

THE PLAY ON GYGES BY AN UNKNOWN AUTHOR*

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In 1950, LOBEL published an Oxyrhynchus papyrus from around 200 AD¹, containing some previously unknown Greek text in iambic trimeter. The content of the fragment, as well as the names Candaules and Gyges occurring in it, indicate beyond any doubt that it came from a work of poetry featuring Herodotus' version of the story of Gyges. Gyges was a young bodyguard of Candaules king of Lydia. He killed his king, took over his throne and married his widow. According to widespread opinion², the fragment is all that remains of a play, presumably a tragedy. That opinion is justified by *paragraphoi* indicating a change of speaker found between the lines of column III; there is certainly a *paragraphos* between lines 8 and 9, and possibly also between lines 12 and 13. The fragment was badly preserved at any rate; out of its forty-four lines, only sixteen trimeters of the second, central column could be deciphered with any certainty. Only the final words of column I and the initial letters of column III are preserved, and the bottom part of the leaf is missing, so that column II text does not follow immediately after the fragmentary column I text. Moreover, the writing was made less legible by traces of another, erased text, and the still preserved letters of an account, running across the lines of the play. What we have is then a private copy, not a professional publication. Then there are many stains, some of them obscuring letters. Even so, the fragment was already given the correct reading in its first

* Originally published in Polish in "Eos" LVI 1966, fasc. 1, pp. 73–82.

¹ E. LOBEL, *A Greek Historical Drama*, PBA XXXV 1949, pp. 1–12; later as *P. Oxy.* 2382 (vol. XXIII, 1958).

² The only differing opinions are: R. CANTARELLA, *Il frammento di Ossirinco su Gige*, *Dioniso* XV 1952, pp. 3–31 (who thinks the text is a fragment of a poetic paraphrase of Herodotus); I. CAZZANIGA, *Il frammento tragico su Gige e la tradizione retorica*, *PP* XXXII 1953, pp. 381–398 (who discerns in it a rhetorical essay); and H. LLOYD-JONES, *The Gyges Fragment. A New Possibility*, *PCPhS* CLXXXII 1952–1953 (who believes it is possible that the fragment is from Archilochus' iambs).

edition, at least as far as column II is concerned. Only the reading γλεφ at the end of line 7, column I, rouses doubt, since no Greek word may end this way. That edition's suggestions for incomplete words proved correct as well, and only the more heavily damaged places were reconstructed differently in later research, and then usually as to wording, not sense. The fragment follows (column II according to STIEBITZ³; columns I and III according to *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, vol. XXIII, p. 102):

column I	column II	column III
	Γύ[γην δ' ἰόν]θ' [ώ]ς εἶδον, οὐκ εἴκασμά τι,	. ρ .[·
] . . [] . []	ἔδει[σα], μὴ φόνου τις ἔνδον ἤ<ι> λ[όχο]ς,	τιδη[
] . υγα . . [] .	ὀπ[οῖα] τὰπίχειρα ταῖς τυραννίσιν.	ἀλλ . [
] . . [.]υσμ . ν . . . η	ἐπε[ὶ] δ' ἔτ' ἐγρήσσοντα Κανδαύλην ὄρῶ,	νε[
] . αγης	⁵ τὸ δραθὲν ἔγνων κα[ὶ] τίς ὁ δράσας ἀνὴρ.	ωχ[
] . ιρουγλεφ	ὡς δ' ἀξυνήμων καρδίας κυκωμένης	χρυσ[
] . . ἐνχωρίοις	καθεῖρξα σι[γῆ]ι τὴν ἀπ' αἰσχύν[ης] βοήν.	ε[
] προσκυνῶ	ἐν δεμνίῳ [δὲ φρον]τίσιν στρωφωμένη<ι>	δρασα[
] θέσθαι τάδε	νύξ ἦν ἀτέρ[μων ἐξ] ἀυπνίας ἔμοι.	[.]μῆ . . [
] . ἀμηχανῶ	¹⁰ ἐπεὶ δ' ἀνῆλ[θεν εὐ]φραῆς ἑωσφόρος,	η . . . [
] . α καὶ πρὸ τοῦ	τῆς πρωτοφεγ[γού]ς ἡ]μέρας προάγγελος,	θέλω δε . [
] ν λέξω τὸ πᾶν	τὸν μὲν λέχους ἤγειρ[α] κάξεπεμψάμην	ἐμαῖς ἀνω[
] . ε γίγνεται	λαοῖς θεμιστεύσονται· μῦθος ἦν ἔμοι	λέγοις ἀν ὦ
] προέδραμεν	πειθοῦς ἐτοῖμο[ς] . .] το[.]οσ . [.] . εἰ . . [] . υδων τι . [
] ἰδῶ μοι λόγου	¹⁵ εὔδειν ἀνακτα παν[τελῆ] μεθ' ἡμέραν ?	
] ξυνήλικας	Γύγην δὲ μοι κλητῆρ[ας ἐκπέμπω] καλεῖν ?	

When I saw that the man leaving was indeed Gyges, and not some image, I feared lest some murderous ambush was brewing in the house, such being the reward meted out to rulers. However, seeing that Candaules was not yet asleep, I understood what had been done and whose doing it was. As if unaware of anything, though my heart seethed, I suppressed the cry of shame. I tossed in my bed and a lot of thoughts ran through my head; I could not sleep; the night had no end to me. And when the bright morning star rose, the harbinger of a coming day, I woke him (*scil.* Candaules), and sent him out, to judge over the people. I had a story at hand to convince him... [saying] it would not do at all for a king to sleep [during the day]; and as for Gyges, I [shall send out] the heralds [to summon him] to me...

Clearly it is Candaules' wife speaking, telling somebody trusted of how Candaules wished to boast of her beauty to his bodyguard Gyges, and asked him to steal into the royal bedroom by night, which he did.

For the first seven years after publication the fragment was much discussed; around twenty papers on it were written then, mentions in reviews and bibliographies excluded. More recently, though, the discussion has grown quiet. Mostly,

³ F. STIEBITZ, *Eine griechische Tragödie von Gyges und Kandaules*, SPFB VI 1957, p. 145.

two problems have been raised: possible reconstruction of the plot of the tragedy, and its approximate date.

The best solution to the problem of the possible reconstruction was proposed by STIEBITZ⁴. Using the preserved words of column I, STIEBITZ reconstructed the main points of the first part of the Queen's speech. She is probably on stage because she has left the palace to bow (προσκυνῶ) before the gods of the land (ἐνχωρίοις) and to sacrifice to them (θέσθαι τάδε). For she is helpless (ἀμηχανῶ) and only the gods can show her a way out, as they did before (καὶ πρὸ τοῦ). Meanwhile she decides to tell everything (λέξω τὸ πᾶν) for the matter cannot remain hidden anyway and either will or already has become known (προέδραμεν). She is probably addressing the Chorus, made up of her companions (ξυνήλικας). And so the Queen tells her companions the reason for her fluster, recounting the events of the last night (II 1–16) to reveal at the end that she will send or already has sent for Gyges. In column III there are two traces of change of speaker, but it is undoubtedly part of the same scene featuring the Queen and the Chorus. Nothing can be gleaned from lines 1 to 8, most likely spoken by the Chorus Leader. In lines 9 to 12 the speaker is probably the Queen (θέλω δὲ), and in line 13, the Chorus Leader again (λέγοις ἄν, ᾧ [ἄνασσα ? δέσποινα ?]). In the final line one may read κλύδων, thus perhaps "how your thoughts billow".

The scene must come from close to the beginning of the tragedy, probably right after the *parodos*. Those must have been preceded by a prologue, maybe in the form of a monologue, perhaps spoken by Candaules leaving the house at dawn. That prologue would have contained information about the secret deal between Candaules and Gyges, the same deal that had caused the events of the night. After Candaules' departure the Chorus would enter on some trivial pretext; then the entrance of the Queen would trigger the scene our fragment belongs to.

We can imagine what happened next based on Herodotus' story: one of the scenes following shortly after this one would have the Queen talking to Gyges. As a result Gyges would be forced to decide to kill the king on the night after, probably with the Queen having him guarded and locked in a palace chamber in the meantime (so that he could not see Candaules, or else her plans could be ruined). The play must also have had a scene where Candaules returned to the palace, possibly announced by a messenger, as in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*. We should depict the Queen in that scene behaving much as Clytaemnestra does in Aeschylus, welcoming her husband with false and ambiguous tenderness to lead him to the chamber whence a moment later one can hear the cries of the man being murdered. Later a detailed account of off-stage events will be given by somebody who was present, perhaps the Queen herself. The ending certainly featured the motif of unrest among the people loyal to the murdered king, men-

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 141–166.

tioned by Herodotus; it would also be the right moment for a god to appear, a *deus ex machina*. Since in Herodotus the matter was eventually decided by the Delphic Oracle, the god in question was probably Apollo (who is also the patron of Gyges' entire dynasty, as can be seen in Herodotus' account of Croesus on the pyre). Thus Apollo legitimises the takeover of the Lydian throne and pacifies the restless people.

The reconstruction proposed by STIEBITZ shows that even if the plot closely followed Herodotus' version of the story of Gyges, the play need not have been either as uneventful as LATTE supposed⁵, or as far from preserving the classical unities of place and time as LESKY thought⁶. It also means that we need not resort to other versions of the legend, such as that by Xanthus of Lydia, preserved in Nicolaus of Damascus. (Using that version, BICKEL reconstructs the play on Gyges as a tragedy of jealousy; his reconstruction is very interesting but barely related to the fragment in question⁷.)

As for the second problem, that is authorship and so the date of the play, the debate of many years has brought no resolution satisfying to all.

The question is exceptionally difficult. There are no testimonies in either ancient or Byzantine authors of any play about Gyges' rise to power. While the original editor of the fragment, and other scholars following him, can see a trace of the awareness of such a play in Achilles Tatius I 8, that trace is very weak if it is indeed a trace at all. The place is a rant against women, who *κἄν φιλῶσι, φονεύουσι, κἄν μὴ φιλῶσι, φονεύουσι*: kill both out of love and hate. To illustrate that truth, the author lists tragic characters first. They are Eriphyle, Philomela, Stenoboa, Aerope and Procne. Then in a new sentence he moves on to non-dramatic characters, citing the disasters caused by Agamemnon's love for Chryseis and Achilles' love for Briseis, the terrible outcomes of Helen's beauty, and even Penelope's faithfulness. It is among those that there is a mention of Candaules, also doomed by his wife's beauty. There can be no doubt that the author of the novel is alluding to Herodotus I 8–13; Homer's characters must have suggested to him a motif in the work of the "Homer of prose". It can be clearly seen that it is not a tragedy he refers to here from the fact that elsewhere he lists the women by name, but is content with "Candaules' wife" here, just as Herodotus was, whereas any tragedy would have used a proper name.

Given all that, the text itself is our only source of information for the date. The analysis must begin with us noting that the fragment bears striking resemblance to Herodotus' account, where the Queen also spots Gyges as he leaves,

⁵ K. LATTE, *Ein antikes Gygesdrama*, *Eranos* XLVIII 1950, p. 141.

⁶ A. LESKY, *Das hellenistische Gyges-Drama*, *Hermes* LXXXI 1953, p. 9; IDEM, *Geschichte der griechischen Literatur*, Bern 1963, p. 797.

⁷ E. BICKEL, *Rekonstruktionsversuch einer hellenistischen Gyges-Nysia-Tragödie*, *RhM* C 1957, pp. 141–152.

guesses her husband's role in the matter, stifles a cry of shame and gives no outward sign of her emotions, to call Gyges to her in the morning. The phrasing of the two versions is saliently similar as well. Let us compare:

II 5 τὸ δραθὲν ἔγνω καὶ τίς ὁ δράσας ἀνὴρ Hdt. I 10 μαθοῦσα δὲ τὸ ποιηθὲν ἐκ τοῦ
 II 7 καθεῖρξα σιγῇ τὴν ἀπ' αἰσχύνης βοήν ἀνδρὸς οὔτε ἀνέβωσε αἰσχυνθεῖσα

Thus it seems certain that the two accounts are related; either Herodotus drew on the tragedy, or the tragedy, on Herodotus.

LOBEL, who discovered the fragment, accepted the former possibility, influenced by the fragment containing many words attested only in early tragedy, namely in Aeschylus. However, other characteristics of Aeschylus' style are absent, and no title of a play by that poet fits the material of the fragment. Thus LOBEL was inclined to see the author as another tragic poet of the same period, and had in mind Phrynichus as the author of two tragedies depicting events from recent history, making him likely to draw on historical events two centuries earlier. We must note here that the term "historical drama" applied by LOBEL to the play on Gyges has been challenged⁸: while Gyges was indeed a historical character, so many legends and myths surrounded him that to the Greeks his story was as mythical as that of their own kings of the Mycenaean era. LOBEL's opinion that the play probably originated in the earliest period of Greek tragedy, the first quarter of the 5th century BC, was shared by D.L. PAGE, who published a short study devoted entirely to the fragment⁹. That dating is supported by the long observed dramatic quality of the part of Herodotus' work which deals with kings of Lydia being thus explained without the need to ascribe to Herodotus any outstanding poetic talent. One would of course have to assume that he drew, not on one tragedy on Gyges ascending to the throne, but rather on a whole trilogy, presenting also the story of Croesus. We know that Herodotus knew Aeschylus' *Persae* and used it (even though he omitted the most valuable information, namely the description of the battle of Salamis); he could also have used Phrynichus' tragedy *Μιλήτου ἄλωσις*.

Even so, other considerations undermine a dating so early. First of all, it is not allowed by the language of the fragment, which, despite some Aeschylus-like expressions, does not appear archaic, its style is smooth and flowing. Therefore it seems advisable to seek the author among later tragic poets. Even if the tragedy predates Herodotus, it may be roughly contemporary with him. Still, so far A.E. RAUBITSCHKE¹⁰ has been the only scholar to raise the possibility, putting forwards Ion of Chios as the author of the Gyges tragedy.

⁸ V. MARTIN, *Drame historique ou tragédie*, MH IX 1952, pp. 1–9.

⁹ D.L. PAGE, *A New Chapter in the History of Greek Tragedy*, Cambridge 1951.

¹⁰ A.E. RAUBITSCHKE, *Gyges in Herodotus*, CW XLVIII 1955, pp. 48–50; and *idem*, *Die schamlose Ehefrau*, RhM C 1957, pp. 139 f.

But the reverse relationship, that of the play imitating Herodotus, is also possible and actually more likely. That is the impression one receives when comparing the two texts. The poet appropriates all the elements of Herodotus' story, embellishing it with details of his own to add psychological depth to his heroine and to motivate her actions. Herodotus (I 10) reports: "Then she saw him [*scil.* Gyges] leaving and understood that it was her husband's doing", without clarifying what caused the realization. In the tragedy the Queen does not immediately assess the situation correctly as she spots an intruder in the bedroom; her first thought is that there might be a plot to assassinate her husband, naturally posing a threat to her as well, and so she is afraid (ἔδεισα). However, a glance at her husband is enough to find out that he is not yet asleep but does not react, although he must have seen Gyges too. Only then does she guess her husband's role in the scheme. Finally, it is psychologically justified and natural that in the morning the Queen cannot wait for her husband to go, wanting as she does to speak face to face with Gyges; so she wakes him at dawn and sends him off to his duties. If Herodotus had been drawing on a pre-existing play, he certainly would not have omitted those highly suggestive motives. Likewise, the Queen not having a name would be inexplicable; it is only explained by assuming that Herodotus was just retelling a story he had heard. Opinions that the tragedy was post-Herodotean were expressed within months of the fragment's publication.

The first scholar who not only expressed that opinion, but also attempted to justify it in depth, was Kurt LATTE¹¹. In more recent years, more and more researchers believed the fragment came from a tragedy written in the 4th or possibly 3rd century BC¹². Today it is usually classified as a "Hellenistic period tragedy" on Gyges, a shift caused largely by the authority of LESKY as the author of *Das hellenistische Gyges-Drama* (see n. 6 above), and of a number of discussions of available literature on the fragment published in "Anzeiger für die Altertumswissenschaft". That is also the dating accepted by LESKY in his *Geschichte der griechischen Literatur* (21963).

The arguments for Hellenistic dating are diverse.

First, the *subject matter* of the tragedy is extraordinary, in fact very different from the themes of myth and the epic cycle traditionally employed in the classical period. That can be part of a trend visible in Hellenistic era tragic poets, in so far as can be gleaned from the titles preserved. We are told that in the second half of the 4th century BC Moschion wrote a tragedy on Themistocles, and another, the *Φεραῖοι*, which probably dealt with contemporary political events in Thessaly; that another tragedy on Themistocles was written by Philicus, one of

¹¹ LATTE, *op. cit.* (n. 5), pp. 136–141.

¹² Especially J.C. KAMERBEEK, *De novo fragmento tragico in quo de Gyge et Candaule agitur*, *Mnemosyne* V 1952, pp. 108–115; and J.Th. KAKRIDIS, *Ἡ γυναικὰ τοῦ Κανδαύλη*, *Hellenica* XII 1952–1953, pp. 1–14 and 372.

the poets of the Pleiad; that Lycophron wrote the *Κασσανδρείς*, probably about the founding of the city of Cassandrea; and the titles *Μαραθώνιοι*, *Ὀρφανος* and *Σύμμαχοι* likewise indicate historical or contemporary subject matter. In his 4th century tragedy *Mausolus* Theodectes could have celebrated a contemporary satrap of Caria.

The *lexis* of the fragment is characterised, as immediately noted, by a number of rare words, previously found only or primarily in Aeschylus. That applies to εἵκασμα (II 1), τὰπίχειρα (3), ἀξυνήμων (6), and κλητῆρ[ας] (16), with the last two found in the same part of the trimeter as in Aeschylus. Finally, the phrase ἐν δεμνίῳ [...] στρωφωμένη (8) is quite Aeschylus-like in quality (cf. *Ag.* 1224: λέοντ' ἀναλκιν ἐν λέχει στρωφώμενον). But other words are distinctly epic, especially ἐγρήσσοντα (4) and θεμιστεύσοντα (13)¹³. What is more, borrowings from other archaic and classical authors are fairly obvious: the phrase καρδίας κυκωμένης must to an extent depend on θυμὲ κήδεσιν κυκώμενε in Archilochus fr. 66, and the plural τυραννίσιν = τυράννοις (3) has only one parallel usage, in Herodotus VIII 137. After all, that kind of recycling of the vocabulary of the early poets is characteristic of Hellenistic poetry and tragedy cannot have differed in that respect. It makes sense, too, for Herodotus to be recycled alongside the poets; he was the only prose author the Alexandrian scholars believed a classic, interpreted and edited.

As J.A. DAVISON¹⁴ demonstrates, the rare word προάγγελος (II 11) may also point to the play originating from the 3rd or late 4th century. Elsewhere it is only attested in late authors, starting with Plutarch. However, the Latin word *praenuntius* (first found in Lucretius and Cicero), apparently a calque of the Greek, may mean that προάγγελος existed earlier than that. Both προάγγελος and *praenuntius* are only attested in figurative uses, but DAVISON believes that the Greek word at least must have been in literal use before, namely to mean a messenger who announced the arrival of a king or some other grand person. Now the 3rd and 4th centuries BC, the era of large states and magnificent courts, provided perfect conditions for such an office to evolve.

The argument about προάγγελος may not be unshakeable, but there are sturdier hints in *the metrical and prosodic structure* of the fragment. From the

¹³ The damaged line 15 may also well refer back to epic style, since it could be completed εὔδειν ἄνακτα παν[νύχως] βουληφόρον, modelled on *Il.* II 24: οὐ χρὴ παννύχιον εὔδειν βουληφόρον ἄνδρα. Such completion was proposed when the discussion of the fragment was beginning, but later abandoned, based on the reasoning that if the morning star has already risen, the night is over, so the Queen may no longer tell her husband, “You must not, as the king, sleep all night”. But first, this morning star is only προάγγελος τῆς πρωτοεγγουῆς ἡμέρας, that is, it portends the day, and besides, charmed by the epic phrasing, the poet might have been a little inconsistent. So also in *Od.* VI 36 Nausicaa is commanded in a dream to ask her father for a cart and mules before the dawn of day, ἠῶθι πρό, but only does that when the glow of day wakes her.

¹⁴ J.A. DAVISON, *Προάγγελος and the Gyges Fragment*, CR (n.s.) V 1955, pp. 129–132.

beginning it was pointed out that all its iambic trimeters are made up by disyllabic feet, no long syllable resolved into two short ones; that each trimeter makes a certain syntactic whole (no enjambement); finally that syllables followed by a *muta cum liquida* are regularly treated as long by position (no *correptio Attica*). There are four such cases in the fragment: ἐγρήσσοντα (II 4), ὃ δράσας (5), αὔπνίας (9), and προέδραμεν (I 15); ἔγνων (II 5) may be omitted, as the cluster γν always gives position even in Attic comedy. There is no certain case of *correptio*, and only one probable: in I 9 Porson's Law requires a short syllable immediately before the προσκυνῶ which ends the trimeter. Now such utter disregard of *correptio Attica* could not happen in a classical tragedy, and especially in an early one. Calculations carried out using the texts of the preserved tragedies demonstrate that Aeschylus is the most consistent in applying *correptio*, since of all the cases where the quantity of the syllable preceding a *muta cum liquida* can be discerned for sure, only 13% are long. For Sophocles and Euripides the numbers are 17% and 20% respectively. In addition it is very rare for classical tragedy to preserve a long syllable in a prefix, augment, or immediately before a word or morpheme boundary, that is in cases such as προέδραμεν and ὃ δράσας (3 times in Aeschylus, 7 in Sophocles, and 25 in Euripides, with only two examples occurring before a word boundary, both in Euripides).

In their search for a tragedy of similar prosody and metrical structure scholars first pointed to Hellenistic tragic fragments. LATTE investigated the two longest fragments to be found in NAUCK's collection, since of course only larger texts may provide statistical data which could justify valid conclusions. The two were fragments by Moschion and a fragment from Sositheus' *Lithyrses*, fewer than 100 lines in total. In Moschion, LATTE found 5 syllables long by position before a *muta cum liquida* (all inside a word) against 1 preserved short (actually there are 6 long against 2 short); in Sositheus, 3 against 3 (actually, 3 against 4). Thus in Moschion at least, disregarding *correptio Attica* in a majority of cases is likely, although the brevity of the material does not allow safe conclusions. LESKY attempted to extend the data by including a fragment from the *Ἐξαγωγή* by Ezekiel the Tragedian; the play was probably written in the 2nd century BC, so it can be considered, in language and metre at least, a relic of Hellenistic drama. According to LESKY's calculations, the *Ἐξαγωγή* ignores *correptio* in 40% of cases, much more often than classical tragedy, although still less frequently than it leaves the syllable short.

It would seem that the work most resembling the fragment about Gyges in vocabulary, prosody and meter is Lycophron's *Alexandra*. While that poem is not a proper tragedy, it certainly is a tragic *rhesis* and written according to the principles of the tragic poetic art. In the 1474 iambic trimeters of the *Alexandra*, 53% of relevant syllables before a *muta cum liquida* become long, not counting the *lenis cum μ* and *lenis cum ν* groups which regularly gave position even in Attic tragedy. Lengthening of syllables in prefixes, augments and final parts

of morphemes is very frequent, and there are nine instances of it involving syllables final in their words, caused by the initial clusters of the words following: line 110 ἐνὶ δράκοντος, 522 ὁ Κρώμνης ἄναξ, 577 ἐξεπαίδευσῆ θρασύς, 661 χερσὶ προτείων, 677 συμμεμιγμένᾳ τρυγός, 678 στέμφυλᾶ βρύξουσιν, 916 ὅς ποτῆ φλέξας, 1014 ἄξουσὶ πνοαί, and 1078 πυρὶ φλέξασα. Our fragment is most unusual in that it contains four certain cases of lengthening before a *muta cum liquida* but not a single *correptio*; however, it loses much of its extraordinary character against the background of the *Alexandra*, where whole sections of multiple lines can be found without a single *correptio* (e.g. 127–143, 17 lines with 5 cases of lengthening in them, or 197–216, 20 lines with 4 cases, or 315–346, 32 lines with 7 cases). What is more, as was observed long ago, Lycophron's iambs rarely resolve a long into two shorts; it happens only 19 times in the whole poem, or roughly once every 78 lines on average; they however appear in bunches and hundreds of lines can pass without a resolution.

As for the vocabulary of the *Alexandra*, it has been long established that Lycophron likes rare words, borrowing them from the tragic poets, especially Aeschylus, but also from the epic¹⁵. At the same time one can see in the *Alexandra* traces of Herodotus, clear especially in the light of C. HOLZINGER's commentary¹⁶; the poet makes the most use of book I.

And so, it is in Lycophron that all the characteristic features of our fragment can be found at their fullest and beyond any doubt. Does it follow that it was Lycophron who wrote the tragedy about Gyges? Such a conjecture was made by M. GIGANTE¹⁷. However, the material at our disposal does not seem to justify such a conclusion. The details of lexis and metre discussed above were certainly not specific to Lycophron, but rather found in other Hellenistic tragic poets, as they reflect the poetic principles of the period. Even the aforementioned prosodic features stem from the same archaising trend which had poets employ the vocabulary of early literature, by then obsolete or even incomprehensible. The Hellenistic period had dozens of tragic poets living and writing beside Lycophron, authors of dozens of tragedies each. According to the *Suda*, even Callimachus wrote them, so the list of potential authors of the fragment is vast. One could try to take some hint from research into which Hellenistic authors of tragedies were much read at the end of the 2nd and the beginning of the 3rd century AD to the extent that private copies of their works were made. Unfortunately, of

¹⁵ See the data in J. KONZE, *De dictione Lycophronis Alexandrinae aetatis poetae*, pars I: *De Lycophroneae dictionis proprietate in universum ratione simul habita Homeri et tragicorum*, Monasterii 1870.

¹⁶ *Lycophron's Alexandra. Griechisch und deutsch*, ed. C. HOLZINGER, Leipzig 1895.

¹⁷ M. GIGANTE, *Un nuovo frammento di Licofrone tragico*, PP VII 1952, pp. 5–17, and *idem*, *De frammento tragico in quo de Gyge agitur*, Dioniso XVIII 1955, pp. 7 f.; I have not been able to peruse either paper.

the thirty or so published tragic papyrus fragments from the period which have not been identified as authored by one of the great three, most are *adespota*. Only two lines published in 1919 in *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* vol. XIII can be identified as part of the *Omphale*, a satyr play by Ion of Chios. And then there is the fragment published in 1906 by CRÓNERT, which could come from the *Medea* by Neophron, a tragic poet of probably the 4th century (although ancient tradition would occasionally have him predate Euripides). Papyri earlier than the 2nd or later than the 3rd centuries AD are nameless as well, except for two fragments attributed, without much certainty, to Astydamas, also a 4th century poet. While 4th century poets in general should be considered as potential authors of the Gyges fragment, Neophron probably should not and neither should the two Astydamases who most likely flourished in the first half of the century; as the evidence of the pseudo-Euripidean *Rhesus* indicates, the prosody of that time is not that different from classical yet.