PINDAR: PYTHIAN 2 PAUL MCGILVERY

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 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.

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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 as 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.

Ixion,⁵ they say, ever whirling by the gods' command upon his winged wheel, says this to mortals:

Repay your benefactor,

approaching him with mild requital.

This he learned distinctly.

Beside the well-disposed Cronidians he knew a sweet life, but that happiness did not long remain.

With a riotous heart he desired Hera, who was assigned to Zeus' delightful bed.

But hybris incited Ixion to arrogant lust.

And the man, soon suffering, it seems, earned a special punishment.

Two sins, bringing hardship, brought it about:

30

He, first among heroes, and not without cunning,

acquainted mortals with kindred bloodshed.

And once, in the capacious bedchamber, he did tempt the wife of Zeus.

One must always perceive everything according to one's own measure.

Deviance in the bedroom hurled him into utter immorality.

Thus was it for him, since he spoke incidentally to a cloud.

The ignorant man pursued a sweet lie,

for the form resembled the mightiest daughter of Cronos the heavens.

He was approaching a trap, which the hands of Zeus

had placed for him – beauteous misery!

40

And so he brought about his own ruin:

imprisonment on the four-spoked wheel.

Falling into inescapable bonds,

he exhibits a common lesson.

Without the Graces' consent, the mother alone bore only one child

– an unnatural offspring – unworthy of men, and not within the customs of the gods.

Rearing him, she called him Centaur, who mingled with the Magnesian mares in the foothills of Pelion.

And from them came an amazing host, partaking equally of both parents: the bottom was alike to the mother, the top alike to the father.

A god accomplishes any end, as hoped.

A god, who overtakes the winged eagle and outstrips the dolphin in the sea, and humbles the haughty mortal, yet to another gives everlasting glory.

50

I, for my part, must avoid the abundant sting of slander.

⁵ Ixion, who was a Thessalian king in Greek myth, twice committed acts against the code of guest-friendship. First, he slew his father-in-law after refusing to pay dowry for his daughter, and second, he tried to seduce Hera after the gods invited him to live on Olympus. Pindar recounts the myth of the centaurs, who were the progeny of Ixion and a cloud disguised as Hera, which Zeus created as a trick. Ixion's punishment was to spin for eternity lashed to a four-spoked wheel.

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.

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