

## TRAGIC DATES

## I. EARLY DATES AND DOCUMENTS

The Athenian dramatic inscription of c. 346 called the ‘Fasti’, a list of annual victors in dithyramb, comedy, and tragedy, is reconstructed as beginning in the year 502/1 by its editors Wilhelm and Capps;<sup>1</sup> many assume that it began then because a new choregic system was introduced in that year. In a brief paper of fundamental importance for the study of early tragedy, West has suggested that the Athenian archive Aristotle used when compiling his *Didascaliae* may likewise have gone back no further than 502/1.<sup>2</sup> When West then points out that the Olympiad-dates in the *Suda* for Thespis’ first production (Ol. 61.535/2), Choerilus’ first production (64.523/0), and Phrynichus’ first victory (67.511/08) are spaced out at three-Olympiad intervals before a contest in the 70th Olympiad (499/6) between Pratinas, Choerilus, and Aeschylus, his conclusion that these dates are not to be relied upon becomes irresistible.<sup>3</sup> The *Suda*’s ultimate source—perhaps, West suggests, Eratosthenes—has simply manufactured a chronological schema for the known early tragedians. The *Suda*’s date for Thespis, 535–532, is roughly comparable with that in the *Marmor Parium*, sometime between 538 and 528, but West concludes that both are guesswork.<sup>4</sup> Thus vanish—or ought to vanish—what have always been regarded as our only firm dates for early Athenian tragedy, and utter chronological darkness falls over the history of tragedy before c. 500. Indeed, as the date of Thespis is unreliable, there is no longer any reason to suppose that it was in the 530s that tragic performances were first put on or some sort of tragic festival instituted at Athens.

West suggests that since the date of the contest between Pratinas, Choerilus, and Aeschylus, the 70th Olympiad, falls within what he calls the ‘archival period’—the period covered by the Fasti inscription—‘it is perhaps soundly based’ (251). This is a cautious formulation, and I would myself suggest that this date too is suspect. Like its dating of the introduction of a comic contest at Athens before 562/1, the Parian Marble’s date for Thespis is guesswork; its dates for the fifth century are, however,

<sup>1</sup> *IG* II<sup>2</sup> 2318 with E. Capps, ‘A new fragment of the list of victors at the city Dionysia’, *Hesperia* 12 (1943), 1–11; a full text with discussion in A. W. Pickard-Cambridge, rev. J. Gould and D. M. Lewis, *The Dramatic Festivals of Athens*<sup>2</sup> (Oxford, 1968), 101–7; tragic portions only in *TrGF*<sup>2</sup> DID A 1 (pp. 22–5). 502/1 as the beginning of the list: Capps 10–11.

<sup>2</sup> M. L. West, ‘The early chronology of Attic tragedy’, *CQ* 39 (1989), 251–4. Readers may find it helpful to consult the table of dates in the appendix to the present article.

<sup>3</sup> *Suda* θ 282 Adler s.v. Θέσπις; χ 594 s.v. Χοίριλος; φ 762 s.v. Φρύνιχος; π 2230 s.v. Πρατίνας (cf. α 357 s.v. Αἰσχύλος).

<sup>4</sup> The standard text of the *Marmor Parium* is still *FGrHist* 239A; the notice of Thespis is at epoch 43, but Jacoby’s text (derived from Böckh) was shown to be unreliable by W. R. Connor, ‘City Dionysia and Athenian democracy’, in id., M. H. Hansen, K. A. Raaflaub, and B. S. Strauss (edd.), *Aspects of Athenian Democracy* (Copenhagen, 1990), 7–32, at 26–32. The stone, now in the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford, is far too worn to provide a check on the text, which as Connor rightly concludes must therefore be constituted from the early editions. Connor’s own text is not fully satisfactory, however, and I therefore give a clearer and slightly more cautious one here: ἀφ’ οὗ Θέσπις ὁ ποιητῆς—c. 5–8—πρῶτος [ὄς?] ἐδίδαξε ΝΑΛ—c. 3—ΣΤΙΝ [καὶ ἄθλον] ἐπέθη ὁ παράγος ἐτη ΗΗΡ-3-ἄρχοντος Ἀθή[νησι-κ. 3]-ναίου τοῦ προτέρου. For the possible supplements of the date—the last of the three letter-spaces could contain as many as three unit-signs—see West (n. 2), 253 with n. 13; on the chronological methodology of the compiler of the list, *ibid.* 254 with n. 15.

generally held to be reliable.<sup>5</sup> Its date for the first victory of Aeschylus, 484, falls in the 73rd Olympiad, and this is at least as likely to be the fixed date from which the *Suda*'s source, using a text like the Parian Marble in which Aeschylus' first victory is the first date in the archival period, extrapolated events in the 70th, 67th, 64th and 61st Olympiads. The *Suda*'s provision of the names of all three competitors for the contest in the 70th Olympiad is an anomaly. Another of our three main dramatic inscriptions, the 'Didascaliae', provides the sort of information, including the names of all three competitors and their plays, that Aristotle must have compiled and that shows up in hypotheses and scholia.<sup>6</sup> Our fragments of the inscription go back no further than competitions at the Lenaia in the 420s; apart from the notice in the *Suda*, the first report we have that names plays is the hypothesis of Aeschylus' *Persians* of 472, and the first to name a competitor other than the victor is the hypothesis of the *Seven against Thebes* production of 467.<sup>7</sup> After this sort of date didascalical information is often available, though dramatic inscriptions from Rome show that as late as the 440s and 430s titles of non-victorious comic plays sometimes failed to make it into the archive, which cannot therefore have been complete even for the second half of the century.<sup>8</sup> It seems reasonable to conclude that the attempt to compile complete records of the competitions only began, say, after the Persian War, or perhaps that earlier records were lost when Mardonius burned Athens in 479. The notice in the *Suda*, then—given the tradition's otherwise total ignorance of anyone but the winner of contests before the 460s, the conjunction of the three great names, but without prize-ranking, and the three-Olympiad spacing before Aeschylus' first victory—is highly suspect, and in addition the *Suda* implies that it was at this contest that the *ikria* or wooden seating for the audience collapsed, leading to the construction of the theatre of Dionysus, which is a combination of misunderstanding of earlier sources with outright invention.<sup>9</sup> There seems by the way to be evidence elsewhere for the three-Olympiad principle at work in the fifth century: in Jerome's version of the chronicle of Eusebius, Aeschylus 'was recognized' in the 71st Olympiad, Choerilus and Phrynichus in the 74th, and Sophocles first produced and both he and Euripides 'were recognized' in the 77th; of course Aeschylus is normally placed after Choerilus and Phrynichus, which perhaps explains his also 'being recognized' in the Olympiad following theirs, the 75th. Eusebius also felt able to date the first awarding of a prize goat in a tragic *agon* to the year 591.<sup>10</sup> The fifth-century dates of the Parian Marble, which are confined to the first victories and deaths of the three principal tragedians and Euripides' birth, are perhaps reliable (though the synchronization of Aeschylus' first victory, for which the marble is our only source, with Euripides' birth and Stesichorus' arrival in Greece makes one a little uncomfortable). The *Suda* is totally unreliable, and there is no reason to have any confidence in those of Eusebius' dates that look plausible.

<sup>5</sup> First comic contest: epoch 39.

<sup>6</sup> *IG* II<sup>2</sup> 2319–23; better text and discussion in Pickard-Cambridge, Gould, and Lewis (n. 1), 107–11; tragic portions only in *TrGF* I<sup>2</sup> DID A 2 (pp. 25–7).

<sup>7</sup> The manuscript hypothesis and an improved text of the papyrus version (P. Oxy. 2256 fr. 2) are printed by Snell as *TrGF* I<sup>2</sup> DID C 4a–b (pp. 43–4).

<sup>8</sup> *IG* XIV 1097.2–3 and 1098a4, republished by L. Moretti as *I. G. Urbis Romae* I (Rome, 1968), 215.4 (where Moretti does not print the supplement *κωμωιδίαι*) and 216.2–3; see the text and notes in Pickard-Cambridge, Gould, and Lewis (n. 1), 120–1.

<sup>9</sup> *Suda* π 2230 Adler s.v. *Πρατίννας*; cf. αι 357 s.v. *Ἀισχύλος*. See Scott Scullion, *Three Studies in Athenian Dramaturgy* (Stuttgart, 1994), 52–65, esp. 64.

<sup>10</sup> All these dates from Eusebius are conveniently gathered as *TrGF* I<sup>2</sup> DID D 3 (pp. 51–2).

The third principal dramatic inscription, the ‘Lists of Victors’, consisted of eight separate lists of poets and of actors victorious in tragedy or comedy at Dionysia or Lenaia.<sup>11</sup> Each lists the victors in order by first victory, with their total number of victories registered against their names, and it is generally agreed that the first list was that of tragic poets at the Dionysia. I here reproduce the first column of this list, with two alternative reconstructions of the first ten lines:

IG II<sup>2</sup> 2325 init.

	1 Scullion	1–10 e.g. Scullion
	2–3 = 1–2 Wilhelm coll. [Ἀθηναϊκ]α[ὶ ποη]τῶν   [κωμικ]ῶν	
1	[Νῖκαι Διονυσιακαί]	[Νῖκαι Διονυσιακαί]
2	[ἀστικάι ποητῶν]	[τραγωιδοῖς καί]
3	[τραγικῶν·]	[κωμωιδοῖς ἀφ’ οὗ πρώτων]
4	[ὁ δεῖνα —]	[ἀγῶνες ἦσαν δημοτελεῖς.]
5	[ὁ δεῖνα —]	[ἀστικάι ποητῶν]
6	[ὁ δεῖνα —]	[τραγικῶν·]
7	[ὁ δεῖνα —]	[Χοιρίλος ΔIII ?]
8	[ὁ δεῖνα —]	[Φρύνιχος —]
9	[ὁ δεῖνα —]	[Πρατίνας I ?]
10	[ὁ δεῖνα —]	[ὁ δεῖνα —] (Euripides I, <i>TrGF</i> 16? 2 vict.)
11	a. 484 [Αἰ]σχύ[λος —]	
12	[Εὐ]ῆτης I	(Suda ε 2766 s.v. Ἐπίχαρμος)
13	[Πο]λυφράσμ[ων —]	(Suda φ 762 s.v. Φρύνιχος)
14	[Νόθ]ιππος I	(Athenaeus 8.344c)
15	a. 468 [Σοφ]οκλῆς ΔΓIII	
16	[Μέσα]τος II[—?]	([Eur.] Ep. 5.2; Σ Ar. Vesp. 1502)
17	[Ἄριστ]ίας [—]	(Vit. Soph. 19)

Wilhelm suggested, on the basis of comparison with preserved titles elsewhere in the inscription, that only two lines were taken up by the title, leaving room for eight tragic victors before Aeschylus, whose name is the first preserved.<sup>12</sup> Wilamowitz objected to Wilhelm’s title as too short for what is after all the main title of the whole text.<sup>13</sup> In the left-hand reconstruction I suggest what seems the shortest conceivable title, leaving room for seven names, but something like the *exempli gratia* reconstruction on the right seems preferable. A more elaborate title is indicated on purely epigraphical grounds, but there is another consideration. Next to the names of the minor tragedians restored in the extant part of the column I have listed the places in the literary tradition, apart from papyrus hypotheses, where they are mentioned, and

<sup>11</sup> IG II<sup>2</sup> 2325; text and discussion in Pickard-Cambridge, Gould, and Lewis (n. 1), 112–20; tragic portions only in *TrGF* I<sup>2</sup> DID A 3a (pp. 28–30); new fragments (involving Hellenistic comic poets) published by D. Peppas-Delmousou, *AM* 92 (1977), 229–43.

<sup>12</sup> A. Wilhelm, *Urkunden dramatischer Aufführungen in Athen* (Vienna, 1906), 89–166, esp. 89–105; title: 96.

<sup>13</sup> U. von Wilamowitz, *Rez. zu Wilhelm*, *GGA* (1906), 611–34, at 615–16 = *Kleine Schriften* V.1 (Berlin, 1937), 376–401, at 380. Wilamowitz was, however, wrong to suggest that there was no reason to place the main title at the beginning of the first column; in contrast to e.g. IG II<sup>2</sup> 2318, these inscriptions cannot have had a title running over several columns, as they are individual epistyles and inscribed to their full height. Wilamowitz was convinced that the festival began in the 530s and therefore wanted room for a much longer list of poets before Aeschylus.

it is notable that there is not one of them whose name at least was not already known. If there were eight names of prior victors on the stone, three or four of them would be names totally unknown to us, though we would have to assume that they appeared in Aristotle's *Didascaliae*, Callimachus' *Pinakes*, and so on. It is much more attractive to assume that the beginning of this list corresponded to that of the *Fasti*, the competition of 501, or, if we follow Wilamowitz and Beloch in assuming that contests cannot have been held in 479 and/or 478, perhaps that of 502 or 503.<sup>14</sup> If we trust the Parian Marble (epoch 50), Aeschylus' first victory came in 484, so that sufficient victors to account for only sixteen or seventeen competitions are missing. The sixteen competitions from 484 down to Sophocles' first victory in 468 produced only four first victories, but there ought to be more frequent first victors in the earliest years, since at the outset there is no group of repeaters to account for some of the victories. Still, five are perhaps enough, and we do not then have to conclude that a number of the earliest poets named by Aristotle were completely unknown to later tradition.

## II. USE OF THE *DIDASCALIAE*

There is a very important point to be made here. In studies of the history of Greek drama it is an all but universal assumption that once the didascalical works of Aristotle and his successors were available, no writer would give a date the *Didascaliae* could prove false, but this is a wholly unjustified assumption. It is or ought to be generally accepted nowadays that from the Hellenistic period onward a great deal of nonsense about the tragic poets was generated—sometimes out of their own plays or the comedies, sometimes out of whole cloth—by the likes of Heraclides Ponticus, the biographers Satyrus and Ister, the atticist lexicographers, and the authors of the lives of the poets.<sup>15</sup> It is nevertheless assumed that these same exegetes were subject to sudden onsets of sobriety and scruple over dates. There can be little doubt that in the cases of Choerilus and Phrynichus genuine victory dates of some kind will have been available in the *Didascaliae*, yet the sources of the *Suda* and Eusebius nevertheless manufacture schematic chronologies for them. Other good examples are the attempts made in the *Life of Aeschylus* and elsewhere to account for the poet's departure to Sicily, on the assumption that it was prompted by the visiting of some indignity upon him at Athens. Here is the *Life*:<sup>16</sup>

Ἀπῆρην δὲ ὡς Ἰέρωνα, κατὰ τινὰς μὲν ὑπὸ Ἀθηναίων κατασπουδασθεὶς καὶ ἡσσηθεὶς νέῳ ὄντι Σοφοκλεῖ, κατὰ δὲ ἐνίους ἐν τῷ εἰς τοὺς ἐν Μαραθῶνι τεθνηκότας ἐλεγείῳ ἡσσηθεὶς Σιμωνίδῃ· τὸ γὰρ ἐλεγείον πολὺ τῆς περὶ τὸ συμπαθὲς λεπτότητος μετέχειν θέλει, ὃ τοῦ Αἰσχύλου, ὡς ἔφαμεν, ἐστὶν ἀλλότριον. τινὲς δὲ φασὶν ἐν τῇ ἐπιδείξει τῶν Εὐμενίδων σποράδην εἰσαγαγόντα τὸν χορὸν τοσοῦτον ἐκπλήξαι τὸν δῆμον ὡς τὰ μὲν νῆπια ἐκφύξαι, τὰ δὲ ἔμβρυα ἐξαμβλωθῆναι. ἐλθὼν τοίνυν εἰς Σικελίαν Ἰέρωνος τότε τὴν Αἴτνην κτίζοντος ἐπεδείξατο τὰς Αἰτναίας οἰωνίζομενος βίον ἀγαθὸν τοῖς συνοικίζουσι τὴν πόλιν. καὶ σφόδρα τῷ τε τυράννῳ Ἰέρωνι καὶ τοῖς Γελάοις τιμηθεὶς ἐπιζήσας τρίτον ἔτος γηραιὸς ἐτελεύτα τοῦτον τὸν τρόπον . . .

<sup>14</sup> K. J. Beloch, *Griechische Geschichte*<sup>2</sup> (Strassburg/Berlin and Leipzig, 1912–27), II.1, 219; Wilamowitz (n. 13), 624 = 390.

<sup>15</sup> For a general account, see Mary Lefkowitz, *The Lives of the Greek Poets* (London, 1981).

<sup>16</sup> *Vit. Aesch.* 8–10 (*TrGF* III Test. A27–36).

He went off to Hieron in Sicily, according to some because he was criticised by the Athenians and defeated by Sophocles when the latter was a young man, but according to others because he was defeated by Simonides in the elegy for those who died at Marathon. Elegy very much needs to have the subtlety necessary to arouse emotion, and the elegy of Aeschylus, as we put it, isn't suitable in this way. Some say that during the performance of *Eumenides*, when he brought the chorus on one by one, he so frightened the audience that children fainted and fetuses miscarried. Going therefore to Sicily at the time Hieron was founding Aitna he produced *The Women of Aitna*, prophesying a good life for those who were settling the city. And greatly honoured by the tyrant Hieron and the people of Gela he lived on there for two years and died an old man in the following way . . .

This is followed by the famous story of the eagle dropping the tortoise on Aeschylus' head. Not only is this full of characteristically extravagant invention, but it confuses two journeys to Sicily, one to produce *The Women of Aitna* not long after Hieron's founding of the city in c. 475, and another at the end of the poet's life, more or less immediately following his success with the *Oresteia* trilogy in 458.<sup>17</sup> Only someone constitutionally disinclined to worry his head about dates could have produced such an imbroglio, so that the question of the accessibility of reference books does not really come into it. There is solid evidence then for literary 'history' being produced without benefit of authoritative works we know existed.

### III. THE DATE OF *ANTIGONE*

Let me give two examples of how being conscious of this fact can help as it were to shed darkness on generally accepted dates. The hypothesis to *Antigone* claims that Sophocles' *strategia* at Samos in 441/0 was due to his success in the production of the play, and we read in the latest commentary on *Antigone* that 'whether or not Sophocles' election in fact owed anything to the popularity of *Antigone*, this explanation would hardly have been advanced unless the play's production was dated just a year or two earlier'.<sup>18</sup> It would be nearer the truth to say that from the Hellenistic period onward this explanation might be advanced at any time without such subtleties as the play's date cramping anyone's style in the slightest. Doubts have been expressed about the story in the hypothesis, but no one has given a reason why *Antigone* in particular should have been associated with Sophocles' generalship.<sup>19</sup> The

<sup>17</sup> As already noted by Wilamowitz ad loc. in his edition of Aeschylus.

<sup>18</sup> Hypothesis 1.17–19 Dain = *TrGF* IV T 25 Radt: φασὶ δὲ τὸν Σοφοκλέα ἠξιώσθαι τῆς ἐν Σάμῳ στρατηγίας εὐδοκιμήσαντα ἐν τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ τῆς Ἀντιγόνης. Mark Griffith (ed.), *Sophocles: Antigone* (Cambridge, 1999), 2.

<sup>19</sup> Still the most elaborate treatment of the question is Leonard Woodbury, 'Sophocles among the generals', *Phoenix* 24 (1970), 209–24, esp. 209–11, 217–24; Woodbury develops arguments for trusting the statement in the hypothesis and dating the production of the play to the City Dionysia of 442, but his *Quellenforschung* (210–11 with n. 12) is too superficial. Sir Hugh Lloyd-Jones has expressed doubts about the story in the introduction to his Loeb edition of Sophocles (I, 8). Lefkowitz (n. 15), 82 says that in *Vit. Soph.* 14 (*TrGF* IV Test. A58–62) a report attributed to Satyros claims that 'Sophocles died while reciting a passage from the *Antigone*, or as "others" said, he died of joy when he had recited the play and heard that he was proclaimed victor, that is, in 406/5 B.C. The co-existence of these stories suggests that in the third century there was no fixed information available about the date of the *Antigone*. Aristophanes, in suggesting a link between Sophocles' term as general and the composition of the play, might only have been making a logical conjecture, the way he claimed that the *Odyssey* ended at 23.296, after Odysseus and Penelope were reunited.' There is the problem here that the *Vita* says Satyros described Sophocles as 'reciting' (*ἀναγινώσκοντα*) the play while others described him as dying overcome (*νικηθείς*) by joy when he was announced victor (*νικῶν*) after the 'recital' (*ἀνάγνωσις*). Despite

biographers often turned single scenes or lines in plays into episodes in the poet's life—we are told, for example, that the martial songs in one of Phrynichus' plays so captivated the audience that he was immediately appointed general<sup>20</sup>—and I think this is what has happened here too. Perhaps the best-known passage of *Antigone* in antiquity was Creon's ship-of-state speech, quoted both in Stobaeus (4.4.15 Hense) and in Demosthenes' *False Embassy* (19.246–8). In both cases the quotation from *Antigone* begins with lines 175–7: ἀμήχανον δὲ παντὸς ἀνδρὸς ἐκμαθεῖν | ψυχὴν τε καὶ φρόνημα καὶ γνώμην, πρὶν ἂν | ἀρχαῖς τε καὶ νόμοισιν ἐντριβῆς φανῆ, 'It is impossible to know fully any man's spirit and thought and judgment, until he is seen to be versed in governmental authority and the laws.' Here, surely, is the source of the story in the hypothesis: what could be more appropriate than that the poet who composed these lines should be given an opportunity to exemplify them through his election as general?

If this is right, the usual dating of the play must be abandoned, and the only dating criteria we are left with are the statement in Hypothesis 1.15 that *Antigone* was reckoned to be the thirty-second of Sophocles' roughly 120 plays, and stylistic considerations. The first is an unusually specific sort of statement, and could perfectly well be based ultimately on didascalical records; if it has any validity, and if we assume that Sophocles' productions were spaced out more or less evenly throughout his career, *Antigone* should belong to the later 450s. Objectively the most striking stylistic feature of *Antigone* is the total absence of ἀντιλαβή, or division of trimeters between speakers. Sophocles seems to have grown increasingly fond of this technique, which is present in *Aias* and *Trachiniai* and very common later; this suggests that *Antigone* could be the earliest of the extant tragedies. Lloyd-Jones suggests 'with great caution' that *Trachiniai* and *Antigone* are earlier than *Aias* and may belong to the 50s or 40s;<sup>21</sup> I am inclined to agree that *Antigone* is early, and at a venture would date it c. 450.

the victory, which is probably pure *ad hoc* wordplay, a solo recital sounds like something even this sort of source would regard as different from a production of the play, so though the story is obviously invented, it is hard to feel quite comfortable treating it as a direct contradiction of the hypothesis and therefore dismissing both as bad sources on general grounds; a specific ground for dismissing the statement in the hypothesis still seems needed. Lefkowitz's suggestion that there was no fixed date available in the third century is open to the objection that disagreement about a date (even if it really is that) does not necessarily mean that both dates are wrong. If (as I argue in this paper) some sources clearly generated dates without consulting reliable works we know existed, but others do preserve true dates, it seems illegitimate to infer from the existence of one clearly false date that another source offering a different date must also be wrong. Hence some specific explanation of the Samian *strategia* connection is necessary. I do not understand Lefkowitz's suggestion that Aristophanes of Byzantium (whom she takes to be the author of the whole hypothesis, including the Samian story, which seems doubtful: probably this was added to the hypothesis later from a source such as Satyros), in linking the *strategia* with *Antigone*, 'might only have been making a logical conjecture'. She goes on in a new paragraph: 'The subject matter of *Antigone* apparently suggested to biographers that it was performed at the time of a political crisis. The Samian revolt challenged the authority of the Athenian empire . . .' If this is what she suggests is the basis of the 'logical conjecture', the Samian revolt in particular is hardly the one obvious 'political crisis' to be connected with *Antigone* except by someone who already knows the date of *Antigone*; if that is not what she takes to be the basis of Aristophanes' logic, then it is unclear to me at least what she is thinking of. Thus we still seem to need a specific explanation of someone's linking *Antigone* in particular with Sophocles' generalship *on other than chronological grounds*.

<sup>20</sup> Aelian, *V.H.* 3.8.

<sup>21</sup> Lloyd-Jones (n. 19), 8–9.

## IV. THE DATE OF AESCHYLUS' SUPPLIANT WOMEN

The other conventional dating I would like to cast doubt on is that of Aeschylus' *Suppliant Women*. The hypothesis of the *Suppliants* and its companion plays published from an Oxyrhynchus papyrus in 1952 lists Sophocles as the second-place finisher:<sup>22</sup>

ἐπὶ ἄρ[χοντος -nominis- 'Ολυμπιάδος -numeri- ἔτει -numero-  
 ἐνίκα [Αἰ]σχύλο[ς] 'Ικέτιων Αἰγυπτίους<sup>23</sup>  
 Δαν[α]ῖσι Ἀμυ[μώνη] σατ<sup>v</sup>  
 δεύτ[ε]ρ[ο]ς Σοφοκλή[ς], τρίτος  
 Μέσατος [N . . . ]  
 |Βάκχαις Κωφοῖ[ς]  
 Ποι]μέσω Κυκ. |  
 σατ<sup>v</sup>

The Parian Marble (epoch 56) dates Sophocles' first *victory* to 468; scholars have trusted other evidence that this was also Sophocles' first *production*, and therefore dated *Suppliant Women* after 468.<sup>24</sup> The chronicle of Eusebius places the poet's first

<sup>22</sup> P. Oxy. 2256 fr. 3, published by E. Lobel, *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* 20 (1952), 30; I print Snell's supplements from his apparatus, *TrGF* I<sup>2</sup> DID C 6 (pp. 44–5). I have nothing new to contribute to the vexed question of what the scribe meant by his brackets (|). A. F. Garvie, *Aeschylus' Suppliants: Play and Trilogy* (Cambridge, 1969), 5–8 cautiously suggests that the scribe accidentally omitted the titles of Sophocles' plays after his name and here supplies them in brackets before proceeding to list those of Mesatos; this is perhaps the likeliest possibility, but the brackets could also be cancellation marks.

<sup>23</sup> The order *Αἰγυπτίους 'Ικέτιων* has been suggested: see W. Rösler, 'Die Schluß der "Hiketiden" und die Danaiden-Trilogie des Aischylos', *RhM* 136 (1993), 1–22; A. H. Sommerstein, 'The Beginning and the end of Aeschylus' Danaid Trilogy', *Drama* 3 (1995), 111–34.

<sup>24</sup> It must be emphasized that the more specific dating to 464/3 (based on Lobel's suggestion ἐπὶ Ἀρ[χεδημίδου in line 1) that has almost become standard is based on mistaken textual decisions fostered by the accident of Lobel's joining line 1 to the rest of the papyrus fragment only just before the publication of the volume. Snell's text, *TrGF* I<sup>2</sup> DID C 4a–b (pp. 43–4), of the papyrus hypothesis of the *Seven against Thebes* trilogy (P. Oxy. 2256 fr. 2), published together with that of the Danaid trilogy (fr. 3), is clearly superior to Lobel's; in the first line of fr. 2, Snell replaces Lobel's ἐδιδάχθη ἐπὶ Θεαγ]ενίδου κτλ. with ἐπὶ ἄρχοντ(ος) Θεαγ]ενίδου. There are two compelling reasons for this change. The second line of fr. 2, like that of fr. 3, began ἐνίκα Αἰσχύ]λος; since the beginning of the second line will have been aligned with that of the first in fr. 2 as in fr. 3, this establishes the space available for supplementing the first line, and ἐδιδάχθη ἐπὶ Θεαγ]ενίδου is clearly just too long (as Snell concludes and study of the original plate confirms); ἐπὶ Θεαγ]ενίδου would be far too short. Snell's supplement not only fits the space, but is also recommended by the analogy of ἐπὶ ἄρ[ at the beginning of fr. 3. These fragments are in the same hand, can reasonably be assumed to be of common authorship, and therefore very probably gave the date in the same form. The absence of ἐδιδάχθη in fr. 3 therefore favours its absence in fr. 2; the space available in fr. 2 requires ἐπὶ ἄρχοντ(ος) rather than ἐπὶ alone; this coheres with the remains in fr. 3 and favours the supplement ἐπὶ ἄρ[χοντος there. The joining of the first line to fr. 3 was a last-minute addendum to the P. Oxy. volume, and Lobel must have restored ἐδιδάχθη in fr. 2 from the manuscript hypothesis before the analogy of fr. 3 was available to him, though he did suggest reading ἐπὶ ἄρχοντος in fr. 3. Many scholars, e.g. Garvie (n. 22), 2 and H. Friis Johansen and E. W. Whittle, *Aeschylus: The Suppliants* (Copenhagen, 1980), 1.22–3, have concluded from Lobel's texts that ἄρχοντος was probably omitted in fr. 3 'as in fr. 2' (Garvie), and therefore restore ἐπὶ Ἀρ[χεδημίδου. Of course, as Snell saw, the lacunose text of fr. 2 should be restored with the help of the preserved text of fr. 3, and not vice versa. Snell very cautiously does not print ἐπὶ ἄρ[χοντος in fr. 3, but West rightly does print it in his edition of Aeschylus (p. 125), and it is the only supplement for which there are positive arguments.

production in the second year of the 77th Olympiad, 470, and not only his but also Euripides' 'recognitions' in the fourth year, 468; in other words, for what it may be worth, the chronicle explicitly distinguishes between Sophocles' first production and his first victory, and so does not support but contradicts the testimony of the source everyone nowadays relies on, Plutarch's *Life of Kimon*.<sup>25</sup> Here is what Plutarch says:

ἔθεντο δ' εἰς μνήμην αὐτοῦ καὶ τὴν τῶν τραγωδῶν κρίσιν ὀνομαστὴν γενομένην. πρώτην γὰρ διδασκαλίαν τοῦ Σοφοκλέους ἔτι νέου καθέντος, Ἀψεφίων ὁ ἄρχων, φιλονεικίας οὔσης καὶ παρατάξεως τῶν θεατῶν, κριτὰς μὲν οὐκ ἐκλήρωσε τοῦ ἀγῶνος, ὡς δὲ Κίμων μετὰ τῶν συστρατῆγων προελθὼν εἰς τὸ θέατρον ἐποιήσατο τῷ θεῷ τὰς νενομισμένας σπονδάς, οὐκ ἀφήκεν αὐτοὺς ἀπελθεῖν, ἀλλ' ὀρκώσας ἠγάγκασε καθίσαι καὶ κρίναι δέκα ὄντας, ἀπὸ φυλῆς μᾶς ἕκαστον. ὁ μὲν οὖν ἀγὼν καὶ διὰ τὸ τῶν κριτῶν ἀξίωμα τὴν φιλοτιμίαν ὑπερέβαλε. νικῆσαντος δὲ τοῦ Σοφοκλέους λέγεται τὸν Αἰσχύλον περιπαθῆ γενόμενον καὶ βαρέως ἐνεγκόντα χρόνον οὐ πολὺν Ἀθήνησι διαγαγεῖν, εἶτ' οἴχεσθαι δι' ὄργην εἰς Σικελίαν, ὅπου καὶ τελευτήσας περὶ Γέλαν τέθαιπαι. (Plut. *Kimon* 8.7–8)

But they also held in remembrance of him his famous decision in the tragic contest. For when Sophocles, still a young man, produced his first plays, Apsephion the archon, there being intense rivalry and taking up of sides among the spectators, did not (as normal) appoint judges of the contest by lot, but when Kimon and his fellow-generals came forth into the theatre and made the usual libations to the god he didn't let them go away, but compelled them to take the oath and sit and judge, being ten in all, one from each tribe. And so the contest, also because of the rank of the judges, surpassed all in its spirit of rivalry. And Sophocles winning, it is said that Aeschylus, in indignation and taking it hard, didn't stay long at Athens and then went off to Sicily in anger, where he also died and is buried near Gela.

<sup>25</sup> Garvie (n. 22), 11 and Friis Johansen and Whittle (n. 24), 21 inaccurately claim that Eusebius coheres with Plutarch; see the text of Eusebius' notices in *TrGF* P DID D 3 (pp. 51–2). E. C. Yorke, 'The date of the *Supplikes* of Aeschylus', *CR* 4 (1954), 10–11, rightly noted that Plutarch and Eusebius disagree, but assumed that either one or the other must be right, and chose Eusebius and dated *Suppliant Women* to 470 in conformity with his earlier suggestion that on metrical grounds the play should follow *Persians* and precede *Seven* (see n. 32 below). As late as 1979, F. Stoessl, *Die Hikettiden des Aischylos* (Vienna, 1979 [SAWW 356]), 7–25 was still arguing that the papyrus refers to a reproduction of *Suppliant Women* after Aeschylus' death; he dates this reproduction to 453.

Some scholars have doubted Plutarch's dating of Sophocles' first competition, but without relating this issue to the dating of *Suppliant Women*. Before the papyrus was published, Wilhelm Schmid, *Geschichte der griechischen Literatur* 1.2 (Munich, 1934), 313–14, n. 11 had rejected Plutarch's story in a few words. Wolfgang Luppe, 'Zur Datierung einiger Dramatiker in der Eusebius/Hieronymus-Chronik', *Philologus* 114 (1970), 1–8, esp. 7–8 defends the accuracy of five dramatic dates in Eusebius' chronicle (ingeniously but unconvincingly, and with five obviously false dates unaccounted for: see 4 and 8, n. 28); he allows that the distinction between Sophocles' first production and first victory in our extant witnesses to the chronicle may merely be a slight error in the tradition, but prefers to suspect Plutarch: 'viel eher ist wohl in der ohnehin etwas phantastisch anmutenden Erzählung über die außergewöhnliche Einsetzung der Schiedsrichter mit einer Ausschmückung zu rechnen. . . . könnte leicht aus einer sehr frühen Aufführung in Übertreibung die erste gemacht worden sein'. C. W. Müller, *Zur Datierung des sophokleischen Ödipus* (Wiesbaden, 1984 [Abh. Mainz 1984:5]) argues that tragedians were never granted a chorus in successive years, and therefore seeks to overturn Plutarch's evidence that Aeschylus competed against Sophocles in 468, the year preceding his victory with the *Seven against Thebes* trilogy in 467. Though no evidence certainly contradicts it, Müller's general hypothesis is nevertheless far from certain. Müller (60, 70–3) improves on Luppe's case against the credibility of Plutarch's story (apart from his suggestion about number-play [72]) and accepts Luppe's argument that Sophocles' first competition should be dated, following Eusebius, to 470; he dates *Suppliant Women* between 465 and 460 (74, n. 222).



Apsephion is the correct archon for 468, when Sophocles won his first victory at the age of twenty-eight—perhaps a rather advanced age for a début.<sup>26</sup> That archon-date must have stood in some ultimate source, but this little tale was not put together by a man with the *Didascaliae* open on his desk. Plutarch is clearly relying on the same sources as the *Life of Aeschylus*: there too, as we have seen, Aeschylus' defeat by the νέος Sophocles is combined with confusion of the two trips to Sicily. The *Lives* of the poets are the least reliable of all sources, filled with biographical fictions and false information; such sources are favourites of Plutarch, who for example is alone in knowing what Solon had to say to Thespis about play-acting, and which passage Sophocles read from *Oedipus at Colonus* to defend himself against his son Iophon's charge of paranoia—a story concocted out of the conflict between father and son in the play itself.<sup>27</sup> In pseudo-history, encounters between the tiro and the old man are a frequent synchronization motif. Dio Chrysostom tells us that Sophocles competed as νέος against Aeschylus as γέρων and as πρεσβύτερος against Euripides as νεώτερος, and Plutarch's *Lives* of Kimon and Lucullus are full of this theme, the phrases ἔτι νέος ὢν and ἔτι μειράκιον ὢν each occurring twice, νέος ὢν without ἔτι three times.<sup>28</sup> Plutarch's description of Sophocles as ἔτι νέου doubtless reflects a νέος ὢν in his source and must mean 'while still a youth'; hence the statement that this was Sophocles' first production, which serves also to heighten the ignominy of Aeschylus' defeat. The archon-date must have come attached to the story about Kimon, and whoever generated the story cannot have thought of this as Sophocles' first production, since he lays great emphasis on rivalry and taking up of sides by the spectators, which clearly assumes previous contests between the two poets.<sup>29</sup> Plutarch's story is from a chronological point of view a total mess. Is the statement that this was Sophocles' first production a mere filling-out of an invented story or a precious nugget of didascalical information rescued from oblivion by someone who thought that Sophocles' first tragic victory in 468 drove the aged Aeschylus, whose victory with the *Oresteia* in 458 was listed in the *Didascaliae*, to go off to Sicily in high dudgeon shortly before his death there? Let me call to mind the famous statement of Housman, which does not apply only to the use we make of manuscripts: 'Chance and the common course of nature will not bring it to pass that the readings of a MS

<sup>26</sup> This age is given by the Parian chronicler when he notices the first victory in 469/8, but the same source says he was ninety-two when he died in 406/5; the first assumes a birth year of 497/6, the second of 498/7. For the sake of simplicity I use 497/6, and all the ages given in what follows may therefore be a year too young.

<sup>27</sup> Plut. *Solon* 29.6 (*TrGF* II 1 Thespis T 17), cf. Diog. Laert. 1.59; *An seni* 3, 785a–b (*TrGF* IV T 82 Radt), cf. *Vit. Soph.* 13 (*TrGF* IV T A 1.47–54 Radt). Cf. Plut. *Numa* 4.8 (T 67 Radt), alluding to the tale in Paus. 1.21.1 (T 94 Radt) that Dionysos intervened with Lysander to allow Sophocles to be buried in his ancestral tomb on the road to Dekeleia then occupied by the Spartans. Cf. M. Cropp and G. Fick, *Resolutions and Chronology in Euripides: The Fragmentary Plays* (London, 1985 [*BICS* Suppl. 43]), 79–80 on the danger of using Plut. *Nikias* 9.5 to date *Erechtheus*.

<sup>28</sup> Dio Chrysostom 52.3 (*TrGF* IV T 50 Radt). I am very grateful to C. B. R. Pelling for alerting me to the theme of youth and the contrast of youth and age in *Kimon* and *Lucullus*. ἔτι νέος ὢν: *Kimon* 4.5, 5.1–2; ἔτι μειράκιον ὢν: *Lucullus* 1.1, 1.4 (cf. *μειράκιον παντάπασιν* at *Kimon* 4.3, 9.1); νέος ὢν without ἔτι: *Kimon* 16.2; *Lucullus* 1.5, 2.1; on the general theme, see also *Kimon* 5.4 (Kimon achieves highest honours on his entry into politics), *Lucullus* 38.3 (Marius as an old man contended politically with the young).

<sup>29</sup> I am grateful to Simon Goldhill for suggesting to me the possibility that the rivalry here is tribal, but this is not a necessary nor to my mind the natural reading of the passage; even if we assume that the story has some basis in fact, only about twenty percent of the Athenian members of the audience could have felt a tribal loyalty to one or other of the two poets.

are right wherever they are possible and impossible wherever they are wrong: that needs divine intervention.<sup>30</sup> There is no justification for regarding Plutarch's statement as right merely because it is not impossible, and under any kind of critical scrutiny it appears totally unreliable. I conclude that *Suppliant Women* may have been produced as early as 477, 475, 474, or 473, when Sophocles was nineteen, twenty-one, twenty-two, or twenty-three, or 470 when he was twenty-six. (I discuss the ages of debuting dramatists at the end of the paper.) The play, in other words, cannot be very early fifth century as used to be assumed, but could still be first or second in the chronological sequence of extant plays. We cannot with certainty do more than accept this range of dates, as well as those available in the 460s, as possible. There is, however, every reason to rethink the relative probabilities in this light.

#### V. SUPPLIANT WOMEN: DATING CONSIDERATIONS

Since the publication of A. F. Garvie's *Aeschylus' Suppliants: Play and Trilogy* in 1969 it has been all but universally accepted that the play should be dated to the 460s. It is important to remember, however, that the question Garvie set himself to answer was whether the 'internal' evidence of the play constituted an insuperable obstacle to accepting what seemed the unambiguous evidence for its date provided by the papyrus. His answer was that it did not provide such an obstacle, and that the new evidence ought therefore to be accepted. Garvie's claim, however, was only that the internal evidence was reconcilable with, and to some degree suited, not that it clearly or strongly favoured, a date in the 460s;<sup>31</sup> his only definite conclusion on internal grounds was that the play cannot be as early as the 490s or 480s. In his consideration of the play, in other words, Garvie has the evidence of the papyrus constantly in mind, and, on the premise that the evidence of the papyrus is unambiguous, Garvie's answer is completely persuasive. Things look altogether different, however, when the papyrus evidence turns out to allow a date either in the 470s or in the 460s; as Garvie himself put it, 'A date in the 470s . . . , a few years before the *Persae*, would be consistent with the [stylistic] evidence' (84).

In my view the old consensus that *Suppliant Women* seems the least-developed both in form and dramatic technique among the extant plays still has a good deal to be said for it, and the post-war 470s may well have been a decade of great ferment and rapid change on the tragic scene, leading up to the addition of a third actor in the 460s. Either the mid-470s or 470 seem to me likelier dates for *Suppliant Women* than the 460s. In what follows I reconsider certain aspects of the internal evidence, with reference throughout to Garvie's treatment, rightly regarded as standard.

#### *Resolutions in the iambic trimeter*

Garvie is characteristically cautious about drawing chronological conclusions from the rates of trisyllabic resolutions in the iambic trimeters of Aeschylus' plays, but he

<sup>30</sup> A. E. Housman, *Manilius*<sup>2</sup> I (Cambridge, 1937), xxxii.

<sup>31</sup> Garvie (n. 22), 161–2 says in his final summary (my emphasis): 'The only possible conclusion is that the *Suppliants* provides us with no reliable internal evidence, whether political or non-political, for the dating of the trilogy. At most it tends to support a date in the late 460's, the only relevant period in which we know for certain that there was a climate of opinion at Athens favourable to Argos. It is enough to be sure that it gives us no reason for rejecting the evidence of the papyrus fragment. Since then arguments from style and structure have been seen to be equally inconclusive, there is no longer any reason to refuse to accept what the papyrus tells us.'

does seem to accept the conclusion that we can posit a steady decline in them. His own figures are: *Pers.* 10.95 per cent, *Sept.* 9.57, *Supp.* 8.42, *Ag.* 4.77, *Ch.* 5.17, *Eum.* 5.00.<sup>32</sup> Garvie (33) points to the consistency in the rate of resolution in the three plays of the trilogy as an indication that the progression is not a matter of chance. Euripidean tragedy shows such a steady increase in the rate of resolution from the year 428 that this criterion can be used to date his plays, but the Sophoclean rate fluctuates in a manner that allows no chronological conclusions; Ceadel's figures are: *Aj.* 6.2 per cent, *Ant.* 3.9, *Tr.* 5.9, *O.T.* 6.0, *El.* 3.4, *Ph.* 11.0, *O.C.* 5.2.<sup>33</sup> Does the consistency in the plays of the trilogy justify the conclusion that Aeschylus steadily reduced his rate of resolution rather than that it fluctuated as in Sophocles? It is surely not surprising that three plays written *at the same time* show a close similarity in this respect; the question is whether trilogies written two or six or twelve years before the *Oresteia* would show a steady increase in rates of resolution or a fluctuation. We might in other words conclude on the one hand that Aeschylus' unconscious sense of metrical propriety would produce similar results in the plays of a given trilogy, just as we should guess that a play of Sophocles written in the same year as any of those extant would be quite similar to it metrically, but on the other hand that over time what unconsciously seemed proper would vary considerably, as it does in Sophocles. This conclusion is at any rate as plausible as the other; on general grounds we might expect Aeschylus' style to resemble that of Sophocles rather than Euripides, and the Aeschylean range of resolution rate (5–11 per cent) is in fact very similar to that of Sophocles (3.4–11 per cent) and very much lower than that of Euripides, whose overall average is 20.12 per cent. We have insufficient data to decide this question; from this point of view it would be preferable if we had not two dated plays and three plays from one dated trilogy, but five differently dated plays.

Even if we suppose that Aeschylus had a 'new style' of more constrained resolution in the early 450s, can we safely conclude that the other plays must show a steady decline, with plays in the late 470s at about 11 per cent, in the early 460s at about 9.5 per cent, and in the later 460s at about 8.5 per cent, before a precipitous decline to 5 per cent in the next five years? Or must we reckon with the possibility that nine years and more earlier than 458 plays fluctuated within a range of 2.5 per cent (8.5–11 per cent) or so? With only two dated plays in this period, we have no ground for certainty that one rather than the other of these alternatives is the correct one.

Things get even more difficult when we examine the actual figures for the three earlier plays more closely. Garvie's figure for *Sept.* includes the 49 lines of trimeter at the end of the play that are secluded by Murray and West and called *versus Aeschylus indigni* by Page. I have recalculated the resolution rate for this play on the basis of West's text, excluding from the count all the lines he secludes. The result is 43 reso-

<sup>32</sup> Garvie (n. 22), 33 Table B (with resolutions involving proper names excluded); I give the figures calculated to two decimal figures rather than rounded up as on Garvie's tables. These figures correspond very closely to those of E. B. Ceadel, 'Resolved feet in the trimeters of Euripides and the chronology of the plays', *CQ* 35 (1941), 66–89, at 84 Table 4A with n. 1. They are so different from those in E. C. Yorke, 'Trisyllabic feet in the dialogue of Aeschylus', *CQ* 30 (1936), 116–19, at 117, that Yorke gets the order *Pers.*, *Supp.*, *Sept.* (cf. n. 25 above); Yorke's figures are less accurate than Ceadel's and Garvie's. Cropp and Fick (n. 27), 6–7 criticize Ceadel's exclusion of resolutions involving proper names (which are excluded also by Garvie), but see e.g. 29–30, where they themselves observe that certain types of resolution in Aeschylus and early Sophocles occur only when proper names are involved.

<sup>33</sup> Ceadel (n. 32) 84–5 Table 4B with n. 2 (percentages in the note).

lutions in 483 lines, or 8.90 per cent,<sup>34</sup> to set beside *Pers.* at 10.95 per cent and *Supp.* at 8.42 per cent. The plays of the *Oresteia*, with a much lower resolution rate, vary by 0.40 per cent (*Ag.* 4.77, *Ch.* 5.17); on this improved count the differential between *Sept.* and *Supp.* is 0.48 per cent; on the 'steady decline' hypothesis the conclusion required would seem to be that *Sept.* and *Supp.* were written in the same year, or that, since the difference between *Pers.* in 472 and *Sept.* in 467 represents a decline of about 0.4 per cent per annum, we ought to assign *Supp.* to 466.

But there are further considerations. The words *πόλεμος* and *πολέμιος* cause a resolution (the latter necessarily) every time they appear in an Aeschylean trimeter; *πολέμιος* appears seven times in *Sept.*, *πόλεμος* once; the latter appears three times in *Supp.*; neither is in *Pers.* These words cause fully 18.6 per cent of the resolutions in *Sept.*, and it would not be unreasonable to conclude that the choice of word here is driven primarily by a thematic equivalent of the practical considerations that led the poet to use proper names causing resolutions, which are usually discounted in the statistics. If we adjust in all three plays for what is a spectacular anomaly in *Sept.*, the results are: *Pers.* 10.96 per cent (unchanged), *Supp.* 7.94 (37 resolutions in 466 lines), *Sept.* 7.25 (35 in 483). On this reckoning we might place *Supp.* in 469 or 470, but the figure for *Pers.* of 472 now makes no sense. There is still another outstanding anomaly in *Sept.*, which is that 8 of its 43 resolutions occur in 30 iambic trimeters delivered in ten groups of three in the midst of lyric passages (a resolution rate of 26.6 per cent). If we decide that this great freedom in the lyric context is not coincidence but represents a passing stylistic preference, and so adjust for it by excluding in all three plays trimeters delivered in lyric contexts, the results are: *Pers.* 10.74 per cent (45 resolutions in 419 lines), *Supp.* 8.49 (35 in 412), *Sept.* 7.72 (35 in 453).<sup>35</sup> If the last two adjustments are combined, the results are: *Pers.* 10.74 per cent, *Supp.* 7.77, *Sept.* 5.96.

We might conclude that though the resolution rates cannot determine the order of *Sept.* and *Supp.*, they nevertheless show that both followed *Pers.*; but the more reasonable conclusion is surely that the 'steady decline' hypothesis needs to be given up. The considerable differences in rate produced by the adjustments made above indicate how limited the difference between these plays really is, and how dangerous it is to overinterpret these data. Garvie's table classifying all the resolutions by type and by position in the trimeter makes two important and related facts clear.<sup>36</sup> The first is that far more than half of all the resolutions in all the plays happen in the third foot of the trimeter; the second is that it is only the rate of resolution in this foot that consistently diminishes between the three early plays and those of the *Oresteia*. If we combine dactyls (da) and tribrachs (tri) we get the following rates of third-foot resolution: *Pers.* 6.99 per cent (da 4.66, tri 2.33), *Supp.* 6.31 (da 5.26, tri 1.05), *Sept.* 6.21 (da 4.97, tri

<sup>34</sup> This figure can be reconciled in detail with the counts of Yorke (n. 32) and of Ceadel (n. 32), but not quite with Garvie's, who counts ten more lines in total and at least one resolution that I think cannot be accounted for on the basis of variations between West's text and any other.

<sup>35</sup> The lines excluded are those specified by Ceadel (n. 32), 84, n. 1. Seth L. Schein, *The Iambic Trimeter in Aeschylus and Sophocles* (Leiden, 1979), 24 with nn. 24–5 observes that resolution rates tend to be higher in messenger speeches, and that this phenomenon is particularly clear in *Pers.*; by my reckoning, in the messenger speeches of *Pers.* there are 23 resolutions in 180 lines, a rate of 12.78 per cent, in the balance of the play 24 in 249 lines, a rate of 9.64 per cent.

<sup>36</sup> Garvie (n. 22), 34–5, Tables C–D. The raw numbers of resolutions in Table C are expressed in Table D as percentages of the total number of resolutions in the particular play. I have preferred to convert Garvie's raw numbers (and my own in the case of *Sept.*) into absolute rates of resolution, as these are absolutely comparable between plays; the figures I give in what follows are so expressed, and the trends they represent are therefore clearer.

1.24), *Ag.* 2.67 (da 2.09, tri 0.582), *Ch.* 2.90 (da 2.10, tri 0.80), *Eum.* 2.80 (da 2.18, tri 0.62). We have here two very distinctive groups of three plays with very closely comparable rates of variation. The average of the earlier group is 6.5 (or one resolution in 15.4 third feet), with a variation between highest and lowest rate of 0.78, which represents 12 per cent of the average (or one variation in 128 third feet, equivalent to about four in a play); the average of the *Oresteia* is 2.79 (or one resolution in 35.8 third feet), with a variation between highest and lowest rate of 0.23, which represents 8.26 per cent of the average (or one variation in 434 third feet, equivalent to about 1.5 in *Ch.* or *Eum.* and 2 in *Ag.*). The difference between the two groups in absolute rate of resolution is considerable, but it is clear that the variation between rates within the earlier group (12 per cent) and within the *Oresteia* (8.26 per cent) is quite similar; the *Oresteia* variation is between plays written at the same time, which surely makes it unreasonable to reach conclusions about the relative dates of the plays in the earlier group on the basis of the absolute rate of resolution of each. The fact that *Pers.* has the highest overall resolution rate of the three earlier plays is due at bottom to its high rate of fourth-foot tribrachs (1.86%, eight in the play), but rates of resolution in this position do not match the general trend: *Pers.* has fourth-foot tribrachs at three times the rate of *Supp.* (0.62 per cent, three in the play), but at only twice the rate of *Eum.* (0.93 per cent, six in the play). Do we really want to draw major chronological conclusions from such facts?

#### *Other stylistic matters*

Garvie denies or at least questions the probative value of virtually every other kind of stylistic evidence for dating *Suppliant Women*, in my view rightly: lyric metres and responsion, epic borrowings, rare words, 'Sicilian' words, colloquial expressions, compound words, ἀπαξ λεγόμενα, ornamental adjectives, imagery, repetition. I should like, however, to say a little more about two issues: Aeschylus' use of particles and of ring-composition and logical connection.

Denniston concluded that Aeschylus' plays reflect his adoption of certain particle combinations as they came into general use; Aeschylus and Plato alone, in Denniston's view, 'afford evidence of a more general and significant character' for differences in the use of particles between an author's earlier and later works.<sup>37</sup> This is not a matter of unconscious stylistic preferences or of natural variation but of development in the language itself, and it is therefore a far more telling because far less subjective criterion than most. Four different particle combinations appear only in the trilogy and in *Sept.*: ἦ μὴν, μέντοι, ἀλλ' οὖν, δ' οὖν. Postponed δέ occurs twenty times in the trilogy, seven times in *Sept.*, five times in *Pers.*, but only once in *Supp.* Any one of these facts might be regarded as accidental, but the combination of the five surely constitutes a strong case for placing *Sept.* closest in time to the trilogy, and, on the basis of postponed δέ and therefore less compellingly, *Supp.* earliest of all.

The results of Friis Johansen's consideration of ring-composition and logical connection in the tragedies seem significant; as Garvie puts it, 'in two respects the *Supplikes* stands alone, in the frequency of ring-composition and in the generally more mechanical verbal parallelism with which it is worked out'.<sup>38</sup> Garvie denies, however,

<sup>37</sup> J. D. Denniston, *The Greek Particles*<sup>2</sup> (Oxford, 1954), lxxvii–lxxviii; postponed δέ: 187–8. Garvie (n. 22), 55–6 summarizes Denniston's findings.

<sup>38</sup> Garvie (n. 22), 74–6 (quotations: 76), 81–2, and in his summary, 86. H. Friis Johansen, 'Some features of sentence-structure in Aeschylus' *Suppliants*', *Cl. et Med.* 15 (1954), 1–59, at 32–47 (framing technique and repetition), 48–52 (formulae of transition).

that this difference can ‘bear the weight of a chronological argument’; he notes that *Prometheus Bound* is in this regard even more distinctive than *Suppliants*, containing very little ring-composition indeed, yet ‘must be closer in date to [the other plays] than an early *Supplices* would be’. Both here and on the issue of logical connection Garvie puts what are distinctive features of *Supp.* into perspective by noting that *PB* is even more obviously an odd man out; for those who now believe that *PB* is non-Aeschylean, this kind of argument loses all its force. Friis Johansen noted that in all the other plays Aeschylus avoids abrupt changes of subject within a speech by deploying formulae of transition, but that in *Supp.* there are no such formulae, Aeschylus there marking off separate subjects by ring-composition alone, with the result that changes of subject are very abrupt. Garvie allows that Friis Johansen’s point is valid, but complains that he leaves *PB* out of account, since it is so different in this respect from all the other plays. Garvie therefore discounts the value of this criterion, but once *PB* is out of the picture the process of development Friis Johansen sketches looks clear enough.<sup>39</sup>

My own conclusion is that the metrical evidence is not a useful dating criterion, not at any rate as an index of the chronological order of the first three plays, but that the use of particles constitutes a strong argument for placing *Persians* and *Suppliant Women* before *Seven Against Thebes*, and that the employment of postponed δέ, ring-composition, and logical connection are fairly persuasive arguments for regarding *Suppliant Women* as the earliest of all.

#### *Structural issues*

The pre-1952 discussion about the date of *Suppliant Women* was concerned largely with the play’s form and structure, and it was on this basis that almost all scholars dated it very early in Aeschylus’ career. No one can now date it as early as the 490s or 480s, but, as I suggested above, it is perfectly possible that major changes in the shape of tragedy were taking place in the post-war 470s, just as it is certain that the third actor was added between 467 and 458. Taplin has stated the case very fairly:

The scholars who used to date *Hik* early were not building their case on nothing, and the arguments which used to be put forward for a later date, while not negligible, were not conclusive. Were it not for the papyrus *didaskalia* a sober man might well put the play in the 470s rather than the 490s, but he could not in all fairness be expected to plump for the 460s.<sup>40</sup>

From our point of view, Taplin’s most telling argument is that the unique employment in *Suppliant Women* of a mid-act (rather than act-dividing) strophic choral song (418–37) represents an ‘archaic’ way of integrating the chorus into the dialogue acts, in which they must have played a larger role than they would do in later tragedy.<sup>41</sup> Garvie, by contrast, had sketched a developmental model of tragic drama according to which the chorus never originally took the role of ‘protagonist’, this being an experimental innovation in the Danaid trilogy; rather the chorus was restricted to commenting on or responding to events narrated to them by the first actor, whose function was to report. The second actor’s original function too can, in Garvie’s view, be reconstructed, and was essentially the same: he was a messenger, someone who

<sup>39</sup> Garvie (n. 22), 86–7, in his summary of the stylistic arguments, again has *PB* very much in mind; his final sentence reads: ‘one could not with logical consistency believe that the *Prometheus* is an authentic late play of Aeschylus, and at the same time demand that the *Supplices* on stylistic grounds be assigned to the beginning of Aeschylus’ career’.

<sup>40</sup> Oliver Taplin, *The Stagecraft of Aeschylus* (Oxford, 1977), 195.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.* 207–9, where Taplin also discusses astrophic lyrics in mid-act.

could bring in more or novel news for the chorus to respond to. Dialogue between actors, according to Garvie, developed only slowly. This line of speculation then enables Garvie to present both the 'protagonist' role of the chorus of *Suppliants* and the confrontation between Pelasgos and the Herald as novelties.<sup>42</sup> Garvie's developmental model is both extremely speculative and, to my mind at least, very counterintuitive. We have next to no evidence to go on, but it is surely far more likely that the earlier tragedians did see and take advantage of the possibility of making the chorus 'dramatically' central and of having actors confront one another. The number of actors available does not, after all, correspond to the number of characters available, and on this ground alone it is unduly restrictive to speak of actors as having single, definable functions. A single actor could deliver any amount of reporter's narrative, and could do so in more than one character; on Garvie's model the second actor therefore seems superfluous. Surely the second actor, like the third, was introduced to increase the dramatic possibilities of an already dramatic genre, not to pick up part of the burden of narration in a static exchange of narration and comment.

Taplin then seems right to see techniques of integrating the chorus into dialogue scenes as likely to be characteristic of early tragedy, and it is probable too that the chorus played the role of 'protagonist' more rather than less often in early days. Certainly both conclusions suit the evidence for the development of tragedy we actually have. Aristotle (*Poet.* 4.1449a17–18) says that Aeschylus τὰ τοῦ χοροῦ ἡλάττωσε καὶ τὸν λόγον πρωταγωνιστεῖν παρεσκεύασεν. Garvie comments:

Aristotle is concerned here not with the relationship between actor and chorus as actor, but with the relative extent of the dialogue and lyrics. The previous protagonist was not ὁ χορός but τὰ τοῦ χοροῦ. He is using the word 'protagonist' in a metaphorical sense.<sup>43</sup>

Aristotle, however, need not have used a metaphor or this metaphor, and the fact that he does so suggests, though it can of course not prove, that he was thinking of plays such as Aeschylus' *Suppliants*, *Aigyptioi*, and *Danaïdes*, and the *Aigyptioi* and *Danaïdes* of Phrynichus, in which the choruses played 'protagonistic' roles. There is no doubt, though, that Aristotle was thinking primarily of 'the relative extent of the dialogue and lyrics', and this brings us to what in my view is the strongest argument for dating *Suppliant Women* earlier rather than later.

The percentages of choral and solo lyrics in Aeschylean plays given by Ziegler (*RE* VI A 1956–7) are: *Supp.* 60 per cent, *Pers.* 50, *Sept.* 43, *Oresteia* average 42, *Ag.* 48, *Ch.* 42, *Eum.* 36. Two of these figures include substantial amounts of solo singing by an actor: Xerxes sings about 14.6 per cent of the lyrics in *Pers.*, Cassandra 8.9 per cent of those in *Ag.* (5.6 per cent of the lyrics in *Supp.* are usually regarded as sung by sub-choruses rather than by actors). Adjusting for this, we obtain strictly choral percentages of *Supp.* 60 per cent, *Pers.* 43, *Sept.* 43, *Oresteia* average 40.5, *Ag.* 43.7, *Ch.* 42, *Eum.* 36. Does Garvie's argument that the high proportion of choral lyrics in *Suppliants* is a straightforward consequence of the chorus taking a central dramatic role really account for these figures? Again, we must remember that Garvie was professedly attempting to reconcile the internal evidence of the play with the external

<sup>42</sup> Garvie (n. 22), 106–16 (original role of chorus), 138–9 (*Supp.* an innovation), 116–18 (function of first actor), 125–6 (second actor), 133–5 (confrontation between actors comes in slowly). Garvie's implication that the early chorus was 'anonymous and colourless' (106) and his comparison of early tragedy to 'a cantata or an oratorio' (115) are rightly rejected by Taplin (n. 40), 207.

<sup>43</sup> Garvie (n. 22), 107; cf. Taplin (n. 40), 207.

evidence apparently offered by the papyrus. How does the matter appear when it becomes legitimate to date the play either in the 470s or in the 460s?

We have two or three other tragedies in which the chorus takes a central role: *Eumenides*, in which it sings 36 per cent of the play, Euripides' *Suppliant Women*, where it sings 16 per cent, and perhaps *Bakchai*, 26 per cent.<sup>44</sup> The question is whether very high percentages of choral lyric are a function of the chorus having a central dramatic role or an index of relatively early date, and the clear distinction is between earlier plays with vastly more choral lyric and later plays (including all those of Sophocles and Euripides<sup>45</sup>) with far less rather than between plays with protagonistic and those with non-protagonistic choruses. In Aeschylus himself, when the date of *Suppliants* is treated as uncertain, it seems natural to detect a fairly clear development from *Supp.* through *Pers.* and *Sept.* to the *Oresteia*, where the highest percentage of choral lyric is not in *Eum.*, which in fact has the lowest, but in *Ag.*, which is at once far the longest and the most reflective of the three plays.

The claim that the chorus's central role in *Suppliants* somehow entails choral lyric at a rate of 60 per cent appears very much the post-papyrus piece of wisdom it is when we look at the matter from another angle. In all tragedy known to be written in the 460s and later there is not a single chorus, even among protagonistic choruses, that sings anything like 60 per cent of the play; and this is true even of the protagonistic chorus of *Eumenides*, which has the lowest rate of lyric in Aeschylean tragedy. On the other hand, it is absolutely clear that a general development in tragic drama, a development no doubt closely connected with the addition of the third actor, is for the choral proportion of tragedy to decline. Aristotle, who read many more tragedies of Aeschylus than we can, observed this trend in Aeschylus himself, but we too can still see it. Surely it makes no sense to posit a chronological sequence in which *Supp.* at 60 per cent falls not before *Pers.* at 43 or 50 per cent but between *Sept.* at 43 and the *Oresteia* at 40 or 42. If we place *Supp.* earliest, we have a comprehensible development in which a chorus and two sub-choruses sing 60 per cent of *Supp.*, the chorus sings 43 per cent of *Pers.* and another 7 per cent is sung by an actor, the chorus sings 43 per cent of *Sept.* and the rest of the play is spoken, and about 40 per cent of the *Oresteia* is sung by the chorus, with *Kassandra* singing a little more than 4 per cent of *Ag.*

This conclusion coheres with what is in itself the far less compelling argument from the use in *Suppliants* of the 'second actor', that is the limited role of Danaos' silent presence during the supplication by the chorus of Pelasgos (234–489) followed naturally upon Aeschylus'

<sup>44</sup> I calculate the numbers for Euripides from tables 1a (410) and 2a (413) in Eric Csapo, 'Later Euripidean music', in M. Cropp, K. Lee, and D. Sansone (edd.), *Euripides and Tragic Theatre in the Late Fifth Century = Illinois Classical Studies 24–5* (1999–2000), 399–426. The percentage of choral singing in Eur. *Suppl.* is below average for this poet, but that in *Bakchai* is the highest in any of his tragedies. The high percentage in *Bakchai* must be seen against the background of the generally very high percentage of song given by Euripides to actors rather than the chorus: it is not that *Bakchai* has more song in general, but that more than 90 per cent of the song in it is given to the chorus. The amount of song in these two plays falls within the usual range in Euripidean tragedy in general; *Suppliants* shows that a play with a dramatically central chorus can have a below-average proportion of song, and *Bakchai* that such a play will not produce a higher-than-average level of song in general.

<sup>45</sup> See Csapo (n. 44), *ibid.* and, for Sophocles, tables 1b (411) and 2b (414). *PB* is about 30 per cent lyric.

<sup>46</sup> For discussion of this matter with full bibliographical references, see Garvie (n. 22), 125–38; Friis Johansen and Whittle (n. 24), 1.27, who insist against Garvie that Danaos' long silence 'is a weakness'.



decision to make the chorus the protagonist. This seems at bottom another not very persuasive, papyrus-driven argument. Does the chorus get 60 per cent of the play because they require 60 per cent rather than 43 per cent to fulfil their dramatic function, or because Aeschylus was accustomed at the time of composition to write plays of which, say, more than half goes to the chorus? Would a dialogue scene between Danaos and Pelasgos before or after the choral supplication necessarily have spoiled the effect of the latter? Can one not imagine an iambic supplication scene between father and Argive king that would leave plenty of scope for a supplication scene between daughters and king quite different in content, tone and effect? Had Aeschylus chosen to dramatize this myth at about the time he wrote the *Oresteia* he would doubtless have reduced the choral component in this and other ways—unless we wish to argue that the Danaid story simply could not be dramatized at a 40 per cent rate of choral lyric. Should we explain Aeschylus' composition of *Suppliants* at a rate of 60 per cent as a result of mythical or dramatic constraints he could not get round, or as an indication that he wrote it at an earlier stage in the process of diminishment of the choral component Aristotle observed in his work? Faced with potential dates in the 470s as well as the 460s, we should on these grounds plump for the former rather than the latter decade.

A related argument for dating *Suppliants* early is its lack of a prologue; this is, however, a mightily controverted issue. The traditional, pre-papyrus assumption was that in the days of predominantly choral tragedy plays began with the parodos, the prologue being a later innovation.<sup>47</sup> Two pieces of evidence are cited to controvert this claim: the view Themistios (*Or.* 26, 316d) attributes to Aristotle that 'Thespis invented the prologue and the rhesis', and the evidence of the hypothesis to *Persians*, which cites the fifth-century writer Glaukos of Rhegion as its source, that Phrynichus' *Phoinissai*, which the hypothesis says *Persians* imitated, and which is usually but insecurely dated to 476, began with a prologue spoken by a eunuch.<sup>48</sup> The first piece of evidence should be dismissed; Themistios tells us in the same sentence that Aeschylus invented the third actor, which contradicts one of the few things Aristotle says about such matters.<sup>49</sup>

The second piece of evidence is not so easy to weigh. I shall proceed on the assumption that Phrynichos did write a *Phoinissai* on the topic of the Persian war before Aeschylus wrote *Persians*, and that it contained a prologue, but not without registering my suspicion that this information is unreliable. Lloyd-Jones and Taplin suspect that the play of Phrynichus in question is not *Phoinissai*, but his *Δίκαιοι ἢ Πέρσαι ἢ Σύνθωκοι* (*TrGF* 3 F 4a). This is certainly plausible, and if it were right the evidence on which the sentence in the hypothesis to *Persians* is based might once have been something like *Γλαῦκος ἐν τοῖς περὶ Αἰσχύλου μύθων ἐκ τῶν Περσῶν φησι Φρυνίχου τοὺς Πέρσας παραπεποιῆσθαι*. There is a clear risk of ambiguity here, and in Glaukos the chronological relationship between the two plays might have been the reverse. Two other considerations seem to me more compelling. We have it on the good authority of Herodotos (6.21.2) that Phrynichus was fined a thousand drachmas in connection with his production of *The Sack of Miletos* (an unlikely title); it seems odd

<sup>47</sup> See Garvie (n. 22), 120–3 with full references to earlier discussions; Friis Johansen and Whittle (n. 24), 1.25–6.

<sup>48</sup> On the *Phoinissai*, see Garvie (n. 22), 121, n. 4; H. Lloyd-Jones, 'Problems of early Greek tragedy: Pratinas, Phrynichus, the Gyges fragment', in *Estudios sobre la tragedia Griega. Cuadernos de la Fundación Pastor* 13 (1966), 11–33, at 23–4, abridged as id., *Greek Lyric, Epic, and Tragedy* (Oxford, 1990), 225–37, at 234; O. Taplin, 'Aeschylean silences and silences in Aeschylus', *HSCP* 76 (1972), 57–97, at 68, n. 36; Taplin (n. 40), 63, n. 2.

<sup>49</sup> Taplin (n. 40), 62, n. 2 suspects Themistios' statement on the same grounds.

that he would again attempt a potentially painful, contemporary subject even before Aeschylus had given a lead.<sup>50</sup> Most striking of all is that the line quoted as the beginning of Phrynichus' play, *τάδ' ἐστὶ Περσῶν τῶν πάλαι βεβηκότων*, looks like nothing so much as an exercise in verse composition, a version in iambic trimeter of the anapaestic first line of Aeschylus' *Persians*, *τάδε μὲν Περσῶν τῶν οἰχομένων*. It seems much more probable that some enterprising scholiast generated an *ἀρχή*-line for Phrynichus' play out of that of *Persians* than that Aeschylus' imitation of Phrynichus was so close as to involve a minimal metrical adaptation of Phrynichus' opening line. Glaukos may merely have said that Aeschylus imitated Phrynichus (or vice versa), and that in Phrynichus a eunuch announced the defeat of Xerxes (a climactic moment that ought not to come in the prologue); the assumption that the eunuch made this announcement in a prologue would follow from the invention of an iambic *ἀρχή*-line. It was certainly not a reliable scholarly authority who wrote *ἐνταῦθα δὲ προλογίζει χορὸς πρεσβυτῶν*, and someone who recognized the inappropriateness of the term *προλογίζει* to a parodos has written in the margin or inserted into the hypothesis by way of correction a passage from a commentary on Euripides distinguishing choral portions as *parodoi*, *stasima*, and *kommoi*.<sup>51</sup> The evidence of this hypothesis ought in my view to be treated with great caution.

Supposing nevertheless that Phrynichus wrote a *Phoinissai* with a prologue in 476, it would be possible to assume that this was an early or the earliest example of a prologue, that Aeschylus had not yet conformed to this new fashion when he wrote *Persians* four years later, but had conformed to it by the time he wrote *Seven against Thebes* and regularly used prologues thereafter. 'As Aeschylus grows older and finds himself challenged by gifted younger men such as Sophocles', says West, 'we see him increasing the number and variety of his scenes and characters. The play with no prologue disappears, and *Eumenides* even has two.'<sup>52</sup> It is more economical to suppose that this process did not involve a return to the older form (in this as in many other respects) in the second half of the 460s than that it did.

Many scholars claim there is no reason to conclude that prologues were not always an alternative form of opening. We have already found good reason to reject the statement of Themistios that Thespis invented prologues on which this claim is primarily based, and there are two further and weighty considerations that so far as I can see have never been properly faced. It must be remembered first that every Greek tragedy we have apart from *Suppliant Women* and *Persians* begins with a prologue; our text of *Rhesos* lacks a prologue, but hypothesis (b) of the play quotes from two, offering first an *ἀρχή*-line Diggle thinks may be genuine. Since the prologue becomes an indispensable formal component of tragedy, it seems unreasonable to dismiss the absence of one as no criterion of date. There is a further piece of evidence whose relevance to this issue has not been noted, Aristotle's statement (*Poet.* 5, 1449b3–5) about comedy: *τίς δὲ πρόσωπα ἀπέδωκεν ἢ προλόγους ἢ πλήθη ὑποκριτῶν καὶ*

<sup>50</sup> The *οἰκῆμα κακά* of which the Athenians were reminded by *The Sack of Miletos* must, as the phrase suggests, have gone beyond compassionate feelings for the Milesians. The Persian war ended in a Greek victory, but many Athenians died and their city was sacked in the course of it; the risk of reminding an Athenian audience of *οἰκῆμα κακά* cannot therefore have seemed lower in the case of *Phoinissai* than in that of *The Sack of Miletos*.

<sup>51</sup> Hyp. *Pers.* lines 9–13 West, secluded by Page and West after Blomfield.

<sup>52</sup> M. L. West, *Studies in Aeschylus* (Stuttgart, 1990), 23. West is not discussing the date of *Suppliant Women*, but if his instinct about the general development is right, as I think it is, it would, at least on these grounds, be preferable to date the play in the 470s.

ὅσα τοιαῦτα, ἡγνόηται. Everyone assumes that this list includes the features of tragedy whose invention, apart from Aeschylus' addition of the second actor and Sophocles' of the third, Aristotle has passed over a few sentences earlier (1449a28–9: καὶ τὰ ἄλλ' ὡς ἕκαστα κοσμηθῆναι λέγεται ἔστω ἡμῶν εἰρημένα· πολὺ γὰρ ἂν ἴσως ἔργον εἴη διεξιέναι καθ' ἕκαστον). In the case of additional actors and masks Aristotle is talking about things that, once they were introduced to tragedy, remained regular features of it thereafter. He has earlier mentioned ἐπεισοδίων πλήθη among the changes that brought tragedy to its natural perfection (1449a27–8), but does not include them here, presumably because he knew that on this matter practice varied a good deal and no single 'inventor' could be spoken of. With every allowance made for Aristotle's schematic tendencies and lack of information about early tragedy, it still seems reasonable to infer that such evidence as he had did not contradict his conclusion that, whether he could name him or not, the prologue had an 'inventor', or in other words that there was a clear divide between a period when tragedies began with parodoi and a subsequent period when they began with prologues. Aristotle's statement and the extant tragedies together constitute a strong argument for regarding the absence or presence of a prologue as a criterion of date, and by that criterion *Suppliant Women* belongs before or not long after *Persians* (or not long after *Phoinissai*) rather than in the 460s.

#### *Historical considerations*

This section can be brief. Arguments about the date of *Suppliant Women* based on political assumptions or historical allusions have varied widely and cannot be decisive.<sup>53</sup> The most recent discussion is that of Sommerstein, who suggests that the plot of the play reflects Kimon's intervention with the assembly on behalf of Perikleidas in 462, and therefore proposes to date the play to 461; this is ingenious, but no more a necessary conclusion than any other such proposal has been.<sup>54</sup> The notion that Aeschylus' decision to dramatize the Danaid myth in a trilogy was prompted by the allegorical possibilities of some specific historical episode of supplication seems after all pretty dubious. Nor does the praise of Argos in the play necessarily imply that it was written while Athens was at peace or in alliance with Argos; certainly there is nothing here as specific as the allusions to a treaty with Argos in the *Oresteia*. It is hardly reasonable to conclude that the tragedians avoided dramatizing any myth set in a city whose contemporary relations with Athens were less than friendly. In the 470s Themistokles was favouring an anti-Spartan policy, which would naturally entail at least some degree of common cause with Argos; if we must have a suitable historical context, this one seems perfectly plausible. The 'democratic' aspect of Argos in the play is probably no more than the reading of Athenian concerns into the mythical past.

#### *Conclusion*

The cumulative weight of the stylistic observations of Denniston and Friis Johansen, the play's lack of a prologue, the long, awkward silence of Danaos, and above all the

<sup>53</sup> See e.g. Friis Johansen and Whittle (n. 24), 1.27–9; ch. 4 of Garvie (n. 22), who is almost as sceptical; both discussions contain further references.

<sup>54</sup> A. H. Sommerstein, 'The theatre audience, the *demos*, and the *Suppliants* of Aeschylus', in Christopher Pelling (ed.), *Greek Tragedy and the Historian* (Oxford, 1997), 63–79.

high proportion of choral lyric seems to me to tip the scales very decidedly in favour of a date in the 470s for *Suppliant Women*, and rather less clearly in favour of a date before that of *Persians*.

I suggested above that Sophocles could have competed in a tragic contest as early as 477, when he was nineteen years of age. A scholion on *Clouds* 510 tells us that a poet could not produce plays in his own name until his thirtieth year, but this cannot be true: Sophocles and Menander certainly competed at a younger age. So far as we can trust the traditions about Aeschylus and Euripides, which is not far at all, they represent the poets as beginning to compete at about twenty-five and about thirty respectively.<sup>55</sup> We are somewhat better informed in the case of comic poets. It is fairly clear that Menander was born in 342/1 and first competed in 321 at the age of nineteen or twenty.<sup>56</sup> The *Suda* tells us that Eupolis first competed at seventeen, and though caution is always in order with this source there is at any rate nothing that contradicts it.<sup>57</sup> Our information about Aristophanes is difficult to judge, but at *Clouds* 530–3 he accounts for his failure to produce his first play in his own name by comparing himself with a *παρθένος*, not yet allowed to give birth, who exposes her child for another maiden to raise, and this is most naturally read as meaning that he was too young. The *Suda* describes Aristophanes as *γεγονὸς ἐν τοῖς ἀγῶσι κατὰ τὴν ριδ' Ὀλυμπιάδα* (324/3), a date which makes no sense; Jacoby emends the numeral to *ῥδ'* (404/3) and assumes that this date represents the poet's *ἀκμή*, which on standard Hellenistic reckoning would correspond to a birth year of 444/3.<sup>58</sup> If this were correct, Aristophanes would have had his first three plays produced by someone else in 427, 426, and 425 when he was sixteen, seventeen, and eighteen, and then produced *Knights* in his own name in 424 at the age of nineteen; this might be taken to cohere with the fact that Athenians were enrolled as citizens by the process of *dokimasia* at the end of the year in which they turned eighteen. The scholion on *Frogs* 501 says of the poet *σχέδον μεираκίσκος ἤδη ἤπτετο τῶν ἀγῶνων*, and though Dover may be right to assume that this is a mere inference from the *Clouds* passage, it is also possible that it is based on whatever information underlies the date given in the *Suda*. Great confidence is hardly possible, but it is fair to say that such evidence as we have suggests that Aristophanes' first play was produced while he was still in his teens.

There is therefore no reason to rule out the possibility that Sophocles first competed at the age of nineteen in 477. Our internal evidence for the date of *Suppliant Women* is of course not such as to suggest a particular year in the mid-470s, but a date *c.* 475 would suit it very well. We must bear in mind, however, that the date given by Eusebius for Sophocles' first competition, 470, *may* be based ultimately on solid ancient evidence, even if many or most of the dramatic dates in the *Chronicle* are false. Those who judge the internal evidence of *Suppliant Women* more or less as I have, and who are inclined to give it more weight than the uncertain testimony of Eusebius, might prefer, with some misgiving over Sophocles' age, to date the competition won by

<sup>55</sup> Aeschylus: *Suda* π 2230 s.v. *Πρατύνας*; Euripides: *Marm. Par.* ep. 50, *Vit. Eur.* p. 2, 14 Schwartz (*TrGF I* DID C 9).

<sup>56</sup> See *Testimonia* 2, 3, 7, 46 and 49 K-A with commentary ad locc.; St. Schröder, 'Die Lebensdaten Menanders', *ZPE* 113 (1996), 35–48.

<sup>57</sup> *Suda* ε 3657 = T 1 K-A.

<sup>58</sup> *Suda* α 3932 = T 2b K-A; F. Jacoby, *Apollodoros Chronik* (Berlin, 1902), 301–2. Koster on *Proleg. de com.* XXX<sup>b</sup> suggests emending to *πη'* (428/7), the date of Aristophanes' first competition, but this emendation is much more difficult than that favoured by Jacoby. Dover's note on the matter in his edition of *Clouds*, xix, n. 1, wrongly renders the first year of Ol. 94 (ῥδ') as 444/3, with some attendant confusion.

Aeschylus with his Danaid trilogy *c.* 475. Those tempted to trust Eusebius may prefer 470, which is not much less suitable on internal grounds, and is in the end perhaps the safest guess. The only thing a post-*Seven* date in the 460s has going for it is the unreliable testimony of Plutarch.<sup>59</sup>

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#### APPENDIX: TABLE OF DATES

<i>Marmor Parium</i>	<i>Eusebius</i>	<i>Suda</i>
538–528 Thespis	Ol. 60 (540/39?) Thespis	Ol. 61 (535/2) Thespis Ol. 64 (523/0) Choerilus
509/8 dithyrambic contest begins [[503/2/1 <i>Fasti Inscription</i> begins]]		Ol. 67 (511/08) Phrynichus Ol. 70 (499/96) Pratinas, Aeschylus, Choerilus
484 (Ol. 73) Aeschylus: first victory	Ol. 71, 1 (496/5) Aeschylus ἐγνωρίζετο	[[←Ol. 73?]]
Euripides born	Ol. 74, 2 (483/2) Choerilus and Phrynichus ἐγνωρίζοντο	
Stesichorus to Greece	Ol. 75, 4 (477/6) Aeschylus ἐγνωρίζετο ( <i>bis</i> )	
	Ol. 77, 2 (471/0) Sophocles πρῶτον ἐπεδείξατο	
468 Sophocles: first victory	Ol. 77, 4 (469/8) Sophocles and Euripides ἐγνωρίζοντο	