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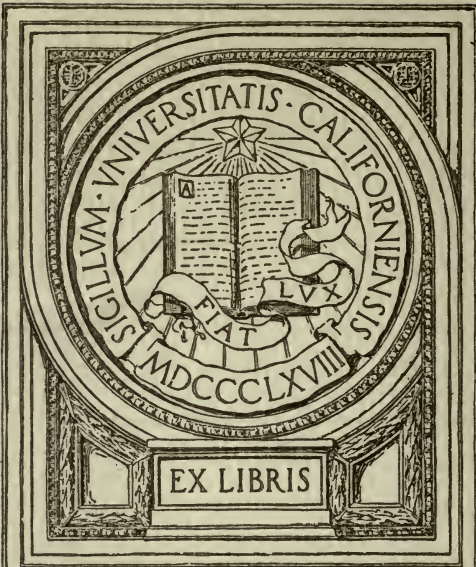
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THE CHRONOGRAMS
OF THE
EURIPIDEAN DRAMAS

COLLECTED AND SOLVED BY
D. S. MARGOLIOUTH

D. LITT., F. B. A.

Oxford
B. H. BLACKWELL, BROAD STREET
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EURIPIDEAN CHRONOGRAMS

THE mode of signature employed by the Greek tragedians in their dramas is indicated in a story told by Diogenes Laertius in his *Life of Heraclides Ponticus*. One Dionysius Metathemenus, a philosopher whose life is narrated by the same author, or, according to another account, Spintharus, a tragedian mentioned by Suidas as the author of two dramas, had composed a poem (probably a tragedy) called *Parthenopæus*, which he put out in the name of Sophocles. Heraclides quoted this work as by that poet. Its author informed Heraclides of what had happened. Heraclides rejected the claim. Its author then wrote bidding Heraclides look at the *parastichis* 'which was in perfect order'¹; Heraclides replied that this might be accidental. The author then wrote: *You shall solve the following also*²:

¹ καὶ εἶχε παγκάλως. These words were strangely taken by Diogenes to mean 'and it contained Pankalōs', which he supposed to be the name of the beloved of Dionysius. Such a name being unexampled, it appears in Pape's *Lexicon of Proper Names* in the form Πάγκαλος.

² καὶ ταῦτα εὕρησεις. For εὕρισκειν, in the sense of solving an enigma, see L. & S., s. v. αἴνγμα, and the definition of γρίφος in Athenæus 448 c.

γέρων πίθηκος οὐχ ἀλίσκεται πάγη
ἀλίσκεται μὲν, μετὰ χρόνον δ' ἀλίσκεται

with the key attached, Ἡρακλείδης γράμματα οὐκ ἐπίσταται οὐδ' ἡσχύνθη, *Heraclides does not understand literature nor was he ashamed.* Whether Heraclides succeeded in solving this puzzle or not is not stated; clearly the two lines are an anagram for the following, which contain the sentiment given in the key—

ἀγράμματός τις, Ἡρακλείδη Ποντίκ', εἶ·
ῶλοι', ἀναισχυντῶν ἐλεγχθεῖς, παῖ κακέ.

Heraclides Ponticus, you are an illiterate; plague on you, bad boy, who when convicted brazen it out. And, indeed, the two lines which contained the puzzle were evidently composed with a view to it; for the Greek proverb has the word ἀλώπηξ, *fox*, and not *ape*;¹ and the former is proverbial with the Hellenes, as with other European races, for cunning. Moreover, the second line is weak, since not every aged ape is caught in a trap, and in the case of an aged beast the phrase 'after a time' is unsuitable. Still the sixty-one letters of this couplet furnished precisely the letters re-

¹ See Leutsch's *Paroemiographi*. The form with 'ape' comes from this passage of Diogenes.

quired for the mock signature of Heraclides Ponticus.

If the charge of illiteracy brought against Heraclides was not wholly unreasonable, the practice with which it deals must have been one known to the experts in tragedy. If Diogenes were right in supposing that the name which was to be found was that of some other person than the author, Heraclides would have been justified in rejecting this evidence; and ignorance of the private affairs of Dionysius or Spintharus could not count as illiteracy. Probably Diogenes was misled by the story of the manner wherein Phidias had signed the statue of Olympian Zeus.¹ The charge was not unreasonable if dramatists regularly signed their works in a certain way, and the expert knew where to look for the signature. The supposition that its presence might be accidental would only be made by one who was unacquainted with the practice.

The signature was then an iambic couplet made up of the same letters as the *first* iambic couplet of the play, containing the names of the author and a direction to find them; usually the names occupy one line and the direction the other. This holds good of all the tragedies which have come

¹ Clement Alex. *Protrepticon* 53.

down to us. And it is owing to this double use of the same letters that the initial lines in most cases exhibit peculiarities of some sort—violations of history or usage, grammar or metre. Some, e. g. the initial couplets of Euripides' *Electra* and Sophocles' *Antigone*, admit neither of translation nor of emendation; in the *Hecabe* this queen is called the daughter of Cisseus, whereas the proper name of her father, Dymas, could have been got into the line without difficulty, had not the letters of the other been required. In the initial iambics of the *Iphigenia in Aulis* Helen and Clytaemnestra are given a sister Phoebe for a similar reason.

In certain cases the syntax of the signature indicates that something more is to follow; and this is the *Chronogram*, an iambic couplet to be reconstructed out of the *second* iambic couplet in the play, giving the date in Olympiads, and a direction to find it. The sacrifices required in order to introduce this are not less than those made to the signatures; the *Agamemnon* and the *Antigone* furnish examples. The earliest signature and chronogram which we possess, those in the *Suppliants* of Aeschylus, state that an expert in tragedy will look out for them; the date there given being Ol. lxxiii. This seems an early date to speak of experts in tragedy; but in classical

Greek this word meant only *melancholy poem*,¹ whence Plato repeatedly calls Homer an author of tragedy.

For an initial exercise in the solution of these puzzles the twenty-four chronograms of the Euripidean dramas seem well suited. For the reason given no alteration whatever of the traditional text can be admitted.² It will be found that *eighteen* of these mention the Olympiads or the Olympia; *three* the Feasts of Zeus; *one* the Sacrifices of Zeus; *one* the Sacrifices of Pisa; whereas *one*, the Rhesus, gives numerals mentioning Chief Sacrifices. This play, however, is signed, not by Euripides, but by Sophocles, whose style was detected in it by some early critics. Of the dates given *twelve* are in agreement with either a traditional date or with one that can be inferred with certainty from the content of the drama; the remaining *twelve* are, for the most part, in agreement with dates that have been inferred on less cogent grounds.

The phrases which occur in the language of

¹ Bekker's *Anecdota* 747, 3 ποίημα ἐπιτάφιον. Ibid. 1 εἶρηται δὲ τραγωδία παρὰ τὸ τραχὺς καὶ τὸ ὤδῃ, ἐκ μεταφορᾶς τῆς τῶν τράγων φωνῆς. So too Plato, *Cratylus* 408 c.

² In the case of the Fragments 23 and 24 we have only inaccurate quotations. We cannot then use of them the phrase 'traditional text'.

these cryptograms, γράμματα (or στοιχέια) ἀλλάσσειν, ὠθεῖν, κυκλοῦν, suggest the employment of movable letters, such as those supplied for word-games, and indeed this apparatus is necessary if the puzzles are to be solved with ease and certainty. The Greek in which they are composed should be simple and clear ; only so far as a solution displays those qualities can it be considered correct. The task of solution is facilitated by the fact that the content of the puzzles is known *a priori*, except the actual numeral ; and even of that we know that it must be between 82 and 94. When once the decade and the word *Olympiads* have been eliminated, not only have the letters requiring rearrangement been reduced by a third, but since these words can only occupy particular places in the iambic line, the general structure of the chronogram is ascertained. Further, the words *tragedy, poem, letters*, and the various synonyms for *date*, speedily reveal themselves in most of the chronograms.

Whether it would be possible in *any one case* to obtain a correct date in this manner except as the result of design may well be doubted ; at least there is no occasion to believe it until an example is produced. That it would be impossible to do so in an indefinite number of cases will

perhaps be granted ; since otherwise it would be necessary to hold that, given an iambic couplet, it can always be so rearranged as to provide not only *a* date, but *the* date of its composition with a direction to find it. If *twelve* cases are not sufficient for the purpose of proving design, it is hard to think of a number which would satisfy requirements. But in the remaining twelve cases, though the tradition does not assure us that the chronograms are right, we have no reason for supposing that they are erroneous.

It only remains to be seen whether the chronograms can be successfully attacked on the ground of the Greek in which they are composed. To the best of the writer's belief they contain no form or phrase for which the ordinary grammars and dictionaries fail to supply justification. The metre is of about the same rigidity as that employed in the satyric drama *Cyclops*.

Reference is made to Professor Murray's edition for the MS. tradition, the traditional dates, and the inferred dates, except in the case of nos. 20-4, where the lines are taken from the *Poetae Scenici Graeci*, ed. 5. The order of nos. 1-19 is that of Murray.

1. Cyclops

πρῶτον μὲν ἡνίκ' ἔμμανῆς Ἦρας ὑπο
νύμφας ὀρείας ἐκλιπῶν ὄχου τροφούς

Solution

ἽΟλυμπιάς τ' ἦν κἀνενήκοντ'· ἀμφί μ' ὦ
φράσων, χρόνου σὺ πέρι μ' ἔρου ποιήσεως.

It was an Olympiad and ninety. O thou who shalt comment on me, ask me about the date of composition.

415-12

Date Ol. xci. No tradition.

2. Alcestis

Ζεὺς γὰρ κατακτάς παῖδα τὸν ἐμὸν αἴτιος
Ἄσκληπιὸν στήρνκοισι ἐμβάλων φλόγα

Solution

κἀστὰι τίς αἰών; φράξ' ἽΟλυμπιάδας λόγους.
τὰς πέντε γ' ἄρον κἀνενήκοντ' ἐμβάλοις.

And what shall be the age? Name Olympiads for the piece. Cancel five and insert ninety.

438

Date Ol. lxxxv. Tradition the same. The shifting from imperative to optative is like *Odyssey* ii. 230, &c.

3. Medea

μηδ' ἐν νάπαισι Πηλίου πεσεῖν ποτε
τμηθεῖσα πεύκη μηδ' ἐρετμῶσαι χέρας

Solution

ἄμπισχ' ἔπη σημεῖ' ἔμ' ὡς ἕτη πύθη·
 'Ολυμπιάδες· ἀρεῖ δ' ἀπ' ἐνενήκοντα τρεῖς.

Clothe with the letters the words, in order to learn my date: Olympiads, but from ninety you shall take three.

431 Date Ol. lxxxvii. Tradition the same.

4. Heraclidae

ὁ δ' ἐς τὸ κέρδος λήμ' ἔχων ἀνειμένον
 πόλει τ' ἄχρηστος καὶ συναλλάσσειν βαρύς

Solution

στοιχεῖ' ἔλ' ἀρ' ἄλλασσ', ἐρωτήσας χρόνον,
 σὺν ἐβδομήκοντ' ἐννέ' 'Ολυμπιάσι δεκάς.

Take then, interchange the letters, if you have asked the date; with seventy-nine Olympiads a decade.

23-0 Date Ol. lxxxix. No tradition. For ἀρ' see *Electra* 374.

5. Hippolytus

ὅσοι τε πόντου θερμόνων τ' Ἀτλαντικῶν
 ναίουσιν εἴσω φῶς ὀρῶντες Ἥλιου

Solution

ἴσον ἐνενήκοντ', ᾧ τότε αἰῶν' ἱστορῶν,
 ὡς ὄντ' 'Ολυμπιάσιν ἀφ' οὕτω τρεῖς ἐλοῦ.

O thou that dost then ask the age, making it equal to ninety Olympiads, then subtract three.

431-28

Date Ol. lxxxvii. Tradition the same. 'Then' means after the signature.

6. Andromache

Πριάμου τύραννον ἐστίαν ἀφικόμην
δάμαρ δοθείσα παιδοποιὸς Ἑκτορι

Solution

δίας θ' ἐορτὰς δός, πόνου 'πὶ δράματι
προοίμι', ἐνενήκοντα κάφαιροῦ μίαν.

And as the commencement of the labour upon the drama give ninety feasts of Zeus and subtract one.

423-20

Date Ol. lxxxix. Murray about the same.

7. Hecabe

Πολύδωρος Ἑκάβης παῖς γεγὼς τῆς Κισσέως
Πριάμου τε πατρός, ὅς μ' ἐπεὶ πόλιν Φρυγῶν

Solution

σύ γ' ἐτῶν ποιήσεως πράσσε πράγμ'· ὀκτῶ βλέπω
ὑπὲρ ὀγδοήκοντ' ἴσ' ἴσ' Ὀλυμπιάσι φράσεις.

Do you the business of the date of the poem. I see it equal, age, equal to eight over and above eighty Olympiads, you will say.

427-24

Date Ol. lxxxviii. Murray the same.

8. Suppliants

εὐδαιμονεῖν με Θησέα τε παῖδ' ἐμὸν
πόλιω τ' Ἀθηναίων τήν τε Πιπθέως χθόνα

Solution

θείην θ', ὅταν ἔτη θῶ ποιήματι, στίχον·
μεθ' ἐπτάδ' ἐννέ' ἐννεάδας Ὀλυμπίων.

And when I make a date for the poem, let me make it in the line: Nine enneads of Olympia after a heptad.

Date Ol. lxxxviii. Murray about the same.

9. Heracles Mad

ἔτικτεν ὁ Περσέως πατέρα τόνδ' Ἑρακλέος
ὃς τάσδε Θήβας ἔσχευ ἐνθ' ὁ γηγενής

Solution

βλέπ' ἔτη ποιήσεως· τέσσαρ' ἐνεστ' ἐκθέσθ' ἃ χρῆν·
δίας γ' ἑορτὰς ὀγδοήκοντ' ἐννέα.

Look at the date of the poetry; there are four words therein which should have been exposed: viz. Eighty-nine feasts of Zeus.

Date Ol. lxxxix. Murray the same.

10. Ion

μῖαs ἔφυσε Μαίαν ἧ μ' ἐγείνατο
Ἑρμῆν μεγίστῳ Ζηνὶ δαιμόνων λάτρην

Solution

μιμουμ' ἔτη τραγωδίας. τί μή, φίλε;
 ἄμα γ' ἐννέ' ἱρῶν Ζητὸς ἐννεάσι μίαν.

I represent the years of the tragedy. Why should you not, friend? Viz. with nine enneads of the sacrifices of Zeus one ennead.

419-16

Date Ol. xc. Cf. Murray.

11. Troades

κάλλιστον ἴχνος ἐξελίσσοισι ποδός
 ἐξ οὗ γὰρ ἀμφὶ τήνδε Τρωικὴν χθόνα

Solution

δεξιὸς ἐφίξετ' ἀλλαγῶν ἴδρις στίχου·
 'Ολυμπιάς τ' ἦν κἀνενήκονθ', ὅς χρόνος.

A clever man, skilled in anagrams, will hit upon the line, It was an Olympiad and ninety, which is the date.

415-12

Date Ol. xci. Tradition the same.

12. Electra

ἐς γῆν ἔπλευσε Τρωάδ' Ἀγαμέμνων ἄναξ
 κτείνας δὲ τὸν κρατοῦντ' ἐν Ἰλιάδι χθονί

Solution

καίων τραγωδίας ὄδ'· ἐνθένδ' ἔλξετε
 τέτραχα· σὺν ἐνενηκοντά γ' Ὀλυμπιάσιν μίαν.

And this is the age of the tragedy. You shall drag it hence in four words, viz. With ninety Olympiads one.

Date Ol. xci. Murray the same.

13. Iphigenia in Tauri

ἔξ ἧς Ἀτρεὺς ἔβλασεν Ἀτρέως δὲ παῖς
Μενέλαος Ἀγαμέμνων τε τοῦ δ' ἔφυν ἔγώ

Solution

σύ σοφῶς τε μετάβαλ', εὐρέ τ' ἔργων ὡς ἔτη
'Ολυμπιάδας ἕξ γ' ἑννέ' ἑννεάδας μέτα.

Do you skilfully rearrange, and find as the date of the piece six Olympiads after nine enneads.

Date Ol. lxxxvii.

14. Helen

λευκῆς τακείσης χιόνος ὑγραίνει γύας
Πρωτεὺς δ' ὄτ' ἔζη τῆσδε γῆς τύραννος ἦν

Solution

Ζηνὸς ἑνενηκοστῆς γ' ἑορτῆς σὺν δυοῖν
κλύεις; παρ' αὐτῆς σύ γ' ἔχ' ἔτη τραγωδίας.

Do you hear the ninetieth feast of Zeus with two? Have from herself the date of the tragedy.

Date Ol. xcii. Tradition the same.

15. Phoenissae

Ἦλιε θοαῖς ἵπποισιν εἰλίσσω φλόγα
ὡς δυστυχῆ Θήβαισι τῆ τόθ' ἡμέρα

Solution

λήθοι σ' ἔτη τραγωδίας, στοιχεί' ἵνα
σὺν Ὀλυμπιάσι ΠΙ ΒΗΘ ὄ φησ' ΙΩΘ ἔλῃς.

*May you be ignorant of the date of the tragedy,
in order that you may apprehend what is meant
by the letters X with LXXXII Olympiads.*

Date Ol. xcii. Murray the same. For the
elisions see Athenaeus 453 d.

411-08

16. Orestes

ἦς οὐκ ἂν ἄραιτ' ἄχθος ἀνθρώπων φύσις
ὁ γὰρ μακάριος κοῦκ ὄνειδίζω τύχας

Solution

κάμοι χρόνους σὺ φράζ' ἀκούσας τῶ στίχῳ.
δύο κἀνενήκονθ'· ἰρὰ γὰρ Πισαῖα θῶ.

*And do you name a date for me, when you hear
the two lines. Ninety-two; for let me make it
Pisaeon sacrifices.*

Date Ol. xcii. Tradition the same.

411-08

17. Bacchae

Σεμέλη λοχευθείσ' ἀστραπηφόρῳ πυρί
μορφὴν δ' ἀμείψας ἐκ θεοῦ βροτησίαν

Solution

ὀρίσεις μ' Ὀλυμπιάσι θ'· ἑκατὸν ἀφ' ἑφθ' ἔλοϋ.
ποιήσεως ἔραψ' ἔτη· χρῆμ' ἦν βραδύ.

And you shall date me by Olympiads; subtract seven from a hundred. I have versified the date of the poem. It was a slow business.

407-4 Date Ol. xciii. Tradition the same. For the form of the first verb see *Troades* 1234 (MSS.), &c.

18. Iphigenia in Aulis

Ἐλένη τε ταύτης οἱ τὰ πρῶτ' ὠλβισμένοι
μνηστῆρες ἦλθον Ἑλλάδος νεανίαι

Solution

ἱερῶν τότ' ἐννέα τ' ἐννεάδας Ὀλυμπιῶν,
ἄλλης θ' ὄλης ἔτη τρίτης ἄμ' εἰσβολῆ.

Then nine enneads of Olympian sacrifices, and the years of another whole ennead, with the commencement of a third.

Date after Ol. xc. The traditional date is Ol. xciii. The accusative is after the word 'containing' in the signature which precedes.

19. Rhesus

λαθόντες ὄμμα τοῦμὸν αἶρεσθαι φυγῆ
μέλλουσι σαίνει μ' ἐννυχὸς φρυκτωρία

Solution

στοιχεί' ἄμ' ἀλλάσσων ἔτη μιμούμ'. ὄλ' οὖν
 ἑκατὸν μέγισθ' ἴρ' ἴρ' ἀφ' ἔφθ' αἰροῦ σὺ νῦν.

*At the same time by rearrangement of letters
 I represent the date. Then from a whole hundred
 Chief sacrifices now subtract seven sacrifices.*

408-4

Date Ol. xciii. The signature which precedes
 is that of Sophocles, whose style was detected
 in it by some ancient critics.

To these we may now add some Chronograms
 from the fragments.

20. Meleagros

Οἰνεὺς δ' ἀνάσσει τῆσδε γῆς Αἰτωλίας
 Πορθάονος παῖς ὅς ποτ' Ἀλθαίαν γαμεῖ

Solution

τραγωδία πᾶς οἶσθ' ὅς ἄθλος αἰσιος;
 ἐνάτη γ' ἀπ' ἐνάτης ἐννεάδος Ὀλυμπίας.

*Do you know what games are entirely auspicious
 to the tragedy? Yes, the ninth Olympiad from
 the ninth ennead.*

419-16

Date Ol. xc. This explains why the dates are
 so often based on the ninth ennead.

21. Oeneus

Τυδεὺς τόκος μὲν Οἰνέως πατήρ δ' ἐμὸς
 ᾗκησεν Ἄργος παῖδα δ' Ἀδράστου λαβών

Solution

δέκ' ἐννεάδας ὄρων, Ὀλυμπιάδας βοῶν,
σκοποῦ μετρούσας τῆσδ' ἔτη τραγωδίας.

*Seeing ten enneads, cry out Olympiads! and
observe how they measure the years of this tragedy.*

419-16

Date Ol. xc.

22. Phrixus

Φοῖνιξ πεφυκῶς ἐκ δ' ἀμείβεται γένος
Ἑλληνικὸν Διρκαῖον οἰκήσας πέδον

Solution

ἐκκέκλοφ' ἡ σοφὴ τραγωδία βίον·
ὄν κοῖδ', ἐπ' ἐνάκισ ἐννέ' Ὀλυμπιάσιν δις ἕξ.

*The prudent tragedy has concealed her age,
which she knows, too; nine times nine plus twice
six Olympiads.*

407-4

Date Ol. xciii.

The list closes with two which have come to us in a corrupt form, but seem to have been long ago corrected with certainty.

23. Telephus

Πάν ἐμβατεύεις ἔνθεν εὐχομαι γένος
Αὔγη γὰρ Ἀλέου παῖς με τῷ Τιρυνθίῳ

Solution

στοιχεί' ἰαμβεῖ' εὖρ', Ὀλύμπιά γ' εὖ πυθοῦ·
ἐννεάσι γ' ἐννέ' ἄμ' ὄγαθ' αἰῶν ἡ τετράς.

20 EURIPIDEAN CHRONOGRAMS

Find out the letters for an iambic line, and carefully ask of them the Olympia. The age, my friend, is a tetrad with nine enneads.

439-6

Date Ol. lxxxv. Tradition the same.

24. Archelaus

ὄς ἐκ μελαμβρότιο πληροῦται ῥοὰς
Αἰθιοπίδος γῆς ἠνίκ' ἂν τακῆ χιών

Solution

ἔτη πός'; οἷ κάχ', ἡ τραγωδία σ' ὄλη
τρισι κἀνενήκονθ' ὄμορ' Ὀλυμπιάσι βοῶ.

How many years? Ah, evil ones, the whole tragedy proclaims you neighbours of the ninety-third Olympiad.

The Archelaus was written as a compliment to the Macedonian Archelaus, who was at the height of his power in Ol. xciii.

457-4

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