Greek Lyric Poetry

A new translation by M. L. West

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Greek Lyric Poetry

The poems and fragments of the Greek iambic, elegiac, and melic poets (excluding Pindar and Bacchylides) down to 450 BC

Translated with an Introduction and Notes by

M. L. WEST

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INTRODUCTION

'GREEK lyric poetry' is a conventional catch-all term covering more or less all the Greek poetry of the centuries down to 350 BC apart from epic, didactic, and other verse composed in hexameters, and drama. It cannot be considered a single genre. It is commonly subdivided into melic poetry, elegy, and iambus. But this division is not without its problems.

'Melic' means 'for song'; but song covers such a wide range, from little personal ditties to solemn choral cantatas, that this is still far from being a unified category. In any case, it is not really logical to distinguish 'melic' poetry from elegy and iambus, since most elegy was sung, and some iambus.

Elegy, at least, is easy to define. It is defined by its metre, the elegiac couplet, and whatever is composed in this metre for recitation or song is classed as elegy. It should be pointed out that the term does not carry the mournful associations that it has in the context of English literature.

As for iambus, it sounds as if it might be another metrical category, and indeed much of the verse that belongs under this heading is in iambic metre–much, but not all. The metre that we call iambic was so named because it was typical of 'iambus', not the other way round. 'Iambus' originally designated the entertaining monologues and songs performed at certain popular festivals of Demeter and Dionysus, which were typically ludicrous, scurrilous, or bawdy.

The general term 'lyric' ought to mean 'accompanied by the lyre'. But this again is inexact. It is true that most of this poetry was sung or recited to an instrumental accompaniment, but the instrument was not always a lyre. In many cases it was the *aulos*, a sort of oboe, two of which were played at once by a single player (the aulete), as was the custom with this instrument all over the ancient Near East. This is the instrument that countless writers on the Greeks have erroneously called a flute. The flute was not altogether unknown in antiquity, but the reader may take it that every reference he has ever seen to flutes or flute-girls in an ancient Greek context ought to have been to oboes and oboists. Besides the lyre and the *aulos*, which were always the principal Greek instruments, we should also men-

tion the harp, which is referred to by a few poets (Sappho, Alcaeus, Anacreon) and was presumably sometimes used by them as an alternative to the lyre.

A solo singer accompanied himself on the lyre or harp, or was accompanied by an aulete. Elegy in particular was commonly sung to the *auloi*, in convivial gatherings where every guest was expected to sing something and a male or female aulete (a slave, or hired) was on hand to provide the musical accompaniment for those who were unable to play a stringed instrument for themselves. Choral song, which had its place mainly at festivals or other special occasions, was accompanied in some cases by the lyre, in others by the *auloi*, in others, apparently, by lyre and *auloi* simultaneously. In all kinds of song, the instrumental accompaniment served principally to support the vocal melody, with little embellishment.

To the modern reader the term 'lyric' may suggest a particular kind of literary style or mood. The body of Greek verse that we put together under this label, however, is very diverse in character. It includes every kind of song, with the exceptions of epic and drama already noted; and song is, after all, a medium almost as wide and varied in scope as speech. Epic and tragic poetry are focused on the mythical past. Some of this 'lyric' poetry too consists of mythic narrative, and allusions to the old myths are liable to appear anywhere. But what we have here above all is the poetry of the present, the poetry in which people express their feelings and ideas about all their current concerns: their personal loves or enmities, their hopes, fears, and complaints, matters affecting their circle of friends or their whole town. It is all social poetry, in the sense that although some poets looked forward to their work being preserved for the future, it was all intended initially for oral delivery (whether sung or recited) before an audience, private or public, in a specific setting. It was always a medium of communication to others, not a matter of poets committing their secret thoughts to paper to be published at some later time if at all. Even where a poem is nominally addressed to a single individual, or takes the form of a prayer addressed to a god, we can assume that it was in fact intended to be heard by a group.

Much of this poetry is of high quality; some of the poets counted among the finest that Greece produced. It is our misfor-

tune that most of their work has perished. We have some complete poems, but for the most part there are only fragments, of varying extent and completeness, preserved either on remnants of ancient papyrus rolls or as quotations embedded in the texts of later prose writers. All that was transmitted through the Middle Ages in its own manuscript tradition was a collection of the Victory Odes of Pindar and a collection of elegiac verse labelled as 'Theognis', consisting in fact of anthologized excerpts from various poets of whom Theognis was only one. However, the situation is better than it used to be. New papyrus fragments continue to be published, and this is one area of Greek literature in which our knowledge has increased significantly over the years. But we still have only a small fraction of what circulated in antiquity.

In this volume I have translated all the surviving remains of iambic, elegiac, and melic poetry down to about 450 BC, except for the works of Pindar and Bacchylides, who require volumes to themselves; I omit only such fragments as are too small or broken to convey any intelligible image or idea. Many of the lesser fragments that I do translate may perhaps be thought too uninformative to justify their inclusion. But collectively, I think, they do help to fill out our picture of the range of each poet's subject-matter and poetic manner.

I have taken 450 BC as the notional limiting date because the poetry of the succeeding period is somewhat different in character, more self-conscious, less spontaneous in feeling and expression; there are no very major figures among its poets. The earlier poetry, on the other hand, apart from the intrinsic beauty that characterizes much of it—only imperfectly conveyed by a translation, but I hope not altogether obscured—is of particular interest because so much of it shows us real Greeks speaking their minds in a wide range of circumstances. We have virtually no contemporary prose literature, and we rely on lyric above all for evidence of the beliefs, attitudes, and opinions most prevalent in those times.

It is also an important source of information about historical events. Ancient authors themselves, writers such as Aristotle and Plutarch, depended largely on Tyrtaeus for their understanding of happenings in seventh-century Sparta, and on Solon for their understanding of Athenian affairs half a century

later; we have the passages that these writers saw fit to quote from the poets as evidence. Various other wars, political crises, and revolutions are intermittently lit up by the lyric fragments, and even where these add nothing to our knowledge of what happened, they may give us a valuable insight into the emotions aroused by the events, the hopes and forebodings, the exultation or the chagrin. The most recent additions to the corpus, a series of papyrus fragments from elegies of Simonides, include our first extended contemporary account of the days leading up to the Battle of Plataea: a clearly poeticized account, but precious to the historian.

I have arranged the material on a broadly chronological basis, under the rubrics 'seventh century', 'seventh to sixth century', and so on. We have one two-line fragment that is attributed to a poet as early as the second half of the eighth century, **Eumelus** of Corinth, but there is room for doubt as to whether it is really so old. Otherwise, the earliest poets represented belong to the middle of the seventh century. They are the elegists Callinus of Ephesus and Tyrtaeus of Sparta, and the iambic poets ('iambographers') Archilochus of Paros and Semonides of Amorgos.

Archilochus ranked in antiquity as one of the greatest of poets, worthy to be named beside Homer and Hesiod. His native island of Paros in the middle of the Aegean was one of the chief centres of the worship of Demeter, goddess of agriculture, and in association with this cult there was a local tradition of iambus: scurrilous and erotic recitations and songs performed at particular festivals, originally, no doubt, with the idea of promoting fertility by means of explicit sexuality. Certainly, explicit sexual (and in some authors scatological) material was admitted by the iambographers to a degree that no other branch of literature tolerated apart from comedy, which was itself in origin associated with fertility rituals. In iambus, sex and scatology typically appear in the framework of first-person narratives. The speaker or singer (possibly costumed in the role of a stock figure) regaled the audience with accounts of extravagant orgies or other escapades in which he claimed to have taken part. He named women whom he had seduced or who had eagerly given themselves to him. If these were real women, the allegations must have been exceedingly embarrassing and shaming to them

and their families, and there are stories of iambographers' victims being driven to suicide by the publicity; but there is something to be said for the view that the persons named were in some cases fictitious. Archilochus' iambi were particularly concerned with one Lycambes and his two daughters, one of whom was called Neobule. The reader will notice several mentions of them, and will easily identify other fragments as belonging to the iambic genre.

But by no means all of Archilochus' poetry can be ascribed to this genre. Much of it represents his reactions to current events, military, political, and personal. There is affectionate banter with friends, bristly remonstrance with enemies, satirical comment on public figures, solemn lament for men lost at sea, vivid references to impending or recent battles. The variety of tone is wide, but Archilochus always comes across as a man of spirit. A number of fragments refer to Thasos, the north Aegean island that was colonized by the Parians: Archilochus spent part of his life there, and was involved in fighting with Thracian tribes on the nearby mainland.

Semonides of Amorgos (not to be confused with the more famous Simonides of Ceos) is a much more indistinct figure. A few of the lesser fragments indicate that his iambus too included elements of obscene narrative. The two main fragments, however, might be put under the heading of popular philosophy. One of them, the so-called 'satire on women', is the longest piece of non-hexameter verse that we have in Greek from before the fifth century. Its 118 lines are almost a complete poem, with only a few lines lost at the end. The generally unfavourable picture of women reflects an attitude that was common. But we should remember that the piece was designed as a conventional entertainment. The theme of woman as a plague appeared in other iambographers too, and it should be compared to routine jokes about mothers-in-law in the more vulgar kind of modern comedy rather than being seen as an expression of personal bitterness.

Callinus of Ephesus and **Tyrtaeus** of Sparta, although they lived on opposite sides of the Aegean, wrote elegies of very similar character. Both use the medium to exhort their fellow citizens to fight to the death in defence of their community, winning glory and averting shame. These poems, perhaps more

than Homer, give us an idea of what it felt like to be a young man in early Greece, faced with the prospect of going into battle—both the physical dangers and the moral pressures.

Callinus' audience seem to be unprepared for war, perhaps enjoying their symposium. Tyrtaeus, on the other hand, speaks as if his hearers are ready drawn up on the battlefield, and it is not impossible that this was the actual situation. We know that three centuries later, when Tyrtaeus was an established classic, Spartan armies were made to listen to recitations of his works. The conflict for which at least some of his poems were composed was the Second Messenian War. Messene, the fertile country beyond the mountains to the west of Sparta, had been brought under Spartan domination two generations previously, in the late eighth century, and it had now risen in revolt. The Spartans succeeded in subduing it again, but not without some difficulty. At the same period they were suffering from internal political troubles. The poor found themselves without sufficient land, and clamoured for a redistribution. The authority of the city's two kings and of the council of elders was threatened. Here again we see Tyrtaeus playing a role as propagandist. In a poem to which later writers gave the title *Eunomia* ('Law and Order') he reminded the people of the divine authority on which the constitution rested, and he called for obedience to the rulers and an end to discord.

Later in the seventh century we find **Mimnermus** of Smyrna again using elegy to rouse his people to the fight, perhaps against the Lydians, who had attacked Smyrna before and, about 600 BC, succeeded in destroying it. But Mimnermus was better remembered for poetry celebrating the delights of love and youth. According to later reports, loved ones of both sexes were named in his poems, and indeed both he and Solon speak of the love of boys and women as if they were complementary. But the more personal parts of his love poetry have not survived, only anthology excerpts containing general reflections on the subject.

Towards the end of the century we encounter our first substantial specimens of choral poetry. They come from the Partheneia (girls' songs) of **Alcman**, composed for Spartan girls' choruses to sing and dance to at certain festivals, and they give glimpses of a very different side of Spartan life from those that

concerned Tyrtaeus. The longest piece (fragment 1) comes from a papyrus in the Louvre which was one of the first Greek literary papyri to be discovered; it was published in 1855. The text indicates that the chorus consists of ten girls and that a religious ceremony of some sort is in progress. It is sometimes thought that the chorus was in competition against another. There are mythological and moralizing passages, and a fair amount about the girls themselves and their finery, with especial praise of the beauty of two who are attending to the sacrifice. One of them is even portrayed as the girls' heart-throb. This was apparently a conventional element in these Spartan Partheneia, as it appears also in a fragment from another one, with a different girl named.

It is in the work of **Sappho**, of course, that the theme of love between women is most famously in evidence. Most of her songs were composed for private pleasure in her house, where, it seems, a circle of unmarried women or girls regularly made music and sang. The nature of the arrangement is not clear, but the most plausible view is that these young women were entrusted to Sappho by their parents for instruction in music and perhaps also in letters. On occasion they sang in public at weddings or festivals. A certain number of the fragments are from wedding songs or religious performances. But the majority are from more intimate compositions, and concerned with personal matters. There is little mention of men, apart from bridegrooms in the wedding songs. It is very much a women's world that is reflected. When Sappho speaks of the old myths about Troy, they are seen through a woman's eyes. It is Hector's wedding that stirs her imagination, not his prowess on the battlefield; Helen is viewed with some sympathy, as a woman whose priorities were upset by love.

Alcaeus was contemporary with Sappho, and lived in the same town of Mytilene on the island of Lesbos. Yet there is no certain indication of any contact between them. If Sappho's is a woman's world, Alcaeus' is no less decidedly a man's. His songs are mostly composed for drinking-parties with male cronies. There are hymns to gods, celebrations of the pleasures of wine and love (of boys), and, above all, songs about fighting and politics. Like many other Greek towns in the seventh and sixth centuries, Mytilene was going through a period of instabil-

ity. One leader after another seized power, or was raised to power on a wave of popular support. We hear of successive administrations by Melanchrus, Myrsilus, and Pittacus. Alcaeus belonged to an established landowning family and, in shifting alliances with others of his class, and at one point with a neighbouring foreign power (Lydia), he struggled in opposition to the popular leaders. But the city was out of sympathy with him, and he found himself evicted from his estates and banished to another part of the island.

Theognis of Megara is in some ways a similar figure: a 'squirearch', a man of standing in his city, whose public actions, however, arouse some discontent; a man who sings to his drinking-comrades of his anxieties about the political situation; a man of cliques, who finds himself betrayed by those he trusted, dispossessed of his land in a democratic revolution, an impoverished and embittered exile dreaming of revenge. His allusions to current situations seem best to fit the last decades of the seventh century, though later chroniclers date him in the middle of the sixth. Not all of his elegies were political. Some of them (or, to be more exact, some of the surviving excerpts) contain general moral advice; some are amatory. In all these categories Theognis habitually addresses his poems to his friend Cyrnus, also called Polypaïdes. The appearance of one or other of these two names is the chief criterion that enables us to identify Theognis' verse among the much larger collection of elegiac excerpts transmitted as his. It is not that an excerpt lacking an address to Cyrnus cannot be by Theognis, but that, as we can see that the collection contains excerpts from Tyrtaeus, Mimnermus, Solon, and others, some as late as the fifth century, it is only prudent to treat as anonymous any piece for which we have no positive indication of authorship. I have accordingly separated 'Theognis' from '**Anonymous Theognidea**'. In the latter section I have taken out those pieces which can be ascribed to a named poet, and also the duplications that are a feature of the collection: the same item often appears twice (with some textual divergences), as a result of the conflation of different ancient anthologies.

The anonymous Theognidea have a fascination of their own, even if they cannot be grouped round a single personality. Many of them were clearly composed for the symposium, and

many more are on the subject of drinking or making merry. It was the custom in some circles for the guests to be wittily rude to each other, and we see at least one example of this (lines 453–6). Other pieces are reflective or philosophic, even dialectical. Many—especially those gathered at the end of the collection (lines 1231–389)—are love poems, mostly addressed to unnamed boys. The value of the collection as a whole is that it may be taken as a representative cross-section of the elegiac poetry written for sympotic and other social settings in the sixth and early fifth centuries. It is here, out of all the material gathered in this volume, that we come closest to the ordinary man and his views on life, friendship, society, fate, death.

At the end of the seventh century and the beginning of the sixth we encounter the first known Athenian poet: none other than the famous statesman **Solon**. Much of his verse, like that of Tyrtaeus and Theognis, is concerned with the public affairs of his city. He played an important part in those affairs. Inequalities between rich and poor had produced a critical situation. The misery and resentment of the under-class threatened to erupt in revolution and to throw up some popular dictator, as had happened at Megara and other places. Solon, after passing a series of comments and warnings on these dangers, in poems that evidently circulated well beyond the confines of a private drinking-group, summoned a mass meeting, won its support, and was given powers to frame special laws to ease the situation. They brought some relief, but failed to please everyone, and in subsequent poems we hear Solon passionately defending his actions against more than one set of critics. The eloquence and vivid imagery of his poetry make it easy for us to understand how this man was able to dominate a crowd.

Alcman, Sappho, Alcaeus, Theognis, and Solon all belong under the heading 'seventh to sixth century' because they were (or may have been) active both before and after 600. But the rubric also covers a couple of poets whom we can only date vaguely to the later seventh *or* the sixth century. They are an obscure iambographer from Selinus in Sicily, one **Aristoxenus**, of whom a single line survives—quite a long one, it is true—and the author of the comic poem *Margites*, which was rather implausibly reputed to have been composed by Homer in a rare fit of drollery. It was in an irregular mixture of epic hexameter

and iambic lines, and it concerned a ridiculous ninny called Margites and the ludicrous situations that he got himself into. Ancient allusions indicate that the main episode dealt with Margites' wedding night. He had no idea what to do with his bride, until she told him that a scorpion had bitten her between the legs and that the wound could only be healed by the insertion of a man's penis.

The numerous Greek colonies in the west, in Sicily and Italy, naturally produced their own poets, and two major lyricists of the sixth century came from that part of the world: Stesichorus and Ibycus. **Stesichorus**' poems were narratives on legendary subjects, composed on the most ample scale. We know that one of them, the *Oresteia*, was divided into at least two books, and a fragment of the *Song of Geryon* has a numeral in the margin signifying 'line 1300'. These were in effect lyric epics, sung to expansive strophic melodies. It used to be generally assumed that this was choral poetry, but it now seems likely that Stesichorus performed it as a solo singer accompanying himself on the lyre, possibly with a chorus of dancers. His themes included several of Heracles' adventures, various episodes connected with the Trojan War, its antecedents and aftermath, and legends from central Greece. The fifth-century tragedians often drew upon Stesichorus for material and for particular versions of myths.

Ibycus came from Rhegium, the modern Reggio. He is clearly no stranger to the Stesichorean tradition, but his poetry is much more personal in orientation, often concerned with love. In the amatory fragments we see some striking imagery, as well as some rather distasteful baroque conceits. The longest extant piece concludes with praise of Polycrates, son of Aeaces the ruler of Samos, where Ibycus settled down as a court poet. Polycrates himself came to power in about 538, and under him the prestige of Samos reached a height it never attained before or since.

Anacreon too enjoyed the patronage of this Samian dynasty; Aeaces is said to have made him Polycrates' music-teacher. Anacreon, an Ionian from Abdera, must be counted one of the very finest of the lyric poets. No wild outpouring of passion here, but feeling tempered by humour and expressed in little songs of exquisite craftsmanship. Posterity saw Anacreon as the arche-

typal merry old soul, the cheerful devotee of wine and love, tottering home from the party with garland askew and with a pretty boy to guide him. Many centuries after his death, a new genre of 'Anacreontic' poetry sprang into life. From about the first century of our era down to Byzantine times, poets composed simple sympotic songs in the spirit of Anacreon (as they understood it), in metres derived from his, and in some cases referring to him by name or even adopting his persona. These later Anacreontea exercised a powerful influence on European literature from the sixteenth century onward; until 1834 they were always included in editions of Anacreon's fragments, and it was only by degrees that their spuriousness came to be agreed by all.

Polycrates fell in about 522, and Anacreon spent his latter years at Athens. His patron there was Hipparchus, the younger brother of the dictator Hippias. Other, more avant-garde poets in Hipparchus' circle were **Lasus** of Hermione, who was interested in musical theory and may actually have invented the word 'music' (*mousikē*), and Simonides of Ceos, of whom more anon.

A few minor names from the sixth century must be mentioned here. **Asius** of Samos was mainly significant as an epic poet, but one enigmatic elegiac fragment survives. **Demodocus**, a caustic wit, came from the small Aegean island of Leros. His habit of introducing his *mots* with the phrase 'Another from Demodocus' was a satirical borrowing from an earnest moralizing poem in hexameters current in neighbouring Miletus, where successive admonitions began with 'Another from Phocylides'. Practically nothing is known of **Pythermus** of Teos, or of the iambographer **Ananius**, who referred to a popular song by Pythermus.

The last of the three major iambographers (the other two being Archilochus and Semonides) is **Hippōnax** of Ephesus, active towards the end of the sixth century. The traditional iambic element of first-person sexual narrative is well represented in his fragments. But the tone is noticeably different from that in the seventh-century writers of iambus. Hipponax is more obviously setting out to be funny. He presents himself as a vulgar fellow, given to brawling and burglary. His reported adventures are not just erotic but picaresque, sordid, and farcical. The whole way of life that he describes is low-class and

shabby. The effect is enhanced by his use of vulgar language, with an admixture of foreign words that were presumably current in the colloquial speech of Ephesus. Just as Archilochus has a favourite enemy, Lycambes, so has Hipponax: it is Bupalus, a sculptor, reputed to have antagonized the poet by caricaturing him. Hipponax claims to have enjoyed wild nights with Bupalus' mistress Ārētē.

The long life of **Xenophanes** of Colophon easily bridges the sixth and fifth centuries. He is the first poet of Greece (and of the world, I fancy) whose year of birth can be stated more or less exactly. This is because he tells us that he was 25 ('if I can claim to know the truth of it') when he left his Ionian home for a life of wandering through Greece, and it is probable that what uprooted him was the Persian capture of Colophon in about 540. His wanderings have lasted a further 67 years, so he is still writing verse at the age of 92, in about 473 BC. Xenophanes plays a role in histories of philosophy because of his highly radical speculations on cosmology and theology. These he expounded in hexameter verse, which falls outside the scope of the present volume. But the elegiac fragments themselves give a hint of his opinionated and argumentative nature, and of his self-esteem.

Simonides of Ceos, a few years younger than Xenophanes, also attained a ripe old age: he boasts that, octogenarian though he is, he has a matchless memory. In him we encounter a professional lyricist of a new type, a poet who acquires a national reputation and openly trades on it to get custom from everywhere. Hipparchus of Athens has been mentioned as one of Simonides' patrons. He had many others, in Euboea, Thessaly, Aegina, Sparta, Sicily, and Italy—men of wealth and standing, who could afford the high fees he was notorious for charging. It was a pattern to be followed by his nephew Bacchylides and by Pindar. Like them, Simonides composed choral odes celebrating his patrons' victories at the great national sports meetings such as the Olympics. But he composed many other kinds of melic poetry too, as well as elegy. In more than one genre he celebrated the great critical battles of the Persian Wars. These wars gave Greece a new consciousness of national identity, and Simonides was the first poet to give it expression.

After Simonides I have placed another group of minor figures.

Susarion of Megara was cited by Megarian antiquarians to substantiate the claim that comedy was invented at Megara, not at Athens. But the fragment quoted must be assigned to the genus iambus rather than comedy, and the man's date is quite uncertain. **Apollodorus** was an Athenian choral poet, active around 500 BC. **Cydias** may have been another, though the evidence is frail. **Pratinas** of Phlius is somewhat better known, mainly as an early contributor to Athenian tragedy and satyric drama.

After these the reader will come upon an interesting collection of stanzas under the heading **Anonymous Party Songs**. Numbers 884–908 circulated as a collection in antiquity. They were evidently popular items sung by guests at Athenian symposia in the fifth century. Many of them have the same metrical structure, and were no doubt sung to a particular well-known tune. A number of them celebrate a famous event of the year 514, when Hipparchus—that patron of outstanding poets, but brother of an increasingly unpopular dictator—was assassinated at a public festival by Harmodius and Aristogeiton. Three years later the dictator himself was ousted and democracy was established. As the songs show, these events came to be somewhat run together in the popular memory, as if Hipparchus had been the tyrant and his death had at once brought the regime to an end. The song-book also contained two or three items from identifiable poets (Alcaeus, Praxilla), which I have left out because they appear elsewhere in their due place.

The **Praxilla** just mentioned was a poetess from Sicyon in the north-east Peloponnese. She was credited on the one hand with songs suitable for the symposium—which might suggest a courtesan—and on the other hand with choral poetry and hymns, which would point rather to a respectable, matronly chorus-leader. It is possible that two different women of the same name have been confused, or else that Praxilla's authorship of the sympotic songs, about which the ancients seem to have entertained some doubts, was a fiction. Another early fifth-century woman poet from the same region, the Argive **Telesilla**, is more unequivocally portrayed as a lady of standing in her city and a leader of female choruses. Before the Hellenistic age, this was the role in which the woman poet could most naturally emerge into the daylight as a public figure. Sappho too, we recall, had such a role in her society.

Timocreon of Rhodes wrote songs of a rather personal nature. It is not clear for what sort of occasion he wrote them, but he evidently hoped for and to some extent obtained a nation-wide hearing. A couple of his fragments are of historical interest for their references to events of the years *c.*479–467, and in particular for invective against Themistocles.

The last elegist included in this volume is **Euenus** of Paros. It must be confessed that the identification of this man and of the fragments to be ascribed to him requires a certain measure of faith. Plato and Aristotle refer to a Parian sophist and rhetorician Euenus, a contemporary of Socrates, and Aristotle quotes verses of his. One of these is virtually identical with a line that appears in the Theognidea in one of three poems addressed to a certain Simonides. It is a reasonable guess that those three poems are by the same poet, and a slightly more risky inference that he was Aristotle's Euenus. But if the Simonides addressed is the famous poet, the author must have been of mature age by about 470, too early for the sophist; and that is the sort of date suggested by the style of the poems and by their presence in the Theognidean collection. It may be that Aristotle confused an older and a younger Euenus. A further complication is that there was at least one, perhaps more than one, later epigrammatist called Euenus. Certain verses cited under this name have to be assigned, as between the various claimants, on rather subjective criteria.

Lamprocles, an Athenian musician, probably flourished a little before the middle of the fifth century. His hymn to Athena is cited by Aristophanes as a 'classic' piece in the good old traditional style. Lamprocles perhaps sang it to his own lyre accompaniment at the great city festival of Athena, the Panathenaea, in the competition for citharodes. The citharode, a professional who sang to the *cithara* (a grander kind of lyre than the ones used in domestic music-making), was the most highly acclaimed sort of musical performer, admired both for his mastery of the instrument and for his fine singing. The citharodes looked back to **Terpander** of Lesbos (*c.*680–650) as the first great exponent of the art, and attributed many achievements to him: increasing the number of the lyre's strings from four to seven, inventing new scales and rhythms, establishing rules of musical form, and so on. Much of this was no doubt constructed by projecting

classical citharodes' practices back on to the first famous citharode. Similarly, when Terpander is named as the source of a couple of hymn fragments, we should probably take them to come from a body of 'traditional' pieces that citharodes of the classical period availed themselves of and ascribed collectively to Terpander. There is no good evidence that actual songs of his were handed down.

A few pages of **anonymous** fragments conclude the volume. Most of them are anonymous because the ancient authors who quote them omit to specify where they are quoting from. But the groups headed 'work songs', 'play songs', and 'ritual songs' fall into a different category. These are the pieces generally labelled 'carmina popularia' in scholarly editions. They were 'popular' in the sense that they were not thought of as belonging to any particular author or performer, but were sung traditionally to accompany certain activities: routine labour, children's games, local religious rituals. They did not circulate in book form, and our knowledge of them is confined to the few that ancient writers chance to quote. These are usually writers of the Hellenistic or Roman period, and we cannot say how old the songs are. Some of them certainly go back to the classical age, and in general they are characterized by a simplicity of language and metre that would not be out of place in the sixth or fifth century. If these actual pieces did not exist so early, they may be taken as samples of a basically timeless category of folk-song that certainly must have existed from the beginning. Even the child Homer, we can assume, played singing games.

The translation

I have tried to produce readable verse translations while rendering as faithfully as possible the thought and the spirit of the originals. This means, for example, reproducing the metaphors and images used in the Greek, so far as they can be made intelligible to the modern reader, and not importing new ones. Minor shifts are occasionally necessary, as when Alcaeus (frag. 351) uses a metaphor from an ancient board game that has no modern equivalent, and speaks of someone 'moving the stone (counter) from the holy line'. The point is that this was a move made only in the last resort, so the appropriate translation will

be 'playing his final card'. No one will be misled, I hope, into supposing that the Greeks played cards.

Another necessity sometimes forced upon the translator is the use of words or expressions that have an old-fashioned air, simply because they correspond better than any current idiom to the Greek concept. This arises particularly in moral and ethical contexts. There is a very common set of words in Greek, *dikē*, *dikaios*, *adikos*, which the student is taught to translate as 'justice, just, unjust'. But these renderings are quite inadequate, as 'justice' in English is a quality of the law, judges, or others in a position to allocate some resource among claimants, whereas *dikē* is a property of anyone who abides by the law, deals fairly with his neighbours, and so on. The word that best catches it is the biblical-sounding 'righteousness'. Again, the early Greek poets very often contrast the 'good' man (*agathos* or *esthlos*) with the 'bad' man (*kakos* or *deilos*). In English, 'good' and 'bad' applied to persons refer simply to moral character, unless some further qualification is added (as in 'a good man in a crisis'). But in early Greek the terms refer predominantly to social status, inherited wealth, breeding, or the lack of these, often with the assumption that moral worth is their natural concomitant. In many cases *agathos* is best represented by a phrase such as 'man of quality', 'man of class', or 'man of worth', and *kakos* by 'rogue', 'rapscallion', 'bum', 'man of low degree', or the like. It should go without saying that it is not practicable, in a work such as this, always to translate the same word or phrase in the same way; nor have I made any particular effort to do so.

I have tried to give some idea of the metrical variety of the originals. Sometimes I have actually imitated the ancient metres, in so far as it is possible to imitate quantitative measures (based on the contrast of longer and shorter syllables) in a language where the prosodic opposition is between stressed and unstressed elements. For example, the metre of Sappho, fragment 44,

— × — ∪ ∪ — ∪ ∪ — ∪ ∪ — ∪ —

is meant to be reflected in my line

Só the hérald Idaéus arríved with the méssage swíft,

and that of Alcaeus, fragment 342,

— ∪ — ∪ ∪ — — ∪ ∪ — — ∪ ∪ — ∪ —

by my

Lét the víne be the fírst fruít-tree you plánt: óthers can waít
their túrn.

In other cases, without attempting to reproduce the original metrical pattern, I have tried to convey some idea of the general effect, for example, by using a strophe of two shorter lines and one longer one where that is the structure of the original. In translating the many poems composed in elegiac couplets, I have usually used iambic lines with alternately six and five stresses, though in a few cases I have used five-stress verses for both lines of the couplet, relying on indentation to indicate the alternation.

It has been an enjoyable task. I do not delude myself that all parts of the end product are likely to give equal pleasure to the reader. But if I have succeeded in opening any eyes, ears, or hearts to some portion of the manifold beauty, wisdom, and wit that shines from these precious remnants of a brilliant culture of long ago, I shall be well content.

NOTE ON THE NUMERATION OF FRAGMENTS

I HAVE given the fragments the numbers that they bear in the scholarly editions currently regarded as standard, namely: for the iambic and elegiac poets, M. L. West, *Iambi et Elegi Graeci* (2nd edn., Oxford, 1989–92); for the Lesbian poets, E.-M. Voigt, *Sappho et Alcaeus* (Amsterdam, 1971) (the numbers are nearly all the same as in the older edition of E. Lobel and D. L. Page, *Poetarum Lesbiorum Fragmenta* (Oxford, 1955)); for other melic poets, D. L. Page, *Poetae Melici Graeci* (Oxford, 1962) and *Supplementum Lyricis Graecis* (Oxford, 1974; numbers prefixed by S). Page's numerations are taken over in M. Davies, *Poetarum Melicorum Graecorum Fragmenta* (Oxford, 1991), of which one volume has so far appeared, containing Alcman, Stesichorus, and Ibycus. The Theognidea are provided with the continuous line-numbering used in all modern editions.

A row of three dots (. . .) indicates a gap in the preserved text; a row of five dots indicates a single missing line. Words partly or wholly restored by conjecture are enclosed in square brackets.