The Rhetoric of the Riddle
in the *Alexandra* of Lycophron*

Christophe Cusset & Antje Kolde

One of the key features of Lycophron's obscure poem the *Alexandra* is its distinctive treatment of proper names, whether toponyms, theonyms, or anthroponyms: in the majority of cases, proper names are avoided by the poet and replaced by more or less convoluted descriptions, or by metaphors that often involve episodes, more or less familiar, drawn from the life of a character, or related to the settings of the action.[1] As a result, the frequent absence from Lycophron's text of explicit proper names – a mode of designation that is independent of context – renders the naming of a character or of a place slippery and unstable: the encrypted expressions that substitute for proper names change for one and the same referent depending on the context in which they are used. These onomastic *détournements,* "diversions", are of course far from being without interest for the poet, as they participate in both the discontinuous construction of meaning and the plasticity of the poetic signifier. But for an "ordinary" reader, these onomastic diversions represent obstacles to identifying characters and places, obstacles somewhat difficult to overcome because they belong to the realm of the riddle and should *a priori* take on a ludic aspect.

These diversions are so numerous in the *Alexandra* that we have decided to focus in the following pages first on a series of animal metaphors that produces an array of other word games, and second on riddling expressions through which Lycophron refers to divinities.

One feature connected with the instability of the naming process is the polysemy introduced by metaphor (in particular metaphor pertaining to

_____

* This paper was translated from French by Ewa Kondracka. Parts of this paper appeared as Cusset 2009.
1 On these issues of *détournement* from the proper name, cf. Cusset 2001, 2006 and 2007; Sistakou 2009.

animals), which is in Lycophron's work one of the most frequently employed devices for replacing the proper name. To the extent that an animal metaphor is not in fact attached to a unique, individual referent, it becomes possible for a metaphorical signifier to refer to several characters, who may share identical features that secure them the very same metaphorical designation. To gauge the effects of this poetic practice we may take the example of the dog, which with thirteen occurrences is one of the most cited animals in the poem.

We quickly pass over two occurrences of the term κύων that do not not seem to be truly metaphorical or to refer to a proper name (unless our reading of the enigmatic text is faulty): these are the two occurrences that designate the sea monster sent by Poseidon to punish Laomedon and devour the young Hesione. The first occurrence is nonetheless quite remarkable, for it appears at the beginning of Cassandra's prophecy, in the very first sentence, and is associated with a lion – this one metaphorical – that represents Heracles.[2] This association generates a certain initial confusion because names belonging to the same semantic register, that of animals, cannot all be understood in the same way: the dog perturbs our reading of the lion (lines 32–34):

...καὶ πρόσθε μὲν πεύκῃσιν οὐλαμηφόροις
τριεσπέρου λέοντος, ὅν ποτε γνάθοις
Τρίτωνος ἠμάλαψε κάρχαρος κύων.

...even aforetime by the warlike pineships of the lion that was begotten in three evenings, whom of old Triton's hound of jagged teeth devoured with his jaws.[3]

From one trimeter to the next, a metaphorical zoonym accompanied by an obscure epithet (τριεσπέρου λέοντος) contrasts with another one qualified by a concrete epithet (κάρχαρος κύων). But this juxtaposition of two different metaphoric levels in the very action performed by Triton's dog creates over the course of reading a confusion about the precise boundaries between the spheres of the human, the animal and the monstrous.

If we judge, however, that in the case of Triton's dog there is no pseudonymic metaphor, that is, no metaphor that substitutes for a proper name, we may feel a bit more discomfited when we pass to the register intermediate between monster and human, that of woman – an intermediate register precisely because its first specimen itself partakes of both the human

---

2   We leave aside here the second occurrence of κύων in reference to the sea monster at line 471. This passage adds nothing more to its description of the beast than the epithet γλαῦκος, which refers the "dog" to the sea world: yet in a sense, this serves to indicate that the term κύων does not refer to a dog in the usual meaning of the term.

3   The translations are by Mair (1921).

and the monstrous. Two other occurrences of κύων are used to designate Scylla, the daughter of Phorcys – another sea monster, half-animal, half-woman. The first occurrence is in lines 44–47:

> ὁ τὴν θαλάσσης Αὐσονίτιδος μυχοὺς
> στενοὺς ὀπιπεύουσαν ἀγρίαν κύνα
> κτανὼν ὑπὲρ σπήλυγγος ἰχθυωμένην,
> ταυροσφάγον λέαιναν...

> ...who also slew the fierce hound that watched the narrow straits of the Ausonian sea, fishing over her cave, the bull-slaying lioness...

The difference between this and the previous example is that the monster in question this time has a well known name which is deliberately left out. And yet, it is possible that this absent proper name is present "under the words" in accordance with an anagrammatic practice fairly common in the text of Lycophron.[4] The syntactic structure framing the passage suggests that the poetic material has been shaped in a distinctive way; it may well be that the name of Scylla (ΣΚΥΛΛΑ), despite being absent, is hidden within a structure that serves as a Saussurean *mannequin*, with the sounds of its initial and final syllables bracketing what might be a theronymic cryptogram:

> ὁ τὴν θαλάσσης Αὐσονίτιδος μυχοὺς
> **Σ**τενοὺς ὀπιπεύουσαν ἀγρίαν **ΚΥ**να
> **Κ**τανὼν **Ὑ**πὲρ σπή**Λ**υγγος ἰχθυωμένην,
> ταυροσφάγον **Λ**έαιν**Α**ν...

It is here that we find a perfect *mannequin* for the cryptogram and an orderly resolution of the anagrammatization, even if it takes place twice with a repetition of the initial syllable (Σ-ΚΥ-ΚΥΛΛΑ). Thus we must also see in the use of κύων here a case of a metaphorical pseudonym, even if we are not far from simple description given the abundance of details that specify what this "dog" does.[5] The presence of the cryptogram is a clear indication of this pseudonymic significance. It is likely that the reference to the dog was suggested by the similarity of sound between Scylla and σκύλαξ, "puppy",[6] which may be of an etymological nature.[7]

----

4   Cf. Cusset 2001 and the theoretical remarks on anagrams in Starobinski 1971 and Bader 1993.

5   Note that the various qualifiers (adjectives and participles: ὀπιπεύουσαν, ἀγρίαν, ἰχθυωμένην, ταυροσφάγον) remain external to the resolution of the anagram.

6   See the examples below of this word in Lycophron.

7   This connection has been proposed since antiquity and is found quite explicitly in Hom. *Od.* 12.85–97; see Calame 2000: 243. The etymological link is not challenged by Chantraine (s.v. σκύλαξ), who does not however offer any justification for it. There may also exist a link with the verb σκύλλω "to tear". In addition, Lycophron's passage draws on a well established tradition of describing Scylla as a

At this point a second factor seems worth stressing: namely, the fact that the poet brings together two animals, the dog and the lion, for the sake of naming and/or describing the character of Scylla, as if the first were insufficient. Indeed, from the point of view of the anagram, the term κύων by itself *is* insufficient (hence the repetition effect). The insufficiency is also due to the very nature of the referent – this is a character that is monstrous and hybrid,[8] one that accordingly cannot allow itself to be confined, even metaphorically, to a single animal; thus, by means of the juxtaposition, there is a hybridization that operates between the bitch and the lioness for the sake of describing the character more precisely without naming it. In this way, we move from pseudonymic metaphor to determinate description, since metaphor, which tends to suggest that its vehicle may serve as an adequate substitute for its tenor even if the resemblance between the two is inexact, here does not suffice to denote "Scylla"; there exists a kind of neutralizing interaction between the anagrammatization and the pseudonymic metaphor. Moreover, we note that even if the word κύνα were deleted from the anagrammatic scheme, the cryptogram could still be reconstructed.

The situation is somewhat different in the second occurrence (lines 668–669):

ποία Χάρυβδις οὐχὶ δαίσεται νεκρῶν;
ποία δ' Ἐρινύς, μιξοπάρθενος κύων;

What Charybdis shall not eat of his [sc. Odysseus'] dead? What half-maiden Fury-hound?

In this passage, an opposition between name and pseudonym is immediately noticeable. Charybdis is actually called by her proper name, as she will be again in line 743. Scylla, who is always associated with her, does not undergo the same fate: on the contrary, two successive equivalences are proposed here. The first is a theonymic pseudonym, Ἐρινύς, often used to describe any kind of infernal deity besides Erinys herself.[9] But this first substitute is imperfect, for despite being a proper name it is, paradoxically, vague and a source of too much confusion in its association with "Charybdis". The point is not in fact to form a novel coupling (as if we might speak of being caught "between *Erinys* and Charybdis"), but rather to refer to

---

sea-dog (cf. e.g. Anaxilas fr. 22.4 *PCG* τρίκρανος Σκύλλα, ποντία κύων, "three-headed Scylla, sea-dog").

8   See the second occurrence below and the compound μιξόθηρος which refers to Scylla in line 650.

9   The name even refers to the Sphinx's riddle in Eur. *Phoen.* 1019–1032 (from which Lycophron seems to borrow a few elements here). See Hurst – Paduano – Fusillo 1991: 234.

Scylla. Lycophron's solution here is to add a second pseudonym, meta-phorical and belonging to the animal world, which refers back to the first mention of Scylla in the text (see above) and actually gives the key to the first pseudonym. The adjective μιξοπάρθενος, which accompanies the term κύων here, is well chosen to denote the hybrid character of the person (as well as that of its designation); this term doubles, and completes by way of opposition, an earlier description attributed in line 650 to the same Scylla: μιξόθηρ. In truth we must search all over the text for the elements that allow us to reconstruct the referent-character, as well as his or her name.

This example reveals clearly how the pseudonymic metaphor functions in the text of Lycophron: the phenomenon of replacing proper names forc-es the reader to an active reading, one that manipulates the text; one part of the text illuminates another, and a constant circulation is necessary to re-store the names under the words.

Two other characters – genuinely female this time – are introduced by the metaphor of the κύων. The first, naturally, is Helen (lines 86–87):[10]

> Λεύσσω θέοντα γρυνὸν ἐπτερωμένον
> τρήρωνος εἰς ἅρπαγμα, Πεφναίας κυνός...
>
> I see the winged firebrand rushing to seize the dove, the hound of Pephnos...

The same designation is to return in lines 850–851:

> Καὶ πάντα τλήσεθ' εἵνεκ' Αἰγύας κυνὸς
> τῆς θηλύπαιδος καὶ τριάνορος κόρης.
>
> And all shall he endure for the sake of the Aegyan bitch, her of the three husbands, who bare only female children.

Two points should be made about the first occurrence. First, as in the case of Scylla, a double metaphor, one that implements a metaphorical hybridi-zation, tries to say something unspeakable about the referent-character whose name is hidden. The very fact that these metaphors require doubling may suggest that, all things considered, a proper name at least has the ad-vantage with respect to linguistic economy. But it also suggests that the character cannot justifiably be reduced to a simple name. The metaphor, with its poetic approximation, may be sufficient – even if in a globalizing and imperfect way – to name the character. Yet this character is presented in a context, and it is something more than just a name that can be blithely introduced into a story; it has a thickness that the doubled metaphor tries, perhaps imperfectly, to render, in places where the proper name would remain purely conventional.

Helen is here both dove and bitch – the two names echo each other at the beginning and end of the line. This combination of the two animals

––––––––––––––––

10   See on this passage Cusset 2001: 69.

raises a second point: if the dove readily connotes femininity through its fragility and vulnerability (especially when it is presented as prey), the bitch initially seems to draw us toward rather different conclusions, for κύων carries its pejorative connotations already in Homer, where Helen applies the term to herself.[11] We must proceed with caution in this case, however, as this bitch is called "Pephnaean", that is to say, originating from a locality of Laconia known as Pephnos. Now the bitches of Laconia had an excellent reputation, as several authors attest.[12] But we may also need to reconsider in an opposed sense the connotations attached to the dove, which seems quite able to refer to a prostitute as well and thus to be just as pejorative as the bitch.[13]

But the ambiguity is resolved by the second occurrence. Here too Helen is described as an "Aegyan bitch", the epithet referring to another city in Laconia, but the following line dispels any doubts concerning the pejorative value of the animal metaphor: she who multiplies spouses in this way cannot be anything but a woman of easy virtue![14]

But women are not the only ones to be described by the term κύων in Lycophron's poem. It can also refer to men, but then, curiously enough, it is always in the plural. In the first case, the plural represents just two people (lines 439–441):

Δοιοὶ δὲ ῥείθρων Πυράμου πρὸς ἐκβολαῖς
αὐτοκτόνοις σφαγαῖσι Δηραίνου κύνες
δμηθέντες...

And two by the mouth of the streams of Pyramus, hounds of Deraenus, shall be slain by mutual slaughter...

---

11 See Hom. *Il*. 3.180, 6.344, 356 etc. See Schnapp-Gourbeillon 1981: 161–169.

12 This remark is taken from Lambin 2005: 51 n. 39, who cites Pind. fr. 106 Snell-Maehler, Soph. *Aj*. 7–8, Arist. *Hist. an*. 608a27–28, Callim. *Dian*. 93–97.

13 On line 131, where Helen is referred to as κάσσα πελειάς, "wanton dove", see Gigante Lanzara 2000: 210, who outlines clearly the ambiguous character of this metaphor.

14 The same characteristic of infidelity earns another female character the designation "bitch", namely Aigialeia, the adulterous wife of Diomedes (lines 610–613): Τροιζηνίας δὲ τραῦμα φοιτάδος πλάνης | ἔσται κακῶν τε πημάτων παραίτιον, | ὅταν θρασεῖα θουρὰς οἰστρήσῃ κύων | πρὸς λέκτρα ("his wounding of the Lady of Troezen shall be part cause of his wild wandering and of his evil sufferings when a wild lustful bitch shall be frenzied for adulterous bed"). The passage clearly works with the assonance of the group τρ/θρ in order to build up a noteworthy inventory of similar sounds, though the reason for this is not yet obvious. Is it a reference to the city of Troy where Diomedes had dared to strike the goddess during a battle (see Hom. *Il*. 5.534–540)? There does not seem to be any link to the name of Diomedes or to that of his wife. On the tradition concerning Diomedes' wife, see Hurst – Paduano – Fusillo 1991: 226.

"Deraenus" is Apollo, here named after a cult site located near Abdera in Thrace. The poet refers to two prophets or seers who are called "hounds of Deraenus", whether because they were faithful interpreters of the god, like a good dog that follows his master, or in order to highlight their fratricidal strife, which cannot help but recall the one of Eteocles and Polynices. The prophets concerned are Mopsus and Amphilochus, the two sons of Manto, daughter of Tiresias; according to Strabo's account (14.5.16), they killed each other in a fight for the rulership of Mallus in Cilicia. In fact only the first one is Apollo's son, while the other is the son of Alcmaeon: the combination of the two proper names into a collective plural effaces not just the proper name but the identity, the proper *life*, of the characters.

The other examples that involve men and metaphorically describe them as κύνες are collective. This occurs in connection with the Achaeans (lines 581 and 1266) and the Phoenicians (line 1291). For our purposes these occurrences would carry us too far afield. But there are still two rather surprising cases, in which the pseudonymic animal metaphor no longer serves as an anthroponymic substitute, but rather as a meteorological and toponymic one. The first concerns a wind of Thrace (lines 924–926):

...οὓς τῆλε Θερμύδρου τε Καρπάθου τ' ὀρῶν
πλάνητας αἴθων Θρασκίας πέμψει κύων,
ξένην ἐποικήσοντας ὀθνείαν χθόνα.

...[the leaders of the Lindians,] whom far from Thermydron and the mountains of Carpathus the fierce hound Thrascias shall send wandering to dwell in a strange and alien soil.

We immediately see the difference in treatment between the characters mentioned before and the present meteorological phenomenon: in the latter case, the animal image does *not* replace the proper name Thrascias, for this is given and indicates at the same time a geographical origin.[15] Perhaps the reason for this difference is that the wind is being personified as a warrior[16] and the designation αἴθων κύων is used in order to describe him: in the end this neutralizes the pseudonymic substitution that is present in the "geographical" designation of the wind.

The second example concerns a river for which there is no metaphor, but rather a metamorphosis into a dog (lines 961–962):

...ὧν δὴ μίαν Κριμισσὸς, ἰνδαλθεὶς κυνὶ
ἔζευξε λέκτροις ποταμός.

---

15 Though the etymology of *Thrascias* is unclear (cf. *DELG* s.v. Θρᾷξ), the scholia demonstrate that Lycophron's readers saw a connection between it and the region of *Thrace*. Thus the name is a kind of meteorological toponym (or a "meteoronym" based on location).

16 See Gigante Lanzara 2000: 357.

> ...of these one [sc. Aegesta] the river Crimisus, in the likeness of a dog, took to be his bride.

In this example, we see that Lycophron explicitly refuses to use metaphor even though it was possible. The participle ἰνδαλθείς reflects the image of the dog back on itself, and the animal analogy merely has the value of a transformation of appearance, without involving the naming process at all.

These last two examples, in which a metaphorical pseudonym is deliberately left to the side, call into question the status of the proper name: does a toponym really have the same status as an anthroponym? Why then is the play with pseudonyms only possible in the case of personal names? Is there a connection with the fact that only individuals are susceptible to change, to becoming no longer suited to the name they bear, as opposed to the (at least greater) permanence of places?

To finish with the subject of the dog, let us consider the term σκύλαξ,[17] which competes with κύων especially in the metaphorical designations of male characters.

Nonetheless the first occurrence concerns a woman (lines 314–315):

Οἴμοι δυσαίων, καὶ διπλᾶς ἀηδόνας
καὶ σὸν, τάλαινα, πότμον αἰάζω, σκύλαξ.

O, me unhappy! The two nightingales and thy fate, poor hound, I weep.

We find in this example a phenomenon of metamorphosis that leads, unlike the previous example of the river, to a pseudonymic metaphor. It involves Hecuba, who was stoned for having blinded the Thracian king Polymestor and then transformed into a dog; this episode of metamorphosis is not absent from the text of Lycophron, but it is reported several lines later through the mediation of the proper name of Erigone's dog, Maira (line 334 Μαίρας ὅταν φαιουρόν ἀλλάξης δομήν, "when thou [Hecuba] shalt put on thee the sable-tailed form of Maira"). Here, in anticipation, it is the pseudonymic metaphor that is used and that will only be justified by the text that follows. The triple apostrophe has here a programmatic and proleptic character: Cassandra begins with a lament of her two sisters, Laodice and Polyxena, as well as of her mother, before turning to the fate which lies in store for them. The relationship between metaphorical pseudonym and personal story suggests that every name has the value of a story, of a "micro-story", to use Claude Calame's terminology:[18] here it is not the metamorphosis into a dog that constitutes an unfortunate destiny, but rather that which precedes it and is designated without further details through the simple term πότμος. Note that the two metaphorical designations (the

---

17 In fact this term is generally used to describe a young dog, especially in Homer; see Hom. *Od.* 9.289, 12.86 etc.

18 Calame 2000: 243.

nightingale and the dog) balance each other at the end of each line of this distich: quite a curious family, in which a bitch gives birth to nightingales, whereas Cassandra will present herself at the end as a swallow (line 1460).[19]

In addition, the line in which the term σκύλαξ is used has a strong musical potency: its multiplication of diphthongs produces a wail of lament through the course of the trimeter, a lament that finds its conclusion in the final apostrophe.

The last example to be treated here concerns a man, one who is directly related to the river Crimissus that we have already encountered in connection with its metamorphosis into a dog. This passage immediately follows the one quoted above (lines 962–964):

> ...ἡ δὲ δαίμονι
> τῷ θηρομίκτῳ σκύλακα γενναῖον τεκνοῖ
> τρισσῶν συνοικιστῆρα καὶ κτίστην τόπων.

> ...and she [sc. Aegesta] to the half-beast god bears a noble whelp, settler and founder of three places.

The son described by the metaphor of the dog is Aegestes, the founder of the city of Segesta in Sicily. Thus the pseudonymic metaphor, rejected earlier for the fluvial father, is operative in the next generation for his son: here Lycophron is playing skillfully on the frequent secondary meaning of the term σκύλαξ, which can also designate a "child", yet it is perfectly natural for a father transformed into a dog to give birth to a "puppy". It is quite likely that the micro-biography produced by the addition of line 964 (συνοικιστῆρα καὶ κτίστην), with its emphasis on the group στη, serves to suggest the name Aegestes in these lines; the name of his mother Aegesta – a feminine form of his own – appears at the beginning of line 968 to echo the name that here is only hinted at.[20]

Thus the image of the dog gives us a fairly complete view of how Lycophron uses animals in his poem to support the ambiguity and richness of the poetic discourse. If some occurrences continue to point to an animal referent, most of the time, without any particular distinction, the zoonym has a metaphorical value that lets it act as a substitute for a proper name, most often for an anthroponym; then it is the context, largely elliptical, that allows the pseudonymic metaphor to be justified. This practice of binding

———————————

19 See the examples of hybridization above.

20 There is one additional example of the term σκύλαξ that is more problematic (lines 991–992): ὅταν θανὼν λήταρχος ἱερείας σκύλαξ | πρῶτος κελαινῷ βωμὸν αἱμάξῃ βρότῳ ("when the minister son of the priestess dies and stains first the altar with his dark blood"). The character's identity is uncertain; it could be the son born of Cassandra after she was raped by Ajax. The term σκύλαξ definitely has the value of a pseudonymic metaphor here, but the proper name eludes us.

the designation to a context stands in opposition to the rigid designation that the proper name offers, detached from any context and exempt from any temporal variation. By contrast, the animal metaphor never comes to a stop and is never particularized; it can always be applied to some other individual. The dog, though it may be man's best friend, is also characterized in particular by its aptitude for switching onomastic masters on each occasion.

Let us now turn to our second topic: those designations of gods that are coded or, to put it another way, riddling. The gods in Lycophron's poem essentially suffer a fate very similar to that of men as far as their designation is concerned: the usual theonyms seldom appear and the poet frequently uses coded or compound designations, usually metaphorical or periphrastic. These metaphors and periphrases are distinctive in several respects: the poet always employs at least two of them to designate any given divinity; though a single expression might have several possible divinities as its referent, there is always only one divinity who can fit *all* of the expressions used to refer to it. In addition, the expressions pertaining to a given divinity can be concentrated in a single passage or, what is much more common, appear spread out over several passages: these passages may be quite distant from each other, though they are usually connected through one or more words and thus complementary. In other words, if we compile all the possible referents for each of the expressions that refer to a divinity and then compare them – whether the riddle thus constructed is confined to a single passage or extends over several – we can eliminate solutions that are not shared by every expression until we reach the single one that solves all the "sub-riddles". Though Lycophron is hardly alone in using metaphor and periphrasis to create his riddles, it is uncommon to accumulate several of them in a single passage, and still less common to distribute them over several passages that are interconnected at the level of diction or sound. Yet these two procedures do not surprise when employed by an author devoted to the fragmentation of information.[21] It follows that, in order to solve the coded designations of deities, the essential thing is to isolate the network formed by the distribution of the gods' epithets and epicleses, and then to determine the referent common to the different metaphors and periphrases.

As we shall see, the examples of Persephone and Hecate offer a good illustration of this enigmatic mode of referring to divinities.

_____

21   See Cusset and Kolde 2012.

Persephone appears three times in Lycophron's poem, but never under that name.[22] She is first mentioned in line 49; the subject is Scylla, who does not fear death:

> ...Λέπτυνιν οὐ τρέμουσαν οὐδαίαν θεόν.

> ...she who feared not Leptynis, goddess of the underworld.

The referent of Λέπτυνιν is clarified for the reader by the addition of οὐδαίαν θεόν, which shows that Lycophron considers the name to be feminine, and therefore that he interprets it as the name of Persephone (as the scholiast also emphasizes), and not that of Hades.

The epithet οὐδαία establishes the link between this passage and the next appearance of Persephone, in line 698; the context is Odysseus' wanderings in southern Italy, through places connected with the infernal world and neighboring Cumae and Naples:

> ...Ὀβριμοῦς τ' ἄλσος, οὐδαίας κόρης,

> ...and the grove of Obrimo, the Maiden who dwells beneath the earth.

The identification with Persephone, already assured by the adjective οὐδαία, is confirmed by the presence of κόρη, even if the widespread epiclesis of Persephone, Kore, is seemingly a noun here and not a proper name. It should be noted, however, that the two terms οὐδαία and κόρη follow another epiclesis, Ὀβριμώ. According to the scholia, this name of Persephone would refer to the scream she uttered when Hermes tried to rape her. For those who did not know it, its meaning becomes clear because it is correlated with the other two terms in a network.

Finally, a few lines later, in 710–711, the text mentions a sacrifice that Ulysses will offer to Daeira and her husband:

> θήσει Δαείρᾳ καὶ ξυνευνέτῃ δάνος
> πήληκα κόρσῃ κίονος προσαρμόσας.

> He shall offer up a gift to Daeira and her consort, fastening his helmet to the head of a pillar.

"Daeira" denotes Persephone at Athens; according to the scholia, it would be derived from δαίς, the ritual torch used in the mysteries or carried by the goddess herself.[23] That the passage concerns Persephone and not another goddess is indicated above all by the narrative context and the reference to a "consort", who is none other than Hades.

Hecate, in turn, appears in connection with two episodes: first when the poet describes the departure of Dardanus from the island of Samo-

---

22 The name is, of course, not easily adapted to the meter, and never occurs in the iambic trimeter of tragedy.

23 For Persephone-Daeira, cf. Pherecydes *FGrH* 3 F 45.

thrace, and then, by means of a number of periphrastic naming construc-
tions, in the lines evoking the fate of Hecuba.

The first occurrence is in line 77, in the context of the journey that
Dardanus made from Samothrace to the Troad, on the occasion of the third
deluge:

> ...Ζήρυνθον ἄντρον τῆς κυνοσφαγοῦς θεᾶς.

> Zerynthos, cave of the goddess, to whom dogs are slain.

Here the goddess is designated only by the geographic location of a place
of worship, Zerynthos, a cave on the island of Samothrace,[24] and a periph-
rasis concerning the victims that were sacrificed to her.

These two elements – the connection with dogs and the geographical
location – also occur among the many periphrastic expressions that mark
the second episode in which she appears, in lines 1174–1188. This new
context clarifies the significance of both elements:

> ὦ μῆτερ, ὦ δύσμητερ, οὐδὲ σὸν κλέος
> ἄπυστον ἔσται, <u>Περσέως δὲ παρθένος</u>   1175
> <u>Βριμὼ Τρίμορφος</u> θήσεται σ' ἐπωπίδα
> κλαγγαῖσι ταρμύσσουσαν ἐννύχοις βροτούς,
> ὅσοι <u>μεδούσης Στρυμόνος Ζηρυνθίας</u>
> δείκηλα μὴ σέβωσι λαμπαδουχίαις,
> θύσθλοις <u>Φεραίαν</u> ἐξακεύμενοι <u>θεάν</u>.   1180
> ψευδήριον δὲ νησιωτικὸς στόνυξ
> Πάχυνος ἕξει σεμνὸν ἐξ ὀνειράτων
> ταῖς δεσποτείαις ὠλέναις ὠγκωμένον
> ῥείθρων Ἑλώρου πρόσθεν ἐκτερισμένης·
> ὃς δὴ παρ' ἀκταῖς τλήμονος ῥανεῖ χοάς,   1185
> <u>τριαύχενος</u> μήνιμα δειμαίνων <u>θεᾶς</u>,
> λευστῆρα πρῶτος οὕνεκεν ῥίψας πέτρον
> Ἅιδῃ κελαινῶν θυμάτων ἀπάρξεται.

> O mother, O unhappy mother! Thy fame, too, shall not be unknown, but <u>the maid-
> en daughter of Perseus, Triform Brimo</u>, shall make thee her attendant, terrifying
> with thy baying in the night all mortals who worship not with torches the images of
> <u>the Zerynthian queen of Strymon</u>, appeasing <u>the goddess of Pherae</u> with sacrifice.
> And the island spur of Pachynus shall hold thine awful cenotaph, piled by the
> hands of thy master, prompted by dreams when thou hast gotten the rites of death
> in front of the streams of Helorus. He shall pour on the shore offerings for thee,
> unhappy one, fearing the anger of <u>the three-necked goddess</u>, for that he shall hurl
> the first stone at thy stoning and begin the dark sacrifice to Hades.

In these lines, Cassandra announces for the second time the fate of her
mother: after being stoned, she will be transformed into a dog and become
a companion of Hecate, as Cassandra had already predicted in lines

─────────────────

24 For the location, see the *Suda* s.v. Σαμοθράκη and the scholia to Ar. *Pax* 277.
    Elsewhere Lycophron locates Zerynthus in Thrace (see the next paragraph).

330–334. This second prophecy is somewhat more detailed, since no fewer than five periphrastic expressions and one epiclesis refer to Hecate, who is never called by her most common name. The first expression, "the maiden daughter of Perseus", is a genealogical periphrasis: we know from Hesiod's *Theogony* (lines 409–411) that Hecate is a daughter of Perses, and the scholia to our passage suggest that Lycophron has allowed himself a certain poetic license in altering the name to Perseus. Then comes the sole epiclesis, Βριμώ, which is formed after Ὀβριμώ, the epiclesis of Persephone that we have already encountered and that creates a link between the two goddesses. After this the poet introduces a pseudonym referring to the form of the goddess (Τρίμορφος), followed by a geographical periphrasis ("the Zerynthian queen of Strymon"): this periphrasis refers back to the earlier passage that mentioned Hecate through the adjective "Zerynthian", though in the present case Lycophron seems to place Zerynthus in Thrace, as suggested by the context. The next line contains a new geographical periphrasis (Pherae, like Strymon, refers to Thrace), followed, in 1186, by the final periphrasis. This one refers, just like Τρίμορφος above, to the form of the goddess: τριαύχενος ... θεᾶς. One cannot help but notice that the last four periphrases form a chiasmus: appearance – geography – geography – appearance; moreover the first and last one are closely related on a lexical level because both begin with the prefix τρι-. Though the identity of the goddess might have remained obscure in the earlier passage, the abundance of information that we are given in the present one dispels any uncertainty: the genealogical and geographical data that focus on Thrace; the relationship with Artemis implied by one of the place names, Pherae; the epiclesis Brimo, which refers to Persephone and echoes the even more obscure Obrimo from line 698;[25] the emphasis on the number three in the prefix τρι-, which on the one hand recalls the sky, the land and the sea, the three domains that have been allocated to Hecate according to Hesiod's *Theogony* (lines 413–415), and on the other evokes Hecate's triple shape;[26] finally the nightly barking with which Hecuba will frighten those who do not honor the goddess in question; all these elements, when taken together, limit the possible referents of each expression, so that in conjunction they could refer to no one other than Hecate.

These examples of the naming of divinities, which are organized around the two goddesses Persephone and Hecate, clearly show how the correlation of different expressions into a network can allow one to solve the riddle. It should be noted, however, that the networks mentioned so far are internal to the poem of Lycophron: they refer to passages that may be

_____

25 For Brimo, cf. A. R. 3.861.
26 Cf. Chariclid. fr. 1.1–2 *PCG* δέσποιν' Ἑκάτη τριοδῖτι | τρίμορφε, τριπρόσωπε.

quite distant from each other but nonetheless all belong to the text of the *Alexandra*. In other passages, enigmatic epicleses seem to create a game of both intratextual and intertextual allusions.

The central part of the *Alexandra* is devoted to the prophecy that Cassandra gives about the return of Odysseus (lines 648–819). In the middle of this passage, and indeed in the middle of the central episode, the suicide of the Sirens, Cassandra announces the suicide of the second siren, Leucosia. She kills herself on the jutting bank of Enipeus, at Paestum (Posidonia) itself or on the cape between Paestum and Elea (line 722):

> ...ἀκτὴν δὲ τὴν προὔχουσαν εἰς Ἐνιπέως...

> ...on the jutting strand of Enipeus...

According to the scholia, "Enipeus is a name by which Poseidon is honored in Miletus". Why did Lycophron choose Enipeus to encode the name of Poseidon? Unfortunately we know nothing about this epiclesis or its cultural context. If Lycophron did intend a reference to Miletus in choosing this name for Poseidon, the geographic epiclesis, however obscure it is for us, ought to have held some significance for him, though we do not know what. Yet the poet might also have used the epiclesis for the following reason: There is a river named Enipeus in Thessaly. The princess Tyro fell in love with it, and Poseidon seized the opportunity to take on the river's appearance and seduce her, as recounted in the Odyssean νέκυια (11.235–259). The intertextual link that the name Enipeus establishes between Lycophron's passage and this one could hardly be accidental: just as the report of the second Siren's suicide constitutes the central passage of the *Alexandra*, so the νέκυια is a key passage among Ulysses' stories at the court of the Phaeacians.

Poseidon establishes an intratextual link between Lycophron's mention of Enipeus and a second passage in which the poet once again evokes the *Odyssey*. In lines 766–767, the god is referred to by the epiclesis Ἱππηγέτης:

> οὔπω μάλ᾽, οὔπω· μὴ τοσόσδ᾽ ὕπνος λάβοι
> λήθης Μέλανθον ἐγκλιθένθ᾽ Ἱππηγέτην.

> Ah! not yet, not yet! Let not such sleep of forgetfulness find Melanthus, the Lord of Horses, bending.

The context is the same as in the first passage, i.e., the prophecy concerning the return of Ulysses. Here are the lines that lead up to the excerpt quoted above (lines 761–767):

> And crossing to the island abhorred by Cronus – the isle of the Sickle that severed his privy parts – he a cloakless suppliant, babbling of awful sufferings, shall yelp out his fictitious tale of woe, paying the curse of the monster whom he blinded. Ah! not yet, not yet! Let not such sleep of forgetfulness find Melanthus, the Lord of Horses, bending.

In Lycophron's narrative, Odysseus is in Corfu, the homeland of the Phaeacians; Lycophron is alluding to the stories told there by Ulysses, including the νέκυια, which was evoked above through the connection between Poseidon and Tyro via Enipeus. As we can see, the linking of line 722 and lines 766–767 in a network allows a better comprehension of the two passages; it is Poseidon, the common referent of the various epicleses used in both passages, who allows this linking to occur.[27] One additional observation is called for. The latter passage illustrates very well the recurring feature that most divine names in the *Alexandra*, though they never refer explicitly to the Homeric model, nonetheless allude to the text of Homer in one way or another.[28] Indeed, Lycophron tells one of the most famous episodes of the *Odyssey*, the one that explains Poseidon's wrath against Odysseus – namely, the encounter with Polyphemus – only through delicate allusive touches that are incomprehensible to anyone who does not know the *Odyssey*. One of these allusions is in the present passage: line 765, "paying the curse of the monster whom he blinded"; the others are in lines 569–661. And the play with the *Odyssey* does not stop there. When speaking of the "Sleep of forgetfulness..." in lines 766–767, Lycophron allows himself a small allusive permutation: in the *Odyssey*, it is Odysseus who undergoes periods of supernatural sleep, in particular when he arrives in Ithaca – after the Phaeacians had helped him! – with an enjambement that, as it seems, Lycophron's text recalls: οὐδ' Ἐνοσίχθων | λήθετ' (Hom. *Od*. 13.125–126).

From our analysis of this selection of examples, first of the use of the canine metaphor and then of the encoded names of deities, we may draw two conclusions. In the first place, Lycophron has frequent recourse to metaphors that possess two distinguishing characteristics: they are obscure, and they echo each other over the course of the poem. Second, these mutually reinforcing metaphors encourage Lycophron's readers to develop a strategy for deciphering his γρῖφοι, the riddles that confront them in those passages whose language is so obscure that they find themselves caught as if in a net: the strategy consists in creating another γρῖφος, that is to say, in constructing a network or net that brings together all the pieces of information disseminated by Lycophron, sometimes in several passages, and that allows us, by correlating them, to find the solution to the riddle.

_____

27 According to the scholia, Μέλανθος and Ἱππηγέτης are two epicleses of Poseidon, the former in Athens, the latter in Delos.

28 See Cusset and Kolde 2012.

Bibliography

Bader, F. 1993. *Anagrammes et allitérations*. Paris: Peeters.

Calame, C. 2000. *Le récit en Grèce ancienne.* Paris: Belin.

Chantraine, P. 1998. *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque. Histoire des mots*, 2nd ed. Paris: Klincksieck.

Cusset, C. 2001. *Le bestiaire de Lycophron: entre chien et loup.* Anthropozoologica 33–34, 61–72.

Cusset, C. 2006. *Dit et non-dit dans l'*Alexandra *de Lycophron.* In: M. A. Harder et al. (eds), *Beyond the Canon*. Leuven: Peeters, 43–60.

Cusset, C. 2007. *Le détournement des noms propres: l'exemple de Lycophron*. Lalies 27, 199–212.

Cusset, C. 2009. *Variations sur l'image du chien dans l'*Alexandra *de Lycophron*. Antichnyy mir i arkheologiya 13, 389–397.

Cusset, C. and A. Kolde. 2012. *Rôle et représentation des dieux traditionnels dans l'*Alexandra *de Lycophron*. In: M. A. Harder et al. (eds), *Gods and Religion in Hellenistic Poetry*. Leuven: Peeters, 1–30.

Gigante Lanzara, V. 2000. *Licofrone. Alessandra*. Milano: BUR.

Hurst, A., G. Paduano and M. Fusillo. 1991. *Licofrone. Alessandra.* Milano: Guerini.

Lambin, G. 2005. *L'Alexandra de Lycophron*. Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes.

Mair, A. W. 1921. In id. and G. R. Mair, *Callimachus and Lycophron. Aratus*. London: Heinemann.

Schnapp-Gourbeillon, A. 1981. *Lions, héros, masques. Les représentations de l'animal chez Homère*. Paris: Maspero.

Sistakou, E. 2009. *Breaking the name codes in Lycophron's* Alexandra. In: C. Cusset et al. (eds), *Lycophron: éclats d'obscurité.* Saint-Etienne: PUSE, 237–257.

Starobinski, J. 1971. *Les mots sous les mots. Les anagrammes de Ferdinand de Saussure*. Paris: Gallimard.