

1 | The state of Stesichorean studies

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Stesichorus' poems were read and appreciated for at least three quarters of a millennium after their composition in perhaps the first half of the sixth century BC.¹ In the late second or early third century AD, Athenaeus cites numerous poems by Stesichorus in a way that suggests first-hand knowledge of a substantial corpus.² But Athenaeus is the last person who can be confidently stated to have had a direct encounter with Stesichorus' works, which ceased to be copied at some point during the Imperial period, perhaps in the third or fourth century AD. As a result, once the manuscripts already in existence had crumbled away, or had been cast into rubbish heaps, the sole available evidence for Stesichorus' poetry lay embedded, as quotations or paraphrases, in the manuscripts of other, more fortunate, ancient authors whose works did survive antiquity.

Collections of these fragments, however, were not made until after the invention of the printing press, and indeed not for some time after that; they first appear in the second half of the sixteenth century, after the authors whose works provide those fragments had themselves received their earliest printed editions. Michael Neander edited four fragments as part of his collection of maxims provided by different lyric poets;³ a few more were published by Henricus Stephanus,⁴ before a substantial collection, including both testimonia and fragments, was gathered by Fulvius Ursinus;⁵ a much shorter selection later appeared in a work by Jacobus Lectius.⁶ All these editions themselves formed part of editions of a range of lyric poets; Stesichorus' remains were too meagre to deserve a dedicated treatment, at least at this point in the story of their transmission. For that they had to wait

Finglass is primarily responsible for the first part of this introduction (the account of previous scholarship on Stesichorus), and Kelly for the second (the description of the papers in this volume).

¹ For Stesichorus' date, see Finglass (2014a) 1–6; for an account of Stesichorus' reception and the loss of his poems, see *ibid.* 60–73.

² Athenaeus cites the *Games for Pelias* (fr. 3–4 F.), *Geryoneis* (fr. 8, 22), *Helen* (fr. 88–9), *Sack of Troy* (fr. 100.18–19, 102a), *Oresteia* (fr. 171), and *Boarhunters* (fr. 184); he also gives three Stesichorean citations that he does not attribute to a particular poem (fr. 278, 281, 303a).

³ Neander (1556) 421–4. ⁴ Stephanus (1560) second part, 76–87.

⁵ Ursinus (1568) 76–97, 304–9. ⁶ Lectius (1614) second part, 99–100.

until the edition of 1771 by Johann Suchfort, a pupil of Christian Gottlob Heyne. This book was the first to provide a translation of and commentary on the fragments; the first, too, to arrange them under the names of the various poems which we have attested for Stesichorus, although many of the attributions were rather bold.

Charles Blomfield's edition nearly half a century later (1816) marked a considerable advance on Suchfort's. Blomfield retained, as all subsequent editors have, Suchfort's arrangement of the fragments by poem, but was both more discerning and more cautious in his attributions of fragments to poems when the author who referred to Stesichorus did not specify his source. Unlike Suchfort, he did not attempt to attribute every fragment to a named poem; instead, he introduced a concluding section entitled 'fragmenta loci incerti', which facilitated the editor's task (and the reader's understanding) by permitting the admission of ignorance. Blomfield's edition achieved a wider circulation thanks to its inclusion in the second edition of Thomas Gaisford's *Poetae minores Graeci*;⁷ altogether more detailed editions that built on these foundations were published by Otto Kleine and Theodore Bergk.⁸ The latter, which was able to draw on important work by Friedrich Schneidewin, was particularly influential, going through several successive editions, and forming the standard collection of the fragments down to 1962.⁹

It would be a mistake to assume that scholars were merely re-editing exactly the same corpus throughout this period. New discoveries were made: in particular, the uncovering in 1683 of the *Tabula Iliaca Capitolina*, with its depiction of the sack of Troy accompanied by the remarkable legend Ἰλίου Πέρσις κατὰ Στησίχορον,¹⁰ which was duly included as a fragment of Stesichorus by Suchfort and then in subsequent editions. The question of how far the tablet reflected Stesichorean reality provoked a lively discussion that continues today.¹¹ Several fragments appear for the first time in Blomfield's edition, despite it being published more than a quarter of a millennium after the first printed Stesichorean collection, thanks to the careful sifting of existing texts. Material was also subtracted from the Stesichorean corpus: the letters of Phalaris, several of which are addressed to Stesichorus and which had been included among the fragments by Ursinus,

⁷ Gaisford (1823) 336–48. ⁸ Kleine (1828), Bergk (1843) 634–53.

⁹ Bergk (1853) 740–61, (1867) 973–96, (1882) 205–34; Schneidewin (1839) 325–36.

¹⁰ Fabretti (1683) 315–84.

¹¹ Stes. fr. 105 F.; cf. Finglass (2014d), Petrain (2014) 100–2.

were removed from editions published after Richard Bentley had proved that they were spurious.¹²

Nor should we forget technical improvements in the editor's craft; it was, after all, so much easier to read Stesichorus once Suchfort and Blomfield had divided up the fragments among the different poems, and after Suchfort and Kleine had equipped them with a commentary, not to speak of the many good textual emendations from those and other scholars that have been universally accepted down to our own day. It was also during this period, especially in the nineteenth century, that literary and literary-historical analysis began to be applied to Stesichorus' fragments. For example, Karl Otfried Müller identified and discussed Stesichorus' remarkable originality in his treatment of mythological details; refusing merely to accept Quintilian's famous description of Stesichorus' poetry at face value, Müller scrutinised his works on the basis of the evidence then available, however limited.¹³ The idea that Stesichorus' positive portrayal of Helen¹⁴ was the result of his having performed at Sparta – a hypothesis that remains attractive to many scholars today – was first put forward as early as 1886.¹⁵ And Wilamowitz's survey of the textual transmission of the lyric poets, published in the last year of that century, naturally included an investigation of Stesichorus; his essay remains fundamental more than a century on.¹⁶ This was also the time when the authenticity of various romantic works ascribed to Stesichorus was first questioned.¹⁷ It would be an exaggeration to say that Stesichorean studies were flourishing by the beginning of the twentieth century – the corpus was simply not substantial enough to permit the sort of intensive analysis experienced by the texts of, say, epic and tragedy. Nevertheless, our poet was far from neglected in work on the transmission, performance, and interpretation of Greek poetry, and, thanks to the progress of scholarship, someone attempting to read and understand his works in 1900 would have had a much easier time of it than a century before.

The first half of the twentieth century did not see especially notable advances in our understanding of Stesichorus. The commentary by Julius

¹² Bentley (1699); see Russell (1988) 97–9.

¹³ Müller (1840) 200–1; Quint. *Inst.* 10.1.62 = Stes. Tb42 Ercoles. For Müller's contribution see also Rutherford, Chapter 6, this volume.

¹⁴ Stes. fr. 91 F.

¹⁵ Thus Seeliger (1886) 8–9; cf. von Premerstein (1896) 634, Wilamowitz (1913) 241, Bowra (1934) 115–16 = (1961) 106–7. The idea is today most associated with Bowra, at least in the English-speaking world, but as the list in the previous sentence shows, he was repeatedly anticipated. The idea is discussed by West in Chapter 4 and Bowie in Chapter 7.

¹⁶ Wilamowitz (1900) 33–5.

¹⁷ See Rizzo (1895), and Rutherford, Chapter 6, this volume.

Vürtheim which appeared in 1919 was too speculative to be of much use. Nor was Ernst Diehl's selection of lyric fragments of particular importance; the scholarly text of Stesichorus of choice remained Bergk's.¹⁸ Some good work was nevertheless done which remains cited today, such as an important essay by Umberto Mancuso on western Greek lyric, and Maurice Bowra's piece on Stesichorus and the Peloponnese.¹⁹ But only in the second half of the twentieth century did Stesichorus emerge to become more than 'the shadow of a great name in the history of Greek literature'.²⁰ The rubbish heaps of Egypt, and more precisely of Oxyrhynchus, excavated by Bernard Grenfell and Arthur Hunt at the turn of the century, had yielded countless Greek manuscripts that would see publication over the succeeding decades. And so it was that exactly four hundred years after the first printed edition of Stesichorus' fragments, the first two ancient manuscripts containing his works were published by Edgar Lobel: one from *Boarhunters*, the other possibly from *The Returns*.²¹ Neither piece was very substantial: one a list of contingents from different Greek states, apparently gathered to hunt the Calydonian boar, the other a speech from Helen to Telemachus in response to a bird omen. But their impact was immediate, especially in terms of our understanding of the relationship between Stesichorus and epic poetry; in an article published shortly afterwards, Werner Peek asked, 'who would have suspected that the dependence [sc. of Stesichorus on Homer] could have gone so far in terms of subject matter too [sc. in addition to his imitation of individual words and phrases, which was already evident from the quoted fragments]?'²² The Telemachus fragment in particular so closely imitated a passage from the *Odyssey*, albeit with significant changes, that it invited a wholesale reassessment of Stesichorus' associations with epic; so too the list of contingents made direct use of a typically epic feature, the catalogue. Yet despite the questions that such discoveries prompted, for the moment, the basis for pursuing such an investigation further remained thin.

The next increase in our knowledge resulted from a papyrus that saw full publication in 1963, from a work not by Stesichorus, but by an anonymous

¹⁸ Diehl (1923–5) II 39–48, (1936–42) II 44–57.

¹⁹ Mancuso (1912), Bowra (1934).

²⁰ Haslam (1978) 29, alluding to Bowra (1936) 77 = (1961) 74 (although Haslam overstates his case when he goes on to say that before the publication of the papyri, 'about his poetry ... there was really nothing to say, except to repeat what had been said about it in antiquity').

²¹ P.Oxy. 2359, 2360; Lobel (1956a), (1956b). For the poem represented by the second papyrus, see Carey, Chapter 3 and West, Chapter 4, this volume.

²² Peek (1958) 173: 'Wer hätte geahnt, daß die Abhängigkeit auch im Stofflichen so weit gehen könnte?'; see *ibid.* 176–7 for an early consideration of the wider issues thrown up by the papyrus.

ancient scholar who referred to and quoted our poet.²³ Two substantial discussions of Stesichorus were preserved in this document: one of his *Oresteia*, the other of his *Palinodes*.²⁴ The latter, with its claim, on the authority of the peripatetic scholar Chamaeleon that there were two *Palinodes*, stimulated a veritable cottage industry of scholarship that attempted (and still attempts) to reconcile this information with existing references to a single palinode; the former provided fascinating information about the relationship between Stesichorus' *Oresteia* and those of the tragedians, which has remained central to subsequent discussion of his legacy to tragedy in general.²⁵ If the previous papyri illuminated Stesichorus' relationship with epic, and perhaps suggested an excessive dependence on his part on that genre, this latest discovery gave a better picture of his capacity for mythological innovation and his influence on later authors.

Although the full publication of these two fragments took place in 1963, Denys Page (who was responsible for that edition) was nevertheless able to incorporate them into his monumental edition of all the archaic lyric poets, *Poetae Melici Graeci*, which was published in 1962. *PMG* was, and remains, the single most important publication on archaic lyric from the twentieth century. Page's skill as an editor could be witnessed in his judicious approach to emendations and supplements; he both avoided excessive indulgence (which had become the norm in editions of lyric poetry) and at the same time eschewed the excessive austerity sometimes seen in the work of Lobel.²⁶ His presentation of the material, in terms of typesetting as well as of editing, was also extremely easy for readers to use; the introduction of a continuous numeration across all the poets (with Stesichorus assigned the numbers 178 to 281) was an immediate hit. Although he did not equip his edition with a commentary (an unfeasible task, given the mass and variety of material that he was editing), his detailed discussion of some fragments (such as fr. 205 *PMG*, the *Tabula*), and comments on others where appropriate in the apparatus, ensured that 'the book ha[d] ... much of the value of a commentary';²⁷ as such it remains essential reading today, despite the

²³ P.Oxy. 2506; Page (1963). For the nature of the text which preserves the Stesichorean fragments, see Finglass (2014a) 81.

²⁴ Stes. fr. 90, 181a F. There remained one further, smaller fragment of Stesichorus in the papyrus which failed to make its way into collections of his fragments, and which now appears as fr. 321; see Finglass (2012a).

²⁵ See Swift, Chapter 8, this volume, and Finglass (forthcoming 1).

²⁶ Cf. West (1977) 161–2 on Voigt (1971): 'Her text is thoroughly prudent, without the gymnosophist tendencies of L<obel>–P<age> [i.e. *PLF*]: where a reading or supplement is probable she is prepared to print it in the text'.

²⁷ Lloyd-Jones (1964) 17.

subsequent publication of separate editions of individual poets. Moreover, from the reader's point of view, all of Stesichorus' fragments then known could now again be consulted in a single volume, edited by a scholar second to none in the interpretation of Greek lyric poetry. Having all the fragments within a single pair of covers may not seem much of a gain – if *PMG* had not appeared, someone who wanted to read all of Stesichorus needed to track down only three papyrus publications in addition to Bergk's edition. Nevertheless, human nature being what it is, a text not included in a standard edition risks being neglected by scholars and students alike, with the exception of the most conscientious specialists within the relevant field.

Although Stesichorus had been fortunate in receiving a new edition, and even more fortunate in his editor, the fragments available were still relatively sparse. As late as the mid 1960s, David Campbell could declare

Time has dealt more harshly with Stesichorus than with any other major lyric poet. Ancient scholars were in no doubt of his importance, and mention him in the company of Homer, Simonides and Pindar; but no passage longer than six lines is quoted from him, and papyrus finds have been meagre. For an estimate of his poetry we depend almost wholly on hearsay.²⁸

Even at the time, that was too pessimistic a judgement, given the substantial advances made possible thanks to the three papyri published over the preceding decade. Moreover, 1967, the year in which the above words were published, turned out to be Stesichorus' *annus mirabilis*. In that year three new papyri appeared, from the *Geryoneis*, the *Eriphyle*, and the *Sack of Troy*, all published by Lobel, all shedding considerable light on the poems concerned.²⁹ The *Geryoneis* papyrus was especially significant, and not just because it was the most substantial; it showed an engagement with Homer beyond what had been observed in the earlier papyri. The monster Geryon reasons about mortality and immortality in a manner reminiscent of Sarpedon's speech to Glaucus in *Iliad* 12; Geryon is implored not to fight Heracles by his mother exposing to him her breast, in a scene which, in its content and language, recalls Hecuba's pleas to Hector in *Iliad* 22; the shooting of Geryon's first head by Heracles is ennobled by means of a simile, again with roots in the *Iliad*, that compares it to the disfigurement of a poppy.³⁰ Almost

²⁸ Campbell (1967) 253. The preface to this work is undated, but a date in 1966 or early 1967 seems likely. Campbell makes less of the papyri than he might, selecting all five of the fragments for his edition from the quoted fragments; he does discuss P.Oxy. 2506 in his commentary, however.

²⁹ P.Oxy. 2617, 2618, 2619; Lobel (1967a), (1967b), (1967c).

³⁰ Stes. fr. 15, 17, 19 F.; see Kelly, Chapter 2 and Carey, Chapter 3, this volume.

every substantial fragment of this papyrus creatively interacts with specific Homeric passages and with epic style in general; there is no subservience to a tradition here, but a startling innovation against that tradition.

Part of what made that innovation so remarkable was that it involved the transference of motifs from the warriors of epic to a figure who might normally command less sympathy from the audience. Indeed, a few years before the publication of the papyrus Thomas Dunbabin could speculate, not unreasonably, that ‘one purpose of the *Geryoneis* was the glorification of the brave Greeks who were winning new lands for Greek settlement’.³¹ But the appearance of the papyrus fragments, with their thoughtful monster meditating on the nature of mortality and implored to save himself by a mother who loved him, revealed this position to be untenable. Stesichorus’ Geryon was portrayed no less sympathetically than Heracles, and quite possibly more sympathetically than the Greek hero; certainly, his death is no cause for celebration. Such a work may have encouraged Greeks involved in overseas wars, trade, and settlement to ponder the human cost of their actions; Stesichorus stands revealed as an early poet of postcolonialism.

The *Geryoneis* papyrus also yielded vital evidence concerning the scale of Stesichorus’ compositions, via the appearance of a stichometric letter indicating that the poem reached at least line 1,300.³² This new hard fact provoked much discussion of the implications for Stesichorean performance. Was it possible, people asked, that such long poems had been sung by a chorus? More probably, as it seemed to some, a soloist was responsible for performing the works – a conclusion reached independently by Spencer Barrett and by Martin West.³³ Barrett’s paper was read to the Oxford Triennial conference of 1968, and had a great influence on subsequent discussion; it finally appeared in print in 2007. A subsequent fundamental article by Page incorporated suggestions by Barrett as well as the author’s own;³⁴ in particular, by comparing the number of lines in each triad with the number of lines in each papyrus column, Page was able to put many of the most substantial fragments in order, and thus to achieve a fuller picture of the poem’s architecture.³⁵ As a result, ‘more light is thrown on the poetic art of Stesichorus by the papyrus-text of his *Geryoneis* than by all his other fragments together’.³⁶ The fragments of this poem remain the best-known and most appreciated part of Stesichorus’ oeuvre, and most clearly establish his

³¹ Dunbabin (1948) 330. ³² Stes. fr. 25.36 F.

³³ Barrett (2007) 1–24, West (1971) 309 = (2011–13) II 89–90.

³⁴ Page (1973a). ³⁵ *Ibid.* 146–9.

³⁶ *Ibid.* 138. Page is referring only to the fragments known up to 1973.

claims as a literary talent of the first rank; here we encounter not so much lyric fragments as lyric poetry.

The *Sack of Troy* and *Eriphyle* papyri, by contrast, did not receive quite as much attention. Nevertheless, the publication of a further papyrus of the former in 1971 ensured continued scholarly interest in that poem;³⁷ an attempt by Page to show that the two papyri (the latter labelled [*The Wooden/Trojan*] *Horse*) belonged to separate works has not been generally accepted,³⁸ and one substantial fragment in modern editions is the result of combining a fragment of one papyrus with a fragment of the other.³⁹ In general, each papyrus, as it appeared, received detailed scrutiny in a series of papers by some of the most distinguished Hellenists of the time, especially by Page himself, by Rudolf Führer, and by Martin West; important contributions by Spencer Barrett were included in papers by Page and West. The journal *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*, felicitously founded in the momentous year of 1967, deserves special mention: appearing as it did (and does) several times a year, with only a short interval between the acceptance of an article and its publication, it ensured the timely dissemination of the latest research on these often recalcitrant fragments to the wider scholarly community.

The year 1974 saw the publication of what is still the most important article on Stesichorean metre, by Michael Haslam; this substantial piece not only looked at the metrical patterning of individual works but also scrutinised the system of Stesichorean metrics as a whole, attempting to describe the poet's choices as precisely as possible and to account for them, and showing among other things that our poet could have played a crucial role in the development of dactylo-epitrite.⁴⁰ In the same year, the papyri published in the twelve years since *Poetae Melici Graeci* in 1962 were re-edited by Page in his *Supplementum Lyricis Graecis* (*SLG*). The need for such a book so soon after the appearance of *PMG* indicates the pace at which lyric papyri were now appearing.

For the moment this pace continued, with a further major papyrus emerging in 1976; anyone who purchased *SLG* in order to have access, via that publication and *PMG*, to the entire Stesichorean corpus would thus have needed to augment their library after only a couple of years. A mummy cartonnage discovered by the French School at Athens in the Fayum region of Egypt during the winter of 1901–2 was taken apart in 1973, yielding many

³⁷ P.Oxy. 2803; Lobel (1971). ³⁸ Page (1973b).

³⁹ Stes. fr. 114 F.

⁴⁰ Haslam's 1974 article was supplemented by a further metrical study in 1978 after the appearance of the next papyrus.

papyrus texts, including a lyric poem soon identified as a new work by Stesichorus. The original edition of this poem, which appeared at Lille in 1976, was not fully satisfactory.⁴¹ Luckily, the papyrus was immediately re-edited by Parsons in what is one of the great works of recent Greek scholarship;⁴² all subsequent work on this papyrus, whether in terms of its text, its interpretation, or its wider significance, can be considered mere footnotes to Parsons. The papyrus offers the most continuous text of any Stesichorean fragment, and yet the first reaction to it as a piece of literature was one of disappointment; Parsons himself refers to ‘the Homeric clichés ... [and] drab repetitious flaccidity of the composition’.⁴³ It may be this papyrus’s misfortune that it appeared so soon after the *Geryoneis* papyrus, provoking implicit comparisons that tended to devalue it; had the Lille fragment appeared first, it might have received more sympathetic discussion on its own terms. Nevertheless, it stimulated much analysis on topics such as its relationship with epic and tragedy; among many articles, one by Anne Pippin Burnett deserves particular mention for its attempt to consider this and other Stesichorean fragments in the context of the festivals of the Greek west.⁴⁴ In the same period, Walter Burkert produced a study of Stesichorus’ relationship with epic and the rhapsodes that has proved highly influential,⁴⁵ and studies by Philip Brize, building on a pioneering article by Martin Robertson, elucidated the relationship between Stesichorus’ Geryon and the Geryon found in the visual arts during the archaic period.⁴⁶

The last Stesichorus papyrus to be published, at least for now, appeared in 1990, edited by Michael Haslam.⁴⁷ It is in many ways the most difficult of them all. We cannot be sure how many poems are represented in the papyrus, whether all the fragments are by Stesichorus, or indeed whether more than one papyrus is represented here; one fragment in particular seems to involve praise of a (living?) individual that would seem out of place in the world of heroic myth as portrayed in the other Stesichorean fragments, and another might come from an epinician context, which again would be surprising for Stesichorus.⁴⁸ The fragments had previously been sorted into different envelopes by Lobel, but it is not clear on what basis, or whether Lobel had information about them now lost to us. This continuing uncertainty hampers attempts to make use of the papyrus in discussions of Stesichorus’ work. Nevertheless, it contains flashes of great poetry,

⁴¹ Meillier (1976). ⁴² Parsons (1977).

⁴³ *Ibid.* 7. ⁴⁴ Burnett (1988).

⁴⁵ Burkert (1987) = (2001–11) I 198–217 = Cairns (2001) 92–116.

⁴⁶ Brize (1980), (1985); Robertson (1969).

⁴⁷ P.Oxy 3876; Haslam (1990). ⁴⁸ Stes. fr. 214, 219 F.

including the announcement to a woman (Althaea, mother of Meleager?) that her brothers have died, and what appears to be the description of a solemn funeral.⁴⁹

In the following year, 1991, two (virtually) complete editions of the fragments of Stesichorus were published: *Poetarum Melicorum Graecorum Fragmenta* (PMGF) volume I, by Malcolm Davies ‘post D. L. Page’ (thus the title page), and *Greek Lyric Poetry* volume III, by David Campbell. Both were part of projected editions of all of archaic Greek lyric poetry; Campbell’s was subsequently completed, providing an extremely useful work in five volumes. The appearance of these books ensured that all the fragments of Stesichorus could once again be read between a single pair of covers, for the first time since 1966.⁵⁰ Moreover, both books included testimonia to Stesichorus’ life and work, something that Page had dispensed with in *PMG*; readers now had easy access to all the most important texts that could illuminate the poet and his life. In terms of the scholarly contribution made by the two editions, Campbell’s has been the more warmly received, despite the more limited prospectus of a Loeb edition; ‘this is’, in Haslam’s words, ‘a Loeb that scholars need not be ashamed to be seen using’.⁵¹ *PMGF* volume I was also the subject of a detailed review by Haslam, a fair and perceptive analysis which forms essential reading for anyone interested either in Stesichorus or in the editor’s task; Haslam’s basic complaints were that the new edition did not take the opportunity to make significant scholarly progress in our understanding of Stesichorus and his text, and that its presentation of the fragments is often difficult to follow.⁵² Many scholars continue to cite Stesichorus from *PMG* and *SLG* rather than *PMGF*, at least for those fragments discovered by 1974, no doubt because the text offered by *PMGF* is often exactly the same as what is to be found in those editions.

All the Stesichorean papyri so far discovered appeared over a period of thirty-four years (1956–90), and all but one across only twenty years (1956–76), a period that might with some justification be called the golden age of Stesichorean scholarship; at the time of writing, no new papyrus has appeared for almost a quarter of a century. Yet scholarship has continued since 1990, including in the field of editorial activity. Successive articles by Alessandro Pardini

⁴⁹ Stes. fr. 191, 247.

⁵⁰ In keeping with the aims of the Loeb series, Campbell omits the very smallest fragments, which contain no intelligible text, but this is more than compensated for by the presence of an accompanying translation.

⁵¹ Haslam (1994) 310; cf. the comparison at Slings (1994) 104.

⁵² Haslam (1992). The online version of this review is incomplete; for the review in full, please consult the paper version, as given in the bibliography.