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 Ἔιγξ.
Palabras-clave: I. Píndaro, sueños. II. Píndaro, Ἔιγξ, 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 Ἔιγξ myth.
Key-words: I. Pindar, dreams. II. Pindar, Ἔιγξ, Aphrodite.

I. PINDAR AND THE SHADeS OF THE UNDERWORLD

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

καὶ σῶμα μὲν πάντων ἐπεται θανάτῳ περισθεὶκι,
ζωὰν δ᾽ ἔτι λειπεται αἰώνος εἰδωλον. Τὸ γὰρ ἐστὶ μόνον
ἐκ θεῶν εἰπεὶ τὰ πρασσόντων μελέων, ἀτὰρ εἰδώλων
tεσαυ ἐν πολλῶ ὁμοίως δείκνυε περιπών ἐφέρποισαν χαλεπῶν τε κράσων.

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 sleepe th, 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 (ἐιδωλον) is said to be deprived of life (λειπεται ἀιώνος). We should translate as follows:

«And, while the body of all men is subject to over-mastering death, the shade, although still alive (ζωὰν δ’ ἔτι), is deprived of life (λειπεται αἰώνος). For this is only due to the gods (ἐκ θεῶν).» 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.

² Cf. LSJ, s.v. λειπτω 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.»
According to a well known version of the legend, Hera punished the crafty nymph lynx by changing her into the bird called iuγξ. 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:

πότινα δ’ ὀξυτάτων βελέων
ποικίλων ἴνγγα τετράκασιμον Ὀὐλεμπόθεν
ἐν ἀλάστο ζεῦξασα κύκλω
μαίναδ’ ὤριν Κυπρογένεια φέρεν
πρῶτον ἀνθρώπου, ...

Sandys8 explains that the plumage of the wryneck is «variegated» (ποικίλατα) 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 ίνγγῃ, ὑπὲρ πυρᾶς). 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 ‘Iynx, when Hera had already punished the nymph transforming her into the bird iuγξ, 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 ‘Iynx, 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») inflicted on the nymph ‘Iynx 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 ‘Iynx, and taught men to rotate the wheel on the fire, so that the bird-species called iuγξ (ζων ἀδικωτατον) would be eternally punished. Note the elegant ambiguity, typical of Pindar’s style: ποικίλων means «variegated» if referred to the bird, and «artful, wily» 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.
9 Gossen, RE, s.v. ‘Iynx, 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.