

## PERFORMING AND RE-PERFORMING HELEN: STESICHORUS' PALINODE

EWEN BOWIE  
University of Oxford

### Resumen

Este artículo sostiene que ambos, evidencia y argumento, puntualizan fuertemente, el modo típico de la primera *performance* de los poemas extensos, *cuasi épicos*, de Estesícoro habiendo sido corales y no monódicos. Se dirige al caso de su Palinodia, argumentando que los testigos antiguos conocieron, de modo casi unánime, sólo un poema con este título, y que la visión de Camaleón aseguró (y que realmente hubo) dos Palinodias es inverosímil y que se halla sostenida solamente por los cuestionables suplementos de Lobel, en su *editio princeps* del P. Oxy 2506, 26 col. I=Stesichorus fr. 193 Davies/Page. El artículo ofrece una reconstrucción de la aclamada motivación de Estesícoro para cambiar su historia sobre Helena por una que involucra a un *eidolon*, y finalmente nota las implicancias de semejante apelación hecha por un poeta para el uso del “yo” por el coro.

### Abstract

*The paper argues that both evidence and argument point strongly to the typical manner of first performance of Stesichorus' long, quasi-epic lyric poems having been choral, not monadic. It then addresses the case of his Palinode, arguing that the almost unanimous ancient witnesses knew only one poem of this title, and that the view that Chamaeleon asserted that (and that there actually were) two Palinodes is implausible and supported only by Lobel's questionable supplements in his edition princeps of P.Oxy.2506, 26 col.i = Stesichorus fr. 193 Davies/Page. The paper offers a reconstruction of Stesichorus' claimed motivation for changing his story*

*about Helen to one involving an eidolon, and finally notes the implications of such a claim by a poet for the use of the singing 'I' by a chorus.*

This paper explores some aspects of Stesichorus' performance of poetry involving the myth of Helen.<sup>1</sup> I begin by addressing briefly the debate conducted in the last four decades concerning the probable manner and contexts of performance of Stesichorus' poems, a problem related to that of their size, and then I concentrate in particular on the poem known already in the fourth century BC, and thereafter throughout antiquity, as the *Palinode* (Παλινωιδία).

### **Performance**

In the ancient world, so far as we can determine, and in almost all modern scholarship until 1971, Stesichorus was seen as a poet who composed pieces for performance by a chorus: then Martin West (1971) argued eloquently for the view that he was a sort of citharode, who accompanied his own singing on the lyre, and this view has been adopted by a number of scholars (most recently Krummen (2009). If this is what he was, he would certainly have been different from citharodes as we otherwise know them, but West made an attractive case for Terpander composing and performing in this way, and in any case it is clear that in ca. 580 BC<sup>2</sup> Stesichorus (and

---

<sup>1</sup>I am very grateful to Prof. Ana Maria Gonzalez de Tobia for her kind invitation to deliver a version of this paper at the conference "Mito y Performance. De Grecia a la Modernidad" held in La Plata in June 2009, and for agreeing to publish it in the Proceedings of that conference. The paper has had a long gestation, and I have benefited from discussion not only at the La Plata conference but also by audiences in Oxford (in a seminar series "Singing for the Gods" organised by the Corpus Christi College Centre for the Study of Greek and Roman Antiquity), London (in an Institute of Classical Studies seminar series) and Amsterdam (under the patronage of S.R. Slings at VU). I have also been fortunate to have been able to test some of my ideas on generations of pupils at Corpus Christi College, Oxford. Where I make a point or construct an argument that has appeared in recent scholarship but is not so credited by me explicitly it should be assumed that I reached that position independently.

<sup>2</sup> That Stesichorus died in 560/559 BC, the first year of the 55<sup>th</sup> Olympiad (Eusebius p.102 Helm = Campbell T3 = Ercoles Ta5(b)ii) or in 556/5-553/2, the 56<sup>th</sup> Olympiad (Cicero. *de re publica*, 2.20 = Apollodorus. *FGrH* 244 F337 = Campbell T2 = Ercoles Ta5(a)), is nearer to being a reliable datum than the conflicting years offered for his birth.

other south Italian poets who may be operating in a similar tradition, Xenocritus or Xenocrates of Locri, and Xanthus), was indeed doing something markedly different from what we currently know of poetry from mainland or Aegean Greece. Since then both Davies (1988) and Cingano (2003) have questioned the validity of a firm distinction between 'choral' and 'monodic' poetry, as have several contributors to the debate on the first occasion of performance of Pindaric and Bacchylidean *epinicia*. In this latter debate it is now widely accepted that, whatever the first occasion of performance, the poet had to reckon with the likelihood that some later performances would be by a single singer, while others might be by a group or *choros*. That might well have been the case for Stesichorus too. We have good evidence from Attica of the late fifth century for sympotic performance of several poets whose works were sometimes performed by a chorus, and these include Stesichorus.<sup>3</sup> Quotation of Stesichorus by Aristophanes in the *parabasis* of his play *Peace* demonstrates that an Attic theatre audience of 421 BC was expected to be familiar with both the words and (presumably) the music of Stesichorus' *Oresteia* by *some* route, even if the modes of dissemination that could be expected by poets of the later sixth and early fifth centuries need not be exactly what was expected by a poet in the second quarter of the sixth century. Despite such complications, it is worth revisiting the issue of how Stesichorus' poems were *first* performed. Perhaps the problem is not soluble on the evidence we have available, but some points made against the traditional view do not seem to me to carry much weight, and others that should count in its favour have been given too little.<sup>4</sup>

1. Some have found difficulty in the idea that a *Geryoneis* of at least 1300, and very possibly more than 1800, lines, or an *Oresteia* long enough

---

<sup>3</sup> Eupolis. fr. 395 Kassel-Austin (= Tb 42 Ercoles): Socrates sings Stesichorus (perhaps from Κόλακες / *Flatterers*): δεξάμενος δὲ Σωκράτης τὴν ἐπιδέξι' <αἰδῶν> | Στησιχόρου πρὸς τὴν Λύραν οἰνοχόην ἔκλεψαν.

<sup>4</sup> For a judicious review of the evidence and arguments, coming down in favour of choral performance, see Willi (2008: 76-81).

to be divided by Alexandrian editors into 2 books, and so perhaps exceeding 2000 lines, could be performed by a chorus.<sup>5</sup> This might well depend, of course, on the size, training and native skills of the chorus - the girls of Delos lauded by the *Homeric hymn to Apollo* seem to have been semi-professional. In fifth-century Attica a non-professional citizen chorus was expected to keep singing through three tragedies and a satyr play:<sup>6</sup> in our earliest tragedy, Aeschylus' *Persae* of 472 BC, the chorus sings for around 600 of 1077 lines. By the time that chorus of *Persae* had finished singing in the other two plays of the trilogy and the satyr play it must have sung some 2000 lines, if not more. Of course a chorus can take breaks while actors either delivered *rheseis* or themselves sang, though such breaks were presumably fewer in Phrynichus' *Capture of Miletus* in the 490s or in the still earlier tragedies of Thespis. But if we suppose a chorus and not an individual to have sung Stesichorus' long poems *Geryoneis* or *Oresteia* we need not insist that all members of the chorus sang all the time: the practice of dividing up the chorus, certain for Attic comedy<sup>7</sup> and arguable for some passages of tragedy,<sup>8</sup> would be one obvious way of offering relief. Such relief is not, of course, available to the solo singer. A solo singer may play or strum on his or her stringed instrument to give the voice a rest, but that voice has to sing every one of the 1800 or more lines that make up the poem. "No doubt he rested at intervals."<sup>9</sup> One hates to think what some Dicaeopolis in the audience would have got up to if these intervals seemed to him too long. I conclude that the considerable length now established for Stesichorus' poems<sup>10</sup> counts for and not against their choral perform-

---

<sup>5</sup> 'troublesome', West (1971: 309).

<sup>6</sup> For an important discussion of the musical competence of large numbers of fifth- and fourth-century Athenians see Revermann (2006).

<sup>7</sup> E.g. Aristophanes. *Lysistrata*, 254-349.

<sup>8</sup> E.g. Aeschylus. *Agamemnon*, 1344-71 (though this is not sung but spoken) with Fraenkel *ad loc.* iii 633-5.

<sup>9</sup> West (1971: 314).

<sup>10</sup> That the Alexandrian editors arranged Stesichorus' poems not in numbered books (like those of Ibycus, for example) but in books each of which was co-extensive with a poem, and had a title (with the *Oresteia* occupying not one but two books) shows that considerable length was either a

ance.<sup>11</sup>

2. How should we assess the claim of the Suda that Stesichorus got his name “because he was the first to establish (*stēsai*) a chorus of singers to the cithara; his name was originally Tisias” (Campbell’s translation)?<sup>12</sup> West emphasised the presence of κίθαρωιδία in this notice, but it is illegitimate to cherry-pick that single item while discarding the rest. If we try to understand κίθαρωιδία in the sentence as transmitted, it should not refer to the music of a solo singer who accompanied himself on the *cithara* of the sort we know from the classical through to the hellenistic and imperial Greek period; it should rather refer to a combination of playing on the *cithara*, certainly by an individual, and singing by a chorus.<sup>13</sup> Of course the information offered in this entry may be both late in origin and garbled in transmission; but in that case it should simply be given a decent burial. I would not take it to be late in its ultimate origin, and would like to press the implication of the claim that this was how the poet - previously called Tisias - came to be called Stesichorus. That claim is in itself improbable. But it would not be made by a writer who believed, and who thought that his readers believed, that Stesichorus was predominantly a citharode who sang solo to the accompaniment of his *cithara*. So its inclusion of the term κίθαρωιδία is unlikely to be evidence that there was an ancient view that solo performance to the accompaniment of *cithara* was his characteristic manner of performance. Rather the claim as a whole implies the view that

---

universal or at least a general feature of the Stesichorean poems that had come down to the Hellenistic period.

<sup>11</sup> The analogy of performance by Attic tragic choruses is also effectively invoked by Burnett (1988: 132-3).

<sup>12</sup> ἐκλήθη δὲ Στησίχορος ὅτι πρῶτον κίθαρωιδίαι χορὸν ἔστησεν, ἐπεὶ τοι πρότερον Τισίας ἐκαλεῖτο, Suda Σ 1095 = Tb2 Ercoles.

<sup>13</sup> It would also be compatible with the mixed mode of performance proposed by Sider (1989), in which the performance begins with citharode Stesichorus sitting while he accompanies a dancing and singing chorus and then stands up to join them (ἀνέστη) when he reaches the palinodic moment: but as far as I know such crossing of the boundary between an accompanying and a participating musician in mid-performance is not paralleled.

Stesichorus was indeed predominantly a poet who composed songs for singing by χοροί.<sup>14</sup> Whether that was a well-founded view depends on when the view was first formed; if this was in the hellenistic period it is not impossible, even if it might be thought unlikely, that at the time a live performance tradition still survived on the basis of which Stesichorus' work was known to be choral.

3. A traditional prop of the view that Stesichorus' poetry was for choral performance has been its triadic structure. West pointed out that we find triadic structure even in Sapphic and Alcaic stanzas. But that is triadic structure on a very small scale. More would take the view that "triadic structure first appears full-blown in Stesichorus, and is general in Pindar and Bacchylides."<sup>15</sup> Some at least of the epinicians of Pindar and Bacchylides are designed for a first performance that was choral, as of course are the undoubtedly triadic lyric systems in Attic tragedy. The much closer similarity of Stesichorus' metrical systems to these than to the small-scale triads of Lesbian poetry remains for me a strong argument for their first performance having been choral.

4. As in Pindar and Old Comedy, however, the poet can foreground his own *persona* even through words sung by his chorus. We shall encounter much such foregrounding shortly in the *Palinode*. West (1971) proposed fr. 212 Davies/Page, from the opening section of Stesichorus' *Oresteia*, as a case where poet and singer are identified:

τοιιάδε χρῆ Χαρίτων δαμώματα καλλικόμων  
ὕμνεϊν Φρύγιον μέλος ἐξευρόντα<ς> ἄβρῶς  
ἦρος ἐπερχομένου

---

<sup>14</sup> For a fuller and more nuanced treatment of these issues, drawing in the important ancient traditions linking Stesichorus with ἀυλός-music, see Burnett (1988:129-35).

<sup>15</sup> Parker (1996: 971).

But there are textual problems: we cannot be sure of the number of the participle ἐξευρόντα<ς>. The manuscripts of the scholia to Aristophanes *Peace* 797ff., our source for this fragment, offer ἐξευρόντα, which comparison with fr. 210 Davies/Page (also from these scholia) γάμους ἀνδρῶν τε δαῖτας shows not to be metrically acceptable. West printed Kleine's emendation ἐξευρόντα<ς>: this might actually be claimed to support a plural singing body. Page's ἐξευρόντα μ' or σ' could equally be correct, but even a confirmed reading μ' would not demand a single singer.

5. If the poems are being sung by choruses, these choruses are surely not secular. They must have some religious and festive, perhaps even competitive, context, even if little or nothing of this comes through in surviving texts. So perhaps these poems are after all not so far from our earlier material (e.g. the *Partheneia* of Alcman). We may note that the Xenocritus or Xenocrates of Locri was, like Xenodamus of Cythera and Thaletas of Gortyn, believed to have been a poet of paeans.<sup>16</sup> We should imagine, then, performances honour of gods, in front of an unidentifiable audience of mortals: δαμώματα may suggest a large audience (δαμώματα δὲ τὰ δημοσίου αἰδόμενα, says the scholiast) as would indeed a χορός.<sup>17</sup> At present I doubt if we can hope for more specificity.<sup>18</sup>

### **Helen**

The extent to which words sung by a chorus can be heard as conveying the thoughts and experiences of an individual, their poet, is well brought out by the case of the *Palinode*. By Stesichorus' time the tale of Troy must have been widely known in what for the poets of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* seems to have been the canonical form: Helen elopes with Paris,

---

<sup>16</sup> Pseudo-Plutarch. *de musica*, 9 = *Moralia*, 1134C.

<sup>17</sup> Compare the description of Astymeloisa in Alcman fr. 3 as μέλημα δάμου.

<sup>18</sup> For an appealing but unprovable suggestion of a 60-day festival of Artemis at Rhegium as one location for Stesichorean performances (in particular, she suggests, for his *Oresteia*) cf. Burnett (1988: 144-7); for the bibliography on this cult of Artemis see Burnett (1988: 144 n.135).

Agamemnon and Menelaus assemble a force to get her back, and after a war of ten years they sack Troy and Menelaus takes her back to Lacedaemon. Partly because this is a good story, partly because it was taken as the background for the two most successful poems of archaic Greece, this tale of Troy was a box-office success, as can be seen from the number of poems of the cycle which developed parts of it that had not been handled by the *Iliad* or *Odyssey*. And within this story one character was especially alluring: Helen. The poets of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* give her greater coverage than their plots require. The poet of the *Iliad* already distances himself from the discreditable picture of a fickle and flighty seductress that the tradition seems to imply, though at her first entrance he is careful to cue us to remember her sexual attraction, when the old men on the walls by the Scaean Gates respond to it (*Iliad* III.156-8). When the poet of the *Odyssey* brings Telemachus to Sparta it is Helen who steals the show, and the poet's audiences were doubtless impressed by his ability to create a new perspective on this beguiling character.<sup>19</sup> There will have been much more in the *Cypria*. Helen was clearly the chief player in the episode - occupying perhaps a whole book? - in which Paris was entertained by Menelaus and Helen: Menelaus then went off to Crete leaving Helen to offer him appropriate hospitality, an instruction that she took rather too far. There will have been a seduction scene that doubtless influenced such later encounters as that between Jason and Medea in the third book of Apollonius' *Argonautica*.

Stesichorus too was drawn to *Troica*, particularly to the presentation of Helen. She figured in his poems entitled *Helen, Returns* (Νόστος) and *Sack of Troy* (Ἰλίου Πέρισις).<sup>20</sup> A papyrus fragment of *Returns* (Νόστος), reworking *Odyssey* 4, has her addressing Telemachus (fr. 209 Davies/Page) and a well-known passage of *Sack of Troy* (Ἰλίου Πέρισις) told how her beauty prevented the Greeks from stoning her.<sup>21</sup> Helen was almost

---

<sup>19</sup> See esp. Austin (1974).

<sup>20</sup> Frs. S88-146 and 196-205 Davies.

<sup>21</sup> Fr. 201 Davies/Page = Scholion on Euripides. *Orestes*, 1287. She also appears in one of the papyrus



certainly a character in Stesichorus' *Oresteia*.<sup>22</sup> But once Stesichorus had used her so extensively, he must surely have been running short of stories that he had not already told at least once. Yet Helen was a character whose inclusion in a poem could clearly be expected to be a considerable contribution to its popularity. What was Stesichorus to choose to sing next?

We know the answer to that question, but Stesichorus' audience, or most of it, did not know it until they had heard that next song. Stesichorus' bold solution was to reject the tradition that Helen had gone to Troy with Paris and to give an account in which a phantom, an εἰδωλον, went in her place.

Development and variation of tales must have been a regular feature of all prose and verse story-telling in the Greek world: that is a necessary condition of the creation of the large and often contradictory body of material we know already to have been circulating by the classical period. Details that augmented current tales or that contradicted minor constituents of them were presumably unproblematic. But some types of material raised more difficult questions.<sup>23</sup> The central elements of the tale of Troy were also, I suggest, details that a poet would not casually subvert, since they were fundamental to a story that had itself gained a central place in Greek myths about their past. So in setting out to give a non-canonical version of Helen's part in the Trojan war Stesichorus thought it appropriate to offer his audience some good reasons for his departure from what was canonical – and did so in a way that we have no ground for supposing that he did in the cases of those other innovations with which he is later credited.<sup>24</sup>

---

fragments, S103.5 Davies [ξ]ανθά δ' Ἐλέναι πρ[ο].

<sup>22</sup> Fr. 210-219 Davies/Page.

<sup>23</sup> Such as theogonic poetry, which is why Hesiod has to make so strong a claim to authority in *Theogony* 26-32.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. *P.Oxy.* 2506 fr. 26 col. i 17-32 (= fr. 193 Davies/Davies) on Chamaeleon's claims.

I return, then, to Stesichorus. Some elements in his departure from the canonical story are not the subject of modern controversy. Our two earliest witnesses, Plato *Phaedrus* 243a and Isocrates *Helen* 64,<sup>25</sup> claim that Stesichorus composed τὴν καλουμένην Παλινωιδίαν because he was blinded; that he discovered the reason for this blindness to be his slander of Helen (Plato uses the term κακηγορίαν, •Isocrates says ἐβλασφήμησέ τι); and that after composing the *Palinode* he regained his sight. Either this story of blindness reached Plato, Isocrates and subsequent writers in a tradition about Stesichorus that grew up later to explain the *Palinode* and is worthless; or they drew it from the poem itself, a conclusion that is supported by the fact that their expressions are so similar that they seem to be using the same text. If, as I think, it came from the poem itself, what was its function in the poem?

Its main function in the poem was surely to explain why Stesichorus now wished to discard the canonical version to which he had earlier subscribed in his *Helen* (and presumably in his other Trojan poems). Stesichorus used the same story to undermine the traditional version and to authorise his own. What did Stesichorus present as his authority for such a change, and how did it cohere with his story of blindness?

Here the words of Isocrates are crucial. He says:

ὅτε μὲν γὰρ ἀρχόμενος τῆς ᾠδῆς ἐβλασφήμησέ τι  
περὶ αὐτῆς ἀνέστη τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν ἐστερημένος

For when beginning the song he uttered some slander about her he got up deprived of his sight

As I have already indicated briefly in print,<sup>26</sup> I understand the term ἀνέστη, “got up”, of waking and rising from sleep. There is no problem

---

<sup>25</sup> To be found printed under fr. 192 Davies = Ta24 and Ta25 Ercoles.

<sup>26</sup> Bowie (1993: 23-28).

about this sense of ἀνέστη. The problem is rather whether, in the absence of any hint that Stesichorus has been asleep, Isocrates might expect to convey his meaning by using this word to describe him “getting up”.<sup>27</sup> I think that he might. Certainly other interpretations of ἀνέστη are also problematic.<sup>28</sup> If, as Plato’s and Isocrates’ allusions to the poem imply, its main lines could be supposed to be well known, then Isocrates can suppose his reader will interpret ἀνέστη as getting up from sleep if that reader already knows that Stesichorus presented himself at some point in the story as asleep.

Do we have any evidence that he did so? One other detail in the surviving tradition suggests that indeed he did. The Suda entry on Stesichorus concludes with a reference to the Palinode:

φασὶ δὲ αὐτὸν γράψαντα ψόγον Ἑλένης τυφλωθῆναι,  
πάλιν δὲ γράψαντα Ἑλένης ἐγκώμιον ἐξ ὀνείρου τὴν Πα-  
λινωιδίαν ἀναβλέψαι

and they say that when he wrote a castigation of Helen he was blinded, and then when, on consequence of a dream, he wrote an encomium of Helen, the *Palinode*, he once again recovered his sight

Suda s.v. Stesichorus iv 433 Adler = TA 19 Davies = Tb2 Ercoles

Dreams imply sleep, and are in all periods of ancient Greek culture a regular vehicle for the transmission of divine commands to mortals. In another poem, the *Oresteia*, Stesichorus indeed exploited the predictive

---

<sup>27</sup> See LSJ s.v. B.2 e.g. Hesiod. *Works & Days*, 577 ὀρθοῦ ἀνιστάμενος. As rightly insisted by Sider (1989: 428 n.3) the verb can have this meaning only “When the context so indicates”: my proposal is that the context did indeed give clear indications which prepared audiences to give the verb this sense.

<sup>28</sup> For some see Davison (1968: 206-9).

capacities of a dream experienced by Clytemnestra (fr. 219 Davies/Page). When I last considered this problem I concluded that Stesichorus presented himself in the *Palinode* as having been visited by Helen herself in a dream, and as having been told by her that his account of her elopement with Paris was false.<sup>29</sup> In doing so I had overlooked two Latin testimonies, attributing Stesichorus' revision of his earlier story to admonition by an oracle from Apollo:

*Stesichorus . . . vituperationem Helenae scribens caecatus  
est et postea responso Apollinis laudem eius scripsit et oculorum  
aspectum recepit.*

Ps-Acro on Horace *Odes* 1.16 (i 71ff. Keller = i 62  
Havthal = Ta26(b) Ercoles)

*Stesichorum aiunt excaecatam esse, quod infam[is]a carmi-  
na in Helenam fecisset. deinde oraculo admonitum palinodiam fe-  
cisse, id est contrario carmine eam laudasse et lumina recepisse.*

Porphyrio on Horace *Epodes* 17.42 (i 535 Havthal = Ta26(a)  
Ercoles )

Despite the absence of this detail from any Greek text I now think it deserves to be taken seriously (this may be taken to be my *palinode*). If it is to be built into a reconstruction of the poem, I propose that Stesichorus said something like this:

---

<sup>29</sup> That what Stesichorus narrated in a “*persona narrative*” within the *Palinode* was an encounter with Helen herself is attractively argued for by Kelly (2007: 2-11) with many parallel cases of poets' encounters with a divinity drawn from archaic poetry. Ercole (2008: 169-0) argues that the existence of variant traditions on the blindness and dream demonstrates that they were not narrated in the *Palinode*, since its text could have been appealed to in order to refute contradictory versions: that presupposes a more widespread opportunity and inclination to consult a full text of the *Palinode* than I think should be credited.

“Homer and Hesiod told false tales about Helen, as I did once myself. I know that they are false because when I starting to compose this song that I am now singing (Isocrates’ ἀρχόμενος τῆς ᾠδῆς) and had embarked upon a repetition of the same false story,<sup>30</sup> I dreamed that I had gone blind, and had consulted the oracle of Apollo to find the reason and a cure for my blindness; and in the dream the oracle told me that I had been blinded for slandering Helen, that in truth only an εἶδωλον of Helen had gone to Troy, and that I would recover my sight only when I retracted my false story and instead told the true one. When I awoke I was indeed blind, so I began to compose this song you are now hearing, which tells the true story. Immediately I regained my sight - and as you can see I am no longer blind. Now the true story, as Apollo told me, is as follows . . . ”

Such a reconstruction is preferable to one that incorporates a dream and an oracle successively - e.g. that supposes Stesichorus to have said that he dreamt that he would be blind, and that he went on to say that he then in waking life went to an oracle of Apollo to find a reason. It is preferable because its detailed assertions remain entirely within the realm of the poet’s claimed dream experience, and so cannot be refuted by another party: the only data available to an audience are that (a) they had long known Stesichorus as a poet who was not blind and (b) at the time of the poem’s performance Stesichorus was also not blind. Stesichorus has so constructed his story that his ability to see at the time of the song’s performance appears to corroborate it.<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> For a persuasive argument that the οὐτος of the phrase λόγος οὐτος “indicates that the *logos* it describes is vividly present before the audience, that it has just been narrated for them” see Beecroft (2006: 51).

<sup>31</sup> It might be right rather to give credence to the stories that appear in Conon (*FGIHL* 26 F1 = Photius *Bibliotheca* 186, 18 = TA 41 Davies = Ta28(a) Ercoles) and Pausanias 3.19.11 (= TA 40 Davies = Ta28(b) Ercoles) but I am inclined to accept Davison’s argument against doing so, i.e. that they diverge too much from each other to be taken as drawing on a single tradition: Davison (1968: 203-4).

### One *Palinode* or two?

I turn now to another feature of the poem's opening. I have used the singular term 'the *Palinode*' because the evidence seems to me to point firmly in the direction of the existence of one such poem, not of two. But since the publication of *P.Oxy.* 2506, 26 col. i = Stesichorus fr. 193 Davies/Page most scholars have held that there were two *Palinodes*. It seems to me most unlikely that Stesichorus could expect to get away twice with a *coup de théâtre* in which he retracted a central and canonical story and put forward an alternative, especially if, as I have suggested, he offered divine authority for the alternative version he first presented. But what is the evidence?

On the one side a dozen ancient testimonies, starting with Plato and Isocrates and ending with the *Suda*, refer consistently in the singular to *the Palinode*. On the other side the first century mythographer Conon calls Stesichorus' composition "hymns to Helen" (ὑμνους Ἑλένης),<sup>32</sup> and the Christian writers Hippolytus and Irenaeus both refer to *Palinodes* in the plural.<sup>33</sup> Irenaeus' term ὑμνησεν however may point to his use of Conon, and Conon's plural ὑμνους is much less precise and persuasive than Irenaeus' τὰς παλινωιδίας. If we had not recovered the papyrus we should not, I think, have seen good reason to postulate the existence of two *Palinodes*.

How, then, does the papyrus change our view? I print the text below (a photograph of the papyrus can be found in Appendix 1):

•μέμ•  
φεται τὸν Ὅμηρο[ν ὅτι Ἑ  
λένην ἐποίησεν ἐν Τίροισι

---

<sup>32</sup> Conon *FGrH* 26 F1 = Photius *Bibliotheca* 186, 18 = TA 41 Davies

<sup>33</sup> Irenaeus, *contra haereses*, 1.23.2 writes: αὐθις δὲ μεταμεληθέντος αὐτοῦ, καὶ γράψαντος τὰς παλινωιδίας ἐν αἷς ὑμνησεν αὐτήν, ἀναβλέψαι. •Cf. Hippolytus. *contra haereses*, 6.19.3.

καὶ οὐ τὸ εἶδωλον αὐτῆ[ς, ἔν  
τε τ[ῆι] ἑτέραι τὸν Ἡσίοδ[ον  
μέμ[φει]ται. διττά<sup>1</sup> γάρ εσ<sup>1</sup> πα  
λινωιδ[.]<sup>δ</sup>λλαττουσαι, καὶ ἔ  
••••ή μὲν ἀρχή••δεῦρ' αὐ  
τε θεὰ φιλόμολπε, τῆς δέ•  
χρυσόπτερε παρθένε, ὡς  
ἀνέγραφε Χαμαιλέων

P.Oxy. 2506 fr. 26. col. 1 = fr. 193 Davies/Page

Line 7: originally διτταγαρεστι , then corrected to διτταιγα-  
ρεισι

Line 8: <ιαι δια> suppl. Lobel

Line 9: <τ>ῆ<ς> μὲν (ῆ)•ἀρχή•Fraenkel, West, Davies

As can be seen from the text, at the point where our fragment begins the commentator is saying that somebody, who must be Stesichorus, “blames Homer because his poem has Helen in Troy and not her *eidolon*, and in the other he blames Hesiod”. So far so good, although we are not told for what Hesiod was blamed. We then have a sentence which our copyist began to write as διτταγαρεστι, then corrected to διτταιγαρεισι, and in the end wrote it as διτταιγαρεισιπαλινωιδ[.]<sup>δ</sup>λλαττουσαι. Between παλινωιδ•and λλαττουσαι there is a gap of about one letter, lost because of damage to the papyrus, and above it to the right has been written <sup>δ</sup>•. What stood in the exemplar at that point we can only guess. Lobel, the first editor of the papyrus, guessed <ιαι δια>, but whatever the <sup>δ</sup>•means it cannot mean as much as that. Does it mean δι? Or is it an abbreviation for δεῖται•“something is missing”? Certainly the supplement δια, giving the restoration διαλλάττουσαι, is convincing, since difference or divergence is what the following sentence goes on to ascribe.

But to what does the sentence ascribe difference or divergence? Lobel's further supplement ιαι makes the ancient commentator ascribe diver-

gence to *palinodes* (in the plural), and allows us to assume that the noun qualified by the dative term ἑτέρω (line 6) had been παλινωιδία, and that the noun παλινωιδία had stood earlier in the commentary. Hence the currently accepted interpretation:

“in one *Palinode* he (sc. Stesichorus) blames Homer because his poem had Helen in Troy and not her εἶδωλον, in the other (sc. *Palinode*) he blames Hesiod. For there are two divergent *Palinodes*, and of the one the beginning is δεῦρ’ αὐτε θεὰ φιλόμολπε, and of the other χρυσόπτερε παρθένε.”

This interpretation, however, requires the papyrus’ words ἡ μὲν ἀρχή to be emended to τ<η>ς μὲν ἀρχή. Such an emendation, however, ought not to be performed lightly. Perhaps it is justified by the balancing expression τῆς δέ, but emendation it is. Before emending we should see what would follow from retention of the papyrus text ἡ μὲν ἀρχή. If we do this, we should conclude that what the commentator has hitherto been discussing are not *Palinodes* but •••••; ‘beginnings’ or ‘openings’, and that he has been saying

“in one beginning (ἀρχή) Stesichorus blamed Homer because his poem had Helen in Troy and not her εἶδωλον, in the other (beginning) he blames Hesiod. For there is a pair of divergent beginnings of the *Palinode*, and the one beginning is δεῦρ’ αὐτε θεὰ φιλόμολπε, and of the other (sc. the words are) χρυσόπτερε παρθένε.”

If that is the sense, what stood in the exemplar where the copyist made a mistake was either ιας δια giving διτταὶ γὰρ εἰσι Παλινωιδίας διαλλάττουσαι, (understand ἀρχαί from earlier in the sentence), or ια-σαρχαίδια, giving διτταὶ γὰρ εἰσι Παλινωιδίας ἀρχαὶ διαλλάττουσαι. The shorter is no more probable than the longer supplement, because we do not know how far the copyist’s eye jumped when he was writing our text. In either case the outcome is the same. The commentator was discuss-



ing divergent openings to 'the *Palinode*'.<sup>34</sup>

That a poem should have two opening sections, each beginning, it seems, with an invocation of a Muse, was of course unusual. This was no doubt why Aelius Aristides adduced it as an analogy for his own practice in the speech addressed "To those who blamed him for not declaiming" (*Oration* 33 Keil). Here Aristides has two prefatory sections, 33.1-2 and 33.3-6, and moves from the first to the second with the remark

μέτειμι δ' ἐφ' ἕτερον προοίμιον κατὰ  
Στησίχορον

"And I shall move over to another opening, in the manner of Stesichorus"

Aristides 33.2 Keil = Stesichorus fr. 241 Davies/Page

Aristides is not quoting Stesichorus (as has often been assumed):<sup>35</sup> he is alluding to a literary trope that his audience will recognise. The poem of Stesichorus that Aristides' audiences and readers are most likely to have known is the *Palinode*, to which Aristides alludes six times elsewhere,<sup>36</sup> one of these occasions being a speech which is itself offered as a 'Palinode' (20 Keil). Aristides' rhetorical technical term προοίμιον means just the same as the commentator's non-technical term ἀρχή.

---

<sup>34</sup> De Martino (1980) saw that some of our evidence (e.g. Aristides 33.3 Keil, discussed below) pointed to two poems, but failed to see that the papyrus did not in fact support the idea of two *Palinodes*, and proposed a complicated four-part structure which missed the connection.

<sup>35</sup> E.g. recently by Kelly (2007: 6) who sees in it support for his proposal of "two hymnodic segments". Neither as it stands, nor if preceded (as originally suggested by Bergk) by fr. 257 Davies/Page μᾶτα εἰπών, does the metre (in the latter case fancied by Davison (1968: 218 n.1) to be an "iambic trimeter acatalectic which has lost its first two syllables") find any support from the metres of secure fragments of Stesichorus.

<sup>36</sup> *Orations* 1.128, 166; 2.234; 3.557; 4.8 Lenz-Behr; 20.3 Keil. See further Bowie (2008).

That the two phrases quoted by the papyrus commentator belong not to two different poems but to the same poem receives some support from metre. They seem to be in the same metre (though admittedly they offer very short samples), and to be in the same metre as the first and third of the lines quoted by Plato (though of course we cannot be sure that the words that followed would maintain this correspondence). The metrical units with which other poems of Stesichorus opened, where we know them, were all different, except for the opening units of the *Geryoneis* and the fragments quoted by the commentator, and even here there is a difference in Stesichorus' practice relating to treatment of the equivalence between a *longum* and two *brevia*: in the *Geryoneis* fragments the poet has a preference for opening with double short (UU) and only twice opens instead with a single long.<sup>37</sup> By contrast all four of our lines of *Palinode* which have the form – – UU – UU – x open with a single long. Since in most known cases we have a different metre for each of our poems, and since the opening of the *Geryoneis* and the lines from the *Palinode* or *Palinodes*, though formally similar, differ in their choice between opening with UU and opening with a single long, this seems to me to make some case for supposing that the two openings quoted by the papyrus come from the same poem as each other, and to increase the chances that they come from the same poem as the lines quoted by Plato.

Before leaving the text of the commentary I must anticipate a possible objection to my supplement. It might be argued that we would expect not *παλινωιδίας* but *τῆς•παλινωιδίας*, and that the supplement *παλινωιδίας* (genitive) is not therefore admissible. This does not seem to me to be so: a preliminary investigation of the use of the article in citation of titles suggests that at all periods, from the late fifth century BC onwards, titles of various sorts are cited both with and without the article: see Appendix 3.

---

<sup>37</sup> *καί τ* [ , S11.13: *νικα*] , S.12.4. See Haslam 1974 and 1978, and Appendix 2.

## **Conclusions**

In the first part of this paper I argued that our testimony strongly supports the view that, at least on their first occasion of performance, the long poems of Stesichorus were sung by a dancing chorus, accompanied by their poet and trainer Stesichorus on the cithara. In the second part I argued that the untraditional version of the story of Helen offered in the *Palinode* was authorised by a narrative early in the poem in which Stesichorus claimed that he had dreamed he was blind, and that in the dream had had a divine message predicting that if he persisted with the traditional version, on which he had already embarked, he would continue to be blind, but that, if he retracted it and had his poem tell what he now discovered to be the truth, he would recover his sight. In the third part of this paper I argue that only one such *Palinode* was known in antiquity, and that we should not abandon the notion of a single *Palinode* on the basis of questionable supplements in a papyrus commentary.

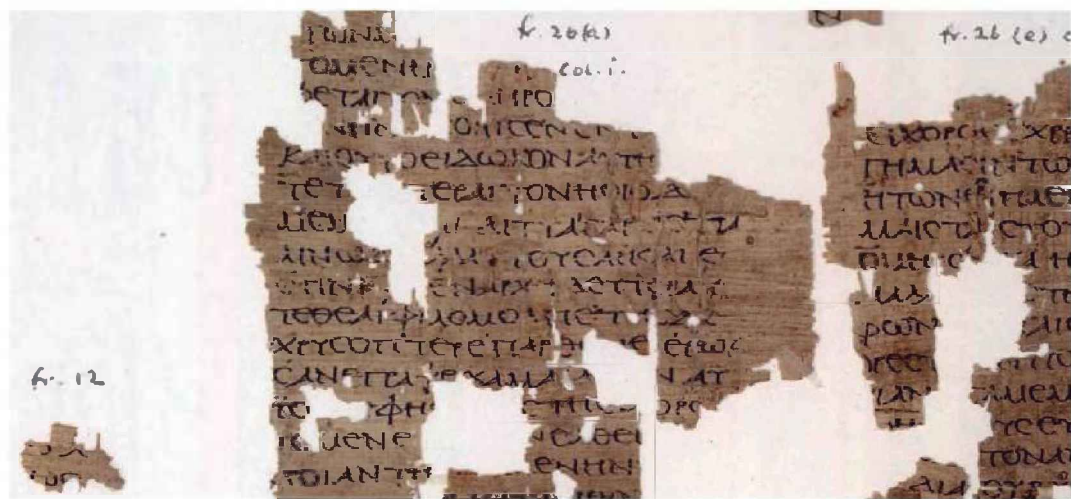
Whether there was one *Palinode*, however, or there were two, it is striking that, unlike such choral poetry as Alcman's first *Partheneion*, but like many *epinicia* by Pindar and Bacchylides, the poem performed by Stesichorus' singers presented so much 'biographic' detail apparently more appropriate to a work sung by the poet himself. I do not see the presence of such detail as an argument against choral performance. It is clear that in the Hellenistic editions of Alcman too there were passages that either were or could be construed as being related to the life of the poet, though in this case it is of course theoretically possible that these were from poems composed primarily for monodic performance.<sup>38</sup> In fifth-century Athens the chorus of a comedy, speaking admittedly through the voice of its *coryphaeus*, could readily adopt the *persona* of the poet in the *parabasis*, as

---

<sup>38</sup> E.g. fr. 16 Davies/Page taken together with some of the ancient scholarship reflected in fr. 13 Davies/Page. It is also tempting to adduce fr. 26 Davies/Page, οὐ μὲν ἔτι παρσηνικαὶ μελιγάρυες ἰαρόφρονες . . . but here the hexameter metre seems to me to point not to a choral performance but to a hymn sung by the poet himself, like the *Homeric hymn to Apollo*, with the poet in Sparta standing in the same relation to a chorus which on other occasions he trained as did the poet of that hymn to the Delian girls whom he compliments.

for example in the revised version of *Clouds* 524-84. Our ignorance of the generic expectations concerning performances of the long poems of Stesichorus and their like makes it very unwise to insist that choral singing of the claimed experience of their poet would strike their first audiences as unusual.

### Appendix 1



### Appendix 2. The metre of known opening lines of *strophai* and *antistrophai* of Stesichorus' poems

<i>Palinode</i> (a)	-- UU - UU - x
<i>Palinode</i> (b)	-- UU - UU or -- UU - U -
<i>Geryoneis</i>	— UU - UU - UU --
<i>Iliou Persis</i>	- UU - UU - UU - UU -
<i>Oresteia</i>	- UU - UU - x - UU - UU -

<i>Suotherai</i>	? - - - υ υ - υ υ - -
Lille Stesichorus	- υ υ - υ υ - υ υ - υ υ - υ υ - x

### Appendix 3. The use of the article in citations.

#### (a) Fifth-century practice

ἐν Ἰλιάδι	Herodotus. 2.116.2, 117
ἐν Ὀδυσσεΐῃ	Herodotus. 2.116.4, 4.29
ἐκ τῆς Λυκουργείας	Aristophanes. <i>Theismophoriazousai</i> , 135
τὴν καινὴν Ἑλένην nb καινήν)	Aristophanes. <i>Theismophoriazousai</i> , 850 (but nb καινήν)
τοὺς ἑπτ' ἐπὶ Θήβας	Aristophanes. <i>Frogs</i> 1021
Πέρσας	Aristophanes. <i>Frogs</i> 1026

*Didascaliae* regularly write titles without the article, as does the catalogue of Aeschylus' plays in manuscripts M and V, whereas the *Life of Aeschylus* has ἐν•τῇ Νιόβῃ, ἐν τοῖς Ἑκτοροῦς Λύτροις (6).

#### (b) Later citations of works of Stesichorus:

##### *Palinode*

τὴν καλουμένην Παλινωιδίαν NB καλουμένην)	Plato, Isocrates (but NB καλουμένην)
ἄιδων ἐς τὴν Ἑλένην ἐναντίον τῷ προτέρῳ λόγῳ Παλινωιδίαν•αὐτὸν ἐκάλεσεν	Philostratus. <i>On Apollonius</i> 6.11
τὰς παλινωιδίας ἐν αἷς ὕμνησεν αὐτὴν	Irenaeus. <i>adversus</i> <i>haeres.</i> 1 fr.12

##### *Other works*

ἐν τοῖς ἐπὶ Πελῖαι Ἀθλοῖς  
and *Etymologicum Magnum* 544.54  
ἐν τοῖς Ἀθλοῖς ἐπιγραφόμενοις  
ἐν Γηρουονήϊδι  
ἐν τῇ Γηρουονήϊδι  
ius Rhodius. 1.211  
ἐν Ἑλένηι  
10.451D  
ἐκ τοῦ πρώτου Στησιχίου Ἑλένης  
ocriti. 18, p.331 Wendel  
ἐν Εὐρωπείαι  
ides. *Phoenissae*, 670 (i 318 Schwartz)  
ἐν Ἰλίου Πέροσιδι  
con. i 165 Dindorf  
ἐν Ἰλίου Πέροσιδι  
27.2  
ἐν Νόστοις  
ἐκ τῆς Ὀρεστείας  
phanes. *Pax*, 797ff, p.125 Holwerda  
ἐν Ὀρεστείας β'  
1087 ii 47 (=Herodian)  
ἐν δευτέρῳ Ὀρεστείας  
sius Thrax. 6.  
ἐν Ὀρεστείαι  
*de pietate*, N 248 III  
ἐν τῇ Σκύλληι  
ius Rhodius 4.825-831  
ἐν Συοθήραις

*Etymologicum Genuinum B*

Athenaeus. 4.172D  
Pausanias. 8.3.2  
*Scholion* on Apollon-  
Athenaeus 3.81D,  
*Argumentum* The-  
*Scholion* on Eurip-  
Harpocration. *lexi-*  
Pausanias. 10.26.1,  
Pausanias. 10.26.1  
*Scholion* on Aristo-  
Habron *ap. P.Oxy.*  
*Scholion* on Diony-  
Philodemus.  
*Scholion* on Apollon-  
Athenaeus. 3.95D

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Austin, N. (1974) *Helen of Troy and her shameless phantom*, Cornell.
- Beecroft, A.J. (2006) "Stesichorus' *Palinode* and the Revenge of the Epichoric", *TAPA* 136: 47-69
- Bowie, E.L. (1993) "Lies, fiction and slander in Early Greek poetry", in C.Gill and T.P.Wiseman (edd.) *Lies and fiction in the ancient world*, Exeter: 1-37
- Bowie, E.L. (2008) "Aristides and early Greek lyric, elegiac and iambic poetry", in W.V.Harris and Brooke Holmes (edd.), *Aelius Aristides between Greece, Rome and the Gods. CSCT 33*, Leiden: 9-29
- Burnett, A.P. (1988) "Jocasta in the West: the Lille Stesichorus", *CA* 7.2: 107-154
- Cingano, E. (1993) "Indicazioni de esecuzione corale in Stesicoro", in R.Pretagostini (ed.) *Tradizione e innovazione nella cultura greca da Omero all'età ellenistica (Festschrift Gentili)*, Roma: vol. i. 347-361
- Cingano, E. (2003) "Entre skolon et enkomion: réflexions sur le 'genre' et la performance de la lyrique chorale grecque", in J. Jouanna and J. Leclant (edd.) *La poésie grecque antique*, Paris: 17-45.
- Davies, M. (1988) "Monody, choral lyric and the tyranny of the handbook", *CQ* 38: 52-64.
- Davison, J.A. (1968) "Stesichorus and Helen" in *From Archilochus to Pindar*, London: 196-225.
- Ercoles, M. (2008). *Stesicoro: testimonianze. Edizione critica, traduzione, e commento*. [http://amsdottorato.cib.unibo.it/826/1/Tesi\\_Ercoles\\_Marco.pdf](http://amsdottorato.cib.unibo.it/826/1/Tesi_Ercoles_Marco.pdf) (Unpublished Bologna doctoral thesis)
- Fredouille, J.-C. (1997) (ed., with others) *Titres et articulations du texte dans les oeuvres antiques. Actes du Colloque International de Chantilly, 13-15 décembre 1994*.
- Fruyt, M. (1997) "Sémantique et syntaxe des titres en latin", in Fredouille et al.(edd.): 9-34.
- Haslam, M.W. (1974) "Stesichorean metre", *QUCC* 17: 7-57.

- Haslam, M.W. (1978) "Versification of the new Stesichorus", *GRBS* 19: 29-57.
- Kelly, A. (2007) "Stesikhoros and Helen", *Museum Helveticum* 64: 1-21.
- Krummen, E. (2009) "Alcman, Stesichorus and Ibycus" in Budelmann, F. (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Lyric*, Cambridge: 189-203
- De Martino, F. (1980) "Un proemio secondo e le due palinodie di Stesicoro", *Belfagor* 35: 73-6.
- Parker, L.P.E. (1996) "Greek Metre (4)" in *Oxford Classical Dictionary*<sup>3</sup>, Oxford.
- Revermann, M. (2006) "The competence of theatre audiences in fifth- and fourth-century Athens", *JHS* 126: 99-124.
- Schade, G. (2004) *Stesichoros: Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 2359, 2386, 2619, 2803. Mnemosyne Suppl. 237*, Leiden and Boston.
- Sider, D. (1989) "The Blinding of Stesichorus", *Hermes* 117: 423-31 (reprinted in G. Nagy (ed.), *Greek Literature, v. 3, Greek literature in the Archaic period: The emergence of authorship* (London and NY 2001) 21-29
- Smotricz A. (1965) "Papirus z Oksyrynchos nr 2506: I Palinodia Stezychora", *Maeander* 20: 445-50
- West, M.L. (1971) "Stesichorus", *CQ* 21: 302-314.
- Willi, A. (2008) *Sikelismos. Sprache, Literatur und Gesellschaft im griechischen Sizilien (8.-5. Jh. v. Chr.)*. *Bibliotheca Helvetica Romana XXIX*, Basel.

### **Texts and commentaries**

- Campbell, D.A. (1991) *Greek lyric. Vol. 3. Stesichorus, Ibycus, Simonides and others*. Cambridge Mass & London.
- Dale, A.M. (1967) *Euripides; Helen*, Oxford.
- Davies, M. (1982) *Poetarum Melicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*. Oxford
- Fraenkel, E.D.M. (1957) *Aeschylus; Agamemnon*, 3 vols, Oxford
- Page, D.L. (1960) *Poetae Melici Graeci*. Oxford