion. D. A. Campbell in his *Greek Lyric Poetry*, p. 214, notes “*διαί-* found only here in a compound...” As regards the form, we are on admittedly uncertain ground. Much about Alcman’s dialect must remain doubtful because of the scanty evidence. Elsewhere he uses δι’ ἀμβροσίαν (frag. 1. 62), [δι]αίτλεκει (frag. 1. 38), διαφάδαν (frag. 1. 56); that is all. For διαβολιῶν in Pindar *Pythian* 2. 76 and διαβολίῃ in Theognis 324 Bergk conjectured forms in *διαί- metri causa*, though editors do not usually follow him in this. Of more significance is the existence of epic forms in *παραι-* in such words as *παραιβασίη*, *παραιβασις*, *παραιβολος*, *παραιβάτης* (this last form occurring-along with *παραιβατέω* – even in early Attic prose). *διαίπετής*, therefore, understood as a compound of *διαί-*, cannot be pronounced impossible; it is unexampled. If, as I hope to demonstrate, there are other objections to this interpretation of *διαίπετής*, this singular compound should be taken as a *prima facie* cause for suspicion.

What is the image? Bowra translates “Astymeloisa answers me not, but holding the garland, like a star that falls through the glittering sky or a golden shoot or tender down...”¹). Astymeloisa, on this reading, is compared to a shooting star; such an image would suggest primarily *speed* and (possibly) *transitoriness*; compare the simile in the *Iliad* 4. 74-79:

4) Das Monogramm stimmt mit dem im Heft über antikes Schriftwesen verwandten genau überein. S. Beilage nach S. 96.

1) *Greek Lyric Poetry*² (Oxford 1961), p. 33.

βῆ δὲ κατ' Οὐλύμπιοι καρήνων ἀΐξασα.
οἶον δ' ἄστερα ἤκε Κρόνον πάϊς ἀγκυλομήτω,
ἢ ναύτησι τέρας ἢ ἐ στρατῶ εὐρέϊ λαῶν,
λαμπρόν· τοῦ δέ τε πολλοὶ ἀπὸ σπινθήρες ἴενται.
τῶ ἔκλυ' ἤϊξεν ἐπὶ χθόνα Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη,
κάδ δ' ἔθορ' ἐς μέσσον.

The real point of comparison in this simile is speed, as is clear from ἀΐξασα (verse 74) and ἤϊξεν (verse 78): in prose ἄπτω and διάπτω are regularly used of shooting stars (e.g. Plato, *Republic* 621 b, Aristotle, *De Caelo* 395 a 32, Plutarch, *Agis* c. 11). The mention of brightness in verse 77 is one of those inessential details which so frequently embellish Homeric similes; it should not be pressed in determining the meaning of Alcman's words. Granted that we have only an imperfect knowledge of the context, it nevertheless is difficult to imagine why Alcman here should conjure up a picture which would stress Astymeloisa's speed, much less her fleetingness. He is thinking here of brightness; compare αἰγλάεντος in verse 66 and χρύσιον ἔρονος in verse 68. What is wanted is a shining star, not a shooting star²⁾. Alcman uses similar images elsewhere; see especially the Louvre *Partheneion* (= frag. 1 Page) vv. 39-43:

ἐγὼν δ' ἀεῖδω
Ἄγιδῶς τὸ φῶς· ὄρῶ
F' ὄτ' ἄλιον, ὄνπερ ἄμιν
Ἄγιδῶ μαρτύρεται
φαίνην·

Thus the form of the word appears to be questionable and the image is apparently inappropriate. There is a third – and it seems to me fatal – objection. It is a perfectly acceptable conceit in English poetry to sing of stars falling (or flying) through the sky; however, a star falling through the οὐρανός is a notion foreign to early Greek thought. The οὐρανός is the vault of the sky, the firmament; it was *solid* and it was the *outer boundary* of the Greek universe. Compare the following passages *exempli gratia*:

σιδήρειος δ' ὄρναμαγδός
χάλκεον οὐρανὸν ἵκε δι' αἰθέρος ἀτρυνέτοιο.
(II. 17. 424-425)

Ἡέλιος δ' ἀνόρουσε... | οὐρανὸν ἐς πολύχαλκον
(Od. 3. 1-2)

τῶν ἕβρις τε βίη τε σιδήρεον οὐρανὸν ἵκει
(Od. 15. 329 = 17. 565)

2) I am aware that a reference to speed cannot be absolutely excluded and that the Louvre *Partheneion* (frag. 1 Page) vv. 46ff., where the maidens are compared to racehorses, could be adduced as a parallel. But compare M. L. West's remarks in *CQ* 59. 1965. 196: "It is not certain whether the two breeds of horse are compared in respect of speed, as is usually assumed, or in looks ... it is perfectly possible, when two horses are seen on a race-course, to comment on other differences between them than their difference in speed."

Such notions survived in the early philosophers: 'Αναξιμένης και Παρμενίδης τὴν περιφορὰν τὴν ἐξωτάτω τῆς γῆς εἶναι τὸν οὐρανόν. 'Εμπεδοκλῆς στερεόμενον εἶναι τὸν οὐρανόν...³⁾. Stars may be placed *in* the οὐρανός and the notion of the "fixed stars" is a familiar one in Greek astronomy; compare *Iliad* 22. 318: ἔσπερος δὲ κάλλιπτος ἐν οὐρανῷ ἴσταται ἀστήρ. Further, the οὐρανός is a region *to* which or *from* which travel is possible, but one does not go *through* it in early Greek poetry; a divinity or object travels rather through the αἰθήρ (or ἀήρ):

ἦ δ' ἄρπη εἰκνῖα τανυπτέρυγι λιγυφώνω
οὐρανοῦ ἐκ κατέπαλτο δι' αἰθέρος
(*Il.* 19. 350-351)

ὧς τῶν ἐρχομένων ἀπὸ χαλκοῦ θεσπεσίω
αἴγλη παμφανώσα δι' αἰθέρος οὐρανόεν.
(*Il.* 2. 457-458)

μή τις ἀνθ]ρώπων ἐς ὠρανὸν ποτήσθω
(Alcman frag. 1. 16 Page)

... ὄδ' ἀμὴν ἄγγελ[ο]ς ὠρανόθεν
δι' αἰθέρο[ς] ἀτ]ρυνέτας κατέπαλτο...
(Stesichorus frag. 32. 3-4 Page)

κάλοι δέ σ' ἄγον
ὠκεες στροῦθοι περὶ γᾶς μελαίνας
πύκνα δόννευτες πτέρ' ἀπ' ὠράνω ἴθε-
ρος διὰ μέσσω.
(Sappho frag. 1. 9-12)

οὔτοι τὸν γ' ὑπεραμπέχοντ' οὐρανὸν εἰσαναβήσει.
(Timotheus frag. 5 Page)

I conclude therefore that neither "falling through" nor "flying through" is a satisfactory explanation of Alcman's *διαιπετής*⁴⁾. Either a more cogent explanation of the word must be provided or the possibility of textual corruption seriously considered. I have suggested above that the image of a bright, shining star would be appropriate in context. And that is precisely what we have here: *διαιπετής* is Laconian for the well-attested poetic epithet *διυπετής*. H. Frisk in his *Griechisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Heidelberg, 1960) *s. v.* states: "*διυπετής* bei Hom. nur in *διυπετέος ποταμοῖο* (Versende) 'vom Himmel gefallen', dann auch 'himmlisch, des Himmels' (*b. Ven.* 4, *οἰωνοί*), 'heiter, klar' (Emp., Hp., E. u. a.; vom Himmel usw.); vgl. Leumann Hom. Wörter 311. - Für *διυπετής* (falls echt, metrische Dehnung) ist wahrscheinlich mit antiken Gewährsmännern (Sch. Od. 4, 477) *διειπετής* zu schreiben, wie *Διειτρέφης* (Inscr.) eine Analogiebildung nach *Διΐΐει-φίλος* (cp. *δίφιλος*), wo der Dativ berechtigt war." If *διυπετής* originally meant "fall from heaven", it apparently early lost, at least partially, the connotation of "falling" and came to mean simply "heavenly", "bright". Empedocles uses it as an epithet of *γαλκός* (frag. 100. 9 D.-K.) and Euripides, *Bacchae* 1267 applies it to the αἰθήρ. As Zenodotus⁵⁾ had already observ-

3) Aetius *Placita Philosophorum* 2. 11. 1-2 (= H. Diels, *Doxographi Graeci* p. 339).

4) Compare Platnauer's comment of Aristophanes, *Pax* 838 (οἱ διατρέχοντες ἀστέρες): "The technical term for shooting stars was ἀστέρες διήπτοντες, sc. διὰ τοῦ αἰθέρος."

5) Or Zenodorus (*ap. Sch. Od.* 4. 477): the reading is disputed.

ed in antiquity, the spelling *διειπετής* is more correct. One of the characteristics of Alcman's dialect is the appearance of *αι* for *ει* (*αἴτις* for *εἴ τις*, *κύπαιρος* for *κύπειρος*, *κνπαιρίσκος* for *κνπειρίσκος*); *δαιπετής* for *διειπετής* should now be added as one more example of this dialectic feature. We may note in passing that, if the above interpretation is correct, *δαιπετής* is an early and firm confirmation of the orthography *διειπετής* versus *δι-*. Finally, Alcman's words may be roughly paraphrased, *interpretationis causa* "...like some bright star of the shining heaven..."

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