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SIMONIDES' DANAE FRAGMENT RECONSIDERED

PATRICIA A. ROSENMEYER

Simonides has long been admired for the "pathetic" style of his poetry. Alluding to this reputation, Catullus entreats a fellow poet for some sympathetic words: *paulum quid lubet allocutionis / maestius lacrimis Simonideis* (38.7-8: "Please grant me just one little word, more mournful than the tears of Simonides"). Horace contrasts lighter and livelier verses with the lyric dirges of the Cean poet: *sed ne relictis, Musa procax, iocis / Ceae retractes munera neniae* . . . (*Odes* 2.1.37-38: "But in case you abandon, reckless Muse, these playful themes, and turn back to the task of Cean lament . . ."). Not only poets, but also ancient literary critics perpetuated the image of Simonides as a writer of poignant, emotional poetry. Quintilian summarizes Simonides' skills with reference to the "propriety" and charm of his language, but emphasizes that the poet's greatest talent lies in his power to excite pity in the audience: *Simonides, tenuis alioqui, sermone proprio et iucunditate quadam commendari potest; praecipua tamen eius in commovenda miseratione virtus, ut quidam in hac eum parte omnibus eius operis auctoribus praeferant* (*Inst.Or.*10.1.64: "Simonides, writing as a general rule in a simple style, may nevertheless be recommended for the propriety of his language and a certain charm. His particular skill, however, consists of his ability to excite pity, so that some men prefer him in this respect to all other authors of this type").[1] "Longinus," in

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1 See also the *vita Aeschyli* for Simonides' defeat of Aeschylus in a competition for the elegy in honor of those who fell at Marathon: the verses of Simonides satisfied the audience because "elegy in particular must have the delicacy required to arouse sympathy" (τὸ γὰρ ἐλεγεῖον πολὺ τῆς περὶ τὸ συμπαθὲς λεπτότητος μετέχειν θέλει

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contrast, views Simonides' pathos as romantic exaggeration, sensationalism beyond the limits of credibility (*de subl.* 15.7-8).[2] While the tone may vary in these passages, the evidence for "pathos" and a strong emotional impact on the reader is consistent.[3]

Such unanimity of opinion in antiquity tempts the modern critic to focus entirely on the "pathetic" in the surviving fragments, and what was formerly a description of selected poems soon becomes a restrictive categorization of the whole corpus. The text under discussion in this paper, however, has come down to us under very different circumstances. It was not selected and transmitted as an example of Simonidean pathos, but rather as a stylistic curiosity, a metrical challenge to the student of literary composition. Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*comp. verb.* 26) discusses it among other texts which involve melody and meter and yet bear a strong resemblance to prose.[4] The lyric poets, he claims, compose in many meters, and vary the length and sound of clauses and divisions, so that often the rhythms are impossible to recognize and define; even the usage of poetical and obscure vocabulary will not rescue these texts from a deceptive stylistic similarity to prose. Dionysius then offers his challenge, transcribing the lines of Simonides without the conventional divisions of lyric verse:[5]

> ἐκ δὲ τῆς μελικῆς τὰ Σιμωνίδεια ταῦτα· γέγραπται δὲ κατὰ διαστολὰς οὐχ ὧν 'Αριστοφάνης ἢ ἄλλος τις κατεσκεύασε κώλων ἀλλ' ὧν ὁ πεζὸς λόγος ἀπαιτεῖ. πρόσεχε δὴ τῷ μέλει καὶ ἀναγίνωσκε κατὰ διαστολάς, καὶ εὖ ἴσθ' ὅτι λήσεταί σε ὁ ῥυθμὸς τῆς

... *vit. Aesch.* Page 1972.332, lines 5-10). See also Dionysius of Halicarnassus on Simonides' skills (περὶ μιμήσεως 420-21 Usener): τὸ οἰκτίζεσθαι μὴ μεγαλοπρεπῶς ... ἀλλὰ παθητικῶς.

2 "Longinus" (*de subl.* 15.7-8) states that no poet had depicted the sad scene of Achilles appearing above his tomb to the departing Greeks more vividly (ἐναργέστερον) than Simonides. This romantic exaggeration in poetry, he says, contrasts with the use of imagery in oratory, which always adheres to tenets of reality and truth.

3 In a wider sense, the vivid and emotional impact of words etching a picture in the reader's imagination is condensed into a manifesto of the poet's art, as reported by Plutarch, *de glor. Ath.* 346F: πλὴν ὁ Σιμωνίδης τὴν μὲν ζωγραφίαν ποίησιν σιωπῶσαν προσαγορεύει, τὴν δὲ ποίησιν ζωγραφίαν λαλοῦσαν.

4 Apart from this source, a few lines of the poem also appear in Athenaeus 9.396e, who quotes the beginning of Danae's speech to define the word γαλαθηνός.

5 Text and translation from Roberts 1910.278-9.

> ᾠδῆς καὶ οὐχ ἕξεις συμβαλεῖν οὔτε στροφὴν οὔτε ἀντίστροφον οὔτ' ἐπῳδόν, ἀλλὰ φανήσεταί σοι λόγος εἷς εἰρόμενος. ἔστι δὲ ἡ διὰ πελάγους φερομένη Δανάη τὰς ἑαυτῆς ἀποδυρομένη τύχας·
>
> From lyric poetry the subjoined lines of Simonides may be taken. They are written according to divisions: not into those clauses for which Aristophanes or some other metrist laid down his canons, but into those which are required by prose. Please read the piece carefully by divisions: you may rest assured that the rhythmical arrangement of the ode will escape you, and you will be unable to guess which is the strophe or which the antistrophe or which the epode, but you will think it all one continuous piece of prose. The subject is Danaë, borne across the sea lamenting her fate . . .

By quoting out of context, removing any trace of frame other than his own text, and by obliterating the customary metrical divisions which mark responsion of stanzas, Dionysius reduces the text to a riddle; he also opens up an area of research for generations of scholars, bent on solving the insoluble: "you may rest assured that the rhythmical arrangement of the ode will escape you. . . ."

There are two ways, not necessarily mutually exclusive, in which scholars have approached the Danae fragment in the past: as philologists concerned with meter and responsion, or as literary critics interested more in the content and tone of the piece. The lengthy debate on colometry and metrical analysis is not the issue here,[6] but

6 Numerous articles on the subject include authors such as Nietzsche (1868), Blass (1873), Headlam (1900), von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1913, 1975), Garrod (1922), Koster (1926), Schroeder (1933), Davison (1935, 1952), Perrotta (1951), Page (1951), Pavese (1967), R. Führer (1976), and M. L. West (1981). Note also the discussions of meter and colometry in the editions of G. Perrotta and B. Gentili 1953.300-304, B. Marzullo 1965.177-80, and especially E. Degani and G. Burzacchini 1977.322-29. For a general bibliography, see P. A. Bernardini 1969.149-51 and D. Gerber 1968.265-79, 317-30, 373-85. For a brief literary discussion of the poem see A. P. Burnett 1985.12-14. In the discussion that follows, I will accept the colometry of Degani and Burzacchini (1977), and push the status of the written text further than some critics will accept. Thus, while acknowledging that the cola as determined by the editors may not be strongly-felt boundaries, I will still posit examples of, e.g., enjambement and displacement; I will also assume a beginning and an end to the

the literary analyses will concern us rather more.

Most modern critics seem to ignore the implications of the lack of context and engage instead in a full discussion of the "pathos," "humanity," or "realism" of the text. They claim that the poem matches perfectly with the stereotype of Simonides presented above. Thus Bowra, arguing somewhat circularly, uses the poem to support a generalization: "These deservedly famous lines show how well justified was Simonides' reputation for pathos . . . the pathos is truly dramatic."[7] Hermann Fränkel also uses the fragment to shed light on the author, emphasizing emotional depth: "The fragment gives a brilliant illustration of the poet's ability to feel sympathy, in a concrete instance, for human suffering and human confidence. . . ."[8] This critic labels the poem the "first Madonna-painting in Greek literature," thus contaminating his reading with a non-archaic bias (although markedly consistent with Simonides' own views of his poetry as reported by Plutarch),[9] which leads to such loaded phrases as "this precious scrap of poetry," or "the formulation almost touches on the sublime."[10] Fränkel's reverent observations on a pagan miracle contrast sharply with Bowra's curious insistence on the "naturalness" of this portrayal of mother and child: "The chest is a real chest, carved and fitted with bolts of bronze. The child sleeps, as the son of a princess should, in his purple cloak . . . Simonides . . . sees all as a real chapter of human experience."[11] Both these approaches, the holy miracle of maternal love and the realistic psychological drama, say more about the absent text than the surviving lines. The fact that there is really no way to determine the literary genre or compositional context of this piece opens the way for general assumptions of emotional nuance and pathos. But all this "atmosphere," I would suggest, is created and fostered by the text's fragmentary status. The romanticizing interpretations of the critics offer homage to the modern cult of the fragment

poem based on the preserved text. In short, this interpretation focuses on the poem as it appears on the page.

7 Bowra 1961.338. Bowra's use of the term "dramatic" recalls Quintilian's interest in Simonides' ability to excite emotions in an audience.

8 Fränkel 1975.315.

9 See above n. 3.

10 Fränkel 1975.316.

11 Bowra 1961.338-39.

without acknowledging the anachronistic nature of their judgements.

Returning to the only context we have for this text, we recall the fact of its transmission by a literary critic to clarify a linguistic and stylistic point, namely that lyric poetry, without certain distinguishing signs, may closely resemble prose.[12] Lyric meter depends wholly on limits and repetitions, markers which differentiate strophe, antistrophe, and epode. With the removal of these markers, and the suppression of beginning and end, the text floats free, outside the rules and regulations of lyric meter; it refuses to fulfill the expectations of a reader who depends on generic rules for comprehension. The excerption by a critic thus both destroys and creates a frame. It abolishes the fragment's status as lyric poetry by removing the traces and signposts of meter and responsion — the text reads like continuous prose, claims Dionysius;[13] but the same act of excerption, with its explicit admission of the game being played on the reader, also asserts the particularly literary quality of the fragment as such. Dionysius openly teases his readers, who will be confused as to whether they are reading poetry or oratory, but the fact of a literary identity remains unchallenged. The critic plays with generic boundaries within the larger frame of literature.[14] Once we remove the poem from its context within the critical essay, however, the lack of a frame to guide and control our response to the text forces us to accept a partially obstructed perspective, namely that of privileging the surviving fragment. The fragment is thus defined as poetry by the simultaneous presence (of the text) and absence (of the context/pretext/postscript), which highlights the text in isolation.

A frame, or lack of frame, strongly affects our reading of any text. If it were determined, for example, that the Danae fragment

12 Dionysius (*comp. verb.* 26) compares good quality lyric verse to a piece of fine oratorical prose: οὐκ ἂν ἁμαρτάνοι τις τὰ μὲν ἐοικότα τῷ καλῷ λόγῳ ποιήματα καλὰ ἡγούμενος.

13 See translation above: "you will think it all one continuous piece of prose." Horace (*Sat.* 1.4.56-62) plays a similar game of textual rearrangement, although he steps beyond metrical division to word order, but then experiences the opposite result, namely that the "*disiecti membra poetae*" remain.

14 The Simonides text is the final example to prove his point in a series which includes Homer (*Od.* 14.1-7) and Euripides (Telephus fr. 696 Nauck). Within this essay on literary composition the fragment functions solely as an exemplum and needs no additional explanation as to its presence. The lack of a clear beginning or metrical pattern in the selection is attributable to Dionysius, whose intent it is to convince his readers of its stylistic "prosiness."

originally existed as part of an epinician ode, we would immediately alter our reading of the myth, fitting it into and justifying its context. As it is, however, the contextual emptiness surrounding the text allows the reader's imagination a great deal of room in which to manoeuvre. Previous descriptions of this text including remarks on pathos, atmosphere, and mood, are markedly constituted by the fact of excerption. It is questionable, of course, whether any appreciation of the text can look through the given (non)frame without being affected by it; the presentation inevitably exaggerates the "literariness" of the piece, whether as prose or as poetry. The text as a cameo swiftly acquires the status of a precious object, and the missing lines only intensify and increase its value.

Although it has been uprooted, however, the fragment cannot be read in complete isolation. After the naming of Perseus, any reading will also be influenced by familiarity with the myth. Simonides has chosen an unusual moment in the sequence of events — after the initial exposure and before the landing on Seriphos[15] — but the text plays with the narrative recall of the "whole" myth. The absence of recorded context is thus balanced by the presence of the story in mythic memory. The reader, recognizing a few important clues, knows the basic facts of how the story began, how this particular episode fits into a sequence, and how it will all end. This omniscient viewpoint controls certain responses: the pathos and uncertainty of Danae's words, for example, are saturated with the assurance that all will end well; the curious chest is revealed as a piece of the nativity furniture, the threatening storm part of the ordeal of a hero and a sign of his eventual transcendence. The recall of the myth, in fact, puts the reader in an arena much larger than that of the confines of any one fragment. This function of myth effectively replaces the missing beginning and end of our fragment. The excerption thus omits part of the story only to expose the text to free-play by the reader with narrative recall of the myth. The limitation imposed by the lack of narrative frame becomes a sudden abundance of narrative options.

I noted above that most modern interpretations which venerate

[15] Fränkel 1975.315-16. Fränkel remarks on the novelty of this choice, but it must be stressed that while this observation holds true for the fragment, we do not know if it was true of the text from which it was taken.

the fragmentary nature of the text and romanticize the pathos of the poem are unduly influenced by ancient stereotypes of Simonides. I would argue here first for an awareness of the consequences of this influence, and secondly for a reconsideration of the information provided by Dionysius. The literary critic preserves Simonides' text to be read for its linguistic interest, for the arbitrariness of its stylistic categories, and as proof of the fragility of literary conventions. Dionysius muddles the line distinctions to prove that the same words read in a different rhythm can confuse the reader. The example makes a statement about genre expectations, but also about communication in general and the possibilities for misinterpretation: one subtle alteration of the verbal pace and poetry is taken for prose.[16] It is my contention that these verses not only illustrate Dionysius' points about literary language and communication through different genres, but that the verses are actually about this very topic. I would propose accordingly, and will attempt to explain in the following pages, that the Simonides fragment primarily concerns language, both its power and its weaknesses. The poet sings here about Danae singing about not being listened to. The text crackles with the constant tension of attempts at communication and the apparent futility of human speech or understanding. Messages are sent out into the void, and the intended audience never responds, in word or action, within the confines of the fragment.

The text supports this approach on the level of content. The storm appears first in the given sequence, establishing a scene of vivid confusion. Can we "overhear" or understand Danae in all that noise? Can other potential rescuers hear her, or can she even hear herself speak? What sort of audience or lack of audience defines her state, locked in a chest, cast adrift in an ocean storm? Danae's words function throughout to gain attention, to seek help, but the roaring wind threatens to overcome her voice, and the fragment remains an expression of solitude. Is Danae alone because she cries out to deaf ears, or, *because* she speaks, is she, in her own mind at least, not alone? This last question is brought to the forefront by the use of two

[16] When the wrong generic expectations are evoked, the message is inevitably garbled and the reader's response confused. For a clear discussion of this potential confusion within a poetics of lyric, see Culler 1975.161-88.

specific verbal patterns: the lullaby and the prayer. Danae's address to her child is purely one-sided: the child is *"infans,"* ignorant of language, unable to participate in verbal exchange. Even as Danae voices a wish for some sign of comprehension from him, she acknowledges that it is impossible. Her words take on metalingual overtones as she comments on their uselessness. The next step is a prayer to Zeus, begging for assistance or some mark of his presence, at the very least. But her invocation again produces ambiguous results: does it establish and highlight the god's obvious absence, or does it manage to bridge the gap and communicate with the silent divinity? Danae seems never more alone than at these moments of reaching out for a connection, of singing about not being heard.

At this point I would like to turn to a close reading of the text, with a particular focus on the use of language, while temporarily underplaying the emotional impact of the verses. Remarks about structure will assume, for lack of better information, that the text is self-contained and "complete." I reproduce below the text from Degani and Burzacchini and supply my own translation.

ὅτε λάρνακι ἐπ.
ἐν δαιδαλέᾳ
ἄνεμός τέ μιν πνέων
κινηθεῖσά τε λίμνα δείματι
5 ἔρειπεν, οὐκ ἀδιάντοισι παρειαῖς
ἀμφί τε Περσεῖ βάλε<ν> φίλαν χέρα εἶπ-
εν τ'· "ὦ τέκος,
οἷον ἔχω πόνον· στρ.
σὺ δ' ἀωτεῖς, γαλαθηνῷ δ' ἤθεϊ κνώσ-
σεις ἐν ἀτερπεῖ δούρατι
χαλκεογόμφῳ, νυκτί <τ' ἀ>λαμπεῖ
10 κυανέῳ τε δνόφῳ ταθείς.
ἅλμαν δ' ὕπερθεν τεᾶν κομᾶν βαθεῖαν
παριόντος κύματος οὐκ
ἀλέγεις οὐδ' ἀνέμου φθόγ-
γον πορφυρέᾳ κείμενος ἐν
χλανίδι καλὸν πρόσωπον.
εἰ δέ τοι δεινὸν τό γε δεινὸν ἦν,

καί κεν ἐμῶν ῥημάτων λεπ-
τὸν ὑπεῖχες οὖας.
15 κέλομαι δ' εὗδε, βρέφος, εὑδέτω δὲ πόντος,
εὑδέτω <δ'> ἄμετρον κακόν·
μεταβουλία δέ τις φανείη,
Ζεῦ πάτερ, ἐκ σέο. ἀντ.
ὅτι δὴ θαρσαλέον ἔπος εὔχομαι κ<αὶ>
νόσφι δίκας, σύγγνωθί μοι."

When, inside the curiously designed ark
the blowing wind and the crashing waves
cast her down in fear, with wet cheeks
she threw her arms around Perseus, and spoke:
"My child, such grief I bear; but you slumber,
dozing milk-filled in this joyless brass-bound box,
stretched out in the dark night and the murky gloom.
You pay no heed to the deep swell
of the waves rushing by above your head,
nor to the voice of the wind,
a lovely face lying wrapped in purple cloth.
If this danger were indeed a danger to you,
then you might offer your delicate ear to my words.
But I say 'sleep, my baby; let the sea sleep,
and let the measureless evil sleep.'
Perhaps some change of mind might reveal itself,
Father Zeus, from you.
But if what I pray is bold and improper,
please forgive me."

The fragment divides fairly symmetrically into three parts: two shorter sections (1-6, 15-19) frame a longer central section (6-14). Within this framework, the mode of representation shifts from impersonal narration to direct, first-person speech in Danae's "monologue."[17] The opening description, appearing *"in medias res"* as a result of the fragmentation (or editorial selection), presents the setting and the situation: we read of wind and waves, an ornate chest, some-

[17] Cf. Aristotle *Poetics* 1448a 19-22 on the practice of this mixed mode by Homer.

one crying in the storm, and Perseus. The central section contains the bulk of Danae's address to her child; the poet's perspective merges smoothly into the character's, as she offers further insights into their predicament. Her words are descriptive and introspective, full of synonyms to emphasize the trapped and hopeless nature of the situation: four out of nine verbs imply "sleep" or "lying down" (8: ἀωτεῖς, κνώσσεις; 10: ταθείς; 12: κείμενος), four out of ten adjectives suggest darkness or gloom (8: ἀτερπεῖ; 9: ἀλαμπεῖ; 10: κυανέῳ; 12: πορφυρέᾳ).[18] This section is static, portraying in detail a slumbering baby, ignorant of the surrounding danger which seems somehow held in check by his very lack of concern. The final section presents an attempt by the speaker to control the situation, to turn from fear and despair to faith in the powers of salvation and the cooperation of natural forces. As Danae takes courage and directs her words outwards, the shift from passivity to action is marked by a number of verbs, two of which are performative verbs in the first person (15: κέλομαι; 19: εὔχομαι) and four of which are imperatives (15: εὗδε, εὑδέτω; 16: εὑδέτω; 19: σύγγνωθι).

A brief glance at the text reveals a host of figures and poetic devices: alliteration, assonance, enjambement, litotes, and verbal ambiguities. The text incorporates and emphasizes various functions of language at different stages:[19] the speaker attempts to catch the attention of an audience, to establish or prolong conversation, or to express emotion through interjections. Occasionally the poetic function dominates, and the content of the message becomes secondary (but complementary) to the sonority of expression. But all this is best discussed in context, as follows.

ὅτε λάρνακι ἐπ.
ἐν δαιδαλέᾳ
ἄνεμός τέ μιν πνέων
κινηθεῖσά τε λίμνα δείματι
5 ἔρειπεν, οὐκ ἀδιάντοισι παρειαῖς

[18] The textual problems surrounding the Greek of line 9 (νυκτί <τ' ἀ> λαμπεῖ) are notorious; see the discussion in West 1981.31.

[19] In my analysis I have benefited from Roman Jakobson's schema of factors and functions of verbal communication, summarized in Jakobson 1960.350-77.

ἀμφί τε Περσεῖ βάλε<ν> φίλαν χέρα εἶπ-
εν τ'· "ὦ τέκος,

The initial word (ὅτε) sets up a tension which will remain unresolved until the verb of the subordinate clause crops up in line 5 (ἔρειπεν), and the phrase still floats incomplete until the end of the main clause in line 6.[20] This discrepancy between metrical (as reconstructed by the editors) and syntactical division,[21] in which the verse boundary is imposed before the conclusion of the phrase (i.e., enjambement), upholds on a stylistic level the context of confusion; the language of suspense and deferred sense supplies an eloquent backdrop to a scene of emotional and physical turbulence. Similarly, in line 3, the object (μιν) is displaced from its verb (ἔρειπεν) and tossed in near the participle "flowing" (πνέων) with its noun "wind" (ἄνεμος), so that the actual words (signifiers) are as blown about and isolated as their subjects (signifieds). The tempest is thus much more than a backdrop. It is the force that pulls us as readers headfirst into the poem, insisting on a reading through all the dizziness of the storm into the sanctuary of the λάρναξ. It withholds grammatical sense until line 6, by which time we are caught by the curiousness of the scene and the power of the phrasing. A straightforward description would not have the same effect as this in which the storm focuses on human (re)action: now howling in unison with Danae's fear and desperation, it will later contrast with Perseus' peaceful sleep. The environment is an integral part of the situation.[22]

Before the onslaught of the elements, and isolated on the page by colometric reconstruction, we catch a glimpse inside an ornate chest (1-2: . . . λάρνακι / ἐν δαιδαλέᾳ). Both words independently evoke an epic past. Homer uses λάρναξ in two distinct ways: as a box for valuables and money, e.g., household stores or tools (*Il.* 18.413; v. Hdt. 3.123, Bacch. 5.141: λ. δαιδαλέᾳ), and as a funerary urn or coffin (*Il.* 24.795 of Hector's ashes; v. Thuc. 2.34).[23] The word δαιδάλεος in Homer is applied consistently to

[20] "Loose" word order is, of course, characteristic of all poetic syntax, but the "performative" aspect of this case is particularly marked.

[21] Jakobson 1960.367.

[22] Along similar lines, see Perrotta 1951.114.

[23] Later authors use λάρναξ to mean the ark of Deucalion (Luc. *Syr. D.* 12, Apollod.

curiously wrought metal or wood, often implying divine provenance (e.g., *Il.* 4.135: Menelaus' belt; 8.195: Diomedes' breastplate; 19.380: Achilles' shield; *Od.* 1.131: Athena's chair). Hesiod confirms the implications of supernaturalism and cunning in the word, describing Athena's gift to Pandora as an "embroidered veil . . . a wonder to behold" (Hes. *Th.* 575: καλύπτρην / δαιδαλέην . . . θαῦμα ἰδέσθαι).[24] The resulting semantic ambiguity between a carved chest of household treasures and a cunningly designed coffin is particularly relevant to this fragment. The λάρναξ is many things at once: a continuation of Danae's original incarceration, a cradle rocked by the ocean, a displaced chest bearing precious cargo, a potential funerary urn, and an ark of eventual salvation.

The λάρναξ of the first six lines functions as a slim but important barrier between the excesses of the storm and the unhappy mother and child. The text compares and contrasts images of human and elemental boundaries. In the first section, the wind howls and the waves are stirred up, while Danae clasps her child and speaks out. The connectives (τέ or τ') in lines 3-4 and 6-7 produce a chiastic pattern of verbal and physical actions: the aggressive voice of the wind and the motion of the waves provoke the protective motion and comforting words of the mother. In other cases, the boundaries are not so well defined. For example, the ocean is κινηθεῖσα (4), which could imply an emotional as well as a physical disturbance. The ocean and wind combine to knock Danae down (4-5: δείματι / ἔρειπεν). The emphatic placement of the verb suggests a concrete "casting down," as if against a rock in a conventional shipwreck scene, but the image retains a level of abstraction, both because the text actually reads "cast her down in terror," and because we see in the sea and storm a symbol for the larger, more frightening fate which has struck her down.[25] The sea blends with Danae's despair in the litotes of "not unwetted cheeks" (5:

1.7.2), or a box for exposing children at birth (Diod. Sic. 5.62.1). Compare the double inversion of the second meaning in Ap. Rhod. 1.622, where Hypsipyle exposes her father Thoas in a λάρναξ in order to save him from certain death.

24 Euripides (*Hec.* 470) also uses the word in the context of embroidered cloth; cf. of natural objects, "dappled," "spotted," or "shiny," as in Alexis 17 (Kock *CAF* 2.303) of a fish or Nonnus *Dion.* 5.391 of a deer; it may also be applied to pure cunning (*A.P.* 9.755).

25 See Degani and Burzacchini 1977.325. Their note on line 4 reads as follows: "δείματι . . . esso e variamente interpretato come di mezzo, di modo, o di causa."

οὐκ ἀδιάντοισι παρειαῖς): do her cheeks stream with tears, or with the spray of the salt sea rushing in through the chinks in the box?[26]

In line 6, the action moves to a human plane as Danae cradles her child.[27] The naming of Perseus presents the reader with the first real point of reference in the fragment, since Danae herself is never named; her voice in the lyric is represented as an entity only obliquely in the two occurrences of the pronouns μιν (3) and μοι (19). We see the details of her dripping cheeks and her enveloping arms, and we hear her words; but the parts remain discrete, and the whole image is unformed.[28] The mother exists subordinate to her child, in the shadow of his future. Danae the individual is merely hinted at, as she "kept quiet about herself . . . but . . . kept pleading for her child's life."[29]

"ὦ τέκος, στρ.
οἷον ἔχω πόνον·
σὺ δ' ἀωτεῖς, γαλαθηνῷ δ' ἤθεϊ κνώσ-
σεις ἐν ἀτερπεῖ δούρατι
χαλκεογόμφῳ, νυκτί <τ' ἀ>λαμπεῖ
10 κυανέῳ τε δνόφῳ ταθείς.
ἅλμαν δ' ὕπερθεν τεᾶν κομᾶν βαθεῖαν
παριόντος κύματος οὐκ
ἀλέγεις οὐδ' ἀνέμου φθόγ-
γον πορφυρέᾳ κείμενος ἐν
χλανίδι καλὸν πρόσωπον.
εἰ δέ τοι δεινὸν τό γε δεινὸν ἦν,
καί κεν ἐμῶν ῥημάτων λεπ-
τὸν ὑπεῖχες οὖας.

The central section, cued by the reference to direct speech,

26 It is worth noting the number of alpha-privative words in this fragment, as they serve to emphasize the negative prospects of Danae's situation without completely ignoring the potentially positive outcome.

27 If we accept the text of *PMG* 543.6: βάλλε instead of βάλε<ν>, then dactyls structure Danae's instinctive protective movement; could there be an epic or mythic nuance to this metrical pattern, to give added color to the naming of the hero?

28 For a similar approach to description in the poetry of Sappho, see Burnett 1983.209-313.

29 Lucian *Dial. Mar.* 12: ὑπὲρ αὑτῆς μὲν ἐσίγα. . . . τὸ βρέφος δὲ παρῃτεῖτο μὴ ἀποθανεῖν δακρύουσα. . . .

continues in a vein of self-sacrifice and meekness: the antithetical statement with which Danae opens her speech (6-8: "my child, such grief I bear; but you slumber . . .") concedes a mere three words to her agitation, while the remaining phrases depict Perseus' sleep. She assigns her son center stage from the first emotional apostrophe (6: ὦ τέκος) and the δέ clause beginning with σύ (8), which receives added emphasis from its placement in the line. Danae's initial words are conative as she tries to catch her child's attention with vocative and emotive utterances. In fact, the sound patterns of the vowels in lines 6-7 (ὦ τέκος/ οἷον ἔχω πόνον) resemble one extended interjection of mourning (οἴμοι/ὤμοι). The words resound with the emotive babble of "o" and "oi" sounds. The phrase reinforces its meaning by sound and repetition, echoing the moaning and groaning of grief. The grief itself exists on many levels: the baby held in her arms, the pain in her heart, and the all-encompassing evil of her fate as a mother, defined by, yet prohibited from motherhood, the least honored of Zeus' "wives."

Danae's grief is then juxtaposed with and intensified by Perseus' peaceful sleep, although the same thread of fear and uncertainty runs through this section; even the quiet power of the child's ignorance cannot dispel the gloom and darkness: "but you slumber, dozing milk-filled in this joyless brass-bound box, stretched out in the dark night and the murky gloom." The rich ambiguity of several levels of darkness — the concrete cavern of the chest, the vault of the night sky, the vast ocean, and the metaphorical dim future — adds to the visual and poetic impact.[30] The small glimmer of brass bindings in the murk only emphasizes the solitude of two small figures adrift on an expanse of

30 Jakobson 1960.370-71: "ambiguity is an intrinsic, inalienable character of any self-focused message, briefly a corollary feature of poetry." By eliminating the ambiguity, scholars would reduce the image to a drier, less suggestive either/or situation. See, for example, Irwin 1974.103: "It is possible that Simonides chose κυάνεος to represent the dark blue of the night sky, but more likely that he simply meant 'dark' "; also von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 1886.148: "Es ist nicht wirklich Nacht: aber die ehernen Riegel des Kastens sperren das Licht aus. Es ist keine wirkliche lichtlose Finsternis, die die Arche umgibt: es ist das Blau der Meerestiefe." Fränkel 1975.316 sees this passage as an example of "typical Ionian clarity: even the colors are few in number, but strong and simple." Simplicity, rather than ambiguity, is for these critics a measure of poetic success. In a different context, but along more promising lines, Tarrant 1960.181-87 argues for extended, metaphorical meanings of light (truth, fame, salvation) and dark (danger, deceit, obscurity).

sea. Their abandonment is highlighted by these hints of false hope, flashing distress signals which pass on a message received by no one at all.[31]

Lines 8-10 are tightly constructed. Each verb of sleeping is surrounded by an ablative of manner or place. Repetitions of δέ and τέ create a careful overall balance, as do the parallel alpha-privatives of ἀτερπεῖ (8) and <ἀ>λαμπεῖ (9). The word γαλαθηνός evokes the image of a sucking young animal, helpless and unable to communicate beyond its basic needs.[32] The verb κνώσσεις is poetic,[33] as is the adjective "joyless" applied to a plank; although it is easily understood in context, the transferral of the epithet from human to material object is somewhat harsh. But like the storm, the wooden chest takes on attributes in connection with its contents. Thus χαλκεόγομφος (a ἅπαξ), rather than denoting just solid craftsmanship, alludes also to the cruelty of a brass-bound prison, impossible to escape.[34] The night is a dark one,[35] with no stars or moon to act as guides, and the promising light of Perseus' future κλέος remains locked up in an obscure black box. This is the hero's first trial, as his rites of manhood are compressed into the ritual of birth and exposure.

It was emphasized above that the κυάνεος δνόφος (10) could suggest an entire ocean, a closed chamber, or the night sky. Considering for a moment the latter reading, we note that the verb τείνω (10: ταθείς) is often applied to the night itself, "stretched out" over sleeping mortals.[36] The reverse effect, then, of Perseus stretched out in the dark night is striking. On the other hand, in the context of battle, Homer also uses the verb to describe fallen warriors, stretched out on

31 In Jakobson's terms, code and contact are both missing, not to mention an addressee.

32 See instances of the word in *Od.* 4.336; Anacr. 408.2 (*PMG*) of a fawn; Theoc. 18.41 of a lamb; Hdt. 1.183 of flocks; Crates 1 (*CAF* 1.130) and Pherecr. 28 (*CAF* 1.153) of lambs and pigs, etc; also, Athenaeus' collection of definitions (9.396e).

33 Degani and Burzacchini 1977.326 claim "e verbo raro," but I would disagree. Cf. *Od.* 4.809; Pind. *O.* 13.71, *P.*1.8; Theoc. 21.65; Agathias *AP* 5.294.11.

34 The brass rivets may also remind the reader of Danae's earlier incarceration in an underground, bronze-lined chamber; this prison has been described as similar to Atreus' treasure house (Paus. 2.23.7), but in later versions, as well as in art and folk motif, it metamorphoses into a high stone tower.

35 ἀλαμπής: Soph. *Trach.* 691 of sunlight; Plu. *Phoc.* 1.2 and Bacch. 13.175 of fame; see also Treu 1965.83-97.

36 E.g., *Od.* 11.19: νὺξ . . . τέταται . . . βροτοῖσι; Theog. 1077: ὄρφνη γὰρ τέταται.

the ground in death.[37] There may be suggestions of imminent death in certain details of the Simonides passage: the focus on delicate hair and body parts, for example, occurs in Homer at the moment when hair is dragged in the dust, or limbs are stained with blood; the bundle of purple cloth hints at both royal and funerary implications. The description of Perseus' total passivity in the darkness thus points toward death as well as sleep, but the construct of the myth works to adjust and correct these forebodings of doom.

Lines 11 and 12 refocus on the storm: "the deep swell of the waves rushing by. . . ." The repeated sounds of the wave (ἅλμαν) echo throughout the line in assonance: ἅλμαν δ᾽ ὕπερθεν τεᾶν κομᾶν βαθεῖαν (11). The wave threatens both below the ark (βαθεῖαν) and above it (ὕπερθεν); the tiny head of Perseus (τεᾶν κομᾶν) is engulfed not only by the deep wave completely surrounding it on the line (ἅλμαν . . . βαθεῖαν),[38] but also by its synonym at the end of the phrase, παριόντος κύματος (12). The continuous roll of the ocean forms an arch, as it were, cresting above and crashing down again unremittingly.

After this vivid description of the elements we discover that Perseus has not noticed a thing: "You pay no heed to the deep swell of the waves rushing by above your head, nor to the voice of the wind" (12). The reader almost expects a double litotes in the metrically identical οὐκ ἀλέγεις οὐδ᾽ ἀνέμου, but then perceives instead two non-alpha-privative words with very different grammatical functions.[39] Danae claims that the baby ignores the ἀνέμου φθόγγον (12); the word for voice here, selected from a variety of possibilities for an indistinct sound, denotes rather a clear distinct noise, especially a human utterance, i.e., speech with lexical definition.[40] The word is selected and combined with "wind" to endow the natural element with

37 E.g., *Il.* 4.536, 544; 13.654-55; 20.476-77, 483.

38 The word βαθύς itself refers to vertical extent in either direction, i.e., deep or high, which thus, reinforced by ὕπερθεν, intensifies the physical threat of the elements.

39 Cf. in the case of Homer, Keaney 1981.67: "when a verse of the *Iliad* contains one alpha-privative adjective and another adjective with the same referent beginning with alpha, the second . . . will also be privative."

40 For φθόγγος as the speech of man, see *Iliad* 5.234, *Od.* 12.41, 159 (Sirens), 18.199; for the wailing or crying of men, see Aesch. *Ag.* 237, Soph. *OC* 1669, *Ant.* 1187, 1218; for birdsong, Theogn. 864, Soph. *Ant.* 1001, Eur. *IA* 9; generally, especially in Plato, a sound (*Phlb.* 18c1, *Ti.* 37b6, *Cra.* 389d5, *Lg.* 812d1 [a lyre]).

"human" characteristics, thus setting it in competition with Danae's own voice. Ironically, the baby pays no more attention to his mother's words than he does to the howling elements around him.

Line 12 includes some marked examples of alliteration with κ and ν: κείμενος ἐν χλανίδι καλὸν πρόσωπον. The lovely face of the baby is wrapped tightly in a purple covering.[41] On a formal level the καλὸν πρόσωπον (12) is enclosed on both sides by evil: πόνον at the end of line 7, κακόν at the end of line 16. The glimpse of Perseus' face in the previously accented darkness, a symbol of hope still alive in the gloom, produces the effect of a "chiaroscuro."[42] Whether the child himself is "strahlend von innerem Götterlicht," or whether rather he is "von dem hellsehenden Auge der Mutterliebe erleuchtet," is of no great importance.[43] The fact is that someone does see his bright face, and for Danae this object offers comfort, minimal though it may be. Her perception of his sleeping form supplements this meagre communication in which one side does both the talking and the listening. Her words provide the speaker with the outward shape of normality, as talking to herself is better than silence, better than the senseless roar of wind and waves.

In the next two lines (13-14), Danae makes explicit her reaction to Perseus' presence: the child's innocence simultaneously consoles and disturbs her. While selflessly glad of his ignorant bliss, she despairs at being left so completely alone in the face of her fear and the obvious seriousness of their situation. "If this danger were indeed a danger to you, then you might offer your delicate ear to my words" (13-14).[44] In

41 Note the alliteration of φθόγγον and πορφυρέᾳ.

42 See the similar treatment of Iamus in Pindar *O.* 6.28-57.

43 von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 1886.148. Wilamowitz follows Nietzsche (1868.487) here and reads, with reference to Perseus in the second person, "you shine in the night" (νυκτὶ λάμπεις).

44 The word used for "delicate," λεπτός, has wide usage in other texts. Homer uses it primarily with reference to thin objects, garments, etc.: e.g., crushed barley (*Il.* 20.497), thin bronze (*Il.* 20.275), and thin clothing (*Il.* 18.595; *Od.* 7.97, 10.544), but also to describe limited mental faculties (*Il.* 10.226, 23.590). Other lyric poets use the term of bronze (Pinder *P.* 12.25), of an eagle's plumage (Bacch. 5.28), or of a narrow space (Alcman 102 *PMG*). Sappho uses λεπτός to describe a metaphorical fire in the flesh of a lover (31.9) or a girl's heart (96.17). Dramatists later applied the term to anything subtle or refined, primarily words or ideas (Eur. *Med.* 529, 1082; Ar. *Clouds* 359, *Acharn.* 445). Alexandrian writers then adopted it as a metaliterary term.

a swift pang of emotion (jealousy?), Danae wishes that he could share her pain, thus lessening her burden.[45] Wilamowitz interprets this passage as a bolt of lightning that kindles in her heart the hope that she might lean on the strong shoulders of a hero-son, a bolt that sends its current even into the heart of the reader, who knows full well that Perseus will later save his mother's life, that he will do more than "lend an ear" to her plea.[46] But Danae knows that, for the moment, her wish remains unfulfilled. She cannot reach the ears of her child because the same δεινόν that is real for her is totally unreal for Perseus. The same word repeated means two different things to the people concerned; they share no common code of language.

The utter collapse of communication in line 13 is represented by a particularly sonorous and beautiful form of expression, as meaning suddenly becomes overwhelmed by sound texture: εἰ δέ τοι δεινὸν τό γε δεινὸν ἦν. The word for "danger," δεινόν, is shattered into fragments throughout the line in a small masterpiece of balance, repetition, and internal rhyme. The words εἰ and ἦν frame the phrase with similar vowel sounds, while the δέ τοι and τό γε echo each other chiastically. On the level of grammatical function, the pattern is different, as two particles enclose a pronoun and an article. The δεινόν is first a danger and then, in repetition, a meaningless sound, as the addressee of this message fails to comprehend it.[47] The words hang in the air as an impossible condition, a series of dots . . .[48]

15 κέλομαι δ' εὗδε, βρέφος, εὑδέτω δὲ πόντος,
εὑδέτω <δ'> ἄμετρον κακόν·
μεταβουλία δέ τις φανείη,
Ζεῦ πάτερ, ἐκ σέο. ἀντ.
ὅτι δὴ θαρσαλέον ἔπος εὔχομαι κ<αὶ>
νόσφι δίκας, σύγγνωθί μοι."

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45 Cf. Soph. *Ajax* 545-59 (esp. 552-53): Ajax takes the opposite tack with Eurysaces, openly envying him but approving of his ignorance, hoping that the child will remain sheltered and happy as long as possible.

46 von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 1886.148-49.

47 Marzullo 1965.177-80 calls this phrase a disconcerting banality; Fränkel 1975.316 defines it as "an echo of the principle of subjectivity."

48 While the apodosis is grammatically present, the sense impact of this condition is that of an impossible wish: "if only Perseus understood the danger . . . but he cannot."

At this point there is a definite break in the action, on which most critics have commented. Wilamowitz notes a bitter silence and resignation to fate before the resurgence of maternal love in the lullaby sequence.[49] Perrotta identifies a pang of jealousy followed by the perseverance of humanity.[50] Bowra and Fränkel both read a psychological, dramatic development into Danae's words, moving through these lines from fear to self-command, from self-pity to unselfish tenderness.[51] Of these views, only that of Wilamowitz touches on what I consider to be of greatest importance here: silence. All of Danae's words and feelings are unheard. She attempts to "reach" her companion, both to comfort and to be comforted by him, but Perseus makes no response, and the silence which "answers" her wish annuls the whole preceding speech.

No verbal communication can exist between the two, and the child's physical presence only underscores that frustration. Therefore, Danae is forced to change her language, to try another code. She chooses to sing a lullaby and then a prayer, both forms of incantation which convert an absent or unresponsive third person into the addressee of a conative message.[52] The lullaby itself functions legitimately as a connection between a speaker and an inactive audience; in fact, the whole point of such a form of speech is to render the audience inactive or silent: successful communication here presumes and requires no answer.[53] Danae's lullaby fills two lines (15-16); its content is intimate, using repetition (anaphora) and alliteration to soothe and enchant. The message takes second place to the poetic expression: it communicates a mood, not information, to the baby. The series follows the poetic principle of syllable gradation,[54] as the sequence develops from shorter to longer syllables. There is also a development from a simple verb-

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49 von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 1886.148.

50 Perrotta 1951.115.

51 Bowra 1961.336-39; Fränkel 1975.315-16.

52 Jakobson 1960.355.

53 Cf. Waern 1960.7: "Psychologically it is easy to understand that Simonides makes use of the lullaby form, which was familiar to everybody, in the Danae fragment." (See also Soph. *Phil.* 827-38; Eur. *Ion* 125-27 = 141-43; *Orest.* 174-81.) But Waern is interpreting this as "psychologically easy" according to the characters involved, i.e., a romanticized "Madonna" picture. The lullaby format is adopted for necessary linguistic as well as emotional reasons.

54 Jakobson 1960.358.

noun phrase through a verb-particle-noun phrase, to a complex verb-particle-adjective-noun phrase: κέλομαι δ' εὗδε, βρέφος, εὑδέτω δὲ πόντος, εὑδέτω δ' ἄμετρον κακόν.

The growing tricolon of imperatives functions as an icon for the growing dangers faced by Danae, and the whole phrase, far from being a pure expression of "das weiche, weibliche, mütterliche Gefühl,"[55] throws the reader back to lines 6-7, where τέκος and πόνον stand in eloquent parallelism. Danae's repetitions again associate the child with the sea, a "genuinely pathetic contrast of unequals," and then the whole "immeasurable evil" is associated with these two things, the child and the sea, which "define for her its present terms."[56] The same verb for sleep connects the three objects, as Danae attempts to unite all her experiences, both good and evil, into a harmony of nature and culture. The catalogue of parallels is her way of confirming the possibility of forging such a link, as it progresses from the small and familiar βρέφος to an infinite and threatening κακόν.[57]

The lullaby also implies a faith in Perseus' ignorance and a rejection of her own concept of δεινόν for his: if the baby can sleep through all this (which he does), then surely the immediate storm and the unknown events to come may also be settled peacefully. Danae's yearning for safety pushes her to deceive herself, as she temporarily tries to adopt the blind trust of an infant; the lullaby she sings is as much for her own benefit as for his. The sounds are meant to charm

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[55] von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 1913.154-55.

[56] Silk 1974.164-65, following the usual approach to this text, defines the contents of the poem as "Danae, Perseus, and the sea – plus the famous 'Simonidean pathos.'" His description of the poetic imagery here would convince equally well with the omission of the words "genuinely pathetic." Silk believes that Alcman 89 may have influenced Simonides here: εὕδουσι δ' ὀρέων κορυφαί τε καὶ φάραγγες/ . . . εὕδουσι δ' οἰωνῶν φῦλα τανυπτερύγων. I agree, although it should be emphasized that both authors probably draw on the common source of "folk" tradition for the lullaby form. It is also worth noting the parallel passage in Theocritus 24.7-9, Alcmene's lullaby for the babies Heracles and Iphicles: εὕδετ' ἐμὰ βρέφεα, γλυκερὸν καὶ ἐγέρσιμον ὕπνον/ εὕδετ' ἐμὰ ψυχά, δύ' ἀδελφεοί, εὔσοα τέκνα/ ὄλβιοι εὐνάζοισθε καὶ ὄλβιοι ἀῶ ἵκοισθε.

For the universality of the incantatory form, we may turn to Jakobson's (1960.355) example of a North Russian incantation: "Water, queen river, daybreak! Send grief beyond the blue sea, to the sea-bottom, like a grey stone never to rise from the sea-bottom, may grief never come to burden the light heart of God's servant, may grief be removed and sink away."

[57] See on this subject Treu 1955.304.

and soothe, but the words are her attempt to control the uncontrollable, to gain some stability in the midst of all this flux.

As Danae moves from lullaby to prayer, from an address to an unhearing child to his apparently unhearing, absent, divine father, her method of demanding attention (e.g., imperatives, vocatives with a conative function) shifts accordingly. At first in a position to command, she had directly ordered her child to sleep (15: κέλομαι δ' εὗδε, βρέφος); she then changed to the muted periphrasis of a third-person imperative in her attempt to control the sea and their misfortune (15-16: εὑδέτω . . . εὑδέτω). The subsequent prayer to Zeus initially invokes the god with a traditional challenge prayer formula;[58] at the same time, as if worried that her tone might be too strong and thus offensive, Danae retreats to a less personal, less direct, third-person optative with an indefinite article to underscore the "casual" mode (17: μεταβουλία δέ τις φανείη), and finally succumbs to total humility in σύγγνωθί μοι (19), grammatically an imperative, but in actual mood a plea for forgiveness, without any delusions of imposing her will on the god. These words are completely in tune with the nuances of power and language: the same form of command would not be applicable to a mere child and to Zeus. As Danae moves from the intimate to the divine, she distances herself and ranks her audience through her use of language. It is all a marvelous understatement: the combination of a concrete verb of epiphany (17: φανείη) with an abstract noun of mental process (17: μεταβουλία), a gently assertive claim to a special relationship with Zeus the "Father," and a carefully deferential disclaimer at the end. The prayer evolves smoothly from the preceding incantation, and although Danae's words may still go unanswered, she has uttered them in a culturally acceptable, contractual context. The silence of the prayer is a positive one, creating a channel of communication to the divine, which is quite different from the empty

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[58] Danae calls upon Zeus with the Homeric formula Ζεῦ πάτερ, asking the father of all men not to forget his own son. Using the same formula, but with a more explicit challenge, Bacchylides portrays Minos asking Zeus for a divine portent to prove that he is truly Zeus' son (Bacch. 27.53-54 Kenyon). In tragedy, mortals often challenge the gods in prayer by setting up situations in which the divinity will lose face unless he/she complies with their wishes (see Dale 1963.310-13). Danae is far too reserved in the Simonides fragment to confront Zeus in such a manner, but in Aeschylus' satyr play, she does pointedly remind Zeus of his responsibility for her fate: σὺ γὰρ μετ>εῖχες αἰτίας τῆς μείζονας μέρος (*Dikt.* 782-83 Werre-de Haas).

silence of talking to oneself.[59] The fragment, of course, does not allow us to judge the outcome, but it ends with a reference to its own mythic beginning — perhaps as Zeus once entered Danae's life to start the chain of events, so too, now he will hear her words and be moved to act out a (re)solution.

This last assumption, of course, brings us back into the sphere of Bowra and Fränkel, and confirms the doubts expressed earlier as to whether any appreciation of the text can look through the given frame without being affected by it. In their interpretations of the poem, both critics assumed a context and a level of dramatic realism which says more about the reputation of the author than the fragment at hand. The ancient stereotype of Simonides led Fränkel to focus on the poet's ability, revealed in Danae's lament, to feel sympathy for human suffering; the immediate, emotional appeal of the scene with mother and child tempted Bowra to categorize the poem as full of dramatic pathos, a "real chapter of human experience." But there is a problem inherent in searching for psychological or dramatic realism in this text, and concentrating on the internal logic of the piece may cause the reader to neglect the peculiarity of the whole situation. The matter-of-factness and "normalcy" of this "miracle" only underscores its bizarre nature: the baby does sleep in spite of it all, the lullaby is only slightly altered to fit the unusual motion of the cradle, and Danae's prayer to Father Zeus is only marginally different from an ordinary supplication.

The critcs above congratulate Simonides for speaking to them in a language they can understand. They underplay the confusion of the moment for the sake of the larger context of a happily-ever-after myth. Because Danae eventually does survive the storm and land safely on Seriphos, they can enjoy the poignant beauty of her words as she instinctively tries to comfort her child, and begs for a sign of deliverance from Zeus. The text has thus been reconstituted as a whole story, and the full context is read backwards into this brief excerpt.

As a result, we forget that Dionysius chose the text as an

59 At the risk of trying to have it both ways, if this were the "real" end of the poem, I would suggest that Danae's words of excuse for her ἔπος, and her hopes that it not prove θαρσαλέον . . . καὶ/ νόσφι δίκας (19), could be read as the authorial voice hoping that its poem has pleased the reader.

example of something "less than meets the eye." He divided and isolated the verses in such a way as to highlight their similarity to prose, unravelling the thin thread of literary convention which links author and reader. By breaking the thread, Dionysius asked his audience to accept a generically skewed reading of the poem, to focus for a moment on prose rhythms and clauses instead of poetic diction and images. If we ignore Dionysius' suggestion and attempt to replace the fragment in its "original" context, to weave it back into the tapestry of myth, we may well be able to trace clearly defined patterns of dramatic realism, human sympathy, and the typical Simonidean pathos familiar from his epitaphs. But leaving the text in its divided and isolated form, the critic would do well to look at the poem in all its fragmented strangeness without so many preconceptions, and to avoid importing external influences or judgement by hindsight.

What I have tried to emphasize in this reading of the fragment, then, is not the obvious beauty and pathos of the presentation, but the powerful commentary on language which drives its verses. There is drama, even melodrama, but it focuses on the frustration of silence, the difficulties of communication. Dionysius tried to convince his readers to see the poem as prose, in spite of its marked poetic diction and syntax. I wish to underscore the strangeness of this fragment, and point out its preoccupation with the established systems of language: its arbitrary generic categories, and the fragility of its conventions, functioning only so long as two parties could agree on the terminology. There is only one voice to be heard in the fragment, that of Danae, surrounded by margins of silence. Her choice of language — first lament, then lullaby and prayer — is directly motivated by the lack of an audience. The poem represents her effort to communicate, to create an audience that might hear her and thereby confirm her existence, to overcome the threat of solitude. She is the message in a bottle waiting to be read.[60]

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