Alcman, Partheneion

There is such a thing as the vengeance of the gods:
that one is blessed who devoutly
weaves to the end the web of his day
unweeping. And so I sing
of the light of Agido: I see her
like the sun, which Agido summons to shine on us
as our witness; but our illustrious choir leader
by no means allows me

either to praise or to blame her; for she herself
looks pre-eminent, just as if one
were to set a horse among grazing herds,
a sturdy, thunderous-hoofed prize winner,
one of those seen in winged dreams.

Don't you see? This race horse
is Enetic; but the hair
of my cousin
Hagesichora has the bloom
of undefiled gold.
And that silver face of hers!
But why am I talking to you with full clarity?
Here she is: Hagesichora!
And the second in beauty, Agido,
will run like a Colaxaean horse next to an Ibenian;
for these doves are fighting for us
who are bringing our sacred offering to Orthria,
in the ambrosial night, rising up like the star Sirius.

For, to reciprocate, the abundance of purple
is not sufficient,
nor is the intricate snake
of solid gold, nor the Lydian headband,
a delight for dark-eyed girls,
nor Nanno's hair,
not even the godlike Areta,
nor Thylakis and Cleësithera . .

ἔστι τις σιῶν τίσις·
ὁ δ᾽ ὄλβιος, ὅστις εὔφρων
ἀμέραν [δι]απλέκει
ἄκλαυτος· ἐγὼν δ᾽ ἀείδω
40 Ἀγιδῶς τὸ φῶς· ὁρῶ
Ϝ᾽ ὥτ᾽ ἄλιον, ὅνπερ ἁμιν
Ἀγιδὼ μαρτύρεται
φαίνην· ἐμὲ δ᾽ οὔτ᾽ ἐπαινῆν

οὔτε μωμήσθαι νιν ἁ κλεννὰ χοραγὸς
45 οὐδ᾽ ἁμῶς ἐῆι· δοκεῖ γὰρ ἤμεν αὔτα
ἐκπρεπὴς τὼς ὥπερ αἴτις
ἐν βοτοῖς στάσειεν ἵππον
παγὸν ἀεθλοφόρον καναχάποδα
τῶν ὑποπετριδίων ὀνείρων·

50 ἦ οὐχ ὁρῆις; ὁ μὲν κέλης
Ἐνετικός· ἁ δὲ χαίτα
τᾶς ἐμᾶς ἀνεψιᾶς
Ἀγησιχόρας ἐπανθεῖ
χρυσὸς [ὡ]ς ἀκήρατος·
55 τό τ᾽ ἀργύριον πρόσωπον,
διαφάδαν τί τοι λέγω;
Ἀγησιχόρα μὲν αὔτα·
ἁ δὲ δευτέρα πεδ᾽ Ἀγιδὼ τὸ Ϝεῖδος
ἵππος Ἰβηνῶι Κολαξαῖος δραμήται
60 ταὶ Πεληάδες γὰρ ἁμιν
ὀρθρίαι φᾶρος φεροίσαις
νύκτα δι᾽ ἀμβροσίαν ἅτε σήριον
ἄστρον ἀυηρομέναι μάχονται·

οὔτε γάρ τι πορφύρας
65 τόσσος κόρος ὥστ᾽ ἀμύναι,
οὔτε ποικίλος δράκων
παγχρύσιος, οὐδὲ μίτρα
Λυδία, νεανίδων
ἰανογ[λ]εφάρων ἄγαλμα,
70 οὐδὲ ταὶ Ναννῶς κόμαι,
ἀλλ᾽ οὐ[δ]᾽ Ἀρέτα σιειδής,
οὐδὲ Σύλακίς τε καὶ Κλεησισήρα . . .

GETTING THE WORLD TO MATCH THE WORDS:
VIEWING AS ΘΕΩΡΕΙΝ

Through its dense deictic network, the song implies that both the subjects and objects of viewing are actually part of the extra-verbal perform-ance context. Yet there still remains an open question: what is the essential role of the second-person addressee who appears twice (50 and 56) in the part of the poem under discussion? Both times this addressee is summoned to confirm the chorus's description of the dramatic acts and agents by looking at them. The second-person listener, then, seems to be assigned the role of an eyewitness who is supposed to endorse the truth or falsity of the speaker's descriptions. In J. R. Searle's terminology, this would mean that the chorus's speech-acts describing the current dramatic action qualify as representatives, that is, they commit the chorus to the truth of its expressed propositions (Searle 1976.10–11). Yet, as I intend to show, precisely because deictics are always closely related to metaphor, the chorus's speech-acts, although they stress their own representative quality, in fact, belong to a different category.

Another important component of the pragmatics of the perform-ance can further clarify the non-representative quality of the chorus's speech-acts: time deixis. In the surviving text, there exist two signs of time: a) in lines 40–43, Agido is summoning the sun to appear (ὁρῶ / ϝ᾽ ὥτ᾽ ἄλιον, ὅνπερ ἇμιν / ᾿Αγιδὼ μαρτύρεται / φαίνην); and b) in line 62, the ambrosial night indicates the time of the chorus's ritual action. If both cases are taken as deictically signaling the actual time of the performance, then performance-time must be located before sunrise. As anybody who has experienced a sunrise knows, forms begin to be vaguely perceivable in this transitional moment from complete darkness to half light. Darker masses arise from the depths of the morning twilight, slowly enabling a faint impression of per-spective. Paradoxically, then, the chorus is summoning the second-person addressee to witness what it claims is sharply clear and lucidly transparent (see 50 and 56), but what, under these conditions of semi-darkness, must lack both qualities.

Thus the chorus's speech-acts, despite their descriptive surface, are not really descriptive, and this further supports our understanding of the interaction between deixis and metaphor in the *Partheneion*. Another for-mulation by Searle turns out to match our case: the chorus's speech-acts do not make the words match the world; quite the opposite, they match the world to the words (Searle 1976.3–4 and 10–11). But, if this is true, then

these speech-acts are not really representatives. They clearly qualify as requests, and they belong to the class of pure directives (Searle 1976.11). By their illocutionary force, these directives involve the second person in the peculiar act of looking at something and seeing not *it* but rather through, above, and beyond it.

I therefore suggest that the call for the addressee to be an eyewitness should be understood as a demand for a creative and knowledgeable way of viewing, that is, nothing less than an active participation in the act of θεωρεῖν. By the term θεωρεῖν, I refer to the activity of intentional, intensive, and thus perceptive viewing, ultimately equivalent to the activity of contemplating. Among other contexts where the act of θεωρεῖν applies in classical Greek, that of attending various kinds of performances involving sight-contact with the act performed seems primary.[17] Employing this principal use of the term—obviously relevant to our case, since we are dealing with the way spectators are summoned to look at the performance unfolding before them—I will further trace its application in two Aristotelian passages important for the two major issues raised here. The first passage discusses the function of metaphor, the second the function of mimesis.

In his *Poetics,* Aristotle claims that successful metaphor-making is identical to the act of perceptively viewing (θεωρεῖν*)* the similar (1459a6–8):

> μόνον γὰρ τοῦτο οὔτε παρ᾽ ἄλλου ἔστι λαβεῖν εὐφυΐας
> τε σημεῖόν ἐστι· τὸ γὰρ εὖ μεταφέρειν τὸ τὸ ὅμοιον
> θεωρεῖν ἐστιν.

> This alone is something that cannot be transmitted by
> somebody else and is an indication of natural talent; for

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17 Unlike the nouns θεωρία and, especially, θεωρός that, in classical Greek and in the broader context of attending rituals, seem to apply mainly to cultural practices including perceptive viewing outside the boundaries of one's own polis, the verb θεωρεῖν is employed as perceptive viewing in general, activated in a variety of ways. See, for instance, Plato's *Laws* 657d, 772a, *Republic* 327a1–3 in relation to 327b1, *Republic* 606b1, *Lysis* 206e5–9. On the subtle semantic differentiation in the use of the nouns θεωρία/θεωρός, on the one hand, and the verb θεωρεῖν, on the other, see also Nightingale (forthcoming) ch. 1 n. 4. For θεωρία as a cultural practice, see Rutherford 1998.131–35 and, in particular, 2000.133–46, where he also discusses its relation to contemplation. θεωρία as a cultural practice eventually associated with the concept of philosophic contemplation is discussed *in extenso* by Nightingale 2001.23–58 as well as in her forthcoming book on the same topic.

successful metaphor-making is equivalent to the percep-
tion of the similar.[18]

Although Aristotle does not explicitly use the term θεωρεῖν in his
discussion of metaphor in the *Rhetoric*, the concept is implicit in his
analysis. What metaphors do, he suggests, is to make people understand and
learn (μανθάνειν). This is achieved by the fact that the receiver enters the
process of identifying *this* as *that* (ὡς τοῦτο ἐκεῖνο).[19] Thus the Aristotelian
θεωρεῖν of the *Poetics* seems to be taken up in the *Rhetoric* as a cognitive
process, motivated by metaphors, that enables associations and identifications
to be made between apparently dissimilar entities. Furthermore, pleasure is
clearly the result of this essentially cognitive process.

Interestingly, the analysis of the cognitive aspect of mimesis in the
Poetics, although aimed at the understanding of dramatic mimesis, focuses
on a different art, the art of painting. Insofar as painting involves sight, this
discussion is relevant to the central issue discussed in this paper. According
to Aristotle, the viewer's response to the art of painting eventually clarifies
the function of mimesis in general, including dramatic mimesis (*Poetics*
1448b10–17):[20]

> ἃ γὰρ λυπηρῶς ὁρῶμεν, τούτων τὰς εἰκόνας τὰς μάλιστα
> ἠκριβωμένας χαίρομεν θεωροῦντες, οἷον θηρίων τε
> μορφὰς τῶν ἀτιμοτάτων καὶ νεκρῶν. αἴτιον δὲ καὶ
> τούτου, ὅτι μανθάνειν οὐ μόνον τοῖς φιλοσόφοις ἥδιστον
> ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ὁμοίως, ἀλλ᾽ ἐπὶ βραχὺ κοιν-
> ωνοῦσιν αὐτοῦ. διὰ γὰρ τοῦτο χαίρουσι τὰς εἰκόνας
> ὁρῶντες, ὅτι συμβαίνει θεωροῦντας μανθάνειν καὶ
> συλλογίζεσθαι τί ἕκαστον, οἷον ὅτι οὗτος ἐκεῖνος.

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18 The translations of the passages from the *Poetics* are mine. On this passage, see McCall
    1969.24–56, esp. 39– 53, Dupont-Roc and Lallot 1980.363–65, Halliwell 1986.89–92,
    1987.162.

19 See Aristotle *Rhetoric* 3.10.1410b10–20. In this Aristotelian passage, the process of
    identification of *this* with *that* (ὡς τοῦτο ἐκεῖνο) is indirectly attributed to metaphor, in
    opposition to its absence in the realm of similes. On the cognitive aspect of metaphors
    according to Aristotle, see Laks 1994.283–305, esp. 296–99 and 303–04. A detailed
    analysis of the various issues raised in this much discussed passage exceeds the aims of the
    present reading. The same expression ὅτι τοῦτο ἐκεῖνο is used in the *Rhetoric* 1.11.1371b4–
    10 in the broader context of cognition through and by mimesis.

20 For musical mimesis as part of an essentially visual system of εἰκόνες, see Plato *Laws*
    669a–c.

> Of those things we look at with pain, the most accurate images cause us delight when we contemplate them, such as figures of the most base animals or of corpses. The reason for this also is that learning is most pleasant not only for philosophers, but for others likewise—except that they take part in it briefly. It is for this reason that people delight in looking at images, because it happens that, by contemplating, they learn and they infer about what each one is, namely that this person represents that person.

This passage contains two successive formulations regarding the acts of ὁρᾶν and θεωρεῖν. In the first (1448b10–11), the actual, "real" object is assigned to sight (ἃ γὰρ λυπηρῶς ὀρῶμεν), whereas the εἰκών of this very object, that is, its painted representation, is related to the act of θεωρεῖν (τούτων τὰς εἰκόνας τὰς μάλιστα ἠκριβωμένας χαίρομεν θεωροῦντες). In the second formulation (1448b15–17), ὁρᾶν is the medium through which θεωρεῖν gets accomplished. In both cases, ὁρᾶν and θεωρεῖν are interconnected: the first is the primary activation of the sense of sight, while the second is the conscious process of thoroughly understanding the object seen.[21] Thus only through the second act, that of θεωρεῖν, does the cognitive aspect of mimesis become possible, by enabling the association and identification of *this* person as *that* person.

In metaphor, then, as in mimesis, it is the complex act of θεωρεῖν that is activated, mainly in the process of identifying *this* as *that*. In the case of mimesis, *this* depicts the representing medium, while *that* the represented one;[22] in the case of metaphor, *this* is the vehicle, while *that* is the tenor (Richards 1965, esp.118–33). In both cases, the spectator or listener is in direct, actual, contact with *this*; *that* is what lies under and beyond the palpable reality of a performance or a figure of speech. In other words, *that* is subject to the efficiency of the receiver's response and, while actually absent, has to be cognitively recalled. Yet *this*, although actually present, is, in fact, unfamiliar. The process of learning through the act of θεωρεῖν

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21 On this distinction, see, for instance, Belfiore 1992.66–70, esp. 67.

22 On this interpretation of the Aristotelian *this* and *that,* see Nagy's illuminating approach in Nagy 1990b.44; also Nagy 1989.47–48. See also Sifakis' 1986 analysis, esp. 217–18 and Dupont-Roc and Lallot 1980.164–65. For an extensive analysis of these and other relevant Aristotelian passages, see Halliwell 2002.177–93.

derives from the identification of the unfamiliar *this* to the familiar *that*, which has to be eventually evoked.

Aristotle's choice of the terms *this* and *that*, deictics par excellence, allows us to use his formulation in order to read Alcman's *Partheneion* as an initiation into the art of creatively seeing, that is, the art of θεωρεῖν. While the process in Alcman will turn out to be the inverse of the one outlined by Aristotle, both archaic poet and classical philosopher rely on the way in which viewers construct equivalences between a *this* and a *that*.

For instance, in both the chorus's deictic language and in Aristotle's terminology, Hagesichora can be described as *this*—the real woman present in front of the spectators. In Alcman's poem, however, Hagesichora signifies, or represents, *herself*, the real leader of the actual chorus, a role that even her name within this performance declares.[23] The identification of visible woman and visible function is asserted when the chorus says Ἁγησιχόρα μὲν αὕτα, thus pointing out both the woman and her identity as a choregos, the latter, by definition, a role made possible and meaningful only through actual performance.

What ensues is more intriguing. Due to her multiple metamorphoses through metaphor, the emphatically present, demonstrable, and familiar Hagesichora becomes at the same time defamiliarized as somehow absent and miraculous. In this connection, it is worth noticing that some of the metaphors describing the two agents persistently defamiliarize the *hic* of the performance, of which Hagesichora and Agido are a substantial part, by leading the audience's minds towards a distant and unfamiliar *illic*. Not accidentally, for the Spartan audience all three adjectives attributed to the horses mentioned by the chorus are place names of exotic origin: Enetic, Ibenian, Colaxaean. Thus both agents are momentarily turned not just into running horses but into exquisite and legendary creatures.[24]

Through the transformative power of the chorus's speech, then, these agents can be seen in terms of the Aristotelian *this* and *that*. Yet whereas in Aristotle *this* is a present, unfamiliar object ultimately understood and appreciated by means of its association with an absent yet familiar

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23 On this see Calame 1977.46–47, Nagy 1990b.347–48. See also note 25.

24 On the origin, reputation, and exceptional competence of Colaxaean and Enetic horses, see the scrupulous analysis by Devereux 1965.176–84 and 1966.129–34. It is worth noticing that, in this poem, all place names seem to have a defamiliarizing effect in relation to the familiar *hic*. For instance, see the reference to the river Xanthus (v. 100) in the final depiction of the singing swan as a metaphor for Hagesichora's singing voice.

that, in Alcman the opposite occurs. Each time the chorus uses an indexical expression, they focus on the present, the *familiar* world of *this*; each time they employ a metaphor, they refer to an alternative, imaginary, unattainable, and thus *unfamiliar* world of *that*. In this way, the familiar *this* has to be gradually readjusted in our sight, emerging as a plurality of unfamiliar *thats*.[25] Through such rapid shifting from *this* to *that* and vice versa, the second person, although ostensibly summoned to perform the act of ὁρᾶν (50), is intellectually drawn into an intense activity of θεωρεῖν. The chorus, as initiated spectators, mediates between the two agents and the audience in order to invite the latter into a world that can be seen, understood, and enjoyed only through their own singing words.

ΩΠΕΡ ΑΙΤΙΣ ΣΤΑΣΕΙΕΝ: THE DREAMING CHOREOGRAPHER, HIS DREAMING CHORUS

Through the chorus's guidance and educated vision, the most familiar entities are seen to be the most magnificent wonders. This peculiar vision of sublimity enables the ritual agents, even in the dark, to appear radiant as the sun, their racing as supreme as that of the most exotic horses, their dove-like flight like the rising of the brightest star of heavens. Within this logic of marvel and transgression, the chorus's deictic insistence can be understood and appreciated. Moreover, now we can understand why, in the lines that follow (64–77), the chorus, in its self-description, represents its own appearance as conspicuously inferior to that of the ritual agents. Not accidentally, all the qualities attributed by the chorus to its own, named, members relate to sight: the abundance of purple (64–65), the bracelet of solid gold (66–67), the luxurious headband from Lydia (67–68), Nanno's hair (70). Yet all these elaborate elements, presumably referring to the chorus's look and costumes, lack the most important quality: the sublimity of metaphor. Compared to Hagesichora's and Agido's metamorphoses through metaphor, this intentionally literal description sounds inadequate and deficient.[26]

Perhaps we can now reread lines 45–49 of the *Partheneion*: "For she (i.e., Hagesichora) looks pre-eminent, just as if somebody were to set a

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25 It is precisely this process of constant transformation of *this* into a plurality of *thats* that renders the ultimate correspondence between the ritual agents and the venerated goddess Orthria or Aotis not one of direct identification but one of indirect and diffused evocation.

26 A thorough analysis of 64–77, including its interesting deictic aspect, would require a separate paper. On the priamel structure, see, for instance, Race 1982.54–55.