

THE SO-CALLED PRAYER TO THE FATES AND TIMOTHEUS' PERSAE

C. M. Bowra has in his famous “Greek Lyric Poetry” pp. 404–415 as Appendix II offered a full commentary on a poem of uncertain origin entitled by him: A Prayer to the Fates¹). Various suggestions have been made concerning its author, but most scholars – including Bowra himself – are inclined to regard Simonides as the master of it²); the ascriptions to the *Peleus* of Euripides and the *Phaedra* of Sophocles, which is clear from the manuscript of Stobaeus, have already been refuted by Wilamowitz³) and Nauck⁴).

- (a) κλύτε, Μοῖραι, Διὸς αἶ τε πα-
 ρὰ θρόνον ἀγχοτάτω θεῶν
 ἐξόμενοι περιώσι' ἄφυκτά τε
 μήδεα παντοδαπᾶν βου-
 λᾶν ἀδαμαντίναισιν ὑφαίνετε κερκίσιν.
- (b) Αἴσα (καὶ) Κλωθὴ Λάχεσις τ', εὐώλενοι
 κοῦραι Νυκτός,
 εὐχομένων ἐπακούσατ',
 οὐράναι χθοναίαι τε
 δαίμονες ὧ πανδείματοι·
 5 πέμπειτ' ἄμμιν (τᾶν) ῥοδόκολλον
 Εὐνομίαν λιπαροθρόνους τ' ἀδελφᾶς
 Δίκαν καὶ στεφανηφόρον Εἰράναν,
 πόλιν τε τάνδε βαρυφρόνων
 λελάθοιτε συντυχᾶν. (PMG fr. adesp. 1018 Page)⁵)

We are faced with what is clearly an invocation, and Bowra was right in regarding the poem as an opening section of a larger composition⁶). So now: is it possible to find such a composition into which the *Prayer* can be fitted, so that it suits both in respect to content and metre?

As the *Prayer* opens with an invocation of the Moirai one will have to look for a place where these deities were worshipped eventually together with Zeus with his epithet μοιραγέτης, but – as in the poem – with the Moirai mentioned and addressed before Zeus. This is the case in an inscription from Athens from the second half of the fifth century B.C.⁷).

Regarding a priori Athens as the πόλις mentioned in text (b) line 8 for which *Eunomia*, *Dike* and *Eirene* are wished, one should look for a continuation concern-

1) The text is quoted by Stobaeus Ecl. 1, 5, 12 (I 76f.). Other editions are: E. Diehl, Anth. Lyr. Gr. 2, 159–160. There is a good short commentary in H. W. Smyth, Greek Melic Poets 473–474.

2) Bowra, op. cit. 407, 415.

3) Wilamowitz, Isyllos von Epidauros 16ff.

4) Nauck, Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta, 2. ed., p. XX.

5) 'versuum divisio incertissima' Page in apparatu critico.

6) Bowra, op. cit. 408 and passim thereafter.

7) IG I³ 7, 11–12 an oracle from the Pythian Apollo, ca. 460–50 B.C.

ing a state of unrest or war. These conditions are fulfilled in Timotheus' *Persae* of which only the last third is preserved⁸⁾, but the final section is important in our case as column VI (vv. 237–240 PMG) has striking coincidences with the *Prayer to the Fates* which obviously belonged to an opening section of some lost composition:

ἀλλ' ἑκαταβόλε Πύθι' ἀγνὰν
 ἔλθοις τάνδε πόλιν σὺν ὄλβωι,
 πέμπων ἀπήμονι λαῶι
 240 τῶιδ' εἰρήναν θάλλουσαν εὐνομίαι.

The fact that the *Prayer* expresses hope for Eirene and Eunomia which will be granted in the above final section of the *Persae* yields a nice ring-composition, if we assume that the *Prayer* was the prooimion of the *Persae*. The “misfortunes which lie heavily on her (Athens) heart” (Bowra’s translation), are clearly the war with the Persians with the Greek disaster at Thermopylae in mind. Thus the *Persae* looks in my opinion like a war-report on the battle at Salamis from its opening to its happy end for the Greeks which is evident from ἀπήμονι λαῶι τῶιδ’.

The parallel to the Athenian victory at the naval battle at Cyzicus spring 411/0, which I think was the cause for Timotheus to write his *Persae*⁹⁾, is striking with the restoration of democracy thereafter, and Eunomia (Law and Order)¹⁰⁾.

Also metrically there is a striking coincidence between vv. 237–240 in the *Persae* and vv. 5–9 in fr. (b) of the *Prayer* as hinted at by D. Korzeniewski in his brilliant study, *Die Binnenresponson in den Persern des Timotheus*¹¹⁾:

The <i>Prayer</i> :	πέμπειτ' ἄμμιν (τὰν) ῥοδόκολπον Εὐνομίαν λιπαροθρόνους τ' ἀδελφὰς Δίκαν καὶ στεφανηφόρον Εἰρᾶναν, πόλιν τε τάνδε βαρυφρόνων λελάθοιτε συντυχίαν.	~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~
Timotheus:	ἀλλ' ἑκαταβόλε Πύθι' ἀγνὰν ἔλθοις τάνδε πόλιν σὺν ὄλβωι, πέμπων ἀπήμονι λαῶι τῶιδ' 240 εἰρήναν θάλλουσαν εὐνομίαι.	~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

From Satyrus we learn that the prooimion of Timotheus' *Persae* was written not by Timotheus himself, but by Euripides¹²⁾. This corresponds well with the account of Stobaeus, who derives fr. 1018 (a) from Euripides' *Peleus* from before 423 B.C. Timotheus could have repeated that passage in honour of the tragedian in 410/9. Thus Satyrus' account will still suit, and fr. 1018 (b) was then written not by Simonides as rightly stated by Page¹³⁾, but by Timotheus himself.

8) Page, *Poetae Melici Graeci*, fr. 791. Editio princeps: Wilamowitz, *Timotheus, Die Perser* (Leipzig 1903).
 9) See O. Hansen, *On the Date and Place of the First Performance of Timotheus' Persae*, *Philologus* 128 (1984) 137.
 10) Timotheus' *Persae*, line 240. The *Prayer* line 6 in fr. 1018 (b). Cf. Hansen, art. cit. 137–138.
 11) *Philologus* 118 (1974) 23–24, with note 9.
 12) P. Oxy. 1176 col. 22, 166f. Hansen, art. cit. 137 with n. 4.
 13) *Apparatus criticus ad loc.*

Finally mention should be made of an account of Pausanias, who quotes a passage from the beginning of the *Persae*¹⁴). In my opinion this passage is not part of the proimion, as Pausanias does not use that term, but of the beginning of the ode itself.

Athens

Ove Hansen

14) Fr. 788 PMG. Paus. 8, 50, 3. Cf. Plut. Philopoem. 11,3.

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