NOTES • KORT BYDRAES

ALCAEUS, FR.296(a).8 LOBEL-PAGE:
LION OR TYRANT?

In what must rank among the shortest articles in a Classical journal, Paul Maas connected the text of Aristotle, Pol. 1316a29 with that of Alcaeus, fr. 296(a) L-P, to suggest that the tyranny of the Antileon mentioned by Aristotle had ended by his being flayed. To substantiate his thesis, he added a footnote offering the required emendation of line 8 of the Alcaeus fragment to read: γάλλον ἀvizου Αντιλέοντι οίκοι instead of ἀviz ούκ ἢ vίνος ἀντι λεοντί ντι οίκος (Lobel-Page). Also in the footnote was a reference to E. Ziebarth, Inscr. Graec. xii.9. p.147 on tyrants in Euboea. There was no further comment or argument.1 Despite its stated purpose, the article has been cited chiefly for this reading of the text.2 The present note invites a fresh look at Maas’ suggestion and attempts to offer some arguments in its favour.

The surviving text of the fragment is too damaged to present a sure context for interpretation. There are references to someone’s idea, to love, to the polis, to Zeus as king, to certain dead persons going to the abode of Hades, to the indispensable help of some person(s), to everything however being ruined (?), to fine things, to good changing to or mixing with evil, and then, in line 8, to someone deserving to be flayed. There is enough, it seems, to place the poem among other surviving verses of Alcaeus which deal with the political situation of the aristocracy in Mytilene.3

The first editor, Lobel, took the surviving text ‘unquestionably’ to represent ἀντι λεοντι. Yet he recognised the difficulty of the line’s sense and connection with what precedes.4 He considered the idea of someone being ‘flayed for a lion’ (his translation) as not very surprising in itself, but as introduced very abruptly here. It seems to me that Lobel himself has given good reasons for indeed questioning the reading.5

Page accepted Lobel’s reading and commented: ‘the phrase “deserves to be flayed instead of a lion” might perhaps mean as if he were a lion, or possibly rather than a lion, a lion does not so much deserve it as he does.’6 Page’s careful interpretation has the merit of not placing the association of deserving to be flayed on the lion. This would imply a negative attitude to the lion, whereas in Greek literature and art it is a creature admired
for its majestic stature, strength, courage, ferocity, stalking skill and fear-
someness, but never considered ‘worthy to be flayed.’ The verb òποδέρω
is used of skinning animals like cattle and sheep; obviously, lions were also
skinned, but for proud hunting-trophies, not because they ‘deserved’ it.8

In the light of the above I find Campbell’s version less satisfactory: ‘was
he not worthy to be flayed like a lion?’ He also tentatively suggests an
idiomatic use.9 However, no such or similar proverbial expression about a
lion being skinned is recorded.10

The lion had not quite disappeared in parts of Greece in Alcaeus’ day,11
but its presence played a dominant role in Greek myth, literature, art and
folklore. From the Bronze Age on it figures largely as the great hunter
of other animals and the equally great hunted prey of man.12 There is
therefore nothing intrinsically unusual for a poet like Alcaeus to use a
simile involving a lion. However, the reader must ask not only what is
textually possible, but also what is poetically possible, likely and effective,
for that is where the poet’s attention was concentrated. Would a simile of
a flayed lion obtain the required response from Alcaeus’ audience?

To work towards an answer to this question, we need to establish a kind of
‘poetische Semiotik’13 for the literary use of the lion as simile or metaphor
in early Greek lyric. The lion occurs several times as simile or metaphor,
though only after Alcaeus.14 It is cited for its courage (Bacch. 1.142-43;
Tyrt. 13 West), for its courage and loud roar (Pind. Isth. 4.45–46), for its
confidence in its strength (Theog. 949 = 1278cd), for the terror it inspires
(Semon. 12 Diehl), and as the natural enemy of the fawn (Cydias fr.1).
There is no example that closely relates to a flayed lion.15

We must now examine the case for and against the reading ‘Avt-
tūlē[v]o[ν]το[ς]. Campbell translates: ‘Would he not be more worthy to be
flayed than Antileon ... ’ and glosses Antileon as ‘an obscure tyrant
of Chalcis.’ However, he was known well enough to Aristotle.16 Was he
known to Alcaeus and his audience? It is impossible to tell. All we have
is the context and theme of the fragment. Politics dominates the sympotic
discussion and is duly reflected in Alcaeus’ songs. The tyrant-theme was
especially uppermost in the circle. Into this milieu Antileon would fit bet-
ter than a flayed lion. It would be a more forceful exemplum with which
to emphasise his argument in the aristocratic circle. The poet wanted to
emphasise someone’s disgraceful behaviour. There was no disgrace in the
flaying of a lion. That would have been an intrusive idea in the poem’s
thought. Lobel correctly saw the difficulty of the sense and its cohesion
with the rest of the fragment, as well as the abruptness with which it is
introduced.

Of course, no certainty is possible, given the present state of the fragment.
All we have is the general consideration that for the Greeks the lion was a
creature evoking positive rather than negative associations, and the more
particular consideration that a flayed lion does not occur in the repertoire of lion-imagery in Greek literature. Judging from the existing evidence, Alcaeus and his audience knew less about the skinning of a lion than about tyrants on their political scene and elsewhere.

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5. He unsuccessfully considered another possibility: ἄξος as genitive and λέοντων.
6. Page (note 3) 299.
8. Keller (note 7) 45. The verb ἀποδέξεοι does not appear elsewhere before Herodotus. In the account of the flaying of Marsyas (Apollod. 1.4.2) the expression used is ἔχντημα τὸ δέρμα.
9. Campbell (note 2) 337.
10. Cf. C.S. Köhler, Das Tierleben im Sprichwort der Griechen und Römer, Leipzig 1881, Hildesheim 1967, 117. The cited idioms all refer to the lion’s might being curtailed only by its being dead: ‘where the lion-skin does not reach, there one stitches on the fox’s’, Plut. Vita Lysandri (no. 30); ‘one should not tug a dead lion by the beard’, Martial, Epig. 10.90.10 (no. 31); ‘a dead lion allows itself to be teased by a hare’, Publilius Syrus 401, ed. Bothe (no. 28). At Pind. Ol. 11.21 a lion does not change his inborn nature; at Theog. 293 not even a lion, for all his strength, always has meat to eat; at Plut. Crat. 411a to put on a lion’s skin means to not be a coward. The testimonium of Plut. De def. or. 410c = Alc. fr. 438 L-P may involve an idiomatic use.
14. With its heroic qualities the lion often features in mythological accounts, even in lyric poetry. Such use is descriptive and literal, rather than figurative. Alcman, fr. 56.5 Page has λεόντων ... γάλα, a reference to Dionysus’ power of milking lionesses; cf. C. Calame, Alcman, Rome 1983, 524. Pindar refers to the Nemean lion and Heracles (Ol. 13.44; Nem. 6.42; Isth. 3.11; 6.37), to Artemis yoking lions (fr. 70b.21 S-M), to Peleus and Achilles fighting lions (Nem. 4.62; 3.46), and to Battus and Cyrene confronting lions in Africa (Pyth. 5.58; 9.26). Bacchylides also
refers to Heracles and the lion of Nemea (9.9; 13.47). Corinna (?), fr. 692, fr.5.4
PMG may refer to Tydeus and a lion; cf. D.A. Campbell, Greek Lyric, vol. IV,
Cambridge, Mass. 1992, 61 n. 3.

15. The lion occurs in lyric in non-metaphorical use in Pindar, fr. 237 S-M (with the
fox), fr. 238 (with cattle and wild-boars), fr. 239 (loud-roaring), fr. 74 (lion-taming
?); in Alcaeus, fr. 149 L-P (λωνοί); and in Adesp. 975(b) PMG (its strength and
food).

(1992) 60-61, suggested that Aristotle was familiar with the oral or written history
of Chalcis as a result of his occasional visits to his villa there.

W.J. HENDERSON

Rand Afrikaans University

A NOTE ON DEMOSTHENES DE CORONA 6 δικαίως

The first sentence in Demosthenes’ De Corona 6 reads as follows: ... ἰδίω
καὶ δέομαι πάντων ὁμοίως ὡμίον ἀκούσα μου περὶ τῶν κατηγορημένων ἀπολογουμένου δικαίως, ἀπερὶ οί νόμοι κελέεωσιν, ...

At first sight this sentence does not seem to pose any problems: δικαίως
should be taken with ἀπολογουμένου, being juxtaposed to it, and one can
translate as follows: “... I claim and entreat all of you alike to listen to
my just defence, as the laws demand ...” Or: “... I claim and entreat
all of you alike to listen to me while I defend myself in a just (according
to the law) way, as the laws demand ...” This is the way H. van Looy
understood the sentence: “... vraag en smeek ik u allen zonder onderscheid,
mijn rechtvaardige zelfverdediging te aphanen, zoals de wetten het
gebieden ...” ¹

Support for this view seems to be found at the point where Demosthenes
proceeded to the indictment itself, having finished his reply to the charges
foreign to the indictment (De corona 9-52). In De Corona 56 and 58 he
described the way he was about to defend himself as δικαίως ἀπολογίσομαι
(56) and δικαίως τὴν ἀπολογίαν ἐγνώκα ποιεῖσθαι (68).

But is this, ἀπολογίσομαι δικαίως, what the laws demanded? First of all
it should be noted that the coupling of δικαίως with ἀπολογίσομαι in both
paragraph 56 and 68 was not accompanied by any reference to what the
laws demanded. That this was neither the case in the context of paragraph
6, is confirmed by the reason given by Demosthenes for the institution of
these particular laws: In all public lawsuits the plaintiff enjoyed an advan-
tage above the defendant for many reasons. The defendant only had
a chance if the jury would make their decision having listened to his plea
with the same attitude (impartiality) as they listened to that of the plaintiff:
... τά τοῦ λέγοντος ὑπέρ ή δίκαιου ἐνοίκους προσδέχεται, καὶ παρασχέτων
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