CLCS4009. READING ANTIQUITY: A SURVEY OF ANCIENT LITERATURE

SEMINAR TWO: EPINICIA, ATHLETES, POETS AND LOVE: PINDAR, BACCHYLIDES AND SAPPHO

Conduct the following reading (Pindar and Bacchylides are available online – see details below; the relevant poems of Sappho and Alcaeus are given below), considering the questions below, and be prepared to present your thoughts in class.

READING

PRIMARY SOURCES

Pindar, *Olympian 1*:
http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text;jsessionid=61DCFDCFD2728BA1A6864B7FCF321129?doc=Perseus%3atext%3a1999.01.0162%3abook%3dO.

Bacchylides, *Ode 5*:
http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text;jsessionid=61DCFDCFD2728BA1A6864B7FCF321129?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0064%3Abook%3DEp%3Apoem%3D5

Sappho
fr. 31 and Hymn to Aphrodite (likely performed in female-orientated symposia)
(7th – 6th c. BC; Lesbos)

Fr. 31) He seems to me the peer of gods, that man
who sits and faces you,
close by you hearing
your sweet voice speaking,
and your sexy laugh, which just this moment makes
the heart quake in my breast: for every time
I briefly glance towards you, then I lose
all power of further speech.
My tongue is smashed; at once a film of fire
runs underneath my skin; no image shapes
before my eyes;
my ears are whining like a whirling top;
cold sweat pours down me, and in every part
shuddering grips me;
I am paler than summer grass,
and seem to myself to need little to make me die.

Hymn to Aphrodite) Iridescent-throned Aphrodite, deathless
Child of Zeus, wile-weaver, I now implore you,
Don't--I beg you, Lady--with pains and torments
Crush down my spirit,
But before if ever you've heard my pleadings
Then return, as once when you left your father's
Golden house; you yoked to your shining car your
Wing-whirring sparrows;
Skimming down the paths of the sky's bright ether
On they brought you over the earth's black bosom,
Swiftly--then you stood with a sudden brilliance,
Goddess, before me;
Deathless face alight with your smile, you asked me
What I suffered, who was my cause of anguish,
What would ease the pain of my frantic mind, and
Why had I called you
To my side: "And whom should Persuasion summon
Here, to soothe the sting of your passion this time?
Who is now abusing you, Sappho? Who is
Treating you cruelly?
Now she runs away, but she'll soon pursue you;
Gifts she now rejects--soon enough she'll give them;
Now she doesn't love you, but soon her heart will
Burn, though unwilling."
Come to me once more, and abate my torment;
Take the bitter care from my mind, and give me
All I long for; Lady, in all my battles
Fight as my comrade.

Fragments of Alcaeus (7th c. – 6th c. BC; Mytilene)

A. The Bulwark of the State

Not in hewn stones, nor in well-fashioned beams,
Not in the noblest of the builder's dreams,
But in courageous men of purpose great,
There is the fortress, there the living State.

B. Cease Drinking! Seize the Rudder!

Pray, mix no more into the bowl, but know
That I dislike to have thee labor so,
Singing, carousing, gaily drinking,
As though all parched, of naught else thinking.
Why do we let the wintry morning breeze
Sweep ever idly o'er the glistening seas?
Would that a ship we quickly boarded,
Cutting it loose from where we moored it.
Then would we joyously the rudder seize,
And then the sail-yards turn to front the breeze,
Merrily thus forgetting evils--
Far better 'tis than boisterous revels.

FOCUS QUESTIONS: PINDAR AND BACCHYLIDES

1/ What is *epinician* poetry?

2/ What are the contexts of *epinician* poetry?

3/ What can the two selected poems (by Pindar and Bacchylides) tell us about the performance and contexts of *epinicia*?

4/ Who is praised in *epinician* poetry and why?

5/ Summarise the myths told in the two selected *epinicia*.

6/ What is the place of the myths in each *epicinia* (what do they signify)?

7/ Why do you think Pindar and Bacchylides have chosen these particular myths?

8/ What are the differences / similarities between the ways Pindar and Bacchylides use these myths?

9/ Why do you think *epinicia* poets use myths in their praise poetry?

FOCUS QUESTIONS: SAPPHO AND ALCAEUS

1/ What 'sympotic' themes can you see in these poems?

2/ What can these poems tell us about Greek life?

3/ What can these poems tell us about the symposium?

4/ Can you see hints of the 'contained liberation' atmosphere of the symposium?

FURTHER READING: SECONDARY LITERATURE

Bowie, E. L. 'Early Greek Elegy, Symposium and Public Festival', *JHS* 106, 1986, pp. 327-46 [http://www.jstor.org/stable/629640]

Cairns, D. L. 'Form and Meaning in Bacchylides' Fifth Ode', *Scholia* 6, 1997, pp. 34-48. [http://www.otago.ac.nz/Classics/scholiagfx/v06p034-048.pdf]

Hammer, D. 'Ideology, the Symposium, and Archaic Politics', *AJPh* 125, 2004, pp. 479-512 [http://www.jstor.org/stable/1562221]

Koehnken, A. 'Pindar as Innovator: Poseidon Hippios and the Relevance of the Pelops story in *Olympian* 1', *Classical Quarterly* 24, 1974, pp. 199-206. [http://www.jstor.org/stable/638481]

Kurke, L. 'Inventing the *Hetaira*: Sex, Politics, and Discursive Conflict in Archaic Greece', *CA*16, 1997, pp. 106-150 [http://www.jstor.org/stable/25011056]

Rutherford, R. *Classical Literature: A Concise History*. Malden Mass: Blackwell, 2005, pp. 176-81.

Strauss Clay, J. 'Pindar's Sympotic *Epinicia*', *Quaderni Urbinati di Cultura Classica* 62, 1999, pp. 25-34. [http://www.jstor.org/stable/20546585]