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Interpreting epic and lyric fragments: Stesichorus, Simonides, Corinna, the Theban epics, the Hesiodic corpus and other epic fragments

Un poète doit laisser des traces de son passage,
non des preuves. Seules les traces font rêver.

(René Char, *La parole en archipel*)

1. Stesichorus in Simonides (*PMG 564*) and elsewhere.

To illustrate the fascinating complexity that fragments often present, I shall start with a well known lyric fragment of Simonides quoted by Athenaeus (4.172EF = Simon. *PMG 564* = F 273 Poltera):

... προτέρου Στησιχόρου ἢ Ἰβύκου ἐν τοῖς Ἄθλοις ἐπιγραφομένοις εἰρηκότος φερέσθαι τῇ παρθένῳ δῶρα κασαμίδας χόνδρον τε καὶ ἐγκρίδας ἄλλα τε πέμματα καὶ μέλι χλωρόν [= Stesich. F 3 F.]. ὅτι δὲ τὸ ποίημα τοῦτο Στησιχόρου ἐστὶν ἰκανώτατος μάρτυς Σιμωνίδης ὁ ποιητής, ὃς περὶ τοῦ Μελέαγρου τὸν λόγον ποιούμενός φησιν·

(Μελέαγρου) ὃς δουρὶ πάντα
νίκαε νέους, δινάεντα βαλὼν
Ἄναυρον ὕπερ πολυβότρυος ἐξ Ἴωλκοῦ·
οὔτω γὰρ Ὅμηρος ἠδὲ Στησίχορος ἄειε λαοῖς.

ὁ γὰρ Στησίχορος οὕτως εἶρηκεν ἐν τῷ προκειμένῳ αἵματι τοῖς Ἄθλοις·
θρώϊκων μὲν ἄρ' Ἀμφιάραος ἄκοντι δὲ νίκαεν Μελέαγρος [Athen. 4.172F = Stesich. F 4 F.].

...[But before him (Panyassis)] Stesichorus or Ibycus in the poem entitled The funeral Games [for Pelias] was the first to say that the gifts brought for the girl were “sesame cakes and groats and oil-and-honey cakes and other cakes and yellow honey” [= Stesich. F 3 F.]. That this poem is by Stesichorus is very aptly attested by the poet Simonides, when he says in the course of telling the story of Meleager: “... (Meleager) who defeated all the young men with his spear, hurling it over the eddying Anaurus from grape-rich Iolcus; for so Homer and Stesichorus sang to the peoples” [= Simon. *PMG 564*]. For in the poem in question Stesichorus (F 4 F.) said “Amphiaraus won in leaping [in the long jump], whereas Meleager won with the javelin”¹.

If we leave aside the mythological detail regarding Meleager’s victory at the funeral games for Pelias, the main interest and value of the passage in Athenaeus does not really lie in the problem(s) of attribution he raises and solves, but rather in the multi-layered information it conveys. Besides being a citation fragment from a poem by

¹ The Loeb translation of Athenaeus is by S.D. Olson, and the Loeb translation of the Simonides fragment is by D.A. Campbell, with a few modifications.

Simonides, the title of which remains unspecified², these lines also stand as an unplaced paraphrase fragment of epic poetry, and as a paraphrase fragment of the lyric poet Stesichorus, followed by a citation fragment by Stesichorus (F 4 F.). Indirectly, it is also a testimony of how ancient scholarship dealt with problems of attribution through the centuries. Four different layers can therefore be detected in the Athenaeus passage, namely:

1. It is an unplaced epic fragment (= 'Homerus' F 29 Davies = F epic. adesp. 2 W.), insofar as Simonides recalls that the victory achieved by Meleager at the funeral games for Pelias was also narrated by 'Homer'. Although we know from the *Iliad* (9.529-99) that Homer was familiar with the myth of Meleager and the Calydonian boar, we have to discard Simonides' claim that he dealt with Meleager's victory at Iolcus, as no mention of the funeral games for Pelias can be found in our *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. The attribution to Homer of an epic poem narrating the funeral games for Pelias is not surprising, since in late archaic Greece the Homeric poems were not restricted to the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*: as Wilamowitz remarked, «Um 500 sind alle Gedichte von Homer»³. Moreover, since Simonides displays great familiarity with Homer in a number of elegiac poems where he mentions him «in terms of unqualified admiration»⁴, the attribution by him to Homer of a poem on the funeral games for Pelias indicates that such poem had gained panHellenic recognition at the time; the existence and renown of an epic poem on the funeral games for Pelias is corroborated by the popularity of the theme on a number of early vases and works of art, including the Chest of Cypselus⁵. It is then hard to believe that with the name 'Homer' Simonides could refer to a local poet who composed a Thessalian epic, although the connection of Pelias with Jason, their dispute over the throne of Iolcus and the quest for the golden fleece may have been part of a Iolcus cycle. I am also unconvinced by the possibility that Simonides was here using the name 'Homer' as a *Collectivname*, considering that all the other quotations of Homer by him can be traced back either to specific lines in the *Iliad* (Simon. F el. 19.1 f. W.² = Hom. *Il.* 6.146), or (as far as we can gauge) to the outlasting fame of his poetry (Simon. F el. 20.14 W.²), or to the war at Troy with which at some point he was identified, that is, not only the events narrated in the *Iliad*, but the entire epic tradition including the death of Achilles and the fall of the city (Simon. F el. 11.13-8 W.²).

Eumelus of Corinth, a reputed early poet who told the myth of Medea and the Argonauts, stands out as a plausible candidate for the authorship of the poem mentioned by Simonides (cf. Eum. FF 3-5, 8 B. / 20-3 W. = Eum. *Cor.* FF 2-5 D.), although no evidence is available that in his *Corinthiaca* he dealt with the funeral games for Pelias; he may also have told a different version of the myth of Medea⁶.

² D. Page placed *PMG* 564 among the fragments of Simonides' *Europa*, whereas O. Poltera cautiously places it among the fragments *incertae sedis* as F 273, and quotes W. Kegel's surmise that it belongs to a lost epinician for a Thessalian victor (Poltera 2008, 512).

³ Wilamowitz 1884, 353; see also 352: «Bei Herodotos beginnt die Kritik ... subjective zweifel äußert er».

⁴ West 1993, 6; see Simon. FF eleg. 11.13-8; 19.1 f.; 20.13 f. W.².

⁵ See the recent survey by Davies – Finglass 2014, 212-5.

⁶ For the attribution to Eumelus of the Funeral Games for Pelias see von der Mühl 1952, 358 f. and, most recently, Grossardt 2001, 42 f., 60-61; Debiasi 2015, 61-7. On Medea in Eumelus see

Besides, given that in antiquity the name of Homer was associated with many poems of the epic cycle, it is worth recalling that the association (or confusion) of Homer with another poet as famous as Eumelus is nowhere attested, unless one is willing to assume that the attribution to Eumelus of the epic poem *Titanomachia* (cf. Eum. FF 3; 14 W.), which at some point was arranged by the ancient grammarians as the first poem of the epic cycle (= *Titanom.* FF 1-11 B./1-10 D.), led to the confusion Eumelus = Homer⁷.

We should also note that in his account of the myth, the mythographer Ps.Apollodorus relates the return of the Argonauts and the murder and burial of Pelias *without* mentioning the lavish funeral games (*Bibl.* 1.9.27) held in his honour; hence, it cannot be ruled out that the myth of the Ἄθλα ἐπὶ Πελῖαι may have stood as an independent epic-heroic theme unconnected to the voyage of the Argonauts and to the murder of Pelias inspired by Medea. Similarly, an early Argonautic epic must indeed have existed on its own, dealing with the voyage of the Argo and with the love story between Jason and Medea, but not necessarily with the murder of Pelias at the hands of his daughters following the treacherous advice of Medea⁸. The famous lines of the *Odyssey* (12.69-72) recalling the sailing of Ἀργὼ πᾶσι μέλουσα, παρ' Αἰήταο πλέουσα (v. 70), provide clear evidence of the popularity of an early Argonautic epos; moreover, the existence of a poem narrating *at least* the *nostos* of the Argonauts composed at some point in the archaic age can nowadays also be inferred from *POxy* 3698 (IInd century CE), containing early hexameters of an Argonautic subject, where the names of Orpheus, Mopsos, Jason, Aietes occur, along with the mention of a νόκτος (lines 10, 14, 15, 17, 18)⁹.

Another possibility is that Simonides was referring to the epic poem *Naupactia* (or *Carmen Naupactium*), which also dealt with Medea and Jason at Iolcus (cf. *Naup.* FF 5-9 B./D./W./Tsgalis). The *Naupactia* was not included in the epic cycle, although it can be recalled that other non-cyclic poems, such as the *Capture of Oechalia* and the *Phocais*, were attributed to Homer by several sources (cf. Creophyl. TT 4-15 B. + F 1 B./D./W.; *vita Homeri Herodot.* 16 W.). Yet, this poem is never attributed to Homer and, as happens with Eumelus, the tying of the funeral games for Pelias to the *Naupactia* is far from granted: Pausanias only recalls that in the account of the *Naupactia* Jason migrated from Iolcus to Corcyra (*not* to Corinth)

West 2002, 122-5. On the funeral games for Pelias see also Meyer 1980, 126 f.; Vojatzi 1982, 10-107; Gantz 1993, 191-4.

⁷ This possibility is suggested by Debiasi 2015, 62 fn. 108. Grossardt 2001, 61, has suggested that Simonides is referring to Eumelus' *Corinthiaca*: his opinion is countered by Davies – Finglass 2014, 218 fn. 53.

⁸ Pelias and Medea are mentioned in the same context in Hesiod (*Theog.* 992-1002), but the first connection between Medea and the murder of Pelias is attested on Attic vases around 530 BCE, and in poetry in 462 BCE (Pindar, *Pyth.* 4.250), where Medea is called Πελιασοφόνου. See also Pherec. F 105 Fowler. See on these matters Gantz 1993, 365-8; Tsgalis 2017, 390 f.

⁹ See *POxy* 3698, published by Haslam 1986, 10-5. Haslam (p. 10) wisely refrained from ascribing this fragment to a poet or to a specific poem; for the connection of this fragment with *POxy* 2513, and my doubts that it may be attributed to Eumelus of Corinth, see below, p. 52 and fn. 81. On the existence of an Argonautic epic see mostly West 2005; see also Davison 1968, 78; Martina 2007; Davies – Finglass 2014, 216 f.

after the death of Pelias (Paus. 2.3.9 = *Naup.* F 9 B./D./W./T.: see Tsagalis 2017, 390).

Finally, of two other possibilities suggested by J.A. Davison, that the epic poem alluded to by Simonides could perhaps be a *Meleagris* or else the Ἀμφιαράου ἐξέλασις «since Amphiarus is so closely associated with Meleager by Stesichorus», the second one should be discarded since it originates from a misinterpretation of Stesich. F 4 F., θρώικων μὲν ἄρ' Ἀμφιάραιος ἄκοντι δὲ νικάσεν Μελέαγρος, where Stesichorus is simply referring that the two heroes won in different contests at the funeral games of Pelias: no close association between Amphiarus and Meleager is implied here¹⁰. A *Meleagris* may sound like a more plausible hypothesis, and the early existence of an epic poem centered on Meleager has been surmised by many scholars¹¹, although in Stesich. F 4 Meleager seems to have only been listed as one of the victors in the games for Pelias; moreover, such a poem remains merely conjectural (just as its attribution to Homer). The hunt for the Calydonian boar and the death of Meleager were popular in early epic and lyric poetry, as is attested – besides the narrative in Hom. *Il.* 9.524-99 – by two Hesiodic poems (FF 25.1-13 M-W /16 H./22 M.; 280 M-W/216 M.), by the *Minyas* (F 5 B./W., 3 D.), and by Stesichorus' *Boar-hunters* (cf. FF 183-91 F., coming from two different poems)¹².

2. Simonides *PMG* 564/F 273 P. has a twofold value with respect to Stesichorus. It stands as the earliest testimonium of the *fortuna Stesichori* (= Stesich. Tb37 Ercoles), attesting to the fame he had reached only a few decades after his death: his poems may have circulated well beyond the boundaries of Sicily and Magna Graecia, at the latest in the first decades of the Vth century BCE, unless one is inclined to surmise that Simonides became acquainted with the Ἄθλα ἐπὶ Πελῖαι of Stesichorus during his stay in Sicily, which supposedly took place in the second quarter of the Vth century (cf. Plat. *ep.* 2, 311A; Paus. 1.2.3). It should also be recalled that in Athens Aeschylus was familiar with the poems of Stesichorus in his early years, as stated in an ancient commentary (= Stesich. F 181.1-12 F.), that is, at the end of the VIth century. Additionally, Simon. *PMG* 564 also stands as a paraphrase fragment from the Ἄθλα ἐπὶ Πελῖαι of Stesichorus, to be placed alongside the citation fragment reported by Athenaeus immediately thereafter (= Stesich. F 4 F.). Besides confirming that Stesichorus agrees with Simonides on the victory of Meleager, F 4 provides the additional information that Amphiarus was the victor in the long jump. In a later passage (14.645E) where he quotes again *verbatim* the same line on πέμματα which occurs in 4.172 E (= Stesich. F 3 F.) just before the Simonides fragment, Athenaeus

¹⁰ See Davison 1968, 78 [= *Eranos* 53, 1955, 134]; for the second possibility Davison was probably relying on Schneidewin 1835, 36.

¹¹ See Kakridis 1949, 24 ff., *passim*, and the scholars listed by Aldeen 2000, 238 fn. 148.

¹² The vengeance of Althaea on her son Meleager was dealt with in FF 187-91 F: on these fragments see Garner 1994; Davies – Finglass 2014, 525-31, 533 f. Althaea is also mentioned by Ibycus (cf. F 290 D.); on the epic and lyric fragments dealing with the boar hunt and the death of Meleager see, among others, Galiart 1912, 13-46; Grossardt 2001, 43-75.

omits the title of the poem, and has no doubts in crediting Stesichorus as the author of the *Athla*, without even mentioning Ibycus.¹³

3. Contrary to what Wilamowitz thought, followed by Page, Davies and Campbell (*Greek Lyric* III: 453, fn. 1 *ad* Simon. F 564), the context of Simon. *PMG* 564 can hardly have been taken from the Alexandrian grammarian Seleucus (Ist century BCE, = *FGrHist* 634 F 2), who was drawing on Pamphilus of Alexandria¹⁴. In fact, Seleucus is quoted by Athenaeus at the beginning of the passage (4.172D) as asserting that the word ‘pastries’ (πέμματα) occurs for the first time (πρῶτον) in the epic poet Panyassis (Vth century BCE): πεμμάτων δὲ **πρῶτόν** φησιν μνημονεύσαι Πανύασσιν Cέλευκος. But, as had already been pointed out by Müller, Athenaeus (4.172DE) then proceeds to disprove Seleucus’ claim by quoting a line of Stesichorus (or Ibycus) showing that the word occurred earlier: **προτέρου** Cτησιχόρου ἢ Ἰβύκου ἐν τοῖς Ἄθλοις ἐπιγραφομένοις ... κακαμίδας χόνδρον τε καὶ ἐγκρίδας ἄλλα τε πέμματα / καὶ μέλι χλωρόν (= Stesich. F 3 F.)¹⁵. It follows that in quoting Stesichorus Athenaeus was drawing on a source other than Seleucus, whose identity remains unknown; furthermore, the unspecified source was undecided whether to attribute the *Athla* for Pelias to Stesichorus or to Ibycus, and the problem was solved by Athenaeus himself.

4. As a result, the context of Athen. 4.172DE quoting Simon. *PMG* 564/F 273 P. also provides interesting evidence of the philological skill displayed by Athenaeus, which allows him to solve the disputed authorship of the poem Ἄθλα ἐπὶ Πελῖαι by way of a third poet – Simonides – only a few decades younger than Stesichorus and Ibycus. In a lyric papyrus fragment adespota (*POxy* 2735, frg. 11.1-16), the names of other heroes who competed at the funeral games for Pelias occur (Euphemus, Iolaus, Peleus: cf. Ps.Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.9.2; Paus. 5.9-11; Hyg. *fab.* 273): if, as was suggested by Page and accepted by most scholars, the scraps from this papyrus should be better attributed to Ibycus (= Ibyc. S 176.1-16 D.) rather than Stesichorus, the disputed authorship of the *Athla* between Ibycus and Stesichorus in antiquity may have originated from the fact that both poets dealt with the same heroic theme, although probably in a different way¹⁶.

¹³ The attribution to Stesichorus of a poem Ἄθλα ἐπὶ Πελῖαι is confirmed by the sources which quote FF 1, 2a F. For more controversies over the attribution of some poems and fragments to Ibycus and/or Stesichorus see Cingano 1990, esp. 190-204.

¹⁴ See Wilamowitz 1900, 33 fn. 2: «... Seleukos schwankte zwischen den beiden Dichtern (Ibycus and Stesichorus), also erst nach ihm, wol durch Pamphilos, der bei Athen. IV 172 ... zugrunde liegt».

¹⁵ See Müller 1891, 29: «constat Athenaeum non ipsum eam (glossam) ex Seleuco hausisse ... Est igitur hic, qui contra Seleucum dicat, iam ante Panyassin vocem πέμμα esse usurpatam. Qui hic sit, pro certo dici non potest, sed Athenaeum ipsum esse nemo credet».

¹⁶ For the attribution of *POxy* 2735 to Ibycus see Page 1969, 69-71; Page 1971, 89-93, focussing esp. on frg. 11; the attribution to Stesichorus was suggested by the editor princeps, Lobel (1968, 9), and has been vindicated by West 1969, 142-9 (dealing with frg. 1) and 2015, 70-3; the attribution to Ibycus has recently been advocated afresh by Finglass 2017. Long before the discovery of *POxy* 2735, the possibility that there may have existed two lyric poems dealing with the *Athla* was raised by Schneidewin 1833, 42-5; see now Cingano 1990, 194.

Two more observations bearing on the performance of poetry in archaic Greece can be added to stress the importance and interest of Simon. *PMG* 564 = F 273 Poltera. Homer and Stesichorus are represented here mostly as performers of heroic traditions, although the composition of their own poems is also implied. The key words vividly expressing the liveliness of countless performances by the two poets in front of an audience are (οὔτω γὰρ Ὅμηρος ἠδὲ Στησίχορος) ἄεισε λαοῖς (*PMG* 564.4), where the interaction between the audience and the performers emerge. Interestingly, the expression ἄεισε λαοῖς tallies nicely with what Stesichorus himself says in the proem of one of his poems, the *Oresteia*, where the word λαός (‘people assembled’) is replaced by δᾶμος, and he calls his songs δαμώματα, i.e. τὰ δημοσία ἀδόμενα (F 173.1 f. F.): τοιάδε χρὴ Χαρίτων δαμώματα καλλικόμων / ὕμνεϊν Φρύγιον μέλος ἐξευρόντα<Ϸ> ἀβρῶς ..., ‘such songs of the lovely-haired Graces, composed for the public, we must sing most delicately ...’¹⁷.

Secondly, Simonides is the earliest source to associate Stesichorus and Homer, thereby inaugurating a close parallel between two poets performing the same mythical narrative, yet in two different poetic genres (epic vs. lyric epic), which became canonical throughout antiquity (cf. e.g. *A.P.* 7.75, 9.184.3 f.; Quintil. *Inst.* 10.1.62; Long. *de subl.* 13.3; Dio Chrys. 2.33, 55.7)¹⁸. Moreover, differently from other authors who stress the variance between Homer and Stesichorus regarding the version of a myth – such as Chamaeleon with the treatment of Helen (= Stesich. F 90.1-15 F.; cf. F 91a F.) – in Simonides the two poets are shown to agree on the victory of Meleager in the throw of the spear.

To conclude with the *Athla* of Stesichorus, an improvement in the placing of the few extant fragments can be found in the recent edition by P.J. Finglass (in Davies – Finglass 2014), where attention has been paid to the information provided by a paraphrase fragment in Zenobius and the placing of a fragment has been rightly reconsidered:

(Zenob. vulg. *Cent.* 6.44): ... βέλτιον δὲ τὸν δεσμὸν ἀκούειν τὸν ἀποβιβρώσκοντα τῷ χειρὶ· ἐδέθη γὰρ ἴεν τι πετραίω† Στησίχορος ἐν ἀρχῆι (Schneidewin: εὐναρχεῖν codd.) τῶν ἐπὶ Πελῖαι Ἄθλων, «‘arm-gnawing bonds’: boxing thongs, so called because they cut through and destroy the flesh; but it is preferable to interpret the word as ‘the bonds that eat away the arms’, for ... was bound ...: so at the beginning of the *Funeral Games of Pelias*» (Loeb translation by D.A. Campbell). The text is rather obscure, but the only clear information given is that the episode or words referring to the boxing match in the funeral games occurred in the very beginning (ἐν ἀρχῆι) of the poem, as was restored by F.W. Schneidewin from a meaningless εὐναρχεῖν in cod. Par.: his emendation has been

¹⁷ On these lines see Cingano 2003, 29-34. For other telling occurrences of λαός, δᾶμος, πόλις, indicating the audience in the performance of archaic poetry see Alc. F 3 frg. 3.73 f. D. = F 26.73 f. C.; Theogn. 775-9; Pind. F 42.3-5, *Pae.* 2, F 52b 1-4 M.; Corinna, *PMG* 655.1-5. See D’Alfonso 1994, 112-7; Ercoles 2013, 89, 594.

¹⁸ This parallel has often been overstressed by recent scholarship as clear evidence that, no differently from epic poetry, all Stesichorus’ poetry was performed monodically: see e.g., most recently, West 2015, 77-80. It should, however, not be neglected that the association between the two poets is never centered on the mode or context of performance, but mainly on the same heroic themes – and possibly on the length – of their songs: see Cingano 1990, 213-5.

accepted by all the following editors, but Finglass is the first ever to have consequently placed this fragment as Stesich. F 1 at the beginning of the *Athla* and of the entire collection of Stesichorus' fragments.

1.1. Unlikely fragments: Stesich. FF 98, 171, and 282 F.

The same attention should in my opinion have been paid to the placing and nature of a few other fragments: three examples are worth pointing out, showing that in some cases a clearcut distinction between testimonia and paraphrase fragments is yet to be achieved in editing fragments. They are provided by a few mentions of Stesichorus in the ancient sources which are still unanimously (and mistakenly, in my opinion) classified amongst his fragments, numbering as FF 203, 231 and 229 Page/Davies/Campbell, and as FF 98, 282, and 171 Finglass:

1) F 98 F. (Dio Chrys. *Or.* 2.33): τῶν δὲ ἄλλων ποιητῶν οὐ εφόδρα ἐφρόντιζε (scil. Ἀλέξανδρος). Στησιχόρου δὲ καὶ Πινδάρου ἐπεμνήσθη, τοῦ μὲν ὅτι μιμητὴς Ὀμήρου γενέσθαι δοκεῖ καὶ τὴν ἄλωσιν οὐκ ἀναξίως ἐποίησε τῆς Τροίας κτλ.

2) F 282 F. (Plut. *de malign. Herod.* 14.857F): καίτοι τῶν παλαιῶν καὶ λογίων ἀνδρῶν οὐχ Ὅμηρος, οὐχ Ἡσίοδος, οὐκ Ἀρχίλοχος, οὐ Πείσανδρος, οὐ Στησιχόρος, οὐκ Ἀλκμάν, οὐ Πίνδαρος Αἰγυπτίου ἔχον λόγον Ἡρακλέους ἢ Φοινίκος ἀλλ' ἓνα τοῦτον ἴσασι πάντες Ἡρακλέα τὸν Βοιωτίον ὁμοῦ καὶ Ἀργεῖον.

These two passages are neither citation fragments, nor paraphrase fragments: they have nothing to say about a single word or content of an episode or of a poem by Stesichorus. The mention of Stesichorus by Dio Chrysostom has been placed by Page/Davies, Campbell and Finglass among the fragments of the *Iliupersis*; yet, it simply recalls in the most generic way that, according to Alexander the Great, Stesichorus depicted the capture of Troy (in the *Iliupersis*: cf. FF 99-164 F.) in a manner not unworthy of Homer, *i.e.* he imitated the *pathos* and style typical of Homer (ὅτι μιμητὴς Ὀμήρου) in narrating similar scenes.

On the other hand, the passage by Plutarch, which has been placed amongst the *Fragmenta incerti carminis*, simply states that Stesichorus only knew of an Argive and Boeotian Heracles, with no exotic connotation relating him to Egypt or Phoenicia: moreover, we are informed by Plutarch that in his quite ordinary geographic characterisation of Heracles Stesichorus was in keeping with the most illustrious archaic poets such as Homer, Hesiod, Archilochus, Pisander, Alcman, Pindar. It is apparent that this testimonium does not convey the slightest piece of information on the treatment of Heracles by Stesichorus; it should therefore be dismissed not only from the collection of fragments by Stesichorus, but also from those of other poets mentioned in Plutarch's passage (Archilochus, Pisander, Alcman), contrary to what the editors have generally assumed¹⁹.

In summary, both fragments are extremely vague and do not convey any information on a poem by Stesichorus; they should be deleted and classified among the testimonia pertaining to the poet. In particular, F 98 F. should be relocated under the

¹⁹ See Archiloch. F 289 W.²; Pisand. F 11 D./12 W.; Alcman. F 72 D./222 C.

testimonia referring to the verdict on Stesichorus in antiquity, as has been correctly done by M. Ercoles (2013) in his edition of the *testimonia* pertaining to Stesichorus (= Stesich. Tb43(ii) E.).

3) The third case in point is represented by a passage where Athenaeus (12.513A = Megacl. F 9 Janko = Stesich. F 171 F.) claims, relying on the peripatetic Megaclides of Athens (2nd half of the IVth century BCE), that ‘Stesichorus imitated much of Xanthus’ poetry, for example what is referred to as his *Oresteia*’: πολλὰ δὲ τῶν Ξάνθου παραπεποίηκεν ὁ Στησίχορος, ὡς περ καὶ τὴν Ὀρεστείαν καλουμένην²⁰. Placing as it does Stesichorus as a follower and a plagiarist of the shadowy Xanthus (see below) in his composition of the *Oresteia*, this excerpt is undeniably important from a historical and literary perspective: yet again, it does not convey the slightest piece of information on one single word or on the text or subject matter of the poem. It should therefore be deleted from the fragments and safely placed among the testimonia of Stesichorus, under the heading pertaining to the «giudizi degli antichi» on the poet (it is missing in the useful and detailed collection edited by Ercoles 2013); at the same time, it could serve as a useful testimonium to contextualize Stesichorus’ composition of the *Oresteia*.

1.2. A new fragment of Stesichorus?

Conversely, to conclude on a more constructive note on Stesichorus, a new fragment from his *Oresteia* can perhaps be retrieved by referring to this poem a passage in Aelian where we read that according to the same poet Xanthus, who was earlier than Stesichorus, the original name of Electra, the daughter of Agamemnon, was ‘Laodice’. The Argives renamed her Electra (= ἄλεκτρον, ‘without a marriage bed, deprived of her marriage bed’) when after the marriage of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus she remained a virgin (Ael. *VH* 4.26 = Xanthus, *PMG* 700 = Stesich. T a4b Ercoles):

Ξάνθος ὁ ποιητὴς τῶν μελῶν (ἐγένετο δὲ οὗτος πρεσβύτερος Στησίχορου τοῦ Ἱμεραίου) λέγει τὴν Ἥλέκτραν τοῦ Ἀγαμέμνονος οὐ τοῦτο ἔχειν τὸ ὄνομα πρῶτον ἀλλὰ Λαοδίκην. ἐπεὶ δὲ Ἀγαμέμνων ἀνηρέθη, τὴν δὲ Κλυταίμνηστραν ὁ Αἰγισθοῦς ἔγημε καὶ ἐβαίλευσεν, ἄλεκτρον οὖσαν καὶ καταγερῶσαν παρθένον Ἀργεῖοι Ἥλέκτραν ἐκάλεσαν διὰ τὸ ἀμοιρεῖν ἀνδρὸς καὶ μὴ πεπειρᾶσθαι λέκτρον.

Following C. Robert²¹, R. Janko has recently claimed that Aelianus took this information from Megaclides of Athens (= Megacl. F 10 Janko); Janko has suggested that «Megaclides F 10 should be added to the fragments of Stesichorus’ *Oresteia*», on the ground that «Megaclides meant that Stesichorus not only used this story but

²⁰ This sentence occurs at the end of a section where Athenaeus, relying on Megaclides, has already mentioned Xanthus and Stesichorus: it is featured again as Stesich. F 282 F., completing the whole passage: see below.

²¹ See Robert 1881, 173-5.

borrowed it from Xanthus, whom the poet cited, as we know from [Megaclides] F 9»²². In fact, a close look at the only other extant fragment of Xanthus (*PMG* 699) corroborates this hypothesis, if one considers that the passage of Athenaeus where it is embedded draws on Megaclides and displays some striking similarities with the Aelian passage (Athen. 12.512E-513A = Xanthus, *PMG* 699 = Megaclides F 9 Janko = Stesich. F 281 + 171 F.):

Τοῦτον οὖν [τὸν Ἡρακλέα], φησὶν [ὁ Μεγακλείδης], οἱ νέοι ποιηταὶ κατασκευάζουσιν ἐν ληκτοῦ ἐχήματι μόνον περιπορευόμενον, ξύλον ἔχοντα καὶ λεοντήν καὶ τόξα. καὶ ταῦτα πλάσαι πρῶτον Στησίχορον τὸν Ἱμεραῖον. καὶ Ξάνθος ὁ μελοποιός (*PMG* 699), πρεσβύτερος ὢν Στησίχορου, ὡς καὶ αὐτὸς Στησίχορος μαρτυρεῖ ὡς φησὶν ὁ Μεγακλείδης, οὐ ταύτην αὐτῷ περιτίθει τὴν στολήν ἀλλὰ τὴν Ὀμηρικὴν. πολλὰ δὲ τῶν Ξάνθου παραπεποίηκεν ὁ Στησίχορος, ὥσπερ καὶ τὴν Ὀρέστειαν καλουμένην (F 171).

In this excerpt on the different characterization of Heracles by the ancient poets, Stesichorus is singled out as the first to represent him with a bow, a club and a lion skin. As was pointed out by Robert²³, here too, when Xanthus is introduced, he is immediately associated with Stesichorus, with the same chronological information found in Aelian (*i.e.*, Xanthus predated Stesichorus), and with two further details, namely: a) that Stesichorus mentioned Xanthus in one of his poems; b) that this information is provided by Megaclides (F 9 Janko), and the same applies to the details regarding the characterization of Heracles: Ξάνθος ὁ μελοποιός, πρεσβύτερος ὢν Στησίχορου, ὡς καὶ αὐτὸς Στησίχορος μαρτυρεῖ ὡς φησὶν ὁ Μεγακλείδης ... ~ ... Ξάνθος ὁ ποιητὴς τῶν μελῶν (ἐγένετο δὲ οὗτος πρεσβύτερος Στησίχορου τοῦ Ἱμεραίου). The last line of Athenaeus / Megaclides (= Stesich. F 171), specifying that in the *Oresteia* Stesichorus borrowed from Xanthus, brings further weight to what has been surmised by Janko: as a consequence, the passage by Aelianus (*VH* 4.26), dealing with a detail pertaining to the *Oresteia*, should be classified not only as a fragment of Xanthus, but also as a fragment from Stesichorus' *Oresteia*²⁴.

2 a) Neglected fragments and testimonia of the Theban epics in poetry and prose.

Embedded fragments: Hom. *Il.* 23.677-80; Hes. FF 192-193 M-W; Paus. 9.5.11 f.

Of the two main narratives which formed the core of the epic cycle, the Theban epics and the Trojan epics, the first and shorter one has been the more affected by a poor transmission of the texts of the three poems it was composed of: *Oedipodea*, *Thebaid*, and *Epigonoï*, whereas the inclusion of the *Alcmeonis* remains a moot point. In contrast to what happens with the poems of the Trojan cycle, we also miss

²² Janko 2000, 143 and fn. 2; cf. Ercoles 203, 242-4. Besides Janko (2000, 138-43), on the peripatetic Megaclides see also Pagani 2006; Montanari 2009, 323-5.

²³ Robert 1881, 173 f.

²⁴ These constructive details are not taken into account by Davies – Finglass 2014, 492, who deem it impossible to tell if Stesichorus borrowed from Xanthus with respect to Laodice. Interestingly, the name *Laodike* calls to mind the name that Stesichorus gave to the nurse of Orestes: *Laodameia* (Stesich. F 79 F.).

the precious précis of the aforementioned poems by Proclus, which would have provided invaluable information on the episodes dealt with in each of the narratives²⁵. Only two fragments from the *Oedipodea* survive, five from the *Epigonoï*, and a few more from the *Thebaid*. Because of such disappointing scantiness, contrasted with the fame of the myth of Oedipus and his sons from early antiquity down to our present times, an edition of the Theban epic cycle should provide the reader with as much relevant evidence as can be gathered, in order to contextualize and clarify what the plot and the main episodes of the poems may have been.

Regarding the Theban epics, it can be safely stated that a few relevant references are either neglected or downplayed in all three recent editions of the epic cycle which appeared in the span of 16 years, 75 years after the edition by T. W. Allen (Oxford 1912).²⁶

As is well known, and differently from the version established – as far as we can tell – by Sophocles, in the epic tradition conveyed by Homer, by the Hesiodic corpus (*Il.* 23.679 f.; *Od.* 11.271-80; Hes. FF 192-193, 1-8 M-W/90 H./135-136 M.) and by the Theban epics, Oedipus stayed on to live in Thebes and kept the kingdom after the discovery of incest and parricide and the death of his mother and wife, whose name is not preserved (either Epicaste, as in Hom. *Od.* 11.271, or Jocaste, as in later tradition)²⁷. This is proved by FF 2-3 B./D./W. of the *Thebaid*, which deal with the two different curses imparted by Oedipus upon his two sons when he discovers they have been offending his royal prerogatives, neglecting his dispositions (F 2) and his right to preside over sacrifices (F 3)²⁸. Clearly, the setting of the reiterated cursing was the royal palace of Thebes where Oedipus was still king, and the few other sources confirming this version clarify that the permanence of Oedipus at Thebes was distinctive of the archaic epic tradition, as I shall proceed to demonstrate²⁹. But the presence and kingship of Oedipus at Thebes after the discovery of incest is also clearly implied in the first poem of the Theban cycle, the *Oedipodea*, which told of a second marriage of Oedipus to Euryganeia, from which the four children were born (*Oedipod.* F 2 B./D., 1 W.: see Paus. 9.5.10 below, and Cingano 2015, 220-3).

²⁵ That there was also originally a prose epitome of the three poems forming the Theban epic cycle is proved by the initial words of Proclus introducing the résumé of the *Cypria*, the first poem of the Trojan epic cycle which followed the Theban epic cycle (argum. *Cypria* 1 B.): Ἐπιβάλλει τοῦτοις τὰ λεγόμενα Κύπρια ἐν βιβλίοις φερόμενα ἕνδεκα, «This was followed by the so-called *Cypria*, transmitted in 11 books». The pronoun τοῦτοις here refers to the preceding account of the three Theban poems (*Oedipodea*, *Thebaid*, *Epigonoï*) or, more specifically, to the last one, the *Epigonoï*, which preceded the *Cypria*.

²⁶ See Bernabé 1996; Davies 1988 (cf. Davies 2014); West 2003. The last one appeared in the Loeb Classical Library and is therefore more justified in presenting a concise apparatus and spare notes of reference. Unfortunately, the thorough edition with commentary by Bethe 1929 is only limited to the Trojan cycle. Evelyn White 1936 cannot be properly considered a critical edition of the epic cycle.

²⁷ Besides Hom. *Od.* 11.271, she is only named Epicaste only in schol. Eur. *Phoe.* 13 Schw.; Ps.Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.5.7.

²⁸ On the meaning and function of the curses in *Theb.* FF 2-3 B./D./W. see Cingano 2004, 57-67.

²⁹ Stesichorus would be another likely candidate to have related the same version in his lyric '*Thebaid*', whose existence was unknown until recently (= Stesich. F 97 F.); unfortunately, we are given no clue as to the fate of Oedipus in this poem.

1. Two passages are relevant in Homer: the first occurs in the Ἰθάλα ἐπὶ Πατρόκλωι (*Iliad* 23.677-80), which restate the importance of the funeral games in early Greek poetry as we have just seen with the Ἰθάλα ἐπὶ Πελῖαι:

Εὐρύαλος δὲ οἱ οἶος ἀνίστατο ἰσόθεος φῶς
Μηκιστῆος υἱὸς Ταλαϊονίδαο ἄνακτος,
ὅς ποτε Θήβας δ' ἦλθε δεδουπότος Οἰδιπόδαο
ἐς τάφρον· ἔνθα δὲ πάντας ἐνῖκα Καδμείωνας.

These lines serve as an important testimonium regarding the *Oedipodea* and the *Thebaid*, for two reasons: the evidence that Oedipus died at Thebes as a king, and the rare mention of the Argive hero Mecisteus as one of the participants in the funeral games in his honour. As will become clear (see below, pp. 44-7), Mecisteus – a brother of Adrastus – only features in the early stage of the myth of the Seven against Thebes, where he played a prominent role, as can be inferred by his success in the boxing contest at Thebes in the *Iliad*.

2. The second Homeric passage is found in the *Odyssey*, where we are told by Odysseus in the *Nekyia* (11.271-80) that, after the discovery of parricide and incest and the suicide of Epicaste, Oedipus did not blind himself and kept to his throne in Thebes, albeit suffering many woes (*Od.* 11.271-6):

μητέρα τ' Οἰδιπόδαο ἴδον, καλὴν Ἐπικάστην,
ἣ μέγα ἔργον ἔρεξεν αἰδρεΐησι νόοιο
γημαμένη ᾧ υἱί· ὁ δ' ὄν πατέρ' ἐξεναρίζας
γῆμεν· ἄφαρ δ' ἀνάπτυστα θεοὶ θέσαν ἀνθρώποισιν.
ἀλλ' ὁ μὲν ἐν Θήβῃ πολυηράτω ἄλγεα πάσχων
Καδμείων ἦνασσε θεῶν ὀλοὰς διὰ βουλάς ...

3. Two Hesiodic fragments concur with Homer in situating the death of Oedipus at Thebes as a king, where he was honoured with funeral games. The event evoked in the *Iliad* referring to the funeral games for Oedipus is attested, with further details, also in a Hesiodic fragment preserved by the scholion to the Iliadic lines (Hesiod, F 192 M-W / 135 M., *ap.* schol. T Hom. *Il.* 23.679, V 472 E.):

(Ὅμηρος) βασιλεύοντα ἐν Θήβαις φησὶν ἀπολέσθαι, οὐχ ὡς οἱ νεώτεροι. καὶ Ἡσίοδος δὲ φησὶν ἐν Θήβαις αὐτοῦ ἀποθανόντος Ἀργείαν τὴν Ἀδράστου σὺν ἄλλοις ἐλθεῖν ἐπὶ τὴν κηδείαν τοῦ Οἰδίποδος.

differently from the neoterioi, Homer claims that Oedipus died at Thebes while he was king. Hesiod too tells that, since he died at Thebes, Argeia, the daughter of Adrastus went to the funeral of Oedipus accompanied by other people.

Since Argeia was the daughter of Adrastus, the king of Argos and brother of Mecisteus mentioned in the *Iliad* passage (23.678: cf. Ps.Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.9.13), Mecisteus can be easily included among the 'other people' (σὺν ἄλλοις) mentioned by Hesiod: he travelled from Argos to Thebes with his niece Argeia to attend the fu-

neral of Oedipus. At the time Argeia must already have been the wife of Polynices: according to the early version of the myth attested in the speech of Teiresias in Stesichorus' *Thebaid* (F 97.274-6 F.), followed by Hellanicus (F 98 Fowler) and by Pherecydes (F 96 Fowler; cf. Ps.Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.6.1), both relying on earlier sources, the encounter between Polynices and Argeia took place at Argos (not at Thebes) and was followed by their marriage (see also below). By piecing together these sources we can infer that after the death of Oedipus Argeia went to Thebes with Mecisteus and Polynices, who on this occasion was temporarily called back to Thebes from exile by his brother Eteocles³⁰. In later times this version is confirmed by Pausanias (9.5.12), in a passage of great interest in reconstructing some episodes of the epic cycle (see below): (Πολυνείκης) ἀφικόμενος δὲ ἐς Ἄργος καὶ θυγατέρα Ἀδράκτου λαβὼν κατήλθεν ἐς Θήβας μετὰπεμπτος ὑπὸ Ἐτεοκλέους μετὰ τὴν τελευτήν Οἰδίποδος.

4. The fourth epic passage to be brought into the picture is provided by another fragment of the *Hesiodic Catalogue of Women*, whose text edited in 1913 has recently gained a few words with the publication of a new scrap (*PSI* 131, ed. M. Norsa (IInd century CE) + *PLit Palau Rib.* 21 ed. O' Callaghan (Ist century CE) = Hes. F 193.1-8 M-W = 90/H. /136 M.)³¹:

..... ..] Ἀλκμάονα π[οιμέ]να λα[ῶν
..... ..]υας Καδμηίδες ἐλκεσίπε[πλοι
..... .. εὐαν]θέε τε δέμας εἰcάντα ἰδοῦ[ca
..... ..]τραφὰς πολυκηδέος Οἰδιπόδ[αο
..... ..]α.ενου κτήνου πέρι δῆριν ἔ[χοντ(ε)
..... .. ἥρωε]c Δαναοὶ θεράποντες Ἄρηος
.....]ι Πολυνείκει ἦρα φέροντε[c
.....] Ζηνὸς παρὰ θέεφατα βᾶν[τεc.

The mention of the Theban women (Καδμηίδες) in v. 2 and of the funeral of Oedipus in v. 4 confirms that he died at Thebes as a king, as in the epic passages just quoted. Unfortunately, the restored text does not improve on the first 4 lines of the fragment: 'Alcmaon, shepherd of the people ... the long-robed Cadmean women ... seeing the beautiful body before them ... the burial of much-suffering Oedipus'.

³⁰ On this point see also March 1987, 134-7; Beck 1988, 3 f. Pace Davies 2014, 62, I am unable to detect a «major incoherence» in the temporary homecoming of Polynices for such a solemn and decisive event as the death of his father, inspite of the previous quarrel with his brother Eteocles: it may also have worked as a last attempt of reconciliation.

³¹ I have printed in bold type the contribution to the text provided by the new scrap, edited by O' Callaghan 1993, 131-3 (who failed to identify the Hesiodic authorship); see the further contributions by López García 1995, 53-6, identifying 'Hesiod' as the author; D'Alessio 1996; O' Callaghan 1996, 101 f. At the beginning and at the end of v. 3 I have printed the supplements of M. Norsa instead of Merkelbach – West ἐτέ]θηπε δέμας εἰcάντα ἰδοῦ[ca (accepted by Most), although εὐαν]θέε too remains palaeographically dubious; on the readings at vv. 3 f. see March 1987, 136; Beck 1988, 3. At v. 5 I do not accept κτ[α]μένου, suggested by R. Führer (see Beck 1988, 4), since it would imply that Oedipus was slain in battle, a version nowhere attested and alien to the epic version of the myth: see Cingano 1992, 1-9.

Then, at vv. 5-8 comes a remarkable series of participles (ἔ[χοντ(ε)ς, θεράποντες, φέροντε[ς, βόγ[τε)ς) referred to the Argive heroes (*i.e.* the Seven) ‘engaging in battle for the sake of wealth (Oedipus’ property) ... the Danaan [heroes,] servants of Ares ... being on the side of Polynices (*i.e.*, pleasing Polynices’ wishes) ... going against the oracles of Zeus’. Notwithstanding the integration of three lines provided by the new scrap, the text of the fragment remains obscure, partly because only the central part of the column is preserved and no finite verb is left in the text, and mostly because of the puzzling mention in v. 1 of Alcmaon, son of Amphiaraus, coming two generations after Oedipus³². The presence of Alcmaon disrupts any attempt at working out a chronological sequence of the facts recalled in the following lines, where Oedipus (v. 4), his son Polynices (v. 7) and then the first expedition of the Seven against Thebes (vv. 5-8), are mentioned³³. To make things more confusing, after the reference to Alcmaon comes the mention of the ‘long-robed Theban women’ (v. 2), apparently impressed with the sight of someone (v. 3, where I read the plural ἰδοῦ[σαι, with M. Norsa, C. Robert, and J. March: see also Beck 1988, 3).

The possibility that the object of desire of the Cadmean women be Alcmaon (as assumed by March 1988, 138 and Hirschberger 2004, 357) seems to match the syntax and grammar of vv. 1-4, but it is actually discouraged by the chronology of events and by the other sources: the funeral games for Oedipus were attended by some of the heroes who later became the leaders of the expedition of the Seven against Thebes (such as Mecisteus and Polynices), not by the later generation of the Epigoni, who waged the second, successful expedition against Thebes under the leadership of Alcmaon, a son of Amphiaraus. Besides, the presence of Alcmaon at Thebes is never attested before the expedition of the Epigoni. If her name can be posited in the lacunae of vv. 2-4, it is tempting to identify Argeia, the daughter of Adrastus and bride of Polynices, as the object of ἰδοῦ[σαι: the context would then refer to the impact her beauty exerted on the Cadmean women when she arrived on the scene from Argos as the bride of Polynices, the occasion being the funeral of Oedipus (v. 4)³⁴. Leaving aside v. 1, and considering that Argeia is in fact mentioned in Hes. F 192 as attending the funeral of Oedipus in Thebes, this seems to me the most plausible interpretation of vv. 2-4³⁵. Besides, for the reasons stated above (pp.

³² «Aber Schwierigkeit macht in V. 1 der Name des Alkmaion»: Robert 1915, 117, offering a detailed attempt to interpret the fragment. There is no ground or reason to surmise from vv. 1 f., with March 1988, 137 f., that the funeral of Oedipus at Thebes was attended by the Argive hero Amphiaraus (one of the Seven) together with his two sons Amphilocheus and Alcmaon: see below.

³³ The following lines of the papyrus (vv. 9-22) deal with a different topic, the marriage of Lysidice to Electryon and their offspring, leaving no space for a further mention of the Seven and/or the Epigoni. On the different interpretations of vv. 1-8 see the recent commentary by Hirschberger 2004, 356-9, with no new solution to the various problems.

³⁴ See also Merkelbach 1957, 45 *ad l.* The mention of the funeral becomes explicit with the word τὰφάς, read by M. Norsa at v. 4: see now López García 1995, 54. For δέμας referred to a female figure (here Argeia) cf. Hom. *Il.* 8.305; *Od.* 5.212; Hes. *Theog.* 260.

³⁵ The ingenious interpretation of F 193.1-8 M-W suggested by Gantz 1993, 502, whereby the funeral of Oedipus was «a social event attended ... by all the women of Thebes and accompanied by wonderment at the corpse of the much-grieved Oidipous», is surely true regarding the importance of the event, as is also demonstrated by the funeral games of Pelias; besides, by positing Oedipus as the object of ἰδοῦ[σαι at v. 3, it would simplify the syntax of vv. 1-4. However, it requires that ἐτέθηπε (‘was astonished’), besides being a 3rd person singular, be accepted at the

38 f.), it would be wrong to assume that what took place at Thebes was the first encounter ever of Argeia and Polynices, which resulted in love at first sight³⁶. This hypothesis is contradicted by the fact that Polynices had already left Thebes and settled in Argos before returning for his father's funeral (cf. Paus. 9.5.12); in the palace of Adrastus he had met Argeia, who attended the funeral of Oedipus «because she was already his daughter in law»³⁷.

To sum up, vv. 2-4 of F 193 M-W show that the episode of the funeral of Oedipus was set at Thebes. We can gather from the epic sources that the early panHellenic tradition (Homer, the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women*, the Theban epics) was unanimous in locating the presence of Oedipus at Thebes, still in power as king after the death of Epicaste /Jocaste. Considering the prominence in early epic and lyric poetry of the theme of the funeral games held to honour a deceased hero, I am inclined to follow a suggestion by J. March, and surmise that in Hom. *Il.* 23.677-80 and in Hes. FF 192 f. M-W «Perhaps ... we have the small traces of an Ἄθλα ἐπὶ Οἰδίποδι...» (March 1987, 137) which was featured in the Theban epics, paralleling the Ἄθλα ἐπὶ Πελῖαι in Stesichorus and in the 'Homeric' poem mentioned by Simonides (*PMG* 564, see above), and the Ἄθλα ἐπὶ Πατρόκλῳ in *Iliad* 23³⁸. We can assume that before the war between Argos and Thebes arose, some of the Argive heroes competed in peaceful contest with the Thebans at the *Athla* for Oedipus, and Mecisteus prevailed in boxing over all the Theban competitors (*Il.* 23.678-80). Finally, vv. 5-8 recall the feud between Eteocles and Polynices over the property/wealth of Oedipus and the expedition of the Seven which ensued³⁹; the expression Πολυνείκει ἦρα φέροντε[c at v. 7 cannot but mean that by accepting to participate in the expedition the Argive heroes 'pleased the heart of Polynices', although the expedition proved ill-fated (v. 8, Ζηνὸς παρὰ θέεφατα βάλ[τεε, anticipating the ominous outcome of the expedition: cf. Hom. *Il.* 4.380 f.; 405-9).

At v. 5, the swift transition from the funeral of Oedipus to the war of the Seven suggests that the scene has now moved away from Thebes: taken together, vv. 2-8 can be interpreted as a concise sketch of the main events related to the rise of the war between Eteocles and Polynices. As far as I can see, the only possible way to

beginning of v. 3, a supplement now untenable (see Beck quoted above, fn. 30); moreover, the astonishment of the Theban women would better apply to a young and handsome person they had never met before, rather than to the dead body of their old king.

³⁶ This is the conclusion reached by Robert 1915, 117; see also Friedländer 1914, 319; Gantz 1993, 508 f. This reconstruction would also imply the unlikely mention of Polynices twice in vv. 2-7: the first at vv. 2 f., as an object of ἰδοῦ[σαι, the second at v. 7 (Πολυνείκει ἦρα φέροντε[c), with reference to the expedition of the Seven.

³⁷ The citation is from Beck 1988, 3 f.; long before the discovery of the papyrus, this view had been expressed by Welcker 1882, 340.

³⁸ One should also recall the funeral games for Amarynceus at Buprasion (Hom. *Il.* 23.629-43), for Achilles at Troy (Hom. *Od.* 24.85-92) and for Amphidamas in Chalcis, where Hesiod won a tripod (Hes. *Op.* 654-7).

³⁹ At Hes. F 193.5 M-W the word κτήνος is synonymous of μῆλα which, in the same context, refers to the wealth of Oedipus in Hes. *Op.* 163 (... ὄλεσε μαρναμένους μῆλων ἔνεκ Οἰδιπόδαο); furthermore, the word μῆλα also occurs in the Thebaid of Stesichorus (F 97.241 F.: κ]λυτὰ μᾶλα νέμοντο), referring to the division of the property of Oedipus. Cf. the use of κτήνος in Hes. F 198.5 f. M.-W = 106 H. / 154 c M., to indicate the entire wealth, the possessions of Menelaos: Μενέλαος ... / κτήνῳ γὰρ Ἀχαιῶν φέρτατος ἦεν.

account for the enigmatic mention of Alcmaon in v. 1 is to interpret it as an allusion to the fall of Thebes in the later expedition of the Epigoni, where Alcmaon was the leader, thus anticipating with a rather unusual procedure the outcome of the full story of Oedipus and his progeny. This hypothesis may gain ground if one considers that the story of Oedipus was introduced in this section of the Hesiodic *Catalogue of women* on the Pelopid stemma by way of his second wife: the woman alluded to in the lacuna at the end of Hes. F 190 M-W (vv. 13-5) must be Astymedousa (not Euryganeia, as in the *Oedipodea*), a daughter of Sthenelus, listed as his second wife also by schol. D Hom. *Il.* 4.376 van Thiel and by Eust. *ad Il.* 4.376-81 (1.767.24 van der Valk), whereas according to Pherecydes (F 95 Fowler) she was Oedipus' third wife⁴⁰. In F 193.1-8 (to be read with F 192), the short and dense insertion on the end of Thebes and the two wars which caused it may therefore have effectively concluded the mention of Astymedousa and her progeny which started in F 190.

Lastly, the only other testimonium of Oedipus' permanence at Thebes, whose importance has often been neglected or underestimated, is a much later prose passage where Pausanias sketches a dense summary of the early events at Thebes, ranging from the incestuous marriage of Oedipus down to the descendants of Thersander, the son of Polynices (9.5.10-6). The relevant sections of Pausanias are worth quoting in full (9.5.10-2, and 14):

5. ... Παῖδας δὲ ἐξ αὐτῆς [Ἐπικάτης] οὐ δοκῶ οἱ γενέσθαι, μάρτυρι Ὀμήρωι χρώμενος (quoting Hom. *Od.* 11.271-4) “μητέρα τ’ Οἰδιπόδαο ἴδον, καλὴν Ἐπικάτην, /... / γῆμεν· ἄφαρ δ’ ἀνάπτυτα θεοὶ θέσαν ἀνθρώποιον”. πῶς οὖν ἐποίησαν ἀνάπτυτα ἄφαρ, εἰ δὴ τέσσαρες ἐκ τῆς Ἐπικάτης ἐγένοντο παῖδες τῷ Οἰδίποδι; ἐξ Εὐρυγανείας δὲ ... ἐγεγόνεσαν. δηλοῖ δὲ καὶ ὁ τὰ ἔπη ποιήσας ἅ Οἰδιπόδια ὀνομάζουσι (= Oedipod. fr. 2 B. / D., 1. W.); καὶ Ὀνασίας Πλαταιᾶσιν ἔγραψε κατηφῆ τὴν Εὐρυγανείαν ἐπὶ τῇ μάχῃ τῶν παίδων. [12] Πολυνείκης δὲ περιόντος μὲν καὶ ἄρχοντος Οἰδίποδος ὑπεξῆλθεν ἐκ Θηβῶν δέει μὴ τελεσθεῖεν ἐπὶ σφίσι αἱ κατὰραι τοῦ πατρός· ἀφικόμενος δὲ ἐς Ἄργος καὶ θυγατέρα Ἀδράκτου λαβὼν κατήλθεν ἐς Θήβας μετάπεμπτος ὑπὸ Ἐτεοκλέους μετὰ τὴν τελευτὴν Οἰδίποδος. κατελθὼν δὲ ἐκ διαφορᾶν προήχθη τῷ Ἐτεοκλεῖ, καὶ οὕτω τὸ δεύτερον ἔφυγε ... [14] ὥς δὲ τοῖς σὺν Ἀγαμέμνονι ἐς Τροίαν στρατεύουσιν ἡ διαμαρτία τοῦ πλοῦ γίνεται καὶ ἡ πληγὴ περὶ Μυκίαν, ἐνταῦθα καὶ τὸν Θερσάνδρον κατέλαβεν ἀποθανεῖν ὑπὸ Τελέφου, μάλιστα Ἑλλήνων ἀγαθὸν γενόμενον ἐν τῇ μάχῃ· καὶ οἱ τὸ μνημα Καΐκου πεδίον ἐλαύνοντί ἐστιν ἐν Ἐλαίᾳ πόλει ... καὶ ἐναγίζειν οἱ ἐπιχώριοι φασιν αὐτῷ. ... τελευτήσαντος δὲ Θερσάνδρου καὶ δευτέρα ἐπὶ τε Ἀλέξανδρον καὶ ἐς Ἴλιον ἀθροισζομένου στόλου Πηνελέων ἄρχοντα εἴλοντο, ὅτι οὐκ ἐν ἡλικίᾳ πω Τιταμενὸς ἦν ὁ Θερσάνδρου· Πηνέλεω δὲ ἀποθανόντος ὑπὸ Εὐρυπύλου τοῦ Τηλέφου Τιταμενὸν βασιλέα αἰροῦνται ...

⁴⁰ For Astymedousa as the wife of Oedipus in the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* see Merkelbach – West, apparatus *ad* F 190.13 sqq.: «Stheneli filia Astymedusa nupsit Oedipodi»; West 1985: 110 f. Merkelbach – West (*loc. cit.*) seem to connect tentatively the mention of Alcmaon in Hes. F 193.1 to the role of his mother Eriphyle in persuading him to go to war, with the help of Thersander, son of Polynices: an explanation I find too complicated and unconnected to the following lines.

It becomes apparent from a closer look that the account of Pausanias is imbued with early epic traditions and harmonizes with Homer, the *Hesiodic Catalogue of Women* and the Theban epics regarding not only the death of Oedipus at Thebes while still a king, but also other episodes. It is very likely that he was drawing either on an epic source (see 9.9.5, quoted below), or else on a local source or mythographer who drew on the lost epics. The archaic lore of his version can be detected in particular in the sentences I have underlined: 1) along with schol. Eur. *Phoe.* 1760 Schw. (= *Oedip.* F 1 B./D., 3 W.), Pausanias is the only author who can still quote the poem *Oedipodea*, referring to Oedipus' second marriage to Euryganeia and to her fate after the death of Eteocles and Polynices⁴¹; 2) he confirms the consistency of the early epic tradition in placing the death of Oedipus at Thebes as a king⁴²; 3) he converges with the cyclic poem *Cypria* regarding the death of the Theban leader Thersander, the son of Polynices, in Mysia at the hands of Telephus, in the course of the first thwarted expedition (argum. *Cypria* 7 W.); moreover, the allusion to Thersander's bravery in battle before being killed (9.5.14: ἀγαθὸν γενόμενον ἐν τῇ μάχῃ) may derive from an *aristeia* narrated in the *Cypria*, according to the typical narrative pattern of epic poetry where the death of a valiant hero was preceded by a list of his last exploits⁴³; 4) Thersander's genealogy and his prominent role in the thwarted expedition in Mysia suggest that at the beginning of the war at Troy the leadership of the Boeotian contingent was in his hands. This was almost certainly the version narrated in the *Cypria* and followed by Pausanias, differently from what was told in the Homeric Catalogue of Ships (*Il.* 2.494-510), which had to come to grips with the death of Thersander before the Greeks even arrived at Troy. The acquaintance of Pausanias with the Theban epics is further attested when elsewhere in the same book he refers to the *Thebaid* as the main narrative of the events he has been dealing with. After recalling that the Homeric paternity of the poem was maintained by many respected authors, beginning with Callinus, Pausanias rates the *Thebaid* as the best poem of the epic Cycle after the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* (Paus. 9.9.5 = *Theb.* T 2 B./1 D.): ἐποιήθη δὲ ἐς τὸν πόλεμον τοῦτον καὶ ἔπη Θηβαίικ (Θηβαίοικ codd.: corr. Hemst.)· τὰ δὲ ἔπη ταῦτα Καλλίνος (Καλαίνος codd.: corr. Sylburg) ἀφικόμενος αὐτῶν ἐς μνήμην ἔφησεν Ὅμηρον τὸν ποιήσαντα εἶναι. Καλλίνωι (Καλαίνωι codd.: corr. Sylburg) δὲ πολλοὶ καὶ ἄξιοι λόγου κατὰ ταῦτα ἔγνωσαν. ἐγὼ δὲ τὴν ποίησιν ταύτην μετὰ γε Ἰλιάδα καὶ τὰ ἔπη τὰ ἐς Ὀδυσσεῖα ἐπαινῶ μάλιστα⁴⁴.

⁴¹ We are left with only one testimonium and two fragments of the *Oedipodea*: the attribution of a third fragment taken from Asclepiades, *FGrHist* 12 F 7a, suggested by West (= *Oedipod.* F 2* W.), remains dubious.

⁴² On the skepticism expressed by Davies 2014, 62, regarding the reliability of Pausanias' 9.5.12 see above, p. 39 and fn. 30.

⁴³ Leaving aside the famous *aristeiai* of the *Iliad* (above all, the one of Patroclus), other brave deeds accomplished before being slain can be detected in Proclus' résumé of the epic cycle: see argum. *Cypria* 10 W. (Protesilaus); argum. *Aethiopsis* 1 W. (Penthesileia); argum. *Ilias Parva* 3 W. + Paus. 9.5.15 (Eurypylos). The archaic flavour of Pausanias' narrative has been noted by Haslam 1986, 38 *ad POxy* 3702, frg. 1 col. I 26 («Paus. 9.5.15, ultimately *Cypria* ?»); Beck 1988, 3; see also Legras 1905, 37 fn. 1.

⁴⁴ The importance and reliability of this passage have been demonstrated by Bethe 1891, 147 f.; see also Fitch 1922, 37-43. The arguments brought forward by Scott 1921, 20-6 and Davison 1968, 81 f. to refute Pausanias' statement are ill-grounded, and can only be accepted as regards the

2 b) Retrieving a fragment from the *Thebaid*: Herodotus (5.67.2 f.) and the Theban epics.

The *Iliad* lines on the death of Oedipus at Thebes (23.677-80) are important also because they name the Argive hero Mecisteus, who won the boxing contest at the funeral games; as seen above, his presence at the funeral of Oedipus can also be inferred in the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* (F 192 M-W). Yet, in spite of the weight of the epic tradition he remains to us quite a shadowy, elusive character. Only four other sources single out Mecisteus as a prominent figure in the early stage of the Theban myth: Herodotus reports that he was the brother of Adrastus and, along with Tydeus, he was slain by the Theban foe Melanippus in the final battle of the Seven against Thebes (Herodot. 5.67.3): Ἐπηγάγετο δὲ τὸν Μελάνιππον ὁ Κλεισθένης ... ὡς ἔχθιστον ἐόντα Ἀδρήτῳ, ὃς τὸν τε ἀδελφεὸν οἱ Μηκιτέα ἀπεκτόνεε καὶ τὸν γαμβρὸν Τυδέα.

As I have argued elsewhere, the preceding mention by Herodotus (5.67.1) of the performance of Homeric poems in Sicyon at the time of the tyrant Cleisthenes acquires a much fuller sense if it is referred not to the *Iliad*, but to the Theban epics, in particular to the *Thebaid* (Κλεισθένης γὰρ Ἀργείοισι πολεμήσας τοῦτο μὲν ῥαψωδοῦς ἔπαυσε ἐν Σικυῶνι ἀγωνίζεσθαι τῶν Ὀμηρείων ἐπέων εἵνεκα, ὅτι Ἀργεῖοί τε καὶ Ἄργος τὰ πολλὰ πάντα ὑμνεῖται)⁴⁵. As a matter of fact, the entire context of Herodotus 5.67.1-4 is undisputably and deeply rooted in the narrative of the Theban epics; besides, the passage quoted above on the killing of Tydeus and Mecisteus is complementary to a fragment from the *Thebaid* which – albeit omitting the name of Mecisteus – relates at length the episode following his death alluded to by Herodotus, that is, the death of Tydeus. The Homeric scholion relating the episode adds the detail that Melanippus was killed by Amphiaras, thereby avenging the death of Tydeus, and concludes that the episode was found παρὰ τοῖς κυκλικοῖς, which in this case cannot but indicate the *Thebaid* (schol. Genav. Hom. *Il.* 5.126 = *Theb.* F 9 B. / W., 5 D.; cf. Ps.Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.6.8). The close connection between Herodotus and the *Thebaid* fragment is further demonstrated by another passage in Pausanias' book on Boeotia recalling the same episode, which tallies well with these sources (Paus. 9.18.1):

... τάφος δὲ ἐπὶ τῇ λεωφόρῳ δέικνται Μελάνιππου, Θηβαίων ἐν τοῖς μάλιστα ἀγαθοῦ τὰ πολεμικά· καὶ ἠνίκα ἐπεστράτευσαν οἱ Ἀργεῖοι, Τυδέα ὁ Μελάνιππος οὗτος καὶ ἀδελφῶν τῶν Ἀδράτου Μηκιτέα ἀπέκτεινε, καὶ οἱ καὶ αὐτῷ τὴν τελευτὴν ὑπὸ Ἀμφιαράου γενέσθαι λέγουσι.

Here too the names of the four characters involved occur – the Theban Melanippus and the Argives Adrastus, Tydeus, and Mecisteus –, and the mention of the *aristeia* of the Theban Melanippus has undoubtedly an epic flavour. Proceeding in his narra-

question whether Callinus did actually quote the *Thebaid*. For Pausanias' acquaintance with the Theban epics see also 9.18.6.

⁴⁵ On the Herodotus passage and on the fight between Tydeus and Melanippus see Cingano 1985, 31-40; Cingano 1987, 93-103.

tive, Pausanias explicitly quotes the *Thebaid* in relating another episode of the final battle at Thebes (Paus. 9.18.6 = *Theb.* F 6 B./ 4 D./10 W.).

The presence of Mecisteus in the archaic list of the Seven is confirmed by Ps.Apollodorus (*Bibl.* 3.6.3), who after listing the Argive leaders records that ‘some’ authors included Mecisteus in the list of the Seven: τινες δὲ Τυδέα μὲν καὶ Πολυνείκην οὐ καταριθμοῦσι, συγκαταλέγουσι δὲ τοῖς ἑπτὰ Ἐτέοκλον Ἴφιος καὶ Μηκιτιά. Contrary to what happens with all the other heroes listed, Mecisteus is the only one that Ps.Apollodorus is unable to credit with a genealogy: the omission shows that at the time the deeds and genealogy related to this Argive hero had faded even in the memory of as accurate a mythographer as Ps.Apollodorus.

On the grounds of the evidence collected here, I therefore propose that the passage of Herodotus 5.67.3 be considered as part of the same *Thebaid* fragment relating the death of Tydeus (F 9 B. / W., 5 D.): it should have been given recognition as a relevant entry of the fragment in the editions of Bernabé, Davies, and West. Even if one favours a more cautious approach, it should nevertheless be included amongst the testimonia pertaining to the *Thebaid*⁴⁶.

2 c) Boeotian lyric fragments on the Seven against Thebes: Corinna.

I am considering separately the last extant source mentioning Mecisteus and the expedition of the Seven against Thebes, insofar as it gives me the opportunity to shift back to the placing of other lyric fragments. An overlooked reference to Mecisteus and the war between Thebes and Argos occurs in some tattered papyrus fragments from Oxyrhynchus edited by E. Lobel, dating from the IInd century CE: *POxy* 2372, containing lyric verses in Boeotian dialect with related interlinear and marginal notes⁴⁷. Eteocles is named by the scholiast in frg. 5d, line 1 (Ἐτεοκλε[...]), whilst the name of Polynices probably occurs twice in the text (frg. 22.3, Π[ολυνί]κ[...])⁴⁸. In another fragment (5a) other names can be identified: Amphiarauos (Ἀμφιαραου, lines 2 f. of the commentary), and Melanippus (Μελα]νιππος, v. 4 of the text). Moreover, lines 4 f. of the commentary to frg. 5a include the names of Melanippus and almost certainly of Tydeus, preceded by the verb ‘to kill’ (frg. 5ab, line 5 Μ]ελανιππος μ[...] ἀναρει Τυδ[...]). Finally, in another scrap of the commentary

⁴⁶ The Herodotus passage is missing in West 2003 and in the recent survey of the *Thebaid* by Torres Guerra 2015. Only the more generic reference to the Ὀμήρεια ἔπεα (Herodot. 5.67.1) is included as a testimonium of the Theban epics in the editions of Bernabé and Davies (= *Theb.* T 5 B./ p. 21 D.), who omit the section on the death of Tydeus and Mecisteus (5.67.3). In his wish to dismiss a reference to the Theban epics in the Ὀμήρεια ἔπεα, Davies 2014, 30 fails to notice that the entire Herodotus passage (i.e. the initiatives undertaken by Cleisthenes mentioned in 5.67.2-4) is unmistakably imbued with the Theban epics. A slightly lesser skepticism can be found in Hornblower 2013, 200, who concedes that the Theban epics may be meant here.

⁴⁷ *POxy* 2372, edited by Lobel 1956, 67-78 = Boeotica incerti auctoris, *PMG* 692; on the attribution, see below. I am reproducing here the updated and slightly expanded version of what I had already published 20 years ago in another context. For the sake of clarity, in the following quotations from the papyrus I have inserted in the text some conjectures which were printed by Lobel in the apparatus, and were subsequently accepted by Page in his edition.

⁴⁸ For other possible occurrences cf. frg. 6.1 (... χῆρ' ὧ Πολ[ού]νικες) and Lobel 1956, 72, *ad l.*; frg. 20 col. II.2.

Lobel suggested the name of Mecisteus below that of Tydeus (frg. 5 c, $\omega\epsilon\ \tau\upsilon[\dots / \text{Μη}]κ\iota\epsilon\tau\epsilon\alpha[\dots]$); he also surmised that the name of Mecisteus be recognized in a scholion to another fragment (frg. 7.6, $\text{Μη}κ\iota\epsilon\tau[\epsilon]\upsilon\epsilon$). The close association of these names in a single context would therefore appear to fully justify, firstly the suggestion that the name of Mecisteus be read in frg. 5c of the papyrus, secondly that this scrap should be placed in the vicinity of frgs. 5ab.

The presence, among other fragments dealing with different subjects, of the names of prominent heroes in the first war between Argos and Thebes enabled Lobel to identify in the papyrus the remains of a poem on the Seven against Thebes. To be more precise, these verses told of the final battle between the Seven and the Theban defenders; the clustering of the afore-mentioned names points to the fight of Tydeus and Mecisteus against the Theban Melanippus who, according to Herodotus 5.67.3 (quoted above, p. 44), was the slayer of both; the mention of Amphiarus in this context (*PMG* 692, frg. 5a, lines 2 f. of the commentary) converges with the version of the *Thebaid* (F 9 B. /W., 6 D.) also found in Pausanias (9.18.1), according to which he was the slayer of Melanippus.

No comprehensive study of these fragments has appeared so far, and some progress can be made in attributing them to a specific poem, and in pleading for the authorship. *POxy* 2372 was included by D. Page in his edition of the *Poetae Melici Graeci* as F 692, under the cautious heading «Boeotica incerti auctoris»; a further step was undertaken by D.A. Campbell, who in his Loeb edition of the Greek lyric poets has tacitly attributed them to Corinna, without clarifying his choice⁴⁹. Since they are written in Boeotian dialect, Corinna stands out as the obvious candidate: Lobel, however, refrained from assigning them to Corinna, claiming that certain characteristics of *POxy* 2372 differed from the other extant papyrus fragments and ancient quotations known to be by the Boeotian poetess⁵⁰. Lobel's arguments have fallen short of convincing everybody⁵¹: it should be added that the mention in another fragment belonging to the same papyrus, of two titles of poems (a *Theomachia* and a *Zeuxippe*: *PMG* 692, frg. 36.3 $\Theta\iota\omicron\mu\alpha\chi\iota\alpha$, 5 $\Delta\epsilon\upsilon\zeta\iota\pi[\pi\alpha]$) previously unmentioned amongst Corinna's works, certainly does not exclude her from being the author of these poems. Furthermore (as recalled by Lobel), we have the indisputable evidence from the grammarian Apollonius Dyscolus (*pron.* 93.28, p. 496 Brandenburg) that Corinna composed a poem on the Seven against Thebes:

Δωριεῖς ὕμεις ... Αἰολεῖς ὕμμευς ... Βοιωτοὶ μετὰ διφθόγγου τοῦ ου·
οὐμὲς δὲ κομικθέντες,
Κόριννα ἔπει' ἐπὶ Θήβαις (= Corinna, *PMG* 659).

⁴⁹ Campbell 1992, 58-62.

⁵⁰ See Lobel 1956, 67: «What little evidence we have seems to me to be against supposing so» (*i.e.*, a roll containing works of Corinna), «... The two titles preserved in fr. 36 are not among those known from ancient citations. The person speaking in the marginalia of fr. 33, who appears as likely to be the writer as a character in the poem, is a man not a woman. The metres, though I cannot say what they were, were not either of those known to have been employed by Corinna». See also p. 60, regarding *POxy* 2370-4.

⁵¹ For a different view in favour of the attribution to Corinna see West 1970, 278 f; Palumbo Stracca 1993, 407-9 (disproving West 1990, 557).

Moreover, the brief quotation from this poem provided by Apollonius seems compatible, as far as metre is concerned, with the unidentifiable metre of the present papyrus fragments.

Last but not least, it would be difficult to find an alternative author who might have composed a poem on the same subject-matter in the same dialect. As M.L. West has pointed out with regard to the authorship of *POxy* 2371-4 and *PSI* 1174 (all written in Boeotian dialect), we should consider that the learned grammarians Apollonius Dyscolus and Herodianus in the IInd century CE «... can only quote Corinna for Boeotian forms. That the burghers of Hermopolis and Oxyrhynchus in the second and third centuries had any Boeotian poetry to read other than Corinna seems to me highly unlikely»⁵². To conclude on this point, *POxy* 2372 almost surely contains – amongst other mythological subjects in lyric metre – some fragments of the poem *Seven against Thebes* composed by Corinna; they should therefore be placed in connection with *PMG* 659. Whatever dating of Corinna one is willing to favour, it is noticeable that regarding the figure of Mecisteus she is to our knowledge the only lyric poet (and also the only Greek author) who agrees with the early epic tradition as represented by Homer, by the *Thebaid* (F 9 B. /W., 6 D.), by Herodotus (5.67.3), and later by Pausanias (9.18.1)⁵³. Interestingly, on this specific issue she neglected the innovations dating probably from the classical period, when the name of Mecisteus was dropped forever from the list of the Seven to the benefit of other heroes (Eteoclos, Hippomedon), and memories about his figure and role faded away⁵⁴. Given the nature of the stories narrated by Corinna in the other extant fragments whose mythological details, according to D. Page, are «quite or almost unknown to us from any other sources»⁵⁵, the version of the *Seven against Thebes* she adopted stands out as an intriguing case.

3. Gauging the epic fragments on papyrus: Hesiodic fragments versus other epic fragments.

As was noted by Wilamowitz at a time when a considerable number of papyri had already surfaced from the sands of Egypt, the history of the text of the Homeric and of the Hesiodic corpus is quite diversified⁵⁶. Only a small number of quotation fragments and paraphrases has survived from the many poems other than the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* ascribed to Homer in antiquity; to the present day, we can safely claim that even the papyrus fragments representing the direct tradition of these poems are virtually non-existent, with the exception of a few scraps from the *Margites* (FF 7-9 West = 9-11 Gostoli). On the contrary, the seminal edition of the *Fragmenta*

⁵² West 1970, 279; see most recently, in support of West's opinion, Vessella 2010, 816.

⁵³ On the dating of Corinna see the contrasting views of Page 1953, West 1970 and 1990; Davies 1988; Palumbo Stracca 1993, 411 f., basing a reappraisal of the early dating of Corinna on the evidence of new archaeological findings; Intrieri 2002, 22 fn. 63; Kousoulini 2016, 107 f. with fn. 77.

⁵⁴ On this point see Cingano 2002, 47 f.

⁵⁵ Page 1953, 45. This remark proves right when referred to the myth of Oedipus, where Corinna is the sole author to credit the hero with the killing of the Teumessian fox: cf. *PMG* 672, and see Cingano 2000, 157 f.

⁵⁶ See Wilamowitz 1928, 5.

Hesioda published by R. Merkelbach and M.L. West in 1967, increased ever since by new findings, can prove that a large amount of papyrus fragments of the Hesiodic corpus has been recovered – many of substantial length – attesting to the circulation and appreciation of the Hesiodic corpus in Egypt as late as the IVth century CE; the same can be said of the many quotation fragments and paraphrases from indirect tradition, quoted by various authors.

It is likely that the severe judgment on the cyclic poems – notably on the *Cypria* and the *Little Iliad* – expressed by Aristotle in the *Poetics*, pertaining to matters of style and structure, did exert some influence on Alexandrian scholarship⁵⁷; Aristotle soon found a follower in the Peripatetic Megaclides of Athens, whose dislike for the epic poets other than Homer and Hesiod has been elucidated by R. Janko⁵⁸. The critical view was later reinvigorated by the scathing beginning of an epigram by Callimachus (28.1 Pf.: Ἐχθαίρω τὸ ποίημα τὸ κυκλικόν...), which at a later time was expanded upon by Pollianus (*AP* 11.130.1 f.: τοὺς κυκλι<κ>οὺς τούτους τοὺς ἄντ' ἔπειτα λέγοντας / μισῶ, λωποδύτας ἀλλοτρίων ἐπέων), blaming the drab repetition of expressions such as ἄντ' ἔπειτα as verse fillers⁵⁹. Pollianus' judgment is easily confirmed by the longest fragment of the *Thebaid*, F 2.1-5 B./D./W., where the seminal episode of Oedipus' curse on his sons is given a poor treatment, in matters of style: ἄντ' occurs three times in 5 lines, once accompanied by ἔπειτα: ἄντ' ὁ διογενὴς ἦρωε ξανθὸς Πολυνείκη (v. 1), ... ἄντ' ἔπειτα (v. 3), ἄντ' ὃ γ' ὡς φράσθη παρακείμενα πατρὸς ἐοῖο (v. 5). It is worth noting, however, that the same repetition can be found in Homer, for example at the very end of the *Iliad*, where ἄντ' (followed once by ἐπεὶ, twice by ἔπειτα) occurs no less than four times in 12 lines: *Il.* 24.790, 792, 798, 801.

As far as we can tell, the dislike expressed by the authors mentioned seems to have affected the cyclic and the minor epic poems (*Minyas*, *Phoronis* etc.), rather than the poems of the Hesiodic corpus⁶⁰. These remarks should be kept in mind when considering, as I intend to do now, the controversial ascription of a papyrus fragment (*Plbscher* col. I, Ist century BCE) dealing with an epic *katabasis*. In his lengthy account of the poems attributed to Hesiod, Pausanias is the only extant source to credit Hesiod with a poem on Theseus' descent to Hades together with Peirithous (Paus. 9.31.5: ... ὡς Θησεὺς ἐς τὸν Ἄδην ὁμοῦ Πειρίθωι καταβαίη). The myth related their ill-fated descent with the aim of abducting Persephone, so that Peirithous could marry her: but the two heroes were tricked by Hades into the chairs of forgetfulness, and only Theseus was eventually rescued from the underworld by Heracles⁶¹.

⁵⁷ Aristot. *Poet.* 1459 a 37: οἱ δ' ἄλλοι περὶ ἓνα ποιοῦσι καὶ περὶ ἓνα χρόνον καὶ μίαν πρᾶξιν πολυμερῆ, οἷον ὁ τὰ Κύπρια ποιήσας καὶ τὴν Μικρὰν Ἰλιάδα. τοιγαροῦν ἐκ μὲν Ἰλιάδος καὶ Ὀδυσσεΐας μία τραγωιδία ποιεῖται ἑκατέρας, ἢ δύο μόναι, ἐκ δὲ Κυπρίων πολλαὶ καὶ τῆς Μικρᾶς Ἰλιάδος πλέον ὀκτώ ...

⁵⁸ Janko 2000, 142 f.: see above, fn. 22.

⁵⁹ See Cameron 1995, 399.

⁶⁰ On the other hand, an interesting convergence between Aristotle and Callimachus in matter of taste regarding early poetry is provided by their evaluation of the *Margites*, which they both attributed to Homer (Aristot. *Poet.* 1448 b 33; Callim. F 397 Pf.).

⁶¹ On the early sources of the myth of their descent into Hades see Gantz 1993, 291-4.

In another passage Pausanias relates that a *katabasis* of Theseus and Peirithous was narrated also in the epic poem *Minyas* (Paus. 10.28.2 = *Min.* F 1 B./D./W.), which dealt extensively with the underworld, as is shown by the setting in Hades of some characters mentioned in the few extant fragments (Theseus, Peirithous, Amphion, Thamyris, Meleager). Elsewhere Pausanias tentatively ascribes the *Minyas* to one Prodicus of Phocaea (Paus. 4.33.7 = *Min.* F 4 B./D./W.)⁶²; in three further passages in the last books of his *Periegesis*, however, apparently relying on other sources, he is unable to credit the *Minyas* with an author (9.5.8; 10.28.7; 10.31.3). In the last passage, he contrasts the account of the *Iliad* (9.529-99) with the one found in the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* (= Hes. F 25.12 f. M-W/ 16 H./22 M.) and in the *Minyas* (fr. 5 B./W., 3 D.) regarding the death of Meleager, the hero met in Hades by Theseus and Peirithous, at the hands of Apollo (Paus. 10.31.3 f.): αἰ δὲ Ἡοῖαι τε καλούμεναι καὶ ἡ Μινυὰς ὁμολογήκασι ἀλλήλας ... To make the general picture more confusing *Pihscher* col. I, a substantial papyrus fragment (28-29 lines) in hexameters, published in 1950, presents a dialogue between Theseus and Meleager in the underworld: Peirithous is also present, and Meleager tells them of his own death at the hands of Apollo (*Pihscher* col. I, 1 f.)⁶³. In the remaining text (vv. 3-28), Theseus tells Meleager the reason for their descent to Hades, and is asked a question regarding the former wife of Peirithous. Since, as two distinct accounts of Pausanias make it clear, the episode was narrated both by Hesiod and by the *Minyas*, it remains unclear whether this papyrus fragment should rather be assigned to the Hesiodic *katabasis* of Theseus and Peirithous mentioned by him in 9.31.5, or else to the *Minyas*: scholars have accordingly attributed it to either poem, with a marked preference for the *Minyas* (Hesiod F 280 M-W/216 M. = *Min.* F 7 f. dub. B./7 W.)⁶⁴.

Yet, in dealing with the authorship of the poem, making reference to what I just pointed out on the disappearance of the cyclic and minor epics, contrasted with the steady interest attested for the Hesiodic corpus throughout antiquity, a twofold argument must be taken in consideration⁶⁵. First, the popularity of the *katabasis* theme in archaic Greece, as is shown by a number of poems, from the descent to the underworld of Odysseus in *Odyssey* 11 to the *katabaseis* of Heracles related by Pindar (FF 70b; 346 M.) and Bacchylides (epin. 5), justifies the assumption that two versions relating the same episode may have circulated at the time: one in the *Minyas*, whoever the author of this poem was, and the other narrated in a Hesiodic poem dis-

⁶² Prodicus was either from Phocaea or from Samos; see testimonia 1-4 Bernabé; Janko 2000, 336 fn. 1.

⁶³ The papyrus has been edited by Merkelbach 1950, 255-63; see also D'Alessio 2005, 236 f.; Debiasi 2015, 253-76; for a new edition and a detailed commentary see now Santamaria Álvarez 2016; Tsagalis 2017, 300-3; 334-52.

⁶⁴ On the attribution to a *Minyad* see, most recently, West 2003, 34 f. The possibility that the poem was by a different author, Chersias of Orchomenus, has been advocated by Huxley (1969, 120), and further developed by Debiasi 2015, in part. 255-8. Santamaria Álvarez 2016, after noting the Homeric parallels of the poem, has recently suggested that a poem *Minyas* circulated in imperial times under the name of Hesiod (p. 51). In her recent unpublished Master dissertation (Messina 2015), Silvia Cutuli has differently argued that this fragment was part of the epic poem *Theseis*. For a thorough survey of the *Minyas* see, most recently, Tsagalis 2017, 307-11.

⁶⁵ For what regards the *katabasis* of Theseus and Peirithous I am expanding on what I wrote in Cingano 2009, 126-8.

tinct from the *Catalogue* – or else long enough to also stand as a self-contained narrative in the *Catalogue of Women*, as happens e.g. with the *Alcmene-Ehoie* (Hes. F 195 M-W = 91 H. = *Scut.* 1-56) and with the catalogue of Helen’s suitors (Hes. FF 196-204 M-W = 104-10 H. = 154a-156 M.). This hypothesis may be substantiated by Pausanias’ statement in 10.31.3 f., that αἱ δὲ Ἡοῖαι τε καλοῦμεναι καὶ ἡ Μινυὰς ὠμολογήκαεν ...

Second, if indeed a choice needs to be made in assigning this papyrus fragment either to Hesiod or to the *Minyas*, ‘Hesiod’ (by which I mean a Hesiodic poem) is surely the more likely option, for a statistical reason, related to the very limited number of papyrus fragments of epic poetry – other than Homeric and Hesiodic – which have appeared in the course of time. Regarding epic poetry in fragments, the Herculaneum papyri of Philodemus’ *De pietate* and *De poematis* are by and large the main papyrological source for the indirect tradition of the cyclic and antiquarian epics; they are also a major source for the Hesiodic fragments from various poems (see Hes. FF 20b, 56, 59b, 157, 161b, 201, 233 M.)⁶⁶; Philodemus (Ist century BCE) relied on the impressive erudition and love for quotations of Apollodorus of Athens (IInd century BCE), who was active both at Alexandria and Pergamon and wrote among other works a treatise *περὶ Θεῶν* and one on the *Νεῶν κατάλογος* in 12 books. Philodemus is also able to quote from the rare Hesiodic poem *Great Ehoiai* [Hes. F 363 A M-W = 201 M. = Philod. *de pietate* B 7073-80 Obbink], which seems to have circulated mainly in scholarly milieus.

If we leave the Hesiodic corpus aside, thirteen more citation and paraphrase fragments from the ‘minor’ epic poems have surfaced in the two treatises by Philodemus: four fragments are from the *Cypria*, if one accepts the line quoted by Philodemus, *de pietate* A 1680 Obbink⁶⁷ (= *Cypria* F 16 B./ F adesp. 5 D., rejected by West; *Cypria*, FF 2; 10; 15 B./2; 8; 14 D./2; 11; 17 W.); two fragments are from the *Titanomachia* and two more from the *Minyas* (*Titanom.* FF 1; 9 B./1b; 10 D. = Eumelus, *Titanom.* FF 1; 9 W.; *Min.* FF 6; 8* W., F 5 B./5 D.)⁶⁸; one fragment is taken respectively from the *Alcmaeonis* (F 7 B./D./W.), from the *Nostoi* (fr. 9 W.), from the *Danais* (fr. 3 B./D./W.), from the *Carmen Naupactium* (F 11 B./3b D./10 W.), and from the *Europa* of Eumelus (fr. 26 W.)⁶⁹. By contrast, very little can be added to the epic fragments retrieved from the charred Herculaneum papyri, if one considers the fragments available from the vast number of the Oxyrhynchus papyri and from other collections: only one citation fragment from the *Phoronis* (fr. 6 B./W., 5 D.), and two small citation fragments related to the *Aethiopsis* have surfaced to date (= *Aethiop.* FF 1-2 B./W., F dub. D.). Two more scraps recently published can now be added to the picture: *POxy* 5094 frgs. 1.9; 4.4, where one quotation from the *Cypria* and possibly another one from the *Carmen Naupactium* occur in a myth-

⁶⁶ I am quoting from the recent Loeb edition by Most 2007, who is relying on the new editions of Philodemus’ *De pietate* by D. Obbink, and *De poematis* by R. Janko.

⁶⁷ See the commentary by Obbink 1998, 544-8.

⁶⁸ F 8* West has been retrieved by R. Janko from Philod. *De poematis* 1 col. 123.6.

⁶⁹ A new edition of this fragment (P.Herc. 1692 frg. 3) has been recently published by Obbink 2011, 28.

ological prose work⁷⁰; unfortunately, the lacunae in the two scraps prevent us from making anything out of the mention of the poems⁷¹.

It is worth recalling for the sake of my argument that until now we have been dealing with quotation fragments and paraphrases which do not stem from the direct tradition of these poems: they are embedded in the commentaries of the learned grammarians active in Alexandria, Pergamum, Athens. In general, each quotation is limited to a few words, or else it only consists in a concise paraphrase. Conversely, if we now take into account the epic fragments on papyrus that may represent the direct tradition of the text, we are faced with a controversial situation: we do have a substantial number of unplaced hexameter fragments on papyrus, but the evidence allowing us to ascribe them with confidence to the cyclic and antiquarian epics is exceedingly meagre – or amounting to non-existent; moreover, most of the scraps are too doubtful or lacunose to be evaluated. Consequently, a criterion of attribution based on caution, statistics, lack of evidence and of parallels prevails in most cases: as M. L. West has judiciously remarked, «There are many hexameter fragments on papyrus that do not show clear signs of late composition and might in theory be from archaic epic. But in view of the limited currency that the early epics had in later times, the chances are not high, and their subject matter is generally doubtful»⁷².

To provide a few examples, no one of the recently published hexameter fragments from Oxyrhynchus dealing with Peleus and with Trojan matters (*POxy* 4846-50) is likely to come from the cyclic poems⁷³. On the other hand, if – as has been argued⁷⁴ – *POxy* 2509 on the death of Actaeon is not a Hesiodic fragment (= Hes. FF 103; 39* H./162; 305 M.), the possibility remains that it represents one of the very few papyrus remnants of an archaic epic poem⁷⁵. According to C. Meliàdò, another early exception among the “Papiri della Società Italiana” could be found in *PSI* 1386 (vol. XIV), representing «un quadro narrativo che poteva trovar posto nei *Cypria* tra il matrimonio di Peleo e Teti e il giudizio di Paride»⁷⁶. Amongst the papyrus fragments ascribed to early epic in recent times, one may refer to the controversial *POxy* 2510 (= *Il. Parv.* F dub. 32 B.: Ajax and Odysseus carrying the body of Achilles),

⁷⁰ «Perhaps by ... Apollodorus of Athens»: Obbink 2011, 29. Perale and Vecchiato 2015, 18 f., are cautious in reading a mention of the *Naupactia* here.

⁷¹ *POxy* 5094, frgs. 1.8 f.; 4.4, ed. by Henry – Perale 2011, 172-7; on frg. 1 see most recently the reappraisals of West 2012, 11-3, with a substantial new reading and interpretation; Trachsel 2014; Perale – Vecchiato 2015, with yet a different reading and a new reappraisal.

⁷² West 2003, 35. See also the *caveat* expressed by Janko 1982, 25, noting «... the absence of criteria by which we can distinguish between cyclic hexameters and ‘bad’ late hexameters». A revision and a catalogue of all the unplaced epic fragments other than Hesiodic, from all the papyrus collections, is currently being prepared by M. Perale (Liverpool); for a detailed analysis of some of the epic papyri dealt with in my paper see now Perale 2018.

⁷³ See *POxy* 4846-50, edited by Meliàdò 2008, 7-21; see also *PKöln Gr.* 8 328 = *Supplementum Supplementi Hellenistici* 1193 (hexameters with Doric features, ed. by M. Gronewald).

⁷⁴ By Lobel 1964, 4-7; West 1966, 22; see also Perale 2018.

⁷⁵ The attribution of *POxy* 2509 to Hesiod has been advocated by Casanova 1969, 31-46; Janko 1984, 299-307 (see also Perale 2018), and questioned by West 1985, 88. Debiasi’s suggestion that it may come from Eumelus’ *Europeia* (2013b = Debiasi 2015, 151-83) is cautiously dealt with by Tsagalis 2017, 134 fn. 524.

⁷⁶ See Meliàdò 2010, 380-415.

whose attribution to the *Little Iliad* vigorously advocated by B. Bravo remains unconvincing for many reasons⁷⁷.

The best case in point attesting to the circulation of an early epic poem in the IInd century CE is provided by *POxy* 2513, possibly mentioning the sacrifice of Iphigeneia, which contains scanty lines of hexameter poetry with ‘Homeric tincture’, as was stated by the *editor princeps* E. Lobel, who cautiously refrained from attribution⁷⁸. It was tentatively attributed to the *Cypria* by R. Janko⁷⁹, but the subsequent publication of *POxy* 3698 (IInd century CE), «written in the same hand as XXX 2513 and apparently from the same manuscript»⁸⁰, featuring early hexameter verse on the *Argonautica*, seems to disprove the attribution to this poem. *POxy* 3698 has prompted A. Debiasi to shift the ascription of both texts from the *Cypria* to Eumelus’ *Corinthiaca*, unconvincingly, in my opinion⁸¹. Other tiny scraps of unidentified epic poetry, all of them previously edited by M. Manfredi, have been collected in *PSI* vol. XV (2008, = *PSI* 1466-9)⁸²; to my knowledge, no identification or attribution has been hitherto attempted.

To recapitulate, the scarcity – to say the least – of papyrus fragments other than Hesiodic must be taken as a clear indication that interest in the epic cycle and in other epic poems with a local and antiquarian flavour (such as the *Minyas*, the *Phoronis*, the *Naupactia* etc.) had vanished in the course of the Hellenistic age, and consequently very few copies of the texts were produced. Considering the large number of papyri copied through the centuries that form the bulk of the Hesiodic corpus, it is therefore highly unlikely that a papyrus fragment featuring a long narrative, like *Pibsch* col. I relating the *katabasis* of Theseus and Peirithous, belong to the extant text of a ‘minor’ archaic epic poem (the *Minyas*) rather than to a poem collected in the Hesiodic corpus. However, it does not follow from this assumption that what we have in *Pibsch*, col. I, was a genuine poem by Hesiod: it may well be, on the one hand, that the poem it belongs to went at some point under the name of Hesiod in the cluster of poems known as the Hesiodic corpus (cf. Paus. 9.31.5),

⁷⁷ See Bravo 2001, 49-114; Debiasi 2004, 133 fn. 63; see now the judicious remarks of Perale 2018.

⁷⁸ See Lobel 1964, 13-5.

⁷⁹ See Janko 1982, 25-9.

⁸⁰ I am quoting from Haslam 1986, 10.

⁸¹ See Debiasi 2003; Debiasi 2013a (= Debiasi 2015, 15-45, 165), whose arguments remain highly conjectural. Furthermore, I remain unconvinced by the attribution to Eumelus considering that no other papyrus fragment from direct tradition can plausibly be attributed to him, and that some of his poems were converted into prose as early as in the classical age; further doubts are expressed by D’Alessio 2014, 45 f. On *POxy* 3698 see also above, p. 30 and fn. 9. In spite of the remarks by Santamaria Álvarez 2016, 49 f., it should be clear from the above survey that the Hesiodic papyri outnumber by far the epic scraps of papyrus which may belong to the cyclic epics or to the ‘minor’ epic poems. They are also far more expanded, and in this respect *Pibsch* col. I can be considered ‘Hesiodic’ in length. On *Pibsch* col. I see now Perale 2018, reaching a similar conclusion.

⁸² *PSI* 1466-8 had been edited by M. Manfredi in *PSI* XV fasc. I, 1979; *PSI* 1469 in *SIFC* 27 f., 1956, 49 f.; *PSI* XV 1465 from Oxyrhynchus corresponds to Hes. F 96 Hirschberger. *PSI* 1501 was edited by C. Pernigotti, in *Notizie relative allo stato attuale del XV vol. dei Papiri della Società Italiana: i papiri letterari*, in *Comunicazioni dell’Istituto Papirologico “G. Vitelli”* 5, 2003, 61-73.

and not under the (original) title *Minyas*. If this is the case, in 10.31.3 f. Pausanias may unintentionally be mirroring the contrasting tradition on the double attribution of what was one and only poem; it can be recalled that – as far as we can see – the Hesiodic version of the *katabasis* is paralleled, but not contrasted, by Pausanias with the one in the *Minyas*.

On the other hand, as I pointed out earlier on (and more plausibly in my opinion: see p. 49), Pausanias 10.31.3 f. can safely be taken as a reliable piece of information: two independent poems on the same subject may have circulated in Greece, just as two different epic narratives on the fall of Troy were composed (the *Little Iliad* and the *Ilioupersis*), and two Hesiodic poems bearing nearly the same title were read and transmitted in antiquity, the *Ehoiai* and the *Megalai Ehoiai*, which are clearly distinguished by some learned sources (cf. Pausanias, 4.2.1; 9.31.5: see Cingano 2009, 119 f.). Similarly, two lyric narratives on the *Athla* for Pelias may also have been composed, one (the more expanded and renowned) by Stesichorus, the other (perhaps with a much shorter narrative) by Ibycus.

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Abstract: In the present paper I shall discuss a few specific issues from a limited number of fragments, such as the nature and placing of some lyric and epic fragments from various poets: Simonides (PMG 564 = F 273 Poltera), Stesichorus (FF 1, 3, 4, 98, 171, 281, 282 Finglass), two Hesiodic fragments (FF 192 f. M-W), and the value of some poetic and prose testimonia pertaining to the Theban epics, among which some papyrus fragments in Boeotian dialect attributed to Corinna (PMG 692). In the last section, I shall deal with the attribution of *Pibsker* col. I, and with the broader issue relating to the poor reception and transmission of the epic poems other than Homeric, to be contrasted with the steady interest and circulation attested for the poems attributed to Hesiod throughout classical antiquity.

Keywords: Fragmentary poetry, Stesichorus, Simonides, Hesiod, Theban myths.