

Eratosthenes – or whoever it was – may have made himself a more exact dating by reckoning back one 33-year generation (a unit presupposed elsewhere in Eratosthenes' system) from the appearance of Pratinas and Aeschylus in Ol. 70, using the conversion-formula '33 years before = the ninth Olympiad before'.¹⁵ This put Thespiis a comfortable five years or so before the death of Pisistratus in Ol. 63.1. The nine-Olympiad period could be conveniently trisected to obtain starting-up dates for Choerilus and Phrynichus.

If the grounds for this analysis are judged reasonable, we should cease to treat the dates 535/2, 523/0, and 511/08 as fixed points in the early history of tragedy, however comforting it is to have such. We can accept that Phrynichus was somewhat older than Aeschylus, and Choerilus probably older still.¹⁶ As for Thespiis, we can do no more than acquiesce in the ancient belief that his activity began under Pisistratus. It is sometimes conjectured, even asserted, that it began in connection with a reorganization of the City Dionysia by the tyrant. Obviously the Dionysia grew in magnificence in the second half of the sixth century; they continued to do so in the fifth. It is not implausible that Pisistratus should have assisted the process by some particular initiative of his own. But it should be remembered that this is a mere assumption. Books which refer to a reorganization in 533 are retailing speculation pegged to a date for Thespiis which is itself unreliable.

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¹⁵ A strict reckoning from Ol. 70.2, however, would only have reached back to Ol. 62.1 (= 531). It is not certain whether Eratosthenes subdivided Olympiads. Possibly 531, arrived at by a parallel (but non-Olympiadic) calculation from 498, was the date on the Parian Marble.

¹⁶ The figure of 160 dramas attributed to him in the *Suda* would presuppose a long career; but it is scarcely credible. It contrasts violently with the figures of four for Thespiis and nine for Phrynichus (even though the nine listed represent only a fraction of an alphabetic list). And if the *Didaskaliai* began in 502/1, there simply cannot have been room for so many titles of Choerilus.

AESCHYLUS, *AGAMEMNON* 72–5

ἡμεῖς δ' ἀτίται σαρκὶ παλαιᾷ
τῆς τότ' ἀρωγῆς ὑπολειφθέντες
μῖνοντες ἰσχὺν
ἰσόπαιδα νέμοντες ἐπὶ σκῆπτροῖς.

72

In the first of his three magisterial articles on the *Agamemnon* H. L. Ahrens showed that all the evidence then available best fitted the conclusion that ἀτίται derived from τίνω and not from τίω.¹ Subsequently Ed. Fraenkel in his own note on the word reviewed and supplemented the evidence gathered by Ahrens, and expressed the view that Ahrens' 'discussion, details apart, is final'; and there seems to be widespread agreement that on the linguistic side at least Ahrens' argument cannot be refuted.² If this means anything, it means that the sense of the word cannot be 'unhonoured' or 'dishonoured'. Yet Denniston–Page in their commentary say that "'unhonoured"

¹ 'Studien zum Agamemnon des Aeschylus. Erster Artikel', *Philologus*, Supplbd. 1 (1860), 248–9.

² See the remarks of H. Lloyd-Jones, 'Agamemnonea', *HSCP* 73 (1969), 97 and those of J. Bollack, *Agamemnon* 1, première partie (Lille, n.d.), p. 84. One can also reasonably infer from the translations of H. Weir Smyth, P. Mazon, W. Headlam (both prose and verse), and L. MacNeice, that they all agree with Ahrens' derivation of ἀτίτης from τίνω. Even Denniston–Page do not challenge the plausibility of Ahrens' position on the linguistic side.

seems the only possible sense here', and R. Fagles' recent translation, which generally rests on sound scholarship as well as poetic gifts, has 'dishonored'.³ The principal reason for this persistent disagreement seems to be that the sense proposed by Ahrens for *ἀτίται* has been thought to have rather less plausibility than the linguistic considerations that appear to lead to it.⁴

Ahrens had no trouble showing that *ἀτίτης* could mean 'unable to pay', but of course this sense needs to be further particularized to fit the context. To supply the needed particularization he pointed out that one may be as well *ἀδύνατος σώματι* as *ἀδύνατος χρήμασι*, and then concluded, without any further argument, except to say that it was appropriate to the context, that *ἀτίτης* could mean 'unfit for military service' ('unfähig zum kriegsdienste'). Agreeing with Ahrens, Fraenkel pointed to the expression *ἀτελής στρατείας* as an indication that the concept would not be foreign to Greek thinking, and in his translation he gives: 'insolvent (i.e. unable to serve as soldiers)'.⁵ But the difficulty is not whether a Greek could be expected to understand this notion, or whether it is suited to the context, but whether one could be expected to derive it from *ἀτίται* alone. There is a Greek word that by itself would do the job, i.e. *ἀχρεῖος*.⁶ But in the absence of any evidence that *ἀτίται* was ever used as a poetic substitute for *ἀχρεῖοι*, we must conclude that the Greek audience would be in need of the same enlightenment about *ἀτίται* that the English-speaking reader finds parenthetically included in Fraenkel's translation. It was this that led Denniston-Page to declare that Ahrens' interpretation was too 'obscure' to be acceptable; and to this extent it is difficult to disagree with them.

Fortunately it is far from the case that Ahrens' proposal is the only possibility allowed by the derivation he gives for *ἀτίται*. There appear to be at least three other possibilities.

(1) As both Ahrens and Fraenkel admit, the sense of the word may come from the middle *τίνομαι*, in which case it will mean something like 'unable to exact vengeance'.

(2) H. Lloyd-Jones proposed to keep the sense 'unpaying' but to construe *ἀτίται* with *σαρκὶ παλαιᾷ* and to understand the line thus: '“we who have not paid to our aged flesh the debt we owe it”, i.e. the debt of death’.'⁷

(3) The sense 'unable to pay' may be particularized by construing *ἀτίται* with the genitive *τῆς τότ' ἀρωγῆς*.

The sense 'unable to exact vengeance' does not appear to have many supporters. In fact, although in principle they admit that the word can have this meaning, neither Ahrens nor Fraenkel seems to feel called upon even to consider whether it could have it in this passage; while Sidgwick, who favours 'unhonoured', merely says that 'not avenging' is 'less smooth and natural'. Perhaps a more convincing objection might

³ *The Oresteia*, trans. Robert Fagles (New York, 1975), p. 94. R. Lattimore also gives 'dishonored' in a translation that has been widely used and justly admired as both accurate and poetic.

⁴ However, it should be noted that 'unhonoured' and 'dishonoured' are also open to objection on grounds of sense. It is hardly a cliché of Greek poetry that the old are inevitably without honour. If the Chorus here says it is unhonoured, it must be a positive complaint. But if it is that, it is most obscure why it should occur, as it were, isolated, at this point. Attempts to connect the notion of 'dishonour' with *ὑπολειφθέντες*, interpreted to mean 'cast off' (Lattimore, Fagles), fail because that is not likely to be the meaning of *ὑπολειφθέντες*. F. W. Schneidewin's 'without a share in the honour of the expedition', 'der Ehre des Zuges untheilhaftig', in his commentary on the play (Berlin, 1856), recognizes the difficulty and is perhaps the best effort in a lost cause.

⁵ So also Bollack, op. cit., p. 51 gives 'insolubles'.

⁶ See LSJ⁹ s.v. I.2.

⁷ Loc. cit.

be formulated along these lines. It is Agamemnon and Menelaus who are properly the exactors of vengeance. The others who have joined with them are merely helpers in the task. Thus the old men might properly call themselves ἀξυντίται in the sense, 'unable to join in exacting vengeance', but they could not properly suggest that they, apart from Agamemnon and Menelaus, could be the 'exactors of vengeance' *tout court*. This, more than a mere lack of 'smoothness and naturalness', seems to make possibility (1) less than satisfactory.

Sense (2) Lloyd-Jones finds at least 'natural' although he makes it quite clear that he regards the apparent lack of a true parallel in Greek literature as a cause for hesitation. But even naturalness, at least in this instance, is something about which one may reasonably disagree. What can be found in Greek epitaphs, as Lloyd-Jones points out, namely, the idea that one owes death to Hades or fate or the gods, seems to differ more than a little from what he proposes here and to be much more 'natural'. In the absence of supporting evidence one may reasonably remain unconvinced that if Aeschylus merely said 'we who have not paid our aged flesh', he could expect his audience to think: 'Naturally he means the "the debt of death"'.⁸

It is suggestion (3) that I am prepared to argue for. The idea that ἀτίται might be construed with τῆς τότ' ἀρωγῆς is not new. S. Karsten suggested this in his edition of the play, but he interpreted ἀτίται as in (1) and explained the phrase as meaning: "expertes uindictae illius expeditionis" sive "ultricies illius expeditionis expertes".⁹ But Karsten's interpretation is open to the objection that he detaches vengeance from ἀτίται and attaches it to ἀρωγῆς in a way that gives a fair sense, but only at some cost to the Greek. Much more satisfactory is the interpretation of the construction that seems to underlie Headlam's verse rendering of ἡμεῖς... ἀρωγῆς as: 'But we, that aged sinews made/ defaulters in the task of aid'.¹⁰ Certainly there is nothing intrinsically odd about a genitive being joined with ἀτίται. More prosaically Aeschylus might have said: ἡμεῖς δ' ἀτελεῖς σαρκὶ παλαιᾷ | τῆς τότ' ἀρωγῆς.... This would have been a variation on the phrase ἀτελεῖς τῆς στρατείας, meaning: 'But we, who because of our aged flesh did not have to pay the dues of help then, ...'.¹¹ The substitution of ἀτίται for ἀτελεῖς is merely a further variation along the same lines: 'But we, who because of our aged flesh could not make the payment of help then, ...'.¹¹ The notion that the Chorus would, except for their age, as Argive men have owed a debt of soldierly help to Agamemnon seems quite straightforward. As for ὑπολειφθέντες, we have two choices. We may continue to construe it as before with the same genitive τῆς τότ' ἀρωγῆς, but now with the genitive doing double duty: 'But we who because of our aged flesh could not make the payment of help then,

⁸ (Utrecht, 1855). It is worth noting that the same syntactical configuration was also envisioned by Schneidewin in his explanation given in n. 4 above.

⁹ I am obliged to an anonymous reader for *Classical Quarterly* for calling my attention to this. The relevant section of the verse translation was first published posthumously (Cambridge, 1910). Admittedly Headlam had shown complete and unhesitating agreement with Ahrens earlier in a prose version (first published in 1904) and in a brief note which he himself had written and A. C. Pearson incorporated into the posthumous Commentary on the *Agamemnon* (Cambridge, 1910). (In fact the same note is repeated in the Headlam-Thomson *Oresteia* and neither Pearson nor Thomson appears to have noticed the discrepancy.) Nonetheless, it seems to me that the difference of interpretation reflected in the verse rendering may with as much likelihood be attributed to further insight as to the demands of metre.

¹⁰ Of course the sense of ἀρωγῆς in 73 is amplified by the associations of 45-7: στόλον Ἀργείων χιλιοναύτην... στρατιῶτιν ἀρωγῆν.

¹¹ I prefer 'could not make payment' to Headlam's 'defaulters' because one who is in default still owes; the position with the Chorus is that they do not owe because they cannot pay.

having stayed behind from it...'.¹² Or *ὑπολειφθέντες* may be, as it often must be, construed absolutely. Nor, in view of the effect of the tenses, does this make *ὑπολειφθέντες μίμνομεν*, 'having stayed [then], we [now] wait', a redundant combination. The latter alternative seems slightly more elegant. One could even group the anapaestic metra accordingly:

ἡμεῖς δ' ἀτίται σαρκὶ παλαιᾷ 72
 τῆς τότ' ἀρωγῆς
 ὑπολειφθέντες μίμνομεν ἰσχύν
 ἰσόπαιδα νέμοντες ἐπὶ σκήπτροις.

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¹² Although one might expect the force of the passive of *ὑπολείπω* to be 'left behind' – or even, with Lattimore and Eagles, 'cast off' – most of the instances cited in LSJ⁹ can be and some must be interpreted, rather surprisingly, in an active sense, 'stay behind'. See, e.g., Hdt. 1.165. That sense seems perfectly appropriate here.

TAPLIN ON COCKS*

In *PCPhS* 213 (NS 33, 1987), 92–104 at 93–6, Oliver Taplin suggests that the Getty vase published by J. R. Green in 1985 represents not Aristophanes' *Birds* but the first version of *Clouds*. The purpose of this note is to offer some support for this, while perhaps raising further problems.

The kalyx-krater in question shows a piper between two men dressed as cocks with erect phalluses. Taplin argues that this does not fit *Birds*, where the birds are almost entirely wild ones, but does fit the famous VE scholion on *Clouds* 889, *ὑπόκεινται ἐπὶ τῆς σκηνῆς ἐν πλεκτοῖς οἰκίσκοις λόγοι δίκην ὀρνέων διαμαχόμενοι*. Dover in his commentary (xc–xciii) argued that this should be referred not to the extant revised version of *Clouds* but to the original performed version. If Taplin is right, the Getty vase would be an illustration of that version. Dover himself did not in fact believe that the scholion referred to stage action, but thought it possibly a deduction from metaphors used in the introduction to the scene. This was partly because of the statement in the first hypothesis that *αὐτίκα ἡ παράβασις τοῦ χοροῦ ἡμειπται, καὶ ὅπου ὁ δίκαιος λόγος πρὸς τὸν ἄδικον λαλεῖ...* Dover took this to be saying that 'the contrast of Right and Wrong belongs "in its entirety" to the revised version', but I do not see that that is necessarily the implication of *ἡμειπται*. I am not sure either that the universal assumption that there is no trace in the extant text of possible allusion to the *λόγοι* as cocks is correct. Certainly they are treated at times as men, but the opening words of the *κρείττων λόγος* at 889–90 would suit a cock 'displaying':

χώρει δευρί, δείξον σαυτὸν
 τοῖσι θεαταῖς, καίπερ θρασὺς ὤν.

κεντούμενος in 947, despite the qualifying *ὥσπερ ὑπ' ἀνθρηνῶν*, would fit a cock, as would the chorus' *ῥῆξον φωνὴν ἥτινι χαίρεις* at 960. My own view is that the revision of *Clouds* was published as a reading version¹ (like the published version of a Cicero speech), and in the absence of indications to the contrary the Athenian

* I owe best thanks for learning and scepticism to Angus Bowie, Michael Comber, Robert Parker, Ian Rutherford, and Oliver Taplin.

¹ *Contra* Taplin, *The Stagecraft of Aeschylus* (Oxford, 1977), p. 13 n. 1; cf. G. O. Hutchinson, 'Propertius and the Unity of the Book', *JRS* 74 (1984), 99–106 at 100.