PROBLEMS OF EARLY GREEK TRAGEDY: PRATINAS, PHRYNICHUS, THE GYGES FRAGMENT

by Hugh Lloyd-Jones
No chapter in the history of Greek literature is more obscure than the origins of tragedy, and indeed its whole history before the second quarter of the fifth century. The beginnings are veiled in darkness; even the statement of Aristotle that tragedy originated from the dithyramb is not universally accepted; and those who do accept it disagree about the nature of the early dithyramb and its influence on tragedy. Recent accessions to our knowledge have only made this darkness darker. Till 1952 it was widely believed that we possessed a play written by Aeschylus early in his career, perhaps as early as about 500 B.C., when he was some twenty-five years old. In that year the publication of a scrap of papyrus put paid to that delusion. We must now recognise that the Suppliants of Aeschylus was in all probability produced in 464 or 463, and is therefore later than the Persians, produced in 472, and the Seven Against Thebes, produced in 467. For the century and a half between the date given for the first performance of Thespis at the Dionysia and that of the production of the Persians, we have no specimen of a tragedy.

This deep and long-lasting obscurity is suddenly lit up, like the night sky of Argos by the beacon, by the bright star of Aeschylus. How natural that historians of tragedy should have tended to assume that Aeschylus was not only one of its supreme exponents, but also its real inventor! Gilbert Murray's book on Aeschylus, published in 1940, has for its subtitle The Creator of Tragedy; this reflects the influence of Wilamowitz, who in both his introduction to Greek tragedy of 1889 and his book on Aeschylus published twenty-five years later took this view. All the ingredients of tragedy existed, says Wilamowitz, before Aeschylus; what was lacking was what is specifically dramatic, and this Aeschylus supplied. Aeschylus, according to Wilamowitz, invented tragic dialogue, and so discovered the dramatic element; Aeschylus gave the primitive goat-song as its content the heroic saga that was the essential subject-matter of tragedy.

For us Aeschylus is indeed the first tragedian of real importance; but does it follow that we can be sure that none of his predecessors made an important contribution to the development of tragedy? Very little, to be sure, is known of them; and before this question can be answered, that little must be examined with some care.

Thespis passes for the "inventor" of the genre; he is said to have inaugurated the tragic performances at the Dionysia in 534 B.C. Can we know anything about his works? The Suda gives four titles: The Funeral Games of Pelias or Phorbas, The Priests, The Young Men, Pentheus. Aristoxenus, the well-known writer on music who was a pupil of Aristotle, accuses another fourth-century philosopher, Heraclides Ponticus, of having written tragedies which he passed off as the work of Thespis. Some scholars have claimed that no certain know-

3 Wilamowitz, Einleitung, 92-93.
ledge about the works of such an early writer can have come down to the compiler of the *Suda*, and have therefore assumed that the four titles, and also the four fragments attributed to Thespis⁴, must have come from the tragedies forged in his name by Heraclides. This assumption is not altogether safe. Even if it is allowed to be unlikely that any complete tragedy by Thespis can have survived until the Alexandrian period, we cannot be sure that the titles of some of his works, and perhaps even extracts from them, cannot have been preserved. Even before the time of Aristotle there existed a not inconsiderable literature about tragedy, part of it written as early as the fifth century. Several works that formed part of it are quoted by Aristotle in the *Poetics*; the book of Glaucus of Rhegium, *On the Earliest Poets and Musicians*, appeared probably not much later than 400 B. C.⁵. While it is not certain that treatises like this contained reliable information about Thespis, we cannot rule out the possibility.

The titles credited to Thespis by the *Suda* are therefore worth examining, if only with caution. Two of them, *The Priests* and *The Young Men*, tell us nothing; but the other two refer to episodes of heroic saga of just the kind that furnished subjects to the tragedians of the fifth century. *The Funeral Games of Pelias* had been the subject of a narrative lyric poem by Stesichorus; so had the story of Orestes, later to be made famous by so many tragic treatments; as to the Dionysiac legend of Pentheus, no subject could be better suited to a tragedy. We cannot rule out the genuineness of these titles simply on the ground that Aristotle (*Poetics 1449 a 19*) tells us that tragedy took a long time to throw off the satyr element and become dignified. For all we know, Aristotle had in mind the character not so much of early tragedies as of rustic

⁵ KRANZ, *Stasimon. Untersuchungen zu Form und Gehalt der griechischen Tragödie*, Berlin, 1933, pp. 4-6, with notes on p. 268.
performances originating from the dithyramb that had preceded their appearance; from his point of view any early tragedy, even one dealing with Pentheus, may well have seemed lacking in dignity. There is, then, a possibility, though it falls short of certainty, that these titles are genuine. What of the four fragments assigned to Thespis? The fourth may be at once ruled out, and the third seems unlike work of the sixth century. But the first two might, for all we know, be genuine, and if they are, the plays that contained them may well have had some dialogue.

With this inconclusive result in mind, we may pass on to the other early tragedians of whom something is recorded. Choerilus is a writer of uncertain date. The ancient life of Sophocles makes him compete against Sophocles as early as 468, and Eusebius' date for his floruit, 482, would make him about contemporary with Aeschylus; but according to the life in the Suda he first took part in the tragic competition between 523 and 520. The two known fragments ascribed to him certainly seem archaic, though not more so than some phrases to be found in Aeschylus; they comprise the kennings "bones of earth" for "rivers" and "veins of earth" for "stones". His only known title points to a subject highly suitable for tragedy. Alope, daughter of the Megarian king Cercyon, was killed by her father for having become pregnant by Poseidon. Cercyon is well known to Attic legend as one of the bad men killed by Theseus; Alope's son Hippothoon gave his name to one of the Athenian tribes. This story counts as a local Attic legend; Aeschylus wrote a satyr-play called Cercyon and Euripides a tragedy called Alope. Still, Choerilus' date is uncertain, and these data, few as they are, are of little value for our present purpose.

A much more promising source of information about early tragedy seems to be offered by Pratinas. He is said to have

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6 Nauck, o. c., pp. 719-720.
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competed against Aeschylus and Choerilus between 499 and 496; he was presumably dead by 467, when a tetralogy of his was exhibited by his son Aristias. Pratinas and Aristias are said to have written the most famous satyr-plays apart from those of Aeschylus. The Suda says that Pratinas was the first to write satyr-plays, and it is usual to reconcile this with the derivation of tragedy from satyr performances by supposing with Pohlenz that by about 500 tragedy had grown so remote from its satyric origins that Pratinas, a native of Sicyon, reintroduced the satyr-drama from its original Peloponnesian home, where it had survived unchanged. This is possible, but much less certain than has often been supposed; how can we be sure that the statement in the Suda that Pratinas invented satyr-plays is anything more than an instance of the common tendency for the earliest author known to have been eminent in any genre to be credited with its invention?

Several fragments of Pratinas have been preserved by Athenaeus; one of them is seventeen lines long, and is of much interest. It is a lyric piece in which a chorus of satyrs protests energetically against a performance in which the aulos accompaniment drowns the words it is supposed to accompany. Athenaeus calls the piece a hyporchema, a name given to lyrics meant to accompany a vigorous dance. The names which the Greeks applied to different kinds of lyric composition are often vaguely and inconsistently used, and the word “hyporchema”

7 Hypothesis to Aeschylus, Seven Against Thebes; cf. P. Oxy. 2256, fr. 2 and see Kakridis, Ποικίλα Ἑλληνικά (Ἑλληνικά XIII, 1954, 165-174).
9 See Kleinguenther, Πρώτος ειδικής. Untersuchungen zur Geschichte einer Fragestellung (Philologus, Supplementb, XXVI, 1). Leipzig, 1933.
10 Fr. 1 in Page, Poetae melici graeci, Oxford, 1962, 367.
might possibly have been applied to a lyric from a drama; but on the whole it is likely that by using this term Athenaeus indicates that he or his source took the piece to be not a dramatic but a choral lyric composition.

Against what kind of performance may we suppose that the protest of the chorus of satyrs was directed? Hardly, I think, against the musical accompaniment of tragedies by Phrynichus. Since Dalecampion published his translation of Athenaeus in 1583, supporters of this view have argued that the poet actually puns on Phrynichus' name. "Beat him, with his breath of a variegated toad", the satyrs cry (l. 10 f.), "scorch him with his spittle-wasting reed, with his chattering deep voice, his gait without tune or rhythm, him whose body was shaped beneath the gimlet". The Greek word for "toad" is φρύνος or φρύνη and the mention of a toad is taken to allude to Phrynichus. But Wilamowitz rightly said that the comparison of the aulos to a toad "would be appreciated only by one who has disturbed a common fat toad from its sleep amid the strawberries"; the likeness of a clarinet or oboe in the hands of an unskilful player to a spitting toad it so close that there is no ground for imagining that this or any other name was punned on. Nor is it likely that an early tragedian would have allowed that drowning of words by music that was later to be one of the most scandalous features of the new dithyramb that was brought in late in the fifth century by poets like Timotheus and Philoxenus. The case for thinking the piece to be a protest against the innovations of Simonides' rival, the dithyrambic poet Lasus, is not much stronger; there is rather more to be said for the possibility that the later innovations of Melanippides are in question; but there is no compelling reason for supposing any particular innovations to be attacked at all. All that is necessary is to suppose that the song of satyrs followed a performance by the aulos-player,

12 Wilamowitz, Sappho und Simonides, Berlin, 1913, 134.
which may not have been accompanied until they themselves began to sing.¹³

At this point we may as well take note of the words used by Athenaeus in introducing the quotation, words which have often been too hastily brushed aside. He says that “at a time when the dancing-floors were occupied by hired aulos-players and choreutai, people complained because the aulos-players did not accompany the choruses, as had been the custom, but the choruses accompanied the aulos-players”. During the fifth and fourth centuries before Christ, tragic and dithyrambic choruses at Athens had to consist of citizens, and the mention of hired choreutai caused Wilamowitz to suggest that Athenaeus had wrongly supposed that conditions during the fifth century were like those of his own time, when such people would be hired professionals. Still, even during the fifth century the choreutai had their expenses discharged by the choregos; and after the introduction of the new music of Timotheus and others, considerable expertise must have been required from both musicians and choreutai, so that there may well have been some competition for the services of the best performers. Something like the state of affairs described by Athenaeus—or his source, probably Aristoxenus—may well have existed towards the end of the fifth century.

Bearing in mind that Athenaeus or his source seems to have thought the piece to be a choral lyric composition, let us consider other fragments attributed to Pratinas. Like the five fragments preserved by Athenaeus, the three testimonies preserved by Pseudo-Plutarch, On Music probably come from a writer on music, most likely Aristoxenus. Had we no other information about the author than what they provide, we should suppose him to have been a choral lyric poet, markedly interested in the history of poetry and music. Pratinas is quo-

¹³ See A. M. Dale, Stasimon and Hyporcheme (Erano XLVIII, 1950, 14-20); Words, Music and Dance (Inaugural Lecture at Birkbeck College), London, 1960, 11 f.
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ted as saying that a younger Olympus, and not the famous aulos-player, wrote the famous "nome of many heads"; that Xenodamnus wrote hyporchema and not paens; that the lyric poet Thaletas saved Sparta from a plague (fr. 6 a, b, c Page). He praised the Spartans for excellence in forming choruses (fr. 2); he specially recommended the Aeolic harmony (fr. 5); he claimed originality in terms recalling those employed by other lyric poets (fr. 3). And yet the life of Pratinas in the Suda makes no mention of any lyric poetry, but only of tragedies and satyr-plays. Is it usual to suppose that Pratinas wrote choral lyrics besides these, but that the author of the life omitted to mention this. We should account for the known facts more satisfactorily without having advanced much further on the path of speculation were we to guess that there were in fact two men called Pratinas, one a tragedian and writer of satyr-plays who flourished about 500 and another a lyric poet, active towards the end of the fifth century. This is no more than a speculation; but the arguments that have prompted it may serve as a warning of the extreme uncertainty of our information about Pratinas, and of the danger of using even the single long fragment as evidence for the state of early tragedy or satyr-drama. The one extant fragment which I would assign with much confidence to the early Pratinas is fr. 4, containing the questionable statement that the quail has a sweet voice.  

So far our examination of what is recorded of the earliest tragedians has brought almost no results. True, some things that are asserted of these writers might be held to cast doubt on the claim of Wilamowitz that it was Aeschylus who made heroic saga the subject of tragedy; but this can hardly be taken for granted. The titles assigned to Thespis, while not

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14 This is quoted as coming from the Dysmainai or Karyatides; the former name should certainly be emended with Toup to Dymainai, as Latte in his Hesychius, s. v., saw and as the new Alemán in P. Oxy. XXIV has confirmed.
certainly spurious, are not certainly genuine; Choerilus may have produced his Alope after Aeschylus had become active, and the same is true of the Persians and Tantalus of Pratinas. It is another matter when we come to Phrynichus.

Phrynichus was at least five years older than Aeschylus, perhaps a good deal older. His first victory is placed between 511 and 508, at about the time of the fall of the Pisistratids: he must therefore have been born before 530. His career spanned a long period, for he won one of his victories as late as 476. Aeschylus first competed in the tragic contests in 500, so that the careers of the two poets overlapped over a period of at least twenty-four years. It follows that each may have taken over certain practices from the other, and we must guard against assuming that the older of the two must have been in every way the more old-fashioned. Still, Phrynichus was the older, and in two places Aristophanes makes it clear that at the start of Aeschylus' career Phrynichus was his chief rival (Frogs 908 f.; 1296 f.). Any feature which he and Aeschylus had in common may have been taken over by the older from the younger poet; but we cannot assume that this has been the case without definite evidence.

Aeschylus, according to Wilamowitz, was the first to make heroic saga the subject of tragedy. We have already discovered certain indications that heroic saga may have been the subject-matter of tragedy before Aeschylus; there is no doubt that it was the subject-matter of Phrynichus, and it seems most unlikely that this was due to imitation of Aeschylus' practice. In his Egyptians and his Danaides he handled a heroic subject known from Hesiod's Catalogue, to say nothing of an early epic called the Danaïs, and later to be treated in an Aeschylean trilogy. The mention of two plays on the same subject may indicate that Phrynichus, like Aeschylus, sometimes wrote a trilogy on a continuous theme; if so, one wonders who introduced the practice. Hesiod's Catalogue may also have been Phrynichus' source for the story of Alcestis. Because the Alces-
tis of Euripides was presented in lieu of a satyr-play and has certain burlesque elements, it is often held that the Alcestis of Phrynichus must have been a satyr-play; but this is hardly a safe inference. It is true that in Phrynichus' play Apollo persuaded the Fates to allow Admetus to escape death, provided another victim were offered in his place, by entertaining them and making them very drunk. This touch is primitive, but not necessarily burlesque; Aeschylus thought it proper to mention it in his Eumenides (723-728) and the other detail of the plot that is known to us, the appearance of Death at the bedside of Alcestis to cut from her head a lock in token of her dedication to the infernal gods, does not necessarily suggest a semicomic treatment. We cannot be sure that the Alcestis of Phrynichus was satyric; and even if it was, its plot had a strong element of heroic legend.

Phrynichus wrote a play about Actaeon, another undoubtedly heroic subject. The fate of Actaeon, son of Cadmus' daughter Autonoe by the god or hero Aristaeus, was in all probability treated in Hesiod's Catalogue; the daughters of Cadmus must have figured in that poem\(^\text{15}\). One of them, Semele, was the mother of Dionysus, and the story may well have counted as a Dionysiac legend; Aeschylus later handled it in his tragedy Toxotides, and two minor tragedians wrote plays called Actaeon.

Phrynichus' Women of Pleuron seems to have told how Meleager's life was ended when his mother Althaea hurled into the fire the burning brand whose consumption by the flames

\(^{15}\) P. Oxy. 2509 contains a hexameter text dealing with Actaeon that Lobel thinks may come from the Catalogue (XXX, p. 5): Athene comes to the cave of Chiron on Mount Pelion and prophesies that one day there shall be born Dionysus, who shall hunt upon the mountain with Actaeon's dogs, and what looks like a description of Actaeon's death follows. The story that Actaeon was punished for seeing Artemis naked is not attested before the Hellenistic age; the old legend is that he was eliminated as being Zeus' rival for the love of Semele.
was fated to be followed by his death. Again the story is heroic; we find it in a papyrus fragment of an early epic, probably Hesiodic, which may have served as source to Phrynichus and also to Bacchylides in his fifth dithyramb. Phrynichus' play about the Libyan giant Antaeus, who wrestled with Heracles, may have been satyric, like Euripides' play about a similar Libyan character, Busiris; so may even his Tantalus, though this seems unlikely. Still, we have more than enough evidence to show that most of Phrynichus' subjects came from heroic saga. Can we really be sure that he chose such subjects only because Aeschylus had set him the example? I think not.

But early epic and choral lyric were not the only sources of Phrynichus' plots. So far as we know, he was the first tragedian to dignify by tragic treatment themes from recent history that seemed to possess the necessary weight and dignity. We do not know which of the tragedians instituted this practice, but Phrynichus is the first whom we know to have adopted it. It is in no way surprising that it should have happened, for the fifth-century Greeks drew no hard and fast line between history and myth. Herodotus might ridicule his predecessor Hecataeus for tracing back his own descent to a divine ancestor, but in his own work the frontier between myth and fact is never clearly defined, and even the sceptical Thucydides in his Archaeologia in Book I treats the Trojan War as a real event and those who fought in it as real people.

The first contemporary event dramatised by Phrynichus was the sack of the great Ionian city of Miletus in 494, which formed the disastrous climax of the ill-fated revolt of the Ionian cities against Persian domination. Despite the danger then threatening her from her near neighbours in Aegina, Athens sent twenty triremes to help the rebels, but long before the end of the revolt she had withdrawn her aid. At the start the

16 Fr. S in MERKELBACH, Die Hesiodfragmente auf Papyrus (Arch. Papyrus, XVI, 1958, 26-81).
17 I, 3, 9, 11-12.
rebels won important victories, but in the midsummer of 495 they lost a decisive sea-battle at Lade near Miletus, and the fall of the great city followed. The horrors of the event were notorious, and seem to have been unsparingly depicted in Phrynichus' play. In consequence, he was fined a thousand drachmas, according to Herodotus (VI, 29), for "having reminded the citizens of their own misfortunes". The reason alleged sounds suspiciously aesthetic. The doctrine that poetry causes the soul to suffer experiences of its own through contemplating the good or ill fortune of others, in extant literature first found in the writings of the sophist Gorgias, may well have existed earlier in the fifth century; still, one wonders whether the prosecutor would have made use of it in framing his indictment. Was it simply that the audience found the subject too distressing for their comfort? Or had the choice of a subject a political purpose, so that the poet was punished by political antagonists? The second possibility cannot be ruled out, particularly in view of an event connecting Phrynichus with Themistocles, which we shall come to presently; for even at this time Themistocles was urging Athens to arm herself against the Persian menace. Whatever the cause, it is well to remember that the fine was not a very heavy one 18.

Of the treatment of the subject in Phrynichus' play we know nothing, nor has any fragment been preserved. Wilamowitz thought it must have been a kind of oratorio, containing lyrics and narration but no action 19; but as we shall see presently this view rests on dubious inferences. Perhaps the methods used by Aeschylus to describe the Argive onslaught upon Thebes may give some clue as to the means adopted by Phrynichus to describe the Persian onslaught upon Miletus; in any case, it is hard to see how a play on this subject can have been entirely without action.

19 WILAMOWITZ, Einleitung, 91-92; Aischylos: Interpretationen, 240.
The ancient hypothesis of the *Persians* of Aeschylus contains a valuable testimony taken from a book *On the Plots of Aeschylus* by that Glaucus of Rhegium whom I mentioned earlier. He said that Aeschylus' play was modelled on the *Phoenician Women* of Phrynichus, which also described the defeat of Xerxes in the campaigns of 480/479. We happen to know that in 476 Phrynichus won a victory in the tragic competition with a trilogy for which Themistocles was the choregos; Plutarch, from whom we learn this fact, quotes an inscribed tablet set up to commemorate the victory by Themistocles himself. Bentley's guess that the *Phoenician Women* formed part of this particular trilogy is not certain to be right, but it is exceedingly attractive.

According to the hypothesis Phrynichus' play began with a prologue speech in trimeters by an eunuch, who was engaged in putting out seats for the royal counsellors of Persia, and in so doing announced the news of the defeat. That might lead one to suppose that the royal counsellors formed the chorus of this play, as they did that of Aeschylus' *Persians*; but the title indicates that the chorus consisted of Phoenician women, and this is made probable by two fragments in which the chorus seems to be speaking of its home in Sidon (9, 10). The chief naval strength of Xerxes lay in the Phoenician fleet, which suffered heavy casualties at Salamis, so that the wives and mothers of its sailors would form an appropriate chorus for a play on this topic. The presence of the royal council suggests a setting in Persia, and the words of the chorus "leaving the town of Sidon" may indicate that they too are in Persia for the time being.

Perhaps the royal councillors were mutes, like the jurors in the *Eumenides*; perhaps they formed a secondary chorus, like the handmaids of the Danaids at the end of the *Suppliants*; but there is another possibility. The life of Phrynichus in the *Suda* says that he wrote a play called *The Just Ones*, or *The Persians*, or *The Councillors*. Was this the same as *The Phoeni-
cian Women? The possibility cannot be ruled out; but four different titles is a great many for one play, and more probably the tragedy mentioned in the Suda is a separate work. If so, it may well come from the same trilogy as The Phoenician Women. We have seen that there is one piece of evidence (p. 19 above) that Phrynichus sometimes composed a trilogy on a continuous theme. Ancient authors not infrequently confuse one play of a trilogy with another, and not the least plausible explanation of the evidence would be that the play that began with the setting out of seats for the council was really The Just Ones, or The Persians, or The Councillors. In that case, The Phoenician Women will have been another play belonging to the same trilogy. Of its action we know nothing, and the various attempts that have been made to "reconstruct" it have got nowhere. It has been contended that the announcement of the defeat right at the start, in contrast to The Persians, where it is held back until the queen of Persia and the chorus have had time to express their deep anxiety, shows that Phrynichus' treatment of the subject must have been markedly less dramatic than that of Aeschylus. Even that inference is obviously most unsafe.

Our knowledge that at least two plays by Phrynichus dealt with recent history has lent colour to the suggestion that he may have been the author of a fragment which according to its first editor "may well be thought as surprising as any recovered from the sands of Egypt" 20. A fragment of papyrus written during the second or third century A. D. and first made known in 1949 contains part of a tragedy based on the story of Candaules, king of Lydia, and his murder by his retainer Gyges that is told by Herodotus (I, 8 f.). Candaules boasted to Gyges of the beauty of his wife, and in order that his word might not be doubted forced him to spy on her while she was

going to bed. The queen noticed the intruder, but gave no sign of having done so; next morning she sent for Gyges and offered him the choice between death and the murder of her husband. Gyges chose to survive, killed the king, took his crown and married his widow; he became the founder of the dynasty of Mermnad kings that fell with Croesus.

The second of the three columns of the papyrus, which is the only one of the three that is tolerably well preserved, contains part of a speech in which the queen describes how she caught sight of Gyges in her bedroom, and recounts what happened next, down to the summoning of Gyges to her presence the next morning; it closely corresponds with the account given by Herodotus. Lobel in the first edition showed extreme caution as regards the fragment's date and authorship; but he inclined to think it came from early tragedy. The same view was taken by Denys Page; both thought of Phrynichus as a possible author. But this view has not commended itself to most scholars who have treated of the fragment since; they take it to come from a tragedy of the Hellenistic period, some of them with great assurance.

I hope soon to publish in another place a detailed examination of the fragment's style and language; here a few brief observations must suffice. Lesky has spoken scornfully of the "cento character" of the vocabulary, and of its "rare Aeschylean words mixed now with epic words and now with forms and expressions that are not used in early tragedy". But if we analyse any of the new pieces known to be by Aeschylus that

22 See the bibliography in PACK, The Greek and Latin Literary Texts from Greco-Roman Egypt, Ann Arbor, 1965, p. 97 (on No. 1707).
23 LESKY, Die hellenistische Gyges-Drama (Hermes LXXXI, 1953, 1-10).
have been published since the war, we shall find some words previously known to be Aeschylean, others found in epic and others not previously known to have been used in tragedy till after Aeschylus. If the fragment contained an inordinately large number of words of the third type, or if many of its words were of a sort very surprising to meet in early tragedy, then Lesky’s argument would have much force; as things are, it has very little. Since we know little of the vocabulary of Phrynnichus, and hardly much more of that of Hellenistic tragedy, our lexical impressions are in any case hardly likely to be decisive. It is enough to note that it is most unlike any of the few scraps of Hellenistic tragedy known to us; but this might be due to the unlikeness of the subject-matter. The style is, as Lobel noted, plainer than that of Aeschylus, and in some respects it recalls the manner of the early iambographers. Phrynnichus’ lyrics, as we shall note presently, showed an affinity with the lyric poetry of Ionia. Did his iambics show a corresponding likeness to the plain and forceful style of writers like Archilochus?

It has been maintained with confidence that the prosody of the fragment points to a Hellenistic date. In its avoidance of resolution and its treatment of naturally short vowels before mute and liquid, it differs from most tragic passages of the same length; the papyrus offers no less than four instances of a naturally short vowel lengthened before mute and liquid. These four instances are not all as significant as some have supposed. The long upsilon of ἀὔπνιας (l. 9) carries no weight, since this is the normal tragic scansion of ἀὔπνια and ἀὔπνος; the epsilon of the epic word ἔχρήσοντα (l. 4) might well retain its epic quantity in tragic verse, in which it nowhere else occurs; and ποσέδραμεν in an incomplete line (15) in col. 1 is not a safe instance, since for all we know the first two

24 E. g., the long but obscure fragment of Archilochus at P. Oxy. 2310 fr. 1 col. 1 (fr. 35 Lasserre).
vowels may be run together, so as to make a word of three syllables. What is singular is the lengthened omicron of ὁ δράσας in l. 5:

τὸ δρασθέν ἠγνων κα[...] τὶς ὁ δράσας ἀνήρ.

In the early iambographers this treatment would be normal; would it be normal in a Hellenistic tragedy? Moschion has five vowels thus placed short to only one long; Sosiphanes has three of each; the second-century drama on the Jewish flight from Egypt by Ezekiel, regarded by Lesky as a significant parallel to the Gyges fragment, has 28 short to 43 long. In the first 200 lines of Lycophron's *Alexandra*, 23 such vowels are short to 39 long when mute and liquid occur in the same word, but four are short and two long before mute and liquid in a following word. We observe that, while lengthening is commoner in Hellenistic than in classical tragedy, the proportion of lengthened vowels in our material—about five to three—is not so great that the prosody of this piece can be said to point directly to a Hellenistic origin. The authors who do regularly treat naturally short vowels before mute and liquid in this fashion are the early iambographers. Tragedy, it is agreed, took its dialogue metres from the early iambus, and Phrynichus had special affinities with the poetry of Ionia. Can we feel certain that tragedy in its early period may not have employed a prosody closer to that of Solon than to that of Aeschylus? Now that we know, as we did not know in 1949, that we have no tragedy earlier than 472, that question has become even harder to answer with an unhesitating Yes.

We come now to objections against an early date based on the subject-matter of the piece. Latte held that what he called a story of the novella type was unsuited to a tragedy; for Herodotus, he said, the novella is still history, but for this author it is myth. We have noted that for Phrynichus, as for

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Aeschylus, the boundary between history and myth was vague; an early tragedy whose theme is taken from recent history may well have slipped as easily into the novella as an early tragedy whose theme is from epic saga can slip into “Märchen”. The story of the Danaids, used by Phrynichus as well as Aeschylus, seems to have definite affinities with this genre.

But could a tragic plot with this erotic element, it is asked, have existed anywhere before Euripides? Can there have been a tragic heroine like this before Medea, Phaedra and Sthenboea? Aeschylus in The Frogs claims that he, unlike Euripides, has never depicted a woman in love (1044); how then can an early tragedian have done so? But the wife of Candaules is moved not by love, but by pride; her decision to be avenged is taken instantly, nor have we reason to suppose that her psychology was analysed in anything like an Euripidean fashion. This poet no more depicted a woman in love than Aeschylus did when he depicted Clytemnestra, whose conduct is indeed partly determined by a passion for Aegisthus, but whose amatory sentiments are not explored.

So much for the wife of Candaules; but what of Candaules himself? Is not his ridiculous and pathetic vanity a strange subject for the tragic stage? and is not the act of folly which led to his destruction an odd subject for a tragic narrative, which should be set against the background of a sublime and dignified theology? Let us consider the person of Candaules. First, it may be pertinent to observe that he is not a Hellene, but an Oriental, a barbarian. In early tragedy the only barbarian who makes a dignified appearance is the dead Darius of the Persians, who must be contrasted with the undignified and living Xerxes. More typical are the brutal herald of the Aegyptiads in the Suppliants, and Apollo’s picture in the Eumenides of the nightmare world of barbarism with its decapitations, castrations and impalements (185-190). In Greek poetry the rich

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lord of Asia seldom receives unmitigated praise: whether he is ridiculed, like Midas, or treated with gentle irony, like Croesus, he is likely to figure as the subject of a cautionary tale.

Let us now consider the contention that the act that leads to the downfall of Candaules is impossibly untragic and untheological. Candaules, says Herodotus (I, 8, 2), was fated to come to a bad end. Those whom the gods destroy they first make mad: one of the commonest forms of madness, for the Greeks, was love; and love is an agent of destruction that Ate frequently employs. When the gods decided that Heracles must die, they afflicted him with love for Iole; when they decided that Troy must fall, they afflicted Paris with love for Helen. The misfortune of Candaules, says Herodotus, was that he conceived a passion for his own wife (I, 8, 1). Such a passion, leading as it did to an act of hybris, may well have been conceived by an early tragedian as a visitation of divine displeasure.

The whole history of the Mermnad dynasty, from its foundation by Gyges to its fall with Croesus, would form, as Page observed, an admirable subject for a tragic trilogy. Such a trilogy might well have been made use of by Herodotus. Herodotus often quotes the poets, and is not unwilling to use them as sources. He quotes Sappho (II, 113) and Simonides (V, 102; VII, 228) as having mentioned persons mentioned by himself; he quotes Pindar (III, 38) for a gnome and Aeschylus (II, 156) for a piece of unconventional theology; he records the presence of Anacreon on an historic occasion (III, 21), cites Alcaeus for an historical fact (5, 95) and tells the story of how Phrynicus was prosecuted for dramatising the capture of Miletus (VI, 29).

Had there been an early tragedy about the Mermnads, it is argued, it would have been mentioned in extant literature; whereas the only writer who indicates that he may have known our play is the late novelist Achilles Tatius. But of how many great masterpieces of Greek literature would we know no-
thing, but for the accident of survival or for some chance reference? How much do we know of the works of some important authors, such as Archilochus, or Phrynichus himself? The survival of a play of Phrynichus as late as the second or third century has been thought surprising; but is it less surprising than the survival until that time of a tragedy of Hellenistic date? Most of what we have of Hellenistic tragedy is vapid, moralising, pseudo-philosophical stuff; my feeling about this fragment, for what it is worth, coincides with that of Page that it is fine poetry. Most regrettably, the evidence available is not sufficient to resolve the problem; among those who have discussed it, only Lobel has been as cautious as the nature of the material requires. The history of tragedy before 472 is a profound mystery, and Phrynichus in particular is an unknown quantity scarcely to be measured.

The indications are that he differed greatly in style and method from his younger contemporary, Aeschylus. Can we form any notion of the difference? All that we know of him suggests that his poetry was typical of the artistic atmosphere of Athens during what must have been his formative years, when under the patronage of the cultivated Hipparchus the city was becoming the chief centre of art and culture in the Ionian world. Lasus and Simonides were active there, but perhaps more characteristic of the time were Ibycus and Anacreon. The ornate amplitude of the Sicilian differs markedly from the elegant simplicity of the Ionian; yet both have in common a mannered elegance, a refined sensuousness. In the Thesmophoriazousai of Aristophanes the effeminate poet Agathon appeals to the example of these poets, together with Alcaeus, to justify his principle that in poetry “handsome does as handsome is”. “And besides it is inelegant”, says he (159 f.), “that a poet should appear rough and shaggy. Remember the great Ibycus and Anacreon of Teos and Alcaeus, who gave harmony its flavour, how they wore turbans and enjoyed Ionian luxury. Phrynichus too—you will have heard of him—was hand-
some and wore handsome clothes; that is why his plays were handsome too; for what one writes is bound to be like one's character".

The impression of Phrynichus given by this passage is strongly confirmed by all that is known to us about his lyrics. The elderly Athenians afflicted with a passion for jury-service who fifty-four years after the production of the Phoenician Women come in the middle of the night to wake their friend Philocleon arrive before his house “carrying lamps and humming ancient melodies, honeyed, Sidonian, Phrynichan, delightful” (Wasps 219-220). Eight years later Aristophanes' chorus of birds addresses with these words the muse of bird-song: “Muse of the thickets, Muse various, with whose aid in gardens and on mountain-tops I perch upon the leafy ashtree and with songful throat reveal the sacred strains of melodies for Pan and songs to be danced to the Mountain Mother. From these Phrynichus like a bee sucked the fruit of melodies immortal, ever carrying away sweet song” (Birds 737 f.). Does this exquisite stanza echo an actual lyric by Phrynichus? We cannot prove it, but we are fully justified in thinking it possible.27 The influence of cult poetry on the lyrics both of tragedy and comedy was of course profound; but these words do not mean that Phrynichus in his melodies was influenced by the cult hymns which we know to have been written in honour of Pan and of the Mother of the Gods. The thought is simpler and more poetic, that the poet borrows his melodies from the song of birds; the same claim was made for Walther von der Vogelweide and by Milton on behalf of Shakespeare.28

Lamentably little of Phrynichus' lyrics has survived, but even that little seems to testify to an affinity with the eastern half of the Greek world. One fragment (6) has two and per-

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28 I side with Wilamowitz, Griechische Verskunst, repr. Darmstadt, 1958, 436, n. 2 against Fraenkel, l. c.
haps three successive examples of the greater asclepiad; this metre, known to us from the monodic lyric of the Lesbians, does not occur elsewhere in what we have of tragedy. Ionics are of course used by Aeschylus and other poets; but in view of their supposed associations with the east, their occurrence in two of the very few lyric fragments (14-15) may possibly be significant. Ion of Chios told how Sophocles after a dinner-party was moved by the beauty of a boy who brought him wine to quote from Phrynichus the line "and on his crimson cheeks there shines the light of love": λάμπει δ᾽ ἐπὶ πορφυρέας παρῆσθι φῶς ἔρωτος (fr. 13). It has a languorous richness that to us seems more Ionian than Athenian.

With music went the dance, and Phrynichus was famous for his dances. One of his dance movements figured in the parody of a dance performed by the three sons of Carcinus with which the Wasps concluded (1490-1492). Plutarch quotes a beautiful elegiac epigram, probably of Hellenistic date, about his dances: "and my dances gave as many figures as at sea, when the billows are stormy, the cruel night makes waves" 29. According to one writer of late Hellenistic date, Phrynichus and other early tragedians actually gave dancing-lessons 30.

Did these celebrated lyrics make up the chief part of Phrynichus' plays? A Peripatetic writer says that he and the tragedians of his time "were principally musicians" 31. Aristotle's remark that Aeschylus reduced the part of the chorus and gave the chief place to the spoken element 32 is often taken to mean that in the plays of all tragedians older than Aeschylus the lyric part must have greatly predominated, and together with his statement that Aeschylus brought in the second actor, led Wilamowitz to argue that Aeschylus invented dialogue. If

29 Plutarch, Quaest. symp. 732 f; see Wilamowitz, Griechische Verskunst, p. 465, n. 1.
30 Aristocles, quoted by Athenaeus 22 a.
31 Pseudo-Aristotle, Problemata 920 a 11.
32 Poetics 1449 a 15 f.
Aeschylus invented dialogue, Phrynichus was quick to copy him; we have some eight lines of his in dialogue metre, none of them in what Aristotle says was the earliest dialogue metre, the tetrameter, but all in trimeters 33. The life in the Suda says that Phrynichus invented the tetrameter; the statement is absurd, for Archilochus and others were writing tetrameters long before Phrynichus, but it may reflect the fact that Phrynichus was writing dialogue not much later than or indeed actually before Aeschylus.

Only in one other respect is Phrynichus stated to have been an innovator; he is credited in the life in the Suda with the introduction of the first female character; but we cannot be sure that this was his only innovation. Plutarch couples him with Aeschylus as having brought tragedy on so that it dealt with myths and sad events 34, and all the evidence we have is in accordance with his statement. The high praise given him by so good a judge as Aristophanes is in no way discounted by the nature of the few remains. Can we safely take for granted that his work consisted almost entirely of lyrics, that it had little dramatic power, or that it made no important contribution to the development of tragedy? Surely not; today we know even less about the first century and a half of tragedy than Wilamowitz thought we knew 35.

33 The tetrameters quoted in the Ammonius scholia on the Iliad in P. Oxy. 221 have nothing to do with Phrynichus.

34 Quaest. symp. 615 a.

35 I am grateful to D. Antonio Pastor for many kindnesses. This lecture is based on work in progress, which will appear later in a fuller form and with more documents.