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*Tragicorum Graecorum fragmenta* volume II: old texts, new opportunities

P. J. Finglass

*Tragicorum Graecorum fragmenta* is one of the great monuments of modern scholarship on ancient Greek drama. Published between 1971 and 2004, its five volumes (the last in two parts) contain the fragments of Greek tragedy (and satyr-play) from classical Greece down to the Roman period. Its editors, Bruno Snell, Richard Kannicht, and the late Stefan Radt, are rightly considered giants in our field; other scholars can hope to equal their achievement in these volumes, but no-one is likely to surpass it.

Three of the volumes are dedicated to one of the ‘big three’ tragedians, Aeschylus (volume three, edited by Radt in 1985), Sophocles (volume four, also edited by Radt, first in 1977, then updated in 1999), and Euripides (volume five, in two separate parts, edited by Kannicht in 2004). Each of these books contains not just the fragments and testimonia to each play, but also the testimonia to each author – extremely useful collections of text on the life and artistic production of these playwrights, which anyone interested in these authors must consult whether or not they are concerned with the fragments themselves. Another, the first, contains fragments by other named authors, together with the testimonia to tragedy as a genre, including the vital inscriptional evidence which sheds such light on tragedy in antiquity.

That leaves the second: of the five volumes, I would venture, by some distance the least studied. The contents of the second volume have had the misfortune to be preserved not just as fragments, but as anonymous fragments, shorn not just of immediate context but even of the names of their author, and in such a way that it is not now possible to determine who wrote the text in question. (That last qualification is vital – many fragments, especially those preserved on papyrus, do not have a name attached to them, but through study of their style

and vocabulary, or through the overlap with a quotation fragment which has an authorial ascription, scholars can assign them to their author with certainty or with a high degree of confidence.) In some cases, it is not even possible to determine which century the text in question came from. No wonder, one might think, such texts are neglected.

This neglect is particularly manifest in the absence of translations and commentaries on these texts – a point all the more apparent because recent years have been good, in publication terms, for most tragic fragments. As well as, indeed stimulated by, *Tragicorum Graecorum fragmenta*, there have been Loeb volumes for the fragments of Aeschylus (by Alan Sommerstein, 2008), Sophocles (by Hugh Lloyd-Jones, 1996, revised 2003), and Euripides (by Christopher Collard and Martin Cropp, 2008, in two volumes). Aris and Phillip commentaries on groups of fragmentary plays have also come out, for both Sophocles (Sommerstein, Fitzpatrick, and Talbot 2006, Sommerstein and Talbot 2012) and Euripides (Collard, Cropp, and Lee 1995, Collard, Cropp, and Gibert, 2004), offering exemplary commentaries on a range of dramas. These have recently been added to by a volume containing commentaries on some minor tragedians, Cropp 2019; more are promised. And there have been detailed commentaries on some individual fragmentary dramas: Sophocles' *Tereus* (Milo 2008), Euripides' *Phaethon* (Diggle 1970), *Hypsipyle* (Cockle 1987), *Telephus* (Preiser 2000) *Philoctetes* (Müller 2000), *Cretans* (Cozzoli 2001), *Alexandros* (Karamanou 2017), *Melanippe Wise*, and *Melanippe Captured* (Domouzi 2020), to name just a few. The fragments of the other named tragedians, which make up volume one of *Tragicorum Graecorum fragmenta*, have received much less attention, but Matthew Wright's monograph *The Lost Plays of Greek Tragedy. Volume I: Neglected Authors* (2016) does much to bring

them to the attention of a wider audience. These fragments at least belong to writers with a name – they may be ‘neglected’, in Wright’s terminology, but at least they are ‘authors’.<sup>1</sup>

By contrast, the anonymous fragments in *Tragicorum Graecorum fragmenta* volume II are neglected in a more profound way, never having received a systematic analysis of any kind. True, some individual texts have received attention. The third-century papyrus P. Köln 245, which appears as fr. 672a at the back of *TrGF* vol. V part 2 (pp. 1142–4) and contains dialogue from a play about Odysseus in Troy, has been the subject of a monograph (Parca 1991). And the Gyges fragment, P.Oxy. 2382 from the second or third century, now fr. 664 in *TrGF* volume II, has received quite a bit of attention since its publication in 1949, but the date of the work that it contains remains stubbornly unclear – whether it came before or after Herodotus’ account of the Lydian king Gyges is still a mystery.<sup>2</sup> These texts, however, are the exceptions rather than the rule; and even they have not been integrated into discussions of tragedy more generally. Most of the texts are completely unknown even to specialists in Greek tragedy.

Some tragic texts are even more unlucky than the ones found in *Tragicorum Graecorum fragmenta* volume II. These are the anonymous tragic fragments published after that volume appeared in 1981, or which (in a few cases) had been published before that date,

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I am most grateful to Drs Anna Lamari and Anna Novokhatko for the kind invitation to a wonderful conference; and to audiences in Frankfurt and Dublin who heard versions of this paper. For the issues treated in this chapter see also Finglass forthcoming, a companion piece which takes a different perspective on the subject and examines different passages.

<sup>1</sup> See also Zouganeli 2017 and Sims 2018, doctoral theses which contain commentaries on some of these authors. Wright 2019, the second of two volumes in his study, is devoted to the fragments of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides.

<sup>2</sup> For recent discussion and bibliography of those earlier pieces see Kotlińska-Toma 2015: 178–85, Hornblower 2019: 103–6.

but were only subsequently recognised as coming from tragedy or satyr-play. Those which had appeared by 2004 were then included in the Addenda to *Tragicorum Graecorum fragmenta* volume II, which can be found in *Tragicorum Graecorum fragmenta* volume V part 2, at the very end of the book, after even the index (pp. 1117–58, ‘Addenda et corrigenda in vol. 2’). There is a good deal of material here, but who ever looks at it? Anonymous texts which do not even make it into the volume devoted to those anonymous texts – it hardly seems very accessible or approachable. Moreover, any papyrus that came out after 2004 does not appear even there, or indeed in any volume of *Tragicorum Graecorum fragmenta*: for instance, P.Oxy. 5184, a tragic papyrus that cannot be assigned to any author (which was published by W. B. Henry in 2014). We could really do with a new edition, which gathers all this material together and preferably furnishes it with a translation and commentary too – because most of this material has never received even that rather basic level of scrutiny, and if it is to reach a wider audience such assistance will be vital. Such a book would become out of date over time in its turn, as is the fate of most classical editions: but in terms of present need, the current arrangement is clearly unsatisfactory. One might be forgiven for thinking that, as far as Greek tragedy was concerned, the editor’s task was done – rather, the to-do list sometimes seems greater than ever.

As a result the title of this chapter is somewhat misleading, because the texts of anonymous tragedy are scattered about beyond even that little-consulted volume. Yet what they have in common is that they are largely unknown, and many must have secrets to reveal. No secrets are revealed in this chapter, in which I look at three different anonymous tragic fragments (one a quotation, one written on a potsherd, one from a papyrus), and briefly discuss certain points that makes them, to my mind, worth studying. But I hope that just by pointing to the neglect of these fascinating texts I may persuade other scholars, perhaps

especially doctoral students, to take some of them seriously and apply to them the investigation that they deserve.

I. Tr. Adesp. fr. 110 *TrGF*

ἀλλ' οὐδὲ Αἴας σιωπᾶ, μέλλων δὲ ἑαυτὸν ἀποσφάττειν κέκραγεν

οὐκ ἦν ἄρ' οὐδὲν πῆμ' ἐλευθέρου δάκνον

ψυχὴν ὁμοίως ἀνδρὸς ὡς ἀτιμία.

οὐ γὰρ πέπονθα καί με τσυμφοροῦσατ

βαθεῖα κηλὶς ἐκ βυθῶν ἀναστρέφει

λύσσης πικροῖς κέντροισιν ἠρεθισμένον.

But not even Ajax is silent, but when he is about to slaughter himself he cries out ‘So after all there is no suffering that bites the soul of a free man like dishonour does. That is what I have suffered and . . . me the deep stain from the depths turns me upside down, as I am incited by the bitter goads of madness.’

This passage comes from the *Stromateis* of Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–215), in which the bishop discusses how sinful action is the result of deliberate abandonment to one’s passions, and cites tragic characters who explicitly so abandon themselves. Beginning by citing a speech delivered by Oedipus’ father Laius, a passage which other evidence indicates comes from Euripides’ *Chrysippus*, he goes on to cite a speech delivered by Medea from Euripides’ homonymous play. Finally he gives us the citation from Ajax above. But Clement’s introduction does not explicitly tell us the drama, or the author, from which the quotation comes, and unlike the previous two quotations which he gives us, we have no other evidence which could shed light on the matter; as a result, the actual source of this tragic quotation eludes us. Perhaps it comes from Aeschylus’ *Thracian Women*, in which Ajax’s suicide did not take place on stage as in Sophocles, but was related by a Messenger. But Aeschylus’ was not the only such play available, and any assumption that the fragment was by him would be



πέμψον τιν' ἡμῖν ἄγγελον, κακὴν φάτιν  
Τεύκρω φέροντα, πρῶτος ὧς με βαστάση  
πεπτῶτα τῷδε περὶ νεορράντῳ ξίφει,  
καὶ μὴ πρὸς ἐχθρῶν του κατοπτευθεὶς πάρος  
ρίφθῳ κυσὶν πρόβλητος οἰωνοῖς θ' ἔλωρ. 830  
τοσαῦτά σ', ὦ Ζεῦ, προστρέπω· καλῶ δ' ἅμα  
πομπαῖον Ἑρμῆν χθόνιον εὔ με κοιμίσει,  
ξύν ἀσφαδάστῳ καὶ ταχεῖ πηδήματι  
πλευρὰν διαρρήξαντα τῷδε φασγάνῳ.  
καλῶ δ' ἄρωγούς τὰς αἰετὰς παρθένους 835  
αἰετὰς θ' ὀρώσας πάντα τὰν βροτοῖς πάθη,  
σεμνὰς Ἑρινῦς τανύποδας, μαθεῖν ἐμὲ  
πρὸς τῶν Ἀτρειδῶν ὡς διόλλυμαι τάλας. 838  
ἴτ', ὦ ταχεῖαι ποίιμοί τ' Ἑρινύες,  
γεύεσθε, μὴ φείδεσθε πανδήμου στρατοῦ.  
σὺ δ', ὦ τὸν αἰπὺν οὐρανὸν διφρηλατῶν 845  
Ἥλιε, πατρῶαν τὴν ἐμὴν ὅταν χθόνα  
ἴδης, ἐπισχῶν χρυσόνωτον ἠνίαν  
ἄγγελον ἄτας τὰς ἐμὰς μόρον τ' ἐμὸν  
γέροντι πατρὶ τῇ τε δυστήνῳ τροφῷ.  
ἦ που τάλαινα, τήνδ' ὅταν κλύη φάτιν, 850  
ἦσει μέγαν κωκυτὸν ἐν πάσῃ πόλῃ.  
ἀλλ' οὐδὲν ἔργον ταῦτα θρηνεῖσθαι μάτην·  
ἀλλ' ἀρκτέον τὸ πρᾶγμα σὺν τάχει τινί. 853  
ὦ φέγγος, ὦ γῆς ἱερὸν οἰκείας πέδον 859  
Σαλαμῖνος, ὦ πατρῶον ἐστίας βάθρον,  
κλειναί τ' Ἀθῆναι, καὶ τὸ σύντροφον γένος,  
κρηναί τε ποταμοί θ' οἶδε, καὶ τὰ Τρωικὰ  
πεδία προσαυδῶ, χαίρετ', ὦ τροφῆς ἐμοί·  
τοῦθ' ὑμῖν Αἴας τοῦπος ὕστατον θροεῖ,



The slaughterman stands where it will be sharpest – if a man has leisure to make calculations – the gift of Hector, the man most hateful of foreigners to me, and most detestable to see. It stands fixed in the hostile land of the Troad, newly sharpened on an iron-gnawing whetstone. I planted it, securing it well all round, so that it should prove most kind to this man in providing a speedy death. Thus I am well prepared. After this you, o Zeus, as is fitting, be the first to help me. I shall ask to obtain no great favour from you. Send a messenger for me, bearing the grim tidings to Teucer, so that he may be the first to raise me as I lie fallen on this freshly-dripping sword, and I shall not be noticed beforehand by some enemy and thrown out as prey to dogs and birds. Such is my supplication of you, o Zeus. At the same time I call on Hermes of the earth below, escort of souls, to lull me fast to sleep, as with a swift and spasmless leap I break through my ribs with this sword. And I call as my helpers the perpetual virgins, the perpetual overseers of all the sufferings of men, the dread, far-striding Erinyes, to learn how I am destroyed by the Atridae in my wretchedness. Come, o swift and punishing Erinyes: taste the entire army, do not spare them. And you, who drive your chariot through the lofty heaven, the Sun, when you catch sight of my ancestral land, check your golden rein and announce my ruin and my death to my aged father and the wretched woman who nursed me. Wretched woman, I suppose that when she hears this message, she will raise a great lamentation in the whole city. But there is no point in vainly lamenting thus: no, the deed must be begun with speed. O light, o holy ground of my native land of Salamis, o ancestral foundation of my hearth, and famous Athens, and your race kindred to mine, and springs and rivers here, and the Trojan plains I address: farewell, you who have nourished me. This is the last word that Ajax pronounces to you; the rest I shall speak to those below in Hades.

This imposing speech is on quite another scale than the little anonymous fragment. Yet for all its length, what is relevant here is not what it contains but rather what it does not. In the

words of Karl Reinhardt, the suicide speech of Sophocles' Ajax offers 'no lament, reproach, world-weariness, aversion, no hint of melancholy'.<sup>4</sup> Sophocles' Ajax utters plenty of laments and reproaches earlier in the play; but in his final speech he is focused on making due preparations for the task in hand and a series of requests to the gods, before he finally says farewell to both his homeland and the land of Troy and kills himself. Ajax's passionate hatred for the army which dishonoured him is still there – but there is no explicit reflecting on that dishonour in its own right. Earlier in the drama he had told Athena that he had so turned his hand against Agamemnon and Menelaus, 'that never again shall they refuse honour to Ajax' (ὥστ' οὔποτ' Αἴανθ' οἶδ' ἀτιμάσουσ' ἔτι, 98); later he notes how he is perishing dishonoured by the Argives (ἄτιμος Ἀργείοισιν ὥδ' ἀπόλλυμαι, 440). But any such reflection at this later point in the play, or any reference to the Judgment of the Arms or any other slight which he has received from the army, or any mention of his recent humiliation at the hands of Athena, who diverted his vengeful purpose away from the sleeping army towards animals, would only detract from the grandeur of Ajax's final moments, making more difficult the transition to the remaining part of the play in which the rehabilitation of that warrior will be such a prominent theme.

The plays diverge in other ways. The anonymous fragment uses the language of realisation: the particle ἄρ' in the first line implies that Ajax in that play has only just understood (or is presenting himself as having only just understood) the point about dishonour that goes on to make. But this idea of learning is absent from Sophocles' speech, where Ajax knows just as much as he wants to, and acts and gives instructions to heavenly powers accordingly. A statement of realisation would make him appear less confident and in control – the time for realisation was earlier, whereas now he is acting on the basis of a

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<sup>4</sup> Reinhardt 1947: 36 = 1979: 28.

settled view of his place in the world. So too the reference in the fragment to Ajax as a ‘free man’ and as such particularly bitten by dishonour presupposes a very different figure from the warrior described by Sophocles. The concern that Sophocles’ Ajax shows for his status has nothing to do with his membership of any group, let alone one as capacious as that of all free men, but rather with his belief in his own unique, surpassing excellence: the fragment suggests someone with a more moderate picture of his position in the world. A further potential difference lies in the reference to madness in the Ajax (line 5); although the precise referent is unclear, a strong possibility is that it denotes the attack of madness that Ajax experiences during his attempt on the army. That episode, which so dominates the first part of Sophocles’ play, is not mentioned at all by that playwright’s Ajax before he kills himself: such a humiliating episode is not something that would suit the grander tone of that suicide speech.

Comparison with the anonymous fragment brings out particular characteristics of the speech in Sophocles. A tiny quotation, with almost no context, turns out to be illuminating for the literary and dramatic critic, and meaning can be elicited from the juxtaposition. For while we do not know when this fragment was written or who wrote it, the one thing that we can be certain about is that someone wrote it as part of a dramatic treatment of Ajax’s suicide. Almost nothing of that treatment has survived: but the little that has, while telling us almost nothing about that vanished play, at least invites us to ponder some of the choices that Sophocles made in his account of the myth, and to observe some of the points that he was so careful to avoid. The bishop deserves our thanks for preserving it.

## II. Tr. Adesp. fr. 701a *TrGF*

The second text is one of the fragments tucked away at the back of *Tragicorum Graecorum fragmenta* volume v part 2 (p. 1148). This text was written on an ostrakon, dated on the basis

of its script to the first or second century BC, and discovered at Mons Claudianus, a Roman quarry in the eastern desert of Egypt administered by the Roman army. It consists of twelve tragic trimeters. They were published by Cuvigny and Wagner in 1986, and the following year Eric Handley made a vital contribution to their interpretation; yet apart from their republication in Kannicht's edition, and a reference to them by Wolfgang Luppe 1991, no-one appears to have referred to them since. They read as follows (my translation takes many phrases from Handley's article; I am unaware of a continuous translation of the piece in any language):

σίγησο]ν, ὦ παῖ, καὶ τὸ γενναῖον φρόνει·  
 θανεῖ]ν γὰρ αὐτῇ ἐκπάλαι πεπρωμένον,  
 θέλει]ς κομίσσαι θάνατον ὡς πατροκτό[νος·  
 νῦν γὰρ σὲ κλήζω· εἰ δ' ἔβης πρὸς Αἴ[δ]αν  
 πρὸς καιρόν, ὀλιγον ἦ[ν] με κηδεύειν, τέκνον·  
 ἐν ταῖς γὰρ ἀρχαῖς νέκυσι πληροῦνται τάφοι{ς}  
 στεφάνοις, μύροισιν, οἰκετῶν κηδεύμασι·  
 ὄσω γὰρ ἐστι νεαρὰ τὰ κακὰ, συμπλέγει·  
 ὅταν δ' ἀποστῆ, ἐν ὀλίγω χρόν<ω> τὸ πῦρ  
 εὐμετάθετον τίθησιν εἰς ἄλλον τρόπον  
 τὸν νοῦν τὸν ἐσθλὸν καὶ μα[ραί]νει τῆν φλ[ό]γα.  
 μὴ γὰρ σε[ ]ειν θέλω

Be silent, child, and ponder what is noble! For it being long fated for her to die, you wish to bring death back as if you were the killer of your father. For now I ?appeal to you? ? call you? If you had gone to Hades at the due time, it would have been right for me to grieve little for you, my child. For at the first, funerals for the dead are full of garlands, myrrh, and the mourning of household members;

the more recent the sad event is, the more it conflagrates.<sup>5</sup> When the event is distant, in a short time the fire makes the mind that is good easily transferable to another mode, and diminishes the flame. . . . For not . . . I wish . . .

Handley seems to have rightly identified this as from a speech delivered by Pheres to his son Admetus; they have come into conflict, as in Euripides' *Alcestis*, because the aged Pheres is unwilling to give up his own life to preserve that of his son, leaving Admetus' young wife Alcestis to undertake the sacrifice herself. Yet this text seems to have been passed over in discussions of the *Alcestis* myth, whether in studies of Euripides' *Alcestis*; or of the *Alcestis* rehearsal papyrus (P.Oxy. 4546), which contains a section of stichomythia but only offers the lines spoken by one character, omitting the ones spoken by the other, and thus apparently used by an actor to learn his part; or of the Barcelona *Alcestis*, a mythological poem of at least 124 Latin hexameters published not long before our ostrakon. This reflects in part the status of the ostrakon as a new text, which for more than two decades was not available in any edition, and would be familiar only to readers who happened to have looked at either of the two relevant volumes of the *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*. But even after it was published in an edition, it had the bad fortune to appear in an appendix to a book on a quite different topic. When we add that the text is anonymous, that there is no prospect of ever discovering the name of that author, and that the Greek in the short piece is difficult to understand, it is perhaps not hard to see why the scholarly world appears to have passed it by.

While many questions about this piece remain unanswered, there is nevertheless much of interest here. First, the fragment is quite possibly an extract from a larger play, not as a self-contained unit. For while we can infer the myth from the speech, it requires more thought to unravel than we would expect if it were intended as a self-contained speech, as if

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<sup>5</sup> Or, emending to ὄτῳ with Handley, 'the sad event burns like the pyre inside the person for whom it is recent'.

it were some rhetorical exercise depicting Pheres addressing his son.<sup>6</sup> If this is true, it is a testimony to another *Alcestis* play, or at least to an episode from that myth turned into dramatic verse, which has left no other trace: an addition to the reception history of this myth. Second, certain linguistic usages mean that this play is post-classical (e.g. ἐκπάλαι and εὐμετάθετον are found no earlier than Imperial Greek, and the instances of hiatus – if not signs of textual corruption, a possibility raised by Handley – also imply a post-classical text); so if this is from a play of some kind, it is testimony to the continuing productivity of tragic drama as a genre during the Roman period. Third, just as the *Ajax* fragment came to life when set it alongside a comparable passage from a play that survived complete, so too this fragment permits a productive comparison with another drama on the same subject which has survived in full. In particular, the tone that we find here is quite different from anything in Euripides’ play. There Pheres begins

ἦκω κακοῖσι σοῖσι συγκάμνων, τέκνον·	615
ἔσθλῆς γάρ, οὐδεις ἀντερεῖ, καὶ σώφρονος	
γυναικὸς ἡμάρτηκας. ἀλλὰ ταῦτα μὲν	
φέρειν ἀνάγκη καίπερ ὄντα δύσφορα.	
δέχου δὲ κόσμον τόνδε καὶ κατὰ χθονὸς	
ἴτω. τὸ ταύτης σῶμα τιμᾶσθαι χρεῶν,	620
ἦτις γε τῆς σῆς προύθανε ψυχῆς, τέκνον,	
καί μ’ οὐκ ἄπαιδ’ ἔθηκεν οὐδ’ εἶασε σοῦ	
στερέντα γήρα πενθίμω καταφθίνειν,	
πάσαις δ’ ἔθηκεν εὐκλεέστερον βίον	
γυναιξίν, ἔργον τλᾶσα γενναῖον τόδε.	625

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<sup>6</sup> Similarly, Luppe 1991: 90 argues that lines 1–3 are taken from some wider context and are not simply an amateur’s metrical composition. Luppe seems not to know Handley’s piece, however, since he does not discuss the possibility that the text comes from a version of an *Alcestis* myth.

I come to share in your trouble, my son. For you have lost, as no one will deny, a noble and virtuous wife. Yet you must bear these things though they are hard to bear. Now take this finery, and let it be buried with her. We must show honour to her corpse seeing that she died to save your life, my son, and did not leave me childless or let me waste away in a stricken old age bereft of you. She has given the lives of all women a fairer repute by daring to do this noble deed.<sup>7</sup>

After Admetus angrily rejects his consolation, however, Pheres' tone changes. In the words of Andreas Markantonatos, 'Pheres, fuming with indignation, tears away all Admetus' protective screens and leaves him with his self-respect in tatters';<sup>8</sup> the same scholar refers additionally to his 'unashamed cynicism, brazen self-centredness, and lack of moral fibre'.<sup>9</sup> Neither this new emotional register, not his original one, however, matches what we find on the ostrakon. There we encounter a Pheres who actively consoles his son in a more direct way than we find in Euripides. The speech is not the opening to their encounter, if the supplemented word 'be silent' is correct – Pheres is taking control of the exchange, but not in the angry and contemptuous way that he does in Euripides. He still address him 'my child'; he urges him to consider what is noble; he seems to appeal to the consoling power of time. It implies a different kind of relationship between the two men compared to anything in the classical tragedy. The process of the thought is still difficult, though it is not clear whether this is the result of textual corruption (i.e. the writer of the ostrakon, for whatever reason, has slightly garbled some earlier, better version of this text) or because the text was always like

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<sup>7</sup> Translation from Kovacs 1994, slightly adapted.

<sup>8</sup> Markantonatos 2013: 113.

<sup>9</sup> Markantonatos 2013: 19.

this (which implies a carelessly written text, perhaps never intended for performance at all). While much here is still uncertain, the contents and the provenance of this tragic text are so strikingly unusual that it should scarcely be ignored by anyone concerned with the Alcestis myth.

### III. Tr. Adesp. fr. 665 *TrGF*

The last of my examples is a piece of anonymous tragedy that has seen an unusual level of engagement compared to many of these texts, but which could still do with being better known. Here it is, with a translation from Denys Page's Loeb edition:

#### <ΠΟΛΥΝΕΙΚΗΣ>

οὐκ ἀντερῶ σοι· τ[ή]νδε τή]ν ψ[υ]χὴν ἄπαξ  
σοί, φιλτάτη τεκοῦσα, παρ[ε]θέμην μολ[ών]  
αἰτῶ· παρ' αὐτῆι τὸ ξίφος φύλασ[σ]έ μοι·

#### <ΙΟΚΑΣΤΗ>

μάλιστα· λέξον “ἐμμενῶ μητρὸς κρίσει”·

<ΠΟ.> ἦ μὴν φανείς πονηρὸς οὐδὲ ζῆν θέλω· 5  
ἀλλ', Ἐτεόκλε<ι>ς, πίστευσον, οὐ φανήσομαι·  
σὲ δ' ἐξελέγξω πάντοτ' ἠδίκηκότα.

#### <ΕΤΕΟΚΛΗΣ>

Ἐτεοκλῆς {δι}δούς σκῆπτρα συγγόνωι φ[έ]ρειν  
δειλὸς παρὰ βροτοῖς, εἶπέ μοι, νομίζεται;

<ΠΟ.> σὺ γὰρ οὐκ ἂν ἐδίδους μὴ στρατοὺς ἄγοντί μοι· 10

<ΕΤ.> τὸ μὴ θέλειν σόν ἐστι, τὸ δὲ δοῦναι τύχης·

<ΠΟ.> ἐμοὶ προσάπτεις ὧν σὺ δρᾷς τὰς αἰτίας·  
σὺ φέρειν γὰρ ἡμᾶς πολεμίου<ς> ἠ[ν]άγκασας·  
εἰ γὰρ ἐμέρ[ι]ζες τὸ διάδημ' ἄτερ μάχης,  
τίς ἦν {ἂν} ἀνάγκη τοῦ φέρειν στρατεύμ' ἐμέ; 15



<ΕΤ.>	κοινηί πέφυκεν· ὦ[στ]ε μῆ κέλευέ μοι·	
<ΠΟ.>	ἄλλοις τύραννος τυγχάνεις, οὐ συγγόνωι·	
<>	παλε . . . . . στ . . . ρουν γενήσομαι.	
<ΠΟ.>	τὸ πρᾶιον ἡμῶν, μ[ῆ]τερ, οὐκ ἐνετράπη· ὄθεν ἐξ ἀνάγκης . . . . . λοιπὸν φράσω·	20
	γαίης γὰρ αὐτὸς ἀκλεῶς μ' ἀπήλασεν Ἄ[ργ]οῦς τε γῆ μοι συμμάχους παρέσχετο καὶ πλείον' αὐτὸς στρατὸν ἔχων ἐλήλυ[θα συναν[	
	τοιγάρ[	25
	προσφερ[	
	ὃ παρεθέμην σοι, [μη]τερ	
<ΙΟ.>	οὐδ' εἰ Κύκλωπος εἶχον [	
	ψυχὴν ἄθελκτον . . [	
	τί γὰρ τυραννεῖς, τί λι[	30
	ἠλίκον ἐφ' ὑμῖν π[	
<?ΕΤ.>	κληθεῖς σύναιμος οὐκ ἔχ[	
	τὸ ῥῆμα τοῦτο διαφορο[	
<?ΠΟ.>	ἀδελφὸν ὄντα δεῖ με . [.]μο[	

<Polynices>: I will not contradict you. Dearest mother, by coming here I have entrusted my life to you once for all. I beg you, guard my sword beside you.

<Jocasta>: Gladly.—Repeat: “I will abide by my mother’s judgement.”

<Polynices>: I swear, if I prove a villain, I would not even want to live. But I shall not prove so—believe me, Eteocles: though I shall convict you of wrong at every time.

<Eteocles.> Shall Eteocles give up his sceptre for his brother to bear, —tell me— and be thought a coward by the world?

<Polynices>: Yes, for you would not have offered it, if I had not brought armies here!

<Eteocles.> Not to wish is in your power: granting your will, in Fortune’s.

<Polynices>: You fasten blame on me for what you are doing. It was you who forced me  
to come as an enemy. If you were for dividing the crown without a battle, what need  
had I to bring an army?

<Polynices>: It is for all alike. Cease then to give me orders.

<Eteocles.> To others you may be king, but not to your brother.

<?> . . . . I shall be. . . .

<Polynices>: Mother, he took no heed of my gentle spirit, so I must speak henceforth [in anger]. It  
was he who drove me without honour from the land and the land of Argos provided me with  
comrades in arms, and I have come myself with a greater army . . . therefore . . . which I entrusted to  
you . . .

<Jocasta>: Not even if I had the implacable soul of Cyclops. . . . For why are you monarch, why . . .

<Eteocles.> Despite the name of brother, [you are] not . . . this utterance . . . different

<Polynices>: Though I am his brother, I must . . .

Here we have what is clearly a scene from a drama, which must be from after the fifth  
century on the basis of its language, and which corresponds to a scene from Euripides’  
*Phoenissae* of 408. But this is no unthinking adaptation of Euripides’ play. In the words of  
Edith Hall, ‘the author of the derivative version has made efforts to make the relationship  
between Jocasta and her sons more intense and perhaps more believable’.<sup>10</sup> Polynices here  
hands over his sword to his mother – ‘a spectacular innovation’, according to Page, who goes  
on to note: ‘A new and striking element: Jocasta bids Polynices swear that after the ensuing  
debate he will abide by her verdict.’<sup>11</sup> In Euripides Polynices swears oaths to Jocasta to  
guarantee the truth of what he is saying, but there is nothing here or elsewhere in tragedy to  
match the oath that Polynices swears in this fragment. Hall points to the ‘maternal authority’ (p.

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<sup>10</sup> Hall 2007: 280.

<sup>11</sup> Page 1942: 174.

280) that these shifts create, and the (p. 280) ‘snappy, vituperative stichomythia, a more informal way to open their debate scene than the symbouleutic orations with which the equivalent dialogue commences in the Euripidean *Phoenician Women*.’<sup>12</sup>

Can we date this text? Denys Page called it ‘part of an original Greek Tragedy written in (or not much later than) the 4th century B.C.’, noting that there are no linguistic borrowings from *Phoenissae*, ‘not even a linguistic coincidence worthy of the name’ . . . ‘it is not a schoolmaster’s or schoolboy’s exercise; it is a piece of an ancient Tragedy, based on one of Eur<ipides>’ most popular plays, but going beyond its model in content, and avoiding imitation of it in style’.<sup>13</sup> There may be an implication here, though, that a later poet would have leant on Euripides much more, when in fact independence of phraseology is perfectly possible in a poet from centuries after Euripides’ day. According to Hall, the piece ‘deploys new vocabulary in order to enliven the language, for example the term *merizein to diadema*, “to share the tiara” . . ., in the sense of “to split up the Theban kingdom”. The author could have been a contemporary of Xenophon, who refers to the Persian king’s tiara as *to diadema* in his *Cyropaedia* (e.g. 8.3.13), a work usually dated to c. 380 BC.’<sup>14</sup> For Vayos Liapis on the other hand, ‘The above fragment has all the trappings of a school exercise, a rather maladroit *remaniement*-cum-condensation of the *agōn* between the sons of Oedipus in Eur. *Phoen.* 446–637 . . . This anonymous piece is likely to be a rhetorical exercise in *ēthopoia*, or impersonation, whereby the apprentice orator stages a forensic dispute between the warring

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. Stesichorus fr. 97 F., which also shows the Theban queen mediating between Eteocles and Polynices (cf. Swift 2015: 132–43). My edition makes no reference to Tr. Adesp. fr. 665 *TrGF*, despite the possibilities for productive comparison.

<sup>13</sup> Page 1942: 173, 178–9.

<sup>14</sup> Hall 2007: 280–1. Cf. the discussion in Page 1942: 177, which concludes ‘There are stranger things in our scanty fragments of 4<sup>th</sup>-century Tragedy.’

sons of Oedipus'.<sup>15</sup> Advocating a later date for the piece on linguistic grounds, Liapis cites a discussion by Raffaella Cribiore which refers to it as 'an *ēthopoia* centered on Polyneikes . . . The student – or, less likely, the teacher – who engaged in this exercise and ended it abruptly, leaving a large unwritten space, introduced the bold innovation of Polyneikes handing his sword to his mother. This mini-*agōn*, with its concentration of so much into so little and its numerous errors due to phonetic spelling, was not a felicitous attempt to vie with Euripides.'<sup>16</sup>

Liapis makes a strong linguistic case that the text is post-classical and probably from the imperial period, indeed perhaps contemporary with the third-century papyrus on which it is written. Yet that should not lead us to condemn the piece. A significant achievement in recent scholarship is the understanding that tragedy remained a significant and productive genre long after the deaths of Sophocles and Euripides towards the end of the fifth century BC: that in the fourth century, in the Hellenistic period, and under the Roman empire, Greek tragedy remained an important genre that continued to see significant new works.<sup>17</sup> In this light a whole scene written by an anonymous hand centuries after the composition of the classic play which it reworks is of considerable interest: for it offers a glimpse of a period of the genre that is now almost completely lost. Debate on this substantial fragment up until now has been based on a polarity between 'early/good' and 'late/bad', with the quality of the piece a function of its date; but such a schematic approach is itself well out of date. Even if this is a school exercise rather than an extract from a longer drama, that hardly rules out the possibility of creative engagement with the works of the past. This text has lost its author and

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<sup>15</sup> Liapis 2014: 360, 363.

<sup>16</sup> Cribiore 2001a: 230. For papyri in the context of education more generally see Cribiore 2009.

<sup>17</sup> For fourth-century tragedy see Csapo *et al.* 2014; for Hellenistic tragedy see Kotlińska-Toma 2015 with Coe 2017 (a detailed review); for the *long durée* of tragedy from c. 400 BC to AD 400 see Liapis and Petridis 2019.

its context, and is probably a late example of a genre that would not have much longer to run – but it is none the worse for that, demonstrating as it does the continuing vitality of the genre, which centuries after Euripides was still striving after mythological innovation even in a work destined perhaps for page rather than for stage. Here too, then, is one more way that appreciation of anonymous fragments can give us a better appreciation of Greek tragedy as a whole.

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