

PINDAR: PYTHIAN 2

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Syracuse, that great city, domain of war-plunged Ares
divine nursemaid of men and horses who exult in war,
to you from shining Thebes I come,
bearing this strain – a proclamation of the earth-shaking chariot
in which Hieron,¹ of the beauteous car, was victorious.
He wreathed Ortygia² with far-shining crowns,
that abode of Artemis of the River, not without whom
did he break with gentle hands those foals of gilded reins.
For that arrow-pouring virgin,
and Hermes, God of Games, lay down the harness with both hands 10
whenever Hieron yokes together his obedient team
and the strength of horses to his polished car,
calling upon the trident-wielding god, the god of broad sway.

For other kings, in other times, men have performed
sweet-sounding hymns – a ransom for excellence.
Often do the Cyprians shout songs of praise for Cinyras,³
cherished priest of Aphrodite, whom golden-haired Apollo earnestly loved,
for grace is earned in return for works of friendship.
And you, oh son of Deinomenes, are invoked by a virgin of West Locri,⁴ before
her house.
On account of your might, and after the hopeless toils of war, she looks on,
safe from danger. 20

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- 1 Hieron I of Syracuse (tyrant from 478-467 BCE), son of Deinomenes, had won the chariot race at a panhellenic competition, the date of which is now unknown (the race may not have even been held at the Pythian games).
 - 2 Ortygia, an island just off the southern coast of Syracuse, can still be visited today. It is known in Italian as “Città Vecchia” (the “Old City”) and contains many historic landmarks from antiquity.
 - 3 Cinyras was a mythical figure first alluded to as a guest-friend of Agamemnon in *Iliad* 11.19-23. A wealthy king of Cyprus, he is often associated with the cult of Aphrodite, as he is here. Interestingly, though Pindar characterizes him as a friend to Apollo, the Homeric scholiast Eustathius of Thessalonica claims that he was punished by Apollo after challenging him to a musical contest (similar to the myth of Marsyas).
 - 4 Western Locri was a Greek colony in the South of Italy. This passage suggests that the Locrians were once aided in military action by forces under Hieron (the context of which is unknown). Thus a chorus of girls extolls the beneficence of Hieron outside their safe homes.

For I've seen how, long ago and often helpless,
libelous Archilochus⁶ did wax fat and wanton on bitter hatred.
To be wealthy, and at once have a lucky fate, is the best piece of wisdom.
A wisdom which, clearly, you have – and can display with a free heart.
You are a ruler, wielding power over many well-walled streets and of a host of
people.
And if someone yet says that another man in the Greece of old became mightier
than you in honour or possessions, 60 then
he wrestles fruitlessly with a frivolous heart.

I shall now mount the prow of a garlanded ship, in order to celebrate your valour.
Indeed, the courage of youth aids
in frightful war, from which I say you find boundless glory,
doing battle both with horsemen and on foot.
Your counsels, wise beyond your years,
allow me to laud you fearlessly and on every account.
Farewell! This strain is sent, like Phoenician wares, over the hoary sea.
And as for Castor's melody, upon Aeolian strings,⁷
look earnestly upon it, and the grace of the seven-stringed lyre, when you come
upon
it. 70

Become who you are - who you've learned to be.

The little ape is thought by children to be beautiful,
always beautiful; but Rhadamanthys has thriven because
he received by lot the faultless fruit of a sound mind.
His soul does not delight itself in falsehood,
such as ever accompanies mortals by the cunning of the slanderous.
The spreader of slander does irresistible harm to both himself and others, strained with a
disposition like a fox.
But what real gain comes from his wiles?
For unlike some of the fisherman's tools, which take their charge deep beneath the sea,
I am like the cork atop the net, bobbing over the salt waves. 80
A crafty citizen cannot cast his weighty speech upon those who are noble.
Just the same, he weaves his web entirely of deceit, fawning over everyone.
I would not partake in this insolence – let me be a friend to my friends.
But, becoming like the wolf, and an enemy to my enemies, I shall make my attacks

6 Archilochus was a Greek iambic poet of the 7th century, famous for his harsh invective. There is a legend that Lycambes, the father of his one-time fiancée, was driven to suicide by the slander of Archilochus' merciless iambs.

7 This musical reference likely refers to the Aeolian mode (a musical scale) used in a type of dedicatory hymn to Castor, which is now lost to us.

in secret,
now here, now there, as I tread upon the twisting road.
Under any law, the plain-spoken man comes first –
be it under tyranny, or when either the boisterous mob or wise men keep the city.
One must not quarrel with a god
who hoists up one man, then gives great glory to another.
Yet never does this cheer the minds of the envious.
Some, drawing the line too tight, strike a painful wound upon their hearts
before even achieving what they have contrived in their minds.
Taking the yoke upon one's neck, it helps to bear it lightly.
To kick against the goad becomes a slippery path.
Let me, for my part, be in the company of good men, and delight them.