

Xanthus.

etymology which points to a Dorian source (*Ἀλέκτρα*)¹. Stesichorus, we are told, mentioned Xanthus as a lyric predecessor, and adapted much from him. The *Oresteia* is especially named as a work in which Stesichorus was thus indebted to Xanthus². How far, and in what sense, that statement is true, cannot now be known; but it is at least certain that Xanthus remained wholly obscure, while Stesichorus was widely popular. The introduction of *Electra* may be one of the points in which the Stesichorean *Oresteia* was indebted to Xanthus: and the fact of her figuring in that poem would fully explain her later prominence. Let us suppose, then, that Stesichorus, like Aeschylus, sent *Electra* with Clytaemnestra's offerings to Agamemnon's tomb. Orestes, on his return, would hasten to make his offerings there—as is assumed by all the three Attic dramatists. At the tomb the brother and sister would meet and recognise each other, as they do in Aeschylus. We know that Stesichorus brought in the nurse, whom he called *Laodameia*³. Pindar makes a nurse save Orestes from the hands of Clytaemnestra, but he does not say that she carried him out of Argolis⁴. The *Laodameia* of Stesichorus may have done likewise—giving Orestes to the trusty Talthybius, who carried him forth, and

¹ Aelian *Var. Hist.* 4. 26 *Ξάνθος ὁ ποιητὴς τῶν μελῶν, ἐγένετο γὰρ οὗτος πρεσβύτερος Στησιχόρου τοῦ Ἱμεραίου, λέγει τὴν Ἥλέκτραν τοῦ Ἀγαμέμνονος οὐ τοῦτο ἔχειν τοῦνομα πρῶτον, ἀλλὰ Λαοδίκην. ἐπεὶ γὰρ Ἀγαμέμνων ἀνηρέθη, τὴν γὰρ Κλυταιμνήστραν ὁ Αἰγισθος ἐγήμε καὶ ἐβασίλευσεν, ἄλεκτρον οὖσαν καὶ καταγηρώσαν παρθένον Ἀργεῖοι Ἥλέκτραν ἐκάλεσαν διὰ τὸ ἀμοιρεῖν ἀνδρὸς καὶ μὴ πεπειρᾶσθαι λέκτρον.*

² Athen. 12. p. 513 A (quoting from Megacleides, who wrote *περὶ Ὀμήρου*, and was, as some think, a peripatetic): *καὶ Ξάνθος δ' ὁ μελοποιός, πρεσβύτερος ὢν Στησιχόρου, ὡς καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ Στησίχορος μαρτυρεῖ, ὡς φησιν ὁ Μεγακλείδης, οὐ ταύτην αὐτῷ (Heracles) περιτίθησι τὴν στολήν, ἀλλὰ τὴν Ὀμηρικὴν, πολλὰ δὲ τῶν Ξάνθου παραπεποίηκεν ὁ Στησίχορος, ὥσπερ καὶ τὴν Ὀρεστειαν καλουμένην.*

The meaning of *παραπεποίηκεν* seems to be 'adapted.' It certainly need not mean 'spoiled in copying,' as Schweighäuser takes it ('*dum mutuatus est, mutavit et corrupit*').

Robert, *Bild und Lied*, p. 174 f. thinks that Megacleides was the source of Aelian also (see last note), and thus is our sole authority for the existence of this Xanthus. That Stesichorus mentioned some one named Xanthus cannot be doubted; but whether his debt to an earlier lyric poet of that name was such as Megacleides affirms, is (the critic thinks) very questionable. It is certainly strange that, if Xanthus was so important a source to Stesichorus, absolutely nothing should have come down to us concerning him, beyond the two meagre notices above quoted.

³ Schol. on Aesch. *Cho.* 733.

⁴ *Pyth.* 11. 17.