

This paper examines the myth of Ixion in Pindar's *Pythian 2* and argues that the deception of the Hera-cloud within that myth represents a type of communication that can be characterized in terms of gender. Scholarly attention to Pindar's mythical content has been relatively sparse and has not discussed this particular myth in depth. Discussion of the myth itself may refer to Pindar's treatment, but does not look closely at the specifics (e.g., Detienne 1977: 86-87, Gantz 1993: 718-721), while Pindaric studies note the significance of the Ixion myth in Pindar (cf. Burton 1962, Bowra 1964, Kirkwood 1982, Hubbard 1985, Race 1986), but likewise do not closely analyze the various elements of Pindar's mythical narrative.

In particular, scholars have not commented extensively on the significance of the Hera-cloud, which, I will argue, paradoxically represents both a passive embodiment of male communication and a female figure with her own agency. This instrument of Ixion's downfall has been crafted by Zeus in reaction to Ixion's wrongful lust for Hera and substitutes for a verbal deception; hence the reference to the cloud as a *pseudos* (P. 2.37), a word that Pindar usually reserves for verbal falsehoods. Through this Hera-cloud, Zeus conveys to Ixion a false message that seduction of Hera is permissible. Zeus "speaks" to Ixion through the Hera-cloud, but the Hera-cloud is far from a passive entity or an illusion, for her seductive effect on Ixion is powerful and "real" enough for her and Ixion to couple and engender their own line of descendants (42ff.).

This paper begins with an examination of the myth itself, briefly comparing its presentation in *Pythian 2* to other versions that depict Ixion's crime or punishment differently. In *Pythian 2*, Ixion violates a privileged relationship of *xenia* with Zeus by making an attempt on Zeus' wife, a crime that Pindar depicts as one against Zeus rather than Hera (24). The conflict thus occurs between two male figures and results in Zeus' crafting of the Hera-cloud (37-40). Pindar diverges from other versions in which Ixion's crime is a violation not against Zeus, but against Hera, who consequently invents her own deceptive imitation. These differences are significant, for they demonstrate Pindar's reformulation of the myth to incorporate the Hera-cloud as a communicative act by Zeus.

The paper then proceeds with a comparison of Pindar's Hera-cloud to Hesiod's Pandora and argues that both, as creations mandated by Zeus to punish men, embody a paradox, for they each represent a vehicle for engagement between Zeus and mortals, yet they are not devoid of their own agency. Through the respective creations of the Hera-cloud and Pandora, Zeus communicates his "sweet lie" to Ixion and renders his punishment to men, but he also creates beings with the capacity to speak or act for themselves. This paradox demonstrates an observation by Lévi-Strauss (1969), who notes that in the practice of marriage exchange, a woman is traded between men as a communicative sign, yet the woman herself also generates her own signs. The final section of the paper examines the agency of Zeus, whose hand in creating the Hera-cloud is initially noted (40), but immediately diminishes as the mythical narrative progresses (40-41), while the agency of his creation the Hera-cloud increases (42).

Ultimately, the Hera-cloud, as both the embodiment and the agent of a deception, functions as a communicative act by Zeus, its "speaker," while absolving him of culpability for trickery. The creation of a female, third-party *pseudos* between guest-friends Zeus and Ixion sheds light on both the poet's relationship to his patron, whom he often calls a "host," and the role of gender in the poet's characterizations of truth, falsehood, and deception.