

## Applying for the Position of “Resident Poet”: Damophilos in *Pythian* 4.279-299

Among the many debates concerning *Pythian* 4, the figure of Damophilos occupies a starring role. From the poem itself, we can infer that Damophilos had participated in the attempt to overthrow the rule of the Battiads and that he was exiled as a consequence of the failure of that project. The erstwhile rebel now lives in Thebes and the poet intercedes for him with Arcesilas so that Damophilos can return to his homeland Cyrene.

The plea for Damophilos in *Pythian* 4.279–299 is an exceptional case of the application of Pindar’s poetic art for a real-life goal outside that of the victory celebration (Sigelman 2016: 134). In the effort of reconciling the exile with Arcesilas, ruler of Cyrene, Pindar draws a complex picture of Damophilos, interlacing numerous themes in a few verses. Among such themes, some are coherent with the position of the exile, such as the absence of envy, *hybris*, or strife in the repented Damophilos (283–285, 293–294) as well as the image of Zeus’ benevolence towards Atlas and the Titans (289–293). Other themes, instead, do not show a straightforward connection with the role of former political opponent. Damophilos is said to look ἐν πασιὼν νέος ‘young among boys’ (281) but to possess the wisdom of a centenary (282). He knows the καιρός (286–287), to which he offers his service (287). He finally begs Arcesilas through Pindar to be allowed back to Apollo’s symposia (294). There, surrounded by youth, he will attain ἡσυχία (296), playing the lyre in the way he learnt in Thebes (294–299).

My analysis of the passage starts from the end, precisely from the word ἡσυχία ‘peace’. I focus my attention on those odes where *hēsychia* has political relevance (cf. Hornblower 2004: 60–63; *contra* Pfeijffer 1999: 426–466), and I draw comparisons with the themes in *Pythian*

4.279–299. The word ἡσυχία ‘peace’ and its derivative ἡσυχᾶ ‘in peace, peacefully’ appear with the relevant meaning in the following odes (transl. Race):

- 1) *Olympian* 4.14–16: ἐπεὶ νιν αἰνέω, μάλα μὲν τροφαῖς ἐτοῖμον ἵππων / χαίροντά τε ξενίαις πανδόκοις, / καὶ πρὸς Ἡσυχίαν φιλόπολιν καθαρᾶ / γνώμα τετραμμένον (“for I praise [Psaumis of Camarina], a most zealous raiser of horses, delighting in acts of all-welcoming hospitality, and devoted to city-loving **Hesychia** with a sincere mind”);
- 2) *Pythian* 1.69–70: σύν τοι τίν κεν ἀγητήρ ἀνὴρ, / υἱῶ τ’ ἐπιτελλόμενος, δᾶμον γεραίρων τράποι σύμφωνον ἐς ἡσυχίαν (“For with your help a man who is ruler and instructs his son can in honoring his people turn them to harmonious **peace**”);
- 3) *Pythian* 8.1–5: Φιλόφρον Ἡσυχία, Δίκας / ᾧ μεγιστόπολι θύγατερ, / βουλᾶν τε καὶ πολέμων / ἔχοισα κλαῖδας ὑπερτάτας / Πυθιονίκον τιμὰν Ἀριστομένει δέκευ (“Kindly **Peace**, O maker of greatest cities and daughter of Justice, you who hold the supreme keys of counsels and wars, accept this honor for a Pythian victory from Aristomenes”);
- 4) *Pythian* 11.55–57: ἀλλ’ εἴ τις ἄκρον ἐλὼν ἡσυχᾶ τε νεμόμενος αἰνὰν ὕβριν / ἀπέφυγεν, μέλανος ἂν ἐσχατιάν / καλλίονα θανάτου <στείχοι> (“But if a man has won the peak and dwelling there in **peace** has avoided dire insolence, he would go to a more noble bourne of black death”);
- 5) *Nemean* 7.80–82: Διὸς δὲ μεμναμένος ἀμφὶ Νεμέα / πολύφατον θρόον ὕμνων δόνει / ἡσυχᾶ (“But, after mentioning Zeus, set in motion the famous sound of hymns for Nemea, **softly**”);
- 6) *Nemean* 9.48: ἡσυχία δὲ φιλεῖ μὲν συμπόσιον· (“**Peace** loves the symposium”).

I believe that a comparison of Damophilos’ plea with other *hēsychia* odes sheds light on the thematic coherence of the passage itself and suggests a new reading of Damophilos’ role.

Therefore, I break up *Pythian* 4.279–299 into seven core themes, and I show how they belong with the major thematic lines of the other *hēsychia* odes. Then, drawing from Slater’s analysis of the interdependence of peace and poetry (1981), I show how these themes form a coherent view on the ideological power of poetry. Finally, I argue that Pindar’s intercession with Arcesilas facilitates Damophilos’ reintegration into the political body of Cyrene as a poet.

### Bibliography

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