

AN INTERPRETATIVE PROBLEM IN LYCOPHRON'S *ALEXANDRA*

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Una correcta interpretación de la expresión μεθ' ἔκτην γένναν en el v. 1446 resuelve todos los problemas que atañen a la fecha de la *Alejandra* de Licofrón.

The correct interpretation of the words μεθ' ἔκτην γένναν in line 1446 solves all the problems concerning the date of Lycophron's *Alexandra*.

At lines 1435 ff. of the *Alexandra*, Cassandra refers to a future struggle for power:

Πολλοὶ δ' ἀγῶνες καὶ φόνοι μεταίχμιοι	1435
λύσουσιν ἀνδρῶν οἱ μὲν ἐν γαίᾳ πάλας	
δειναῖσιν ἀρχαῖς ἀμφιδηριωμένων,	
οἱ δ' ἐν μεταφρένοισι βουστρόφοις χθονός,	
ἕως ἂν αἴθων εὐνάση βαρὺν κλόνου,	
ἀπ' Αἰακοῦ τε κἀπὸ Δαρδάνου γεγῶς	1440
Θεσπρωτὸς ἄμφω καὶ Χαλαστραῖος λέων,	
πρηγὴ θ' ὁμαίμων πάντα κυπῶσας δόμον	
ἀναγκάση πτήξαντας Ἀργείων πρόμους	
σηναὶ Γαλάδρας τὸν στατηλάτην λύκον	
καὶ σκῆπτρ' ὀρέξαι τῆς πάλαι μοναρχίας.	1445
ᾧ δὴ μεθ' ἔκτην γένναν αὐθαίμων ἔμος	

εἷς τις παλαιστής, συμβαλὼν ἀλκὴν δορὸς
 πόντου τε καὶ γῆς κείς διαλλαγὰς μολῶν,
 πρέσβιστος ἐν φίλοισιν ὑμνηθήσεται,
 σκύλων ἀπαρχὰς τὰς δορικτῆτους λαβῶν.

1450

Translation by A. W. Mair¹:

"And many contests and slaughters in between shall solve the struggles of men, contending for dread empire, now on land, now on the plough-turned backs of earth, until a tawny lion -sprung from Aeacus and from Dardanus, Thesprotian at once and Chalastraean- shall lull to rest the grievous tumult, and, overturning on its face all the house of his kindred, shall compel the chiefs of the Argives to cower and fawn upon the wolf-leader of Galadra, and to hand over the sceptre of the ancient monarchy. With him, after six generations, my kinsman, an unique wrestler, shall join battle by sea and land, and come to terms, and shall be celebrated among his friends as most excellent, when he has received the first fruits of the spear-won spoils".

It should be noted that in lines 1435-1438 Cassandra contrasts the battles which are going to be fought on uncultivated land with those which are to be fought on cultivated land. The point is that no land will be spared whether it is cultivated or uncultivated. All of the earth is going to suffer in the future conflict.

The ancient *scholia* for this passage explain that the lion mentioned in line 1441 is Alexander the Great². Cassandra states that Alexander will force the chiefs of the Argives (*i.e.* the Greeks) to hand over power to him. Thus the Greeks will be forced to fawn on "the wolf of Galadra"³. Note that Alexander is called a lion in line 1441 and a wolf in line 1444.

Cassandra then states that six generations later (line 1446) her kinsman will fight with Alexander and win the spoils of war. The *scholia* explain that the poet is referring here to the wars which were fought between the Romans and the Macedonians. This prolonged conflict was finally resolved by the battle of Pydna (168 B.C.) in which Aemilius Paullus defeated Perseus, the last king of Macedonia, and ended the Third Macedonian War. The person Cassandra calls her kinsman in line 1446 is obviously Aemilius Paullus. Cassandra was a Trojan and the Romans were regarded as descendants of the Trojans: cf. lines 1226 ff.

¹ Lycophron (London [Loeb edition] 1960 r.) 439 ff.

² Cf. Mair, *op. cit.* 311 f.

³ According to Steph. Byz. Galadra is a Macedonian town.

At line 1450 Cassandra refers to the spoils of war. This must be a reference to the booty which the Romans gained from Pydna⁴. The battle of Pydna put an end to the Macedonian empire and gave enormous spoils to the Romans who emerged as the dominant power in the world soon afterwards. This dominance is mentioned by Lycophron at lines 1226 ff. The triumph which Aemilius Paullus enjoyed at Rome as a result of his victory at Pydna is referred to at line 1449⁵.

Alexander died in 323 B.C. and the battle of Pydna took place in 168 B.C. This period of 155 years is described by the poet as six generations. The poet must have reckoned each generation lasted twenty five years⁶. Thus Aemilius Paullus is said to fight Alexander after six generations.

My interpretation of this passage will, I hope, make it clear that the *Alexandra* was not composed by Lycophron of Chalcis, who was born c. 325 B.C. and who was associated with the court of Ptolemy Philadelphus. This fact was first pointed out by the ancient *scholia* on line 1226⁷. We must therefore conclude that the *scholia* are correct when they state that the *Alexandra* was written by another Lycophron⁸. This poet obviously wrote the *Alexandra* after the Romans destroyed the Macedonian empire in 168 B.C.⁹.

To sum up. Previous scholars were puzzled by the reference to the six generations contained in line 1446¹⁰. My explanation of these words eliminates, I think, all the difficulties mentioned by Susemihl and Mair. There is, that is, no need to postulate any interpolations, because the text hangs together perfectly well, and there is no need either to exclude a reference to the Romans, because the allusion to the battle of Pydna is mathematically demonstrable.

⁴ Webster (*Hellenistic Poetry and Art* [London 1964] 134) followed Momigliano and imagined that this passage contains a reference to the struggle between Pyrrhus and Rome when Pyrrhus had lost Tarentum in 272 B.C. It should be pointed out, though, that Rome was not regarded as the dominant power in the world until much later. Thus Momigliano's theory does not explain lines 1226 ff. where the Romans are said to be the dominant world power.

⁵ Cf. Webster, *op. cit.* 277, for the triumph of Aemilius Paullus.

⁶ For the length of a generation cf. *Thes. Gr. Ling. s.v. γενεά*, where it is noted that a generation was either 20 years, or 25 years, or 30 years.

⁷ Cf. Mair, *op. cit.* 308.

⁸ Previous scholars recognised the problem posed by lines 1226ff. and consequently either regarded these lines as later interpolations or considered that the *Alexandra* was written not by Lycophron of Chalcis but by a later poet: cf. Mair, *op. cit.* 309.

⁹ It was impossible to predict in 272 B.C. that the Romans were going to destroy the Macedonian empire and to defeat all their other rivals so as to gain the supreme power in the world which is clearly mentioned in line 1226 ff.

¹⁰ Cf. Susemihl, *Geschichte der Griechischen Literatur in der Alexandrinerzeit*, I (Leipzig 1891) 278f., with note 47, and Mair, *op. cit.* 308-314.