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HERMESIANAX AND THE TATTOO ELEGY (P. BRUX. INV. E 8934
AND P. SORB. INV. 2254)

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For Dirk Schenkeveld

A newly published Brussels papyrus makes a join with an already published Sorbonne papyrus of Hellenistic elegy; we owe this splendid discovery to M. Huys¹. The find confirms an intuition of Barns and Lloyd-Jones that the poem is about tattooing an adversary with various unedifying scenes from mythology - this had been contradicted with unscholarly fervour by Giangrande and K. Alexander². At the same time, it refutes a conjecture of Lloyd-Jones', namely that this poem is the work of Phanocles: until Huys' discovery, it was possible to suppose that Phanocles fr. 1 Powell, which ends with the Thracian women being tattooed by their husbands because of their murdering Orpheus, was an aition preceding a Dirae type elegy saying 'I will tattoo you likewise'. But the Brussels papyrus is quite clearly the beginning of a poem (cf. especially $\iota\ 3\ \mu\eta\acute{\nu}\sigma\omicron\nu\tau\alpha\iota\ \acute{\alpha}\omicron\iota\delta\alpha\acute{\iota}$), so this attribution has lost what plausibility it may have had before Huys' discovery.

All the same, the identification of the author with Phanocles has influenced the general judgement of the author's standing to an extent which, to my mind, is hardly justified. Papatomopoulos, the author of the editio princeps of the Sorbonne papyrus³, had diagnosed the poet as a minor, provincial versifier of the Hellenistic period. Under the influence of Lloyd-Jones, later studies - including Huys' - have tended to stress the author's Hellenistic elegance. I am convinced that Papatomopoulos was right and that the poet, while certainly belonging to the Hellenistic period (the papyrus dates from the second half of the second century BCE), exhibits at best some crude Hellenistic trickery.

But first, I will deal here with another ascription: on the basis of a new scene as described in the Brussels papyrus, Huys tentatively identifies the poet with Hermesianax. The evidence is shaky enough, as Huys admits himself. The main purpose of this paper is to show that general data on versification in Greek elegy make this ascription impossible. But the arguments for Hermesianax' authorship deserve to be examined before I come to that.

¹ Le poème élégiaque hellénistique P.Brux. inv. E 8934 et P.Sorb. inv. 2254: Édition, commentaire et analyse stylistique (Papyri Bruxellenses Graecae II 22), Brussels 1991. The Sorbonne papyrus is SH 970.

² J.W.B. Barns - H. Lloyd-Jones, Un nuovo frammento papiraceo dell'elegia ellenistica, SIFC 35, 1963, 205-227 (in English in H. Lloyd-Jones, Academic papers I, Oxford 1990, 196-215); G. Giangrande, The Sorbonne papyrus: Meleager and the Calydonian Boar, MPhL 8, 1987, 111-118; K. Alexander, A stylistic commentary on Phanocles and related texts, Amsterdam 1988, 123-165.

³ Un poème élégiaque inédit sur Méléagre et le sanglier de Calydon, Recherches de papyrologie 2, Paris 1962, 99-111.

The first tattoo of the papyrus as we now know it depicts the fight between Heracles and one of various centaurs called Eurytion, who had wanted to marry (ἰ 8 μνηστεύετο κόυρην) a lady who goes unidentified in what is left of this poem. It stands to reason that this is the story about the daughter of Dexamenos, who is given various names by various mythographers (details in Huys, 44-45) - all versions of the myth make Heracles kill Eurytion, which is the moral 'pointed' by this particular tattoo. Dexamenos was king of Olenos in Achaea, close to the Elean border. Pausanias adduces Hermesianax as supplementary (NB καί) witness for his suspicion that there once was a small town Olenos, for in his own day, there were no traces of it any more: VII 18,1 καὶ ὅτι μὲν ἦν πόλις ἐξ ἀρχῆς μικρὸν ἢ Ὀλενος, μαρτυρεῖ τῷ λόγῳ μου καὶ ἐλεγείῳ ἐς Εὐρυτίωνα Κένταυρον ὑπὸ Ἑρμησιάννακτος πεποιημένον - he goes on to say that afterwards Olenos had been abandoned by its inhabitants.

An ἐλεγείῳ ἐς Εὐρυτίωνα is not an Elegia in Eurytionem (Powell) but a pentameter or an elegiac distich about Eurytion. Huys might have rendered the service of pointing out that ἐς with the accusative instead of περί with the genitive is one of Pausanias' most frequent mannerisms.

The problem is that neither Dexamenos nor Olenos is named in what is preserved of the Brussels papyrus; this is not a decisive argument, as the left-hand part of the first column is missing and there is besides a lacuna of at least one pentameter between lines i 7 and i 8. Indeed, the word κόυρην - which Huys is probably right in interpreting as 'daughter' rather than 'girl', although his lengthy commentary does not attempt to justify the choice - suggests that Dexamenos must be supplied somewhere, preferably in the lacuna between i 7 and i 8. But Olenos is another matter: after all this is an ekphrasis of a tattoo, and the name of the city is irrelevant for the poet's purpose. Even more so the fact that Olenos was a small city: why ever would such a detail have been mentioned in this poem? Not even Calydon, a rather bigger city, is named in the second column, in the story of Meleager and the boar. Thus, the lacunas in the papyrus do not allow us to reject Huys' identification of the author with Hermesianax out of hand, but there is very little to recommend it.

Huys' second line of defense is even weaker. On p. 78-79 we are shown how Parthenius reports two stories told in Euphorion's elegy Thrax (SH 413-415; Parth. 13 and 26) with more circumstantial details than there are in the original text. Likewise, Huys claims, Pausanias may have given Hermesianax' elegy as a reference, while in actual fact providing his readers with extracts from a contemporary mythographic handbook. There are two points to be made against this. First, Huys confuses Parthenius and his scholiast: we owe to the latter, not the former, the information that the stories in point were told by Euphorion. Secondly, Parthenius and Pausanias are two very different writers indeed. Pausanias has the infuriating habit of referring to a poetic text for some minor point of mythology or geography without actually quoting it. But where we can verify his references the poets always say what

he says they say, and therefore a reference to Hermesianax via a mythographic handbook would be out of character.

In the course of a lengthy but inconclusive comparison between the poetic techniques used by the poet of the Tattoo Elegy and by Hermesianax, Huys devotes half a page to the so-called Attic correction (95-96). He counts eight cases of this scansion in the ninety-eight lines of Hermesianax' fr. 7 Powell, thus arriving at one case per 12 lines⁴. The papyrus has one case per ten lines, which, Huys claims, is 'peut-être la ressemblance la plus significative entre les deux fragments' (96), although he goes on to say that 'même ce critère n'a qu'une valeur relative'.

Counting instances of Attic correction and dividing them by the number of lines is too simplistic a method to be of any value. If short scansions of short vowels before mute and liquid are fruitfully to be compared with anything, it is with long scansions: it is not the relationship between one option and the total amount of text that matters, but the relationship between one option and the alternative. Had Huys studied the latter, he would have seen that the Tattoo Elegy shows a prosodical practice that is entirely different from Hermesianax'.

It is besides important to distinguish between mute and liquid within a word and at its beginning; a recent study proves this for Theocritus⁵. The same study also shows that after proclitics, mute and liquid behave in exactly the same way as within the word.

Table I presents the data I have compiled in order to check the possibility of Hermesianax' authorship of the Tattoo Elegy. I have systematically ignored 'heavy' groups, namely γμ, γν, δμ, δν, which always make position in Greek poetry, and also βλ, γλ, which with one exception⁶ always make position in my material. I have besides excluded proper names (and combinations of proclitics⁷ plus proper names) for which there is only one possible scansion in dactylic poetry (Ἀμφιτρωνιάδαο, Μελέαγρος, ὁ Προμηθεύς, ὁ Πρίαμος).

If a word begins with mute and liquid, there is a moderate to strict avoidance of lengthening the final short vowel in the preceding word; it may be seen that this tendency is already present in the fifth century - I have not examined earlier elegy - and not only in the Athenian Critias but also in Simonides. Since Simonides generally avoids Attic correction, this means that he has no cases of initial mute and liquid at all (other than after long vowel or

⁴ There are in fact nine cases: add fr. 7, 88 ἀπόπλασκάμενον.

⁵ A. Mojena, *Glotta* 70, 1992, 59: mute and liquid make position word-internally in 78.2 % of all cases, after a proclitic boundary in 75.3 %, after other word-boundaries in 39.3 %. Cf. also M. Fantuzzi, *Ricerche su Apollonio Rodio*, Roma 1988, 155-163.

⁶ Leonidas xcii Gow-Page (= AP V 188), 1.

⁷ I have taken as proclitics (1) all 'true' prepositions, unless used as adverbs or in postposition, regardless of their government, and thus I have included cases of tmesis, (2) all forms of the pronoun ὁ ἡ τό, no matter whether they are used as article or otherwise. I have not taken as proclitics forms of the relative and conjunctions. I recognise that this procedure is open to attack, but it has the advantage of being easy to apply. A more refined definition would not substantially change the outcome.

consonant, where position is not an issue)⁸. Later poets from the classical period all avoid mute and liquid making position word-initially (henceforth to be called 'initial position') with varying degrees of strictness, except Antimachus, whose prosody is more Homeric than Homer's. From Critias onwards, and most prominently in Arcestratus, we observe another tendency, namely towards Attic correction in general.

At the beginning of the Hellenistic period, this latter tendency suddenly stops. Of the mainstream poets, only Nossis, writing at the turn of the century in Epizephyrian Locri, is an exception (her figures are comparable to those of Isyllus, another provincial poet). So is Archimedes (SH 201), who as a scientist one presumes had more important things on his mind than the latest fashion in prosody. The overall third-century picture is avoidance of initial position (except in the epic poets Apollonius and Aratus, Alexander Aetolus and Theocritus 17 - probably his earliest poem), varying tolerance of initial correction (most strongly avoided by Apollonius and Aratus), strong to very strong predominance of position over correction within the word (or word-group formed by proclitic plus following word). Epigram is less strict than epic/epyllion or elegy, with the exception of Leonidas, who is very strict indeed⁹. How conscious poets could be in this respect can be seen from Theocritus 15, where correction is the rule in 1-99 and 145-149 (the conversation of the women, here called 15A), but prosody all of a sudden turns to normal third-century habits (plus an epic predilection for initial position) in 100-144 (the Adonis song, 15B).

As for Hermesianax, he is more tolerant of word-internal correction than any other third-century author except Nossis and Archimedes. At the same time, he avoids mute and liquid at the beginning of the word altogether¹⁰, as Simonides had done. The sample is large enough, and the instances are numerous enough, to exclude coincidence.

I admit that the Tattoo Elegy is a small sample, although I have been unable to find in my third-century material a stretch of continuous text containing eight instances with a similar distribution - Theocritus 15A is obviously a *casus sui generis*, and it is not even very similar. But what is surely significant is the fact that we find two cases of mute and liquid making position at the beginning of a word (i 4; i 14)¹¹, which in itself is enough to disqualify Hermesianax as the author. Besides, the prosody is unique in that it combines initial position

⁸ In the trimeters of Attic tragedy, mute and liquid make position in 29.7 % of the cases (n = 2518, data based on W.S. Allen, *Vox Graeca*, Cambridge 1987³, 109), but hardly ever word-initially (cf. Barrett on E. Hipp. 760 plus Addenda on p. 435; West's preface to his Teubner Aeschylus, xxxv).

⁹ For Leonidas, only the epigrams i-xxxiii G.-P., which are ascribed to Leonidas of Tarentum, have been taken into consideration. Of others attributed to 'Leonidas', the following have a suspect prosody: xxxviii (AP VI 200), xli (AP VI 288), lxxiv (AP VII 480), lxxvii (AP VII 472), the famous lxxxv (AP X 1), xcii (AP V 188; cf n. 6 above).

¹⁰ He does have one case (fr. 1 Powell) of position before the 'heavy' group γλ-.

¹¹ At i 22 J.M. Bremer - M. Huys, *ZPE* 92 (1992) 119 f. supply *πληξέν τῆ*, which would raise the number to three. But although *πληξέν* is very plausible, I prefer *πληξέν μιν* for various reasons that have nothing to do with prosody.

with a predominance of internal correction. This excludes a fourth-century date, and also excludes a third-century main-stream author¹².

Before I go on to a second test, a general remark is in order. The treatment of mute and liquid is of course to a large extent a consequence of the degree of Homerising: a strongly epic vocabulary normally leads to a predominance of epic scansion - I think this is the main reason for the predominance of position-making mute and liquid within the word in Hellenistic poetry. If a poet chooses to say ἔπλετο rather than ἦν (ii 16), he has no option but to scan the first syllable long. And vice versa, some words will only fit dactyls with correction, e.g. ὀφρύων (ii 14). But competent poets use alternative words if they are dissatisfied with the scansion, though in some instances it may be hard to find one (some case endings of ἀλλότριος, for example). It is interesting to note in this respect that Huys admits that the Tattoo Elegy is more Homeric in language than the fragment of Hermesianax (82), yet this more epic vocabulary does not lead unambiguously to more epic prosody. In our poem, the scansion is Homeric at the beginning of the word, where it depends from the vocabulary to a far lesser extent than within the word, where the scansion is actually less Homeric than in Hermesianax.

In the course of a discussion of assonance and alliteration in the Hermesianax fragment (93), Huys draws attention to the frequent rhyme within the pentameter, more precisely: before the diaeresis and at line-end. He rightly explains this as a consequence of Hermesianax' almost obsessive habit of putting an adjective before the diaeresis and a substantive at line-end or the other way round: indeed, we have to wait until v. 16 to find a pentameter where this trick is not used. On the next page, Huys remarks that this tendency is absent from the Tattoo Elegy, and leaves it at that.

This will not do. Table II gives percentages of what I will call 'parallel word-end', that is to say pentameters in which the two words before the diaeresis and at line-end are a noun and an adjective (or participle or pronoun) which has the syntactic function of Attribute or Predicative with the noun; the order is immaterial (as is the rhyme, if any). The figures show how unique Hermesianax is in this respect - only Phanocles comes close. It is a fair assumption that an incidence between 0 and 15 % is what one may expect from authors who do not consciously employ this stylistic manner. If so, it started after Philitas, who may be regarded as the oldest Hellenistic poet, and it may well have originated with Hermesianax and Phanocles. All major third-century elegists use it fairly frequently, and so does even Archimedes.

It is very interesting to see that among epigrammatists the members of what is often called the 'Ionic-Alexandrian' school ignore 'parallel word-end', even Callimachus, who does use it in his elegies, while apart from Nossis - once again the provincial odd woman out - those

¹² I refrain from giving data for the second century because they are scarce and do not deviate substantially from those of the third.

belonging to the 'Doric-Peloponnesian' school employ it regularly, with the exception of Leonidas, who one might say is conscious of it to a certain extent. In other respects, too, Leonidas is an outsider in this 'school'. Of course, the overall increase which we observe in the third century is a consequence of a more frequent use of adjectives altogether, compared with archaic and classical elegy and epigram. It is a piece of traditional wisdom about the Doric-Peloponnesian school that its poets are far more fond of epithets than other epigrammatists.

The Tattoo Elegy uses 'parallel word-end' in 22.7 or 27.3 % of all pentameters (depending on whether one reads ἀξυνέτωι or ἀξυνέτωc at ii 11¹³). This number puts it squarely in the third century. But by the same token it cannot be the work of Hermesianax or indeed any major elegist of the century (except Alexander Aetolus, who is relatively excentric in the matter of mute and liquid as well).

A third point is the frequency of long scansion of final short vowel before liquid or nasal: three times in 48 lines (i 14, ii 19, ii 24). While Huys is justified in pointing out that the phenomenon does occur in Hellenistic dactylic poetry, three times in one single text is far more frequent than in any other Hellenistic author. The poet shows an un-Hellenistic lack of sensitivity in this respect, especially at ii 24, where it would have been easy to write ἦλθον καὶ Λήδης κοῦροι instead of ἦλθον δὲ Λήδης κοῦροι.

Whereas formal aspects of versification definitely suggest that this is not a Hellenistic main-stream poet, there are also crudities in the application of typically Hellenistic traits that have to do with style and content. Huys continually stresses the author's penchant for 'Selbstvariation' (repetition with variation) and 'arte allusiva'. I think that on the whole, this is greatly exaggerated, and where there are instances of these techniques, they are far from elegant.

As for repetition with variation, let me first give an example of what I do consider elegant. Aratus opens and closes his digressive treatment of Virgo (96-136) with what looks deceptively like the same line-end but isn't: 96 (ποσσὶν ὑπο) κέπτοιο Βοώτεω ('you might see her underneath the feet of Boötes'), 136 (ἐγγύς ἐοῦσα πολυ)κέπτοιο Βοώτεω ('close to conspicuous Boötes'). Anyone who is even slightly familiar with Hellenistic poetry will be able to supply parallels of his own for this way of teasing the reader. And now an example from the Tattoo Elegy: ii 6 ἀξυνέτου γλώσσης χάριν ('because of his witless tongue'), ii 11 γλώσσηι δοῦς χάριν ἀξυνέτωι (or -ωc), ('gratifying his witless tongue' or 'his tongue witlessly'). The phrase 'witless tongue' is novel, and nice enough. But the author was apparently so proud of it that he used it twice, with a variation at least in the accompanying χάριν and perhaps in the switch from adjective to adverb. This is a Hellenistic trick, but it's poor poetry: the reader is not teased but is very likely to be irritated.

¹³ Huys and Barns - Lloyd-Jones report that an original iota was corrected to sigma, other editors have it the other way round.

Tantalus' stone is called (ii 4) μέγαν καὶ ἀναιδέα λᾶαν. The latter half of this phrase is of course taken over from Homer's description of Sisyphus', not Tantalus' punishment (λ 598). Huys actually goes so far as to speak of 'une subtilité érudite digne de la grande littérature de cette période' (60). But every school-child must have known this famous Homeric line, and must have known that it was about Sisyphus. Erudite subtlety indeed! I am sure that Callimachus would have thought this beneath himself.

To round off, a very clumsy attempt at coining a new word. Meleager is said to be the θηρέτατος of the many heroes that hunted the Calydonian boar (ii 20). The meaning is obviously 'the best hunter', but there is no way in which the Greek form can be pressed to yield this meaning. Comparatives and superlatives formed from substantives, e.g. βασιλεύτατος, κύντερος, ἀοιδότερος, θερείτατος¹⁴, are highly poetic, and this is no doubt the effect that the poet wished to achieve. He has joined, however, the superlative suffix -ετατος to the stem θηρ-, unaware that the result means 'the wildest beast'¹⁵. He may have thought of compounds like λαγοθήρα, but (1) to derive a noun *θηρα from λαγοθήρα is like deriving an adjective *δικος from ἄδικος, (2) even if we grant him (1), *θηρα would not have a superlative in -ετατος¹⁶.

The Tattoo Elegy is the work of an anonymous amateur, not untalented but sometimes clumsy, from the third or early second century BCE.

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¹⁴ From θερεία or θέρος rather than θέρειος.

¹⁵ According to Huys, θηρέτατος means 'the best hunter' but 'the wildest animal' is a connotation at the same time (70). If so, the connotation is rather pointless, given the fact that Meleager killed the boar with his spear (ii 19), and thus was the ablest, not the most ferocious, hunter.

¹⁶ Perhaps θηρέτατος is a copyist's error for θηρεύτατος, cf. βασιλεύτατος. There is no word *θηρεύς, but there is a verb θηρεύω. θηρεύτατος : θηρεύω :: βασιλεύτατος : βασιλεύω. But in a text of this rather low quality, if we were to print θηρεύτατος we would probably be correcting the author himself.

Table I: Mute and liquid from the fifth to the third century BCE

| | initial | | non-initial | | n= |
|----------------------------|---------|--------|-------------|--------|-----|
| | + pos. | - pos. | + pos. | - pos. | |
| <i>fifth century</i> | | | | | |
| Simonides IEG ² | 0 | 0 | 93.3 % | 6.7 % | 30 |
| Ion | 12.5 % | 37.5 % | 50.0 % | 0 | 8 |
| Euenus | 0 | 28.6 % | 57.1 % | 14.3 % | 7 |
| Critias B 1-9 | 0 | 37.0 % | 18.5 % | 44.4 % | 27 |
| Antimachus | 19.6 % | 2.0 % | 74.5 % | 3.9 % | 51 |
| <i>fourth century</i> | | | | | |
| Crates | 0 | 21.4 % | 28.6 % | 50.0 % | 14 |
| Archestratus | 0 | 32.6 % | 6.5 % | 60.9 % | 92 |
| Isyllus B,C,F | 0 | 25.0 % | 37.5 % | 37.5 % | 8 |
| <i>third century</i> | | | | | |
| Philitas | 0 | 14.3 % | 85.7 % | 0 | 14 |
| Hermesianax | 0 | 0 | 74.3 % | 25.7 % | 35 |
| Phanocles | 0 | 22.2 % | 66.7 % | 11.1 % | 9 |
| Alex. Aetolus | 14.3 % | 7.1 % | 78.6 % | 0 | 14 |
| Callimachus Hy. 5 | 7.7 % | 10.3 % | 84.6 % | 0 | 39 |
| Callimachus Ait. I | 6.5 % | 4.3 % | 87.0 % | 2.2 % | 46 |
| Archimedes | 2.4 % | 12.2 % | 24.4 % | 61.0 % | 41 |
| Theocritus 16 | 17.4 % | 15.2 % | 54.3 % | 13.0 % | 46 |
| Theocritus 7 | 5.2 % | 12.1 % | 77.6 % | 5.2 % | 58 |
| Theocritus 15A | 2.2 % | 13.3 % | 28.9 % | 80.0 % | 45 |
| Theocritus 15B | 22.2 % | 5.6 % | 55.6 % | 16.7 % | 18 |
| Apollonius I 1-200 | 10.4 % | 0 | 87.5 % | 2.1 % | 48 |
| Apollonius IV 1-200 | 10.0 % | 0 | 90.0 % | 0 | 70 |
| Aratus 1-200 | 12.5 % | 0 | 87.5 % | 0 | 48 |
| Euphorion | 7.6 % | 13.4 % | 76.5 % | 2.5 % | 119 |
| Nossis | 0 | 30.8 % | 30.8 % | 38.5 % | 13 |
| Anyte | 0 | 11.6 % | 69.7 % | 18.6 % | 43 |

| | | | | | |
|--------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|----|
| Asclepiades | 3.5 % | 12.1 % | 65.5 % | 19.0 % | 58 |
| Call. Epigr. | 5.0 % | 5.0 % | 78.8 % | 11.3 % | 80 |
| Leonidas | 2.1 % | 6.4 % | 87.2 % | 4.2 % | 94 |
| Mnasalces | 9.1 % | 9.1 % | 57.6 % | 24.2 % | 33 |
| Tattoo Elegy | 25.0 % | 0 | 25.0 % | 50.0 % | 8 |

Table II: 'Parallel word-end' from the fifth to the third century BCE

fifth century

| | | |
|-----------|--------|------|
| Simonides | 9.5 % | n=42 |
| Ion | 5.6 % | n=18 |
| Euenus | 8.3 % | n=12 |
| Critias | 16.7 % | n=24 |

fourth century

| | | |
|--------|--------|-----|
| Crates | 14.3 % | n=7 |
|--------|--------|-----|

third century

| | | |
|-------------------|----------|-------|
| Philitas | 14.3 % | n=14 |
| Hermesianax | 58.3 % | n=48 |
| Phanocles | 50.0 % | n=16 |
| Alex. Aetolus | 29.0 % | n=29 |
| Callimachus Hy.5 | 37.1 % | n=70 |
| Callimachus Ait.I | 37.9 % | n=58 |
| Archimedes | 36.4 % | n=22 |
| Nossis | 12.5 % | n=24 |
| Anyte | 38.5 % | n=39 |
| Asclepiades | 14.7 % | n=75 |
| Call. Epigr. | 16.1 % | n=137 |
| Leonidas | 22.6 % | n=102 |
| Mnasalces | 36.8 % | n=38 |
| TattooElegy | 22.7 % | n=22 |
| | [27.3 %] | |