This little fragment does not seem to have ever aroused much interest in scholars. And yet it poses several problems and is quite instructive. For instance, in spite of its short scope, it is enough to refute Rudolf Pfeiffer’s dictum1) that ἐπειδὴ accompanied by an adjective (γυναικεῖον φύλον etc.) as equivalent to φύλον accompanied by a genitive noun is a relatively late ‘Attic’ idiom. However, the present note’s business is with the grammatical construction of the fragment. In what way are we to interpret τάδε? Should we take it with the following phrase (φύλα βροτήσια) and if so are the three words (1) vocative or (2) accusative? If accusative, who is being addressed? If (3) τάδε does not belong with the following phrase, the issue of who is being addressed is easier, but still not simple. What follows is merely an attempt to rank these possibilities in order of priority.

1) τάδε φύλα βροτήσια as vocative, with comma after μοι (‘tell me, you mortal races here’) can surely be dismissed as impossible Greek. What parallel is there for such a vocative ὅδε? Who would the addressee be? (2)(i) The same phrase as object of ἐπειδὴ (‘tell me these mortal races’) seems to be the solution advocated by Calame in his recent edition and commentary2). At least he prints the fragment as above, with no punctuation, and observes “les Muses, au plur. … représenteraient alors le sujet de ἐπειδὴ et la formule d’invocation constituée par ce vers serait analogue à celle qui ouvre Od. 1,1, l’h. Ven. 1, les h. Hom. 14,1 et 19,1 etc., et surtout le catalogue homérique des vaisseaux (II. 2,484)”. Well, yes; but the Odyssey does not begin ἐν διά μοι ἔννεπε τάνδε nor do any of the other epic passages cited by Calame provide a parallel for the pronoun3). We know from fr. 148 that Alcman in one of his compositions produced a catalogue of races (τοιαύτα καὶ τουλάχιστον ἐνθάνατο καταλέγει κτλ.), and one of our sources for this information is precisely the same author who cites fr. 106 in precisely the same context: Aelius Aristides. But this is hardly a strong argument in favour of taking τάδε φύλα βροτήσια as direct object of an imperative verb addressed to the Muses at the start of some sub-section of this catalogue, for Aristides introduces our fragment by telling us it occurred ‘elsewhere’ (Ἄλλαξσι) from fr. 148. Another possibility in this

1) Hermes 87 (1959) 3, in the course of his famous exposition of Alcman fr. 89.
2) Rome (1983) pp. 113 (text) and 468 f. (comment). Note too his translation (p. 278): ‘dites-moi ces races de mortels’.
3) Calame adds “sur un emploi éventuel de τάδε dans un contexte analogue d’explication des sources d’inspiration du chant, cf. fr. [39.1] (supra p. 480)”. This is doubly baffling, since p. 480 is not supra p. 469 and in both commentary and text Calame rejects Bergk’s conjecture ἔτη τάδε (“le démonstratif τάδε est peu compatible avec une formule qui est censée terminer un poème”), and prefers Diehl’s ἔτη δὲ γε. The MS (of Athenaeus) has ἔτη γε δὲ.
context (ii) is that an indirect question may originally have followed: ‘tell me Muses, as regards these mortal races: what is their x, y, and z?’

(3) ‘Tell me these things, you mortal races.’ This would seem to be the most popular interpretation of our fragment. The vast majority of editors print the fragment with a comma after τάδε; and this is how Campbell, for instance, translates it). M. L. West presupposes this rendering when he says* of the phrase βοτήσια ἔργα at Hes. Op. 773 “It gives the sentence an oracular tone, as if a god were speaking”, and compares our fragment, Parmenides B 6.4 f. DK, ἀπὸ τῆς (scil. ὅδου), ἣν δὴ βροτοί εἰδότες οὐδὲν / πλάττονται, διόρατον· ῥήματι γάρ ἐν αὐτῶν / στήθεσιν ὑθόνει πλακτὸν νόσον· οἷ δὲ φοροῦνται / κοινοὶ ὁμοί τυφλοί τε, τεθηρίτοτες, ἱχοῦτα φύλα / κτλ., and Ar. Av. 685 ff. ἦγε δὴ φύσιν ἀνάρχον ἄμαντος, φύλλων γενεά προσόμοιοι, / ὀλυγοδανέες, πλάσιμα πτιλοῦ, σκιοειδεά φύλ’ ἁμενήνα, / ἀπτήνες ἐφημέριοι, τάλαι βροτοί, ἀνέρρες εἰκελόνε- 

Perhaps one might further adduce the words of Silenus to Midas at Pind. fr. 157 Sn. ὁ τάλας ἔφαμε, νότια βάζεις / χρήματα μοι διακομπέων and Aristotle fr. 44 Rose δαμόνος ἐπιπόνου καὶ τύχης χαλεπῇς ἐφήμερον σπέρμα κτλ. Note too the tone of Socrates’ τί με καλεῖς, ἄφημε; (Nub. 223). In favour of this interpretation it must be said that Aristides himself introduces our fragment as an instance of what Alcman says when he has passed beyond mere divine inspiration (ἐνθεος) and speaks ὀπότε θεός τῶν ἄπο διηθηνῆς. It really sounds as if he should be doing more than invoking a plurality of Muses. All that remains to decide under this heading is whether τάδε rather than τάδε? would be not only more idiomatic (‘tell me this, you mortal races’) but what Alcman originally intended).

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4) E.g. Bergk and Diehl. It is Page (PMG p. 67) who omits any punctuation (as a caution against over-hasty preference for option (3)?).


6) In his note on the relevant passage of Hesiod’s Works and Days. The fragment as interpreted by its quoter sounds as if it came from a monodic poem, an eventuality not lightly to be discounted (cf. Gnomon 58 [1986] 387).

7) An emendation that has independently suggested itself to several colleagues. This is not to say that τάδε is impossible (compare side by side with the epic formula ἄλλ’ ἄγε μοι τόδε εἰπέ such passages as h. Herm. 199: ταύτα μοι εἰπέ), merely less plausible.

8) The corruption envisaged (assimilation to adjacent endings of words) would be easy enough at the best of times. When Alcman’s verses had been whittled down to the five that Aristides happens to quote it would be almost inescapable.