

## PYTHIAN 12

From the time of its founding, the Pythian festival included musical contests. In 490 Midas of Akragas won the competition for the *aulos*, which I have translated by “pipe,” but was in fact more like a modern clarinet or oboe and consisted of a bronze mouthpiece and reed body. Traditionally the invention of Athena, it was known for its expressive range (cf. *πάμφωνον* at 19 and *Ol.* 7.12) and especially for the “many headed tune,” whose invention Pindar also attributes to Athena.

The story of Danaë, merely sketched by Pindar in ring composition, is as follows. King Akrisios of Argos, fearing that the child born to his daughter Danaë would supplant him, locked her up in a tower. Zeus came to her in a shower of gold and sired Perseus. When the king learned of it, he shut the mother and her baby in a chest and put them out to sea. They came ashore on the island of Seriphos, where King Polydektes kept them for many years, making Danaë his mistress. When he invited the leaders of Seriphos to come to a feast and bring him gifts, the young Perseus went off to acquire the head of the Gorgon Medusa as his present. By stealing the one eye belonging to the Graiai, Phorkos’ daughters, he forced them to reveal the location of their three sisters, the Gorgons. With the help of Athena, Perseus cut off Medusa’s

head, brought it to the banquet, and turned his enemies to stone.

The poem opens with an invocation of Akragas (as nymph and city) to accept this celebration of Midas for his victorious pipe playing at Pytho (1–6). Athena invented the art of pipe playing when she reproduced in music the Gorgons’ dirge for their sister, Medusa, after Perseus carried off her head, with which he turned the people of Seriphos to stone (6–12). He blinded the Graiai and punished Polydektes for his enslavement of Danaë (13–18), after which Athena composed the “many-headed tune” in imitation of Euryale’s lament for her sister, and gave it to mortals (18–23). It still serves to summon people to the games and to lead dances (24–27).

The ode closes with a series of gnomes stressing the hard work necessary for success and the unpredictability of divine gifts (28–32).

## 12. ΜΙΔΑΙ ΑΚΡΑΓΑΝΤΙΝΩΙ

ΑΥΛΗΤΗΙ

A' Αιτέω σε, φιλάγλαε, καλλίστα βροτεᾶν πολίων,  
 Φερσεφόνας ἔδος, ἃ τ' ὄχθαις ἔπι μηλοβότου  
 ναίεις Ἀκράγαντος ἐύδατον κολώναν, ὧ ἄνα,  
 ἴλαος ἀθανάτων ἀνδρῶν τε σὺν εὐμενίᾳ  
 5 δέξαι στεφάνωμα τόδ' ἐκ Πυθῶνος εὐδόξῳ Μίδα  
 αὐτόν τε νῦν Ἑλλάδα νικάσαντα τέχνη, τάν ποτε  
 Παλλὰς ἐφεύρε θρασειᾶν <Γοργόνων>  
 οὔλιον θρήνον διαπλέξαισ' Ἀθάνα·

B' τὸν παρθενίους ὑπό τ' ἀπλάτοις ὀφίων κεφαλαῖς  
 10 αἶε λειβόμενον δυσπενθέι σὺν καμάτῳ,  
 Περσεὺς ὅποτε τρίτον ἄνυσεν κασιγνητᾶν μέρος  
 ἐνναλίᾳ Σερίφῳ λαοῖσί τε μοῖραν ἄγων.  
 ἦτοι τό τε θεσπέσιον Φόρκοι' ἀμαύρωσεν γένος,

5 εὐδόξον μίδα EF(schol.)

7 <Γοργόνων> suppl. Triclinius e schol.

11 ἄνυσεν(ν) codd.: ἄνυσεν Σ<sup>79</sup>: ἄνυσεν Boeckh

<sup>1</sup> Akragas, both the city and its eponymous nymph.

<sup>2</sup> Of song (schol.) or the song as well as the wreath (Gildersleeve).

## 12. FOR MIDAS OF AKRAGAS

WINNER, PIPE PLAYING, 490 B.C.

I beseech you, lover of splendor, loveliest of mortals' Str. 1  
 cities,<sup>1</sup>  
 abode of Persephone, you who dwell upon the well-built  
 height  
 above the banks of the Akragas, where sheep graze, O  
 queen,  
 along with the good will of gods and men graciously  
 receive this crown<sup>2</sup> from Pytho offered by famous Midas 5  
 and welcome the man himself, who defeated Hellas in the  
 art  
 which Pallas Athena once invented  
 by weaving into music the fierce Gorgons' deathly dirge  
 that she heard pouring forth from under the Str. 2  
 unapproachable  
 snaky heads of the maidens in their grievous toil, 10  
 when Perseus cried out in triumph as he carried the third  
 of the sisters,  
 bringing doom to wave-washed Seriphos and its people.  
 Yes, he blinded the awesome race of Phorkos<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The three Graiai, daughters of Phorkos as were the Gorgons, had only one eye among them, which Perseus took, refusing to return it until they told him how to find their sisters.

λυγρόν τ' ἔρανον Πολυδέκτα θῆκε ματρός τ' ἔμ-  
πεδον

15 δουλοσύναν τό τ' ἀναγκαῖον λέχος,  
εὐπαράου κρᾶτα συλάσαις Μεδοΐσας

Γ' υἱὸς Δανάας, τὸν ἀπὸ χρυσοῦ φαμέν αὐτορύτου  
ἔμμεναι. ἀλλ' ἐπεὶ ἐκ τούτων φίλον ἄνδρα πόνων  
ἐρρύσατο παρθένος αὐλῶν τεύχε πάμφωνον μέλος,  
20 ὄφρα τὸν Εὐρύκλας ἐκ καρπαλιμῶν γενύων  
χριμφθέντα σὺν ἔντεσι μιμήσαιτ' ἐρικλάγκταν  
γόνον.

εὐρεν θεός· ἀλλά νιν εὐρόλις' ἀνδράσι θνατοῖς ἔχειν,  
ὠνύμασεν κεφαλῶν πολλῶν νόμον,  
εὐκλεᾶ λαοσσόων μναστήρ' ἀγώνων,

Δ' λεπτοῦ διανισόμενον χαλκοῦ θαμὰ καὶ δονάκων,  
26 τοὶ παρὰ καλλίχορον ναίοισι πόλιν Χαρίτων  
Καφισίδος ἐν τεμένει, πιστοὶ χορευτῶν μάρτυρες.  
εἰ δέ τις ὄλβος ἐν ἀνθρώποισιν, ἄνευ καμάτου  
οὐ φαίνεται· ἐκ δὲ τελευτάσει νιν ἦτοι σάμερον  
30 δαίμων—τὸ δὲ μόρσιμον οὐ παρφυκτόν—ἀλλ' ἔσται  
χρόνος

οὗτος, ὃ καὶ τιν' ἀελπίτια βαλῶν  
ἔμπαλιν γνώμας τὸ μὲν δώσει, τὸ δ' οὐπω.

25 θαμὰ ν (ἐνιοι θαμὰ Π<sup>42</sup>): θ' ἄμα VΠ<sup>42</sup>

26 καλλίχορον Π<sup>42</sup>: καλλιχόρων ν: καλλιχώρων V | πόλει V

30 τὸ δὲ Triclinius: τό γε vett. | οὐ παρφυκτόν ν (γρ[ά-  
φει(αι)] κ(αι) οὐ παρφυκτόν Π<sup>42</sup>): οὐ πα φυκτόν VΠ<sup>42</sup>

31 ἀελπίτια edd.: ἀελπίτια Vβ: ἀελπία B: ἀελπία Mommsen

and he made painful for Polydektes his feast, the  
enforced  
bondage of his mother, and her bed of compulsion, 15  
after severing the head of beautiful-cheeked Medusa—

the son of Danaë, who, we tell, was born of free-flowing 3  
gold. But when she<sup>1</sup> had rescued her beloved hero from  
those toils, the maiden composed a melody with every  
sound for pipes,

so that she might imitate with instruments the echoing 20  
wail

that was forced from the gnashing jaws of Eurycle.  
The goddess invented it, but invented it for mortals  
to have, and she called it the tune of many heads,  
famous reminder of contests where people flock,

the tune that often passes through the thin bronze and 4  
the reeds

which grow by the Graces' city<sup>2</sup> of beautiful dancing 26  
places

in the precinct of Kephisos' daughter,<sup>3</sup> faithful witnesses  
of dancers.

If there is any happiness among men, it does not appear  
without toil. A god will bring it to fulfillment either  
today—

what is fated cannot be avoided—but there will come 30  
that time which, striking a person with surprise,  
will unexpectedly give one thing, but defer another.

<sup>1</sup> Athena. <sup>2</sup> Orchomenos (cf. *Ol.* 14.1–4).

<sup>3</sup> The nymph Kopais.