

TWO NOTES ON PINDAR

Resumen: I. Píndaro en frag. 116 Bowra, alude a teorías onirocríticas pre-helenísticas. II. Píndaro en *Pyth.* 4,214 alude a una precisa versión del mito de Ἦλυξ.

Palabras-clave: I. Píndaro, sueños. II. Píndaro, Ἦλυξ, Afrodita.

Summary: I. Pindar, in frag. 116 Bowra, alludes to pre-Hellenistic onirocritical theories. II. Pindar, in *Pyth.* 4,214 alludes to a precise version of the Ἦλυξ myth.

Key-words: I. Pindar, dreams. II. Pindar, Ἦλυξ, Aphrodite.

I. PINDAR AND THE SHADES OF THE UNDERWORLD

In fragment 116 Bowra, Pindar mentions death and the gods:

καὶ σῶμα μὲν πάντων ἔπεται θανάτῳ περισθενεῖ,
ζῶν δ' ἔτι λείπεται αἰῶνος εἶδωλον. Τὸ γὰρ ἐστὶ μόνου
ἐκ θεῶν. εὐδαι δὲ πρᾶσσόντων μελέων, ἀτὰρ εὐδόν-
τεσσιν ἐν πολλοῖς ὄνειροις
δείκνυσι τερπνῶν ἐφέρποισαν χαλεπῶν τε κρίσιν.

Sandys¹ translated as follows:

«And, while the body of all men is subject to over-mastering death, an image of life remaineth alive, for it alone cometh from the gods. But it sleepeth, while the limbs are active; yet, to them that sleep, in many a dream it giveth presage of a decision of things delightful or doleful.»

I would like to suggest that better sense can be made of this fragment if we understand that the shade (εἶδωλον) is said to be deprived of life (λείπεται² αἰῶνος³). We should translate as follows: «And, while the body of all men is subject to over-mastering death, the shade, although still alive (ζῶν δ' ἔτι), is deprived of life (λείπεται αἰῶνος). For this is only due to the gods (ἐκ θεῶν⁴).» According to Pindar, due to the gods the shade never dies.

Instead it exists after death in the Underworld: cf. *Odyssey* XI,83. The shade is able to appear to the living in their dreams because dreams are sent by the gods⁵. Cynthia's shade visits Propertius in a dream. However, it is forced to return to the Underworld at dawn⁶.

¹ Cf. Sir John Sandys, *The Odes of Pindar*, Loeb Edition, London 1968 (reprint), p. 591.

² Cf. LSJ, s.v. λείπω B,II,4: «to be wanting or lacking in a thing, fail of or in, c. gen.»

³ Cf. LSJ, s.v. αἰών (1): «lifetime, life».

⁴ Cf. LSJ, s.v. ἐκ II,6: «of cause, instrument, or means by which a thing is done.»

⁵ On this cf. lastly G. Giangrande, «Medea and Dreams in Apollonius Rhodius», in: A. López - A. Pociña (eds.), *Medeas. Versiones de un mito desde Grecia hasta hoy*, vol. I, Granada 2003, pp. 347 ff.

⁶ Cf. my *Studies in the Text of Propertius*, Athens 2002, pp. 157 ff.

II. PINDAR AND THE WRYNECK

According to a well known version of the legend, Hera punished the crafty nymph Iynx by changing her into the bird called ἰυγξ⁷. Transformation, at the hands of a god, of a person into an animal (or tree, rock, etc.) as a punishment (or for other reasons) was traditionally a final and conclusive act, not to be developed any further by anybody. Now, in *Pythian* 4,214 ff. Pindar writes:

πότνια δ' ὄξυτάτων βελέων
 ποικίλαν ἰυγγα τετράκναμον Οὐλυμπόθεν
 ἐν ἀλύτῳ ζεύξαισα κύκλῳ
 μαινάδ' ὄριον Κυπρογένεια φέρειν
 πρῶτον ἀνθρώποισι, ...

Sandys⁸ explains that the plumage of the wryneck is «variegated» (ποικίλαν) and that the bird was used as a love charm by being «tied by the legs and wings to the four spokes of a wheel, which was made to revolve»: the wheel rotated on fire (πυρφόρῳ ἰυγγι⁹; ὑπὲρ πυρᾶς¹⁰). Being tied to a four-spoked fiery wheel which rotated was the notorious punishment meted out to Ixion¹¹.

Scholars (including Sandys) take Pindar's passage to mean that Aphrodite inflicted further punishment on ἰυγξ, when Hera had already punished the nymph transforming her into the bird ἰυγξ, by tying the said bird to a four-spoked wheel (as had been done to Ixion), and teaching men to use the bird by rotating the wheel on fire. This would be an unheard of procedure, insofar as ἰυγξ, having been already punished by Hera, could not be chastised any further by Aphrodite.

The solution to the problem is simple. According to the version of the legend alluded to by Pindar, Aphrodite («in übertragener Bedeutung»¹²) inflicted on the nymph ἰυγξ the same punishment which was given to Ixion: she tied the nymph to a four-spoked wheel to be rotated on fire. The punishment inflicted on Ixion was eternal¹³. To make the nymph's punishment equally eternal, Aphrodite changed her, after she was tied to the wheel, into the bird ἰυγξ, and taught men to rotate the wheel on the fire, so that the bird-species called ἰυγξ (ζῷον ἀδικώτατον¹⁴) would be eternally punished. Note the elegant ambiguity, typical of Pindar's style: ποικίλαν means «variegated» if referred to the bird, and «artful, wily»¹⁵ if referred to the crafty nymph punished by Aphrodite.

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⁷ Cf. W.H. Roscher, *Ausführliches Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie*, Leipzig 1884, s.v. «Iynx», 772.

⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 223.

⁹ Gossen, RE, s.v. ἰυγξ, c. 1385.

¹⁰ *Schol. Theocr. II*, l. 17 Wendel.

¹¹ Cf. Roscher, s.v. «Ixion», 768: «feuriges Rad».

¹² Gossen, *loc. cit.*

¹³ Roscher, s.v. «Ixion», 768: «unaufhörlich», «unsterblich».

¹⁴ Roscher, s.v. «Iynx», 772.

¹⁵ LSJ, s.v.