

The Song of the Unquenchable Flame

An Epic of Arete, Inheritance, and the Hellenic-Roman Fire

A´

I

Sing, Muse of the lyre that Orpheus once strung,
whose strings could move the stones of Hades and the hearts of kings,
sing of the fire that Prometheus stole and the Hellenes tended,
the fire that Rome carried across seas and mountains,
the fire that Western man has kept through storm and dark,
and which now, in the hour of forgetfulness, must be kindled anew.
Sing not of soft equality that flattens the peaks,
nor of the pale doctrine that names excellence a crime;
sing of arete, the excellence that raises man above the beasts,
of the pride that fathers hand to sons and mothers to daughters,
of the unbroken chain from Homer's wine-dark sea
to the marble forums and the cathedrals of the West.
Reject the captive mind that teaches children shame;
reject the Marxist whisper and the postmodern sneer
that would persuade a people their own blood is poison.
For a civilization that cannot praise its own greatness
will soon have none left to praise.

II

Hear first the ancient voice, the blind singer of Chios,
who sang of Achilles' wrath and Odysseus' long return.
But hear too the singer of Ascra, who told the older tale:
how Chaos gave way to the ordered generations of the gods,
how Ouranos was unseated and Kronos devoured his own,
until Zeus, the youngest, set dike upon the mountain
and bound the Titans beneath the roots of the earth.
This is the first lesson the Hellenes learned:
that order is not given but won, and must be held by law,
that the cosmos is a genealogy and not an accident,
and that the gods themselves are bound by moira and by measure.
In the days when gods still walked the peaks of Olympus,
the Hellenes looked upon the world and measured it.
They measured the heavens with geometry, the body with proportion,
the soul with philosophy, the city with law.
They did not bow before the desert or the jungle;

they raised the column and the temple, the theater and the stadium.
Athens taught the world that free men may govern themselves
by reason and debate, not by the lash of a despot's whim.
Sparta taught that discipline and courage are the walls of a people.
The philosophers—Socrates questioning, Plato dreaming the ideal forms,
Aristotle classifying all that is—
laid the foundations of science and of ethics.
Arete was their star: excellence in body, mind, and spirit.
No man was praised for mediocrity; the victor at Olympia
wore the olive wreath, and the poet sang his name forever.

B´

III

Tip the hat to Ploutos and to Eirene,
to Wealth and Peace, the children of the ordered world.
Yet hear what the singer of Ascrea tells of Wealth:
that Zeus struck the god blind, so that he could not tell
the just man from the unjust, the worthy from the base.
And men have read this as the gods' indifference—
but read it better: Zeus took from Wealth the power to judge,
and left that power to men, who must choose arete freely
or not at all. For a virtue that Wealth rewards by sight
is no virtue but a wage; and a justice that Wealth enforces
is no justice but a ledger.
So the blind god wanders, and men are left their freedom,
and the freedom is the trial: for the wealth that falls on the undeserving
does not escape dike—it only waits.
On earth or under Tartarus, the blind god's gifts are weighed at last,
and Zeus, who blinded him, still sees.

Then came the sons of Aeneas, the Romans who took the torch.
Virgil sang their destiny: to spare the conquered and war down the proud,
to bind the world with law and roads and aqueducts.
They built the arch that still stands, the dome that still shelters,
the code of Justinian that still speaks of justice.
They absorbed the Greek fire and carried it westward,
across Gaul and Britain, to the ends of the known earth.
The Hellenic-Roman tradition is not a tribal fetish;
it is the grammar of civilization itself—
the belief that truth is discoverable, that beauty is objective,
that the individual soul has dignity before the gods and under the law,
that families are the first republic, and that children

are not the property of the state but the heirs of a great inheritance.

IV

Byron stood among the ruins of Athens and felt the old blood stir.
He fought for the freedom of the Greeks against the Ottoman yoke,
knowing that the West was born in those islands and those hills.
He sang of the isles of Greece, where burning Sappho loved and sung,
where the mountains look on Marathon and Marathon looks on the sea.
That same fire runs in the veins of Western peoples still—
in the Greek who remembers Thermopylae,
in the Roman who remembers the Senate and the legions,
in the Frank, the Anglo-Saxon, the Celt, the Teuton, the Slav who received the light
and made it their own through cathedrals, universities, and ships that crossed oceans.

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V

For when the continent went dark, the fire crossed the water
and burned in the cold cells of Iona and of Clonmacnoise,
where monks bent over Virgil by the light of a fish-oil lamp,
copying the heathen's verses onto vellum with a steady hand,
not because they believed them, but because they saw
that a thing of beauty and of order was worth the keeping,
and that the word, once written, outlasts the sword.
They saved what they did not worship, and the saved thing saved them;
and when the Vikings came and the candle guttered,
they carried the books to the ends of the earth and copied them again.
It is the fire of exploration, of invention, of self-government,
of the cathedral rising to the sky and the laboratory probing the atom.

Γ

VI

Now hear the darker song, and hear it whole—
for it is eloquent, and it has teeth, and it is taught
in the schools of the West by men and women who believe it.
Hear the teacher in her classroom, her voice warm with conviction:
"Children, your fathers built their glory on the backs of the enslaved;
your cathedrals rose above the colonies they starved;
your philosophers kept slaves and praised the master's rule;
your empires mapped the world and called the map their own.

Why should you praise a house whose foundations are in bones?
Better to level it and plant something kinder in its place."
And the children, who have no answer ready, believe her—
for the charge is not wholly false, and shame is easier than study.
This is the doctrine Czesław Miłosz saw under the Soviet boot,
when trained ideologues entered the town halls
and explained with confident certainty why the old order was rotten,
why their system was superior, why history itself marched with them—
and the ordinary people, untrained in the new sophistries,
could not answer.
And now, as then, the ordinary people stand without an answer,
and the children carry home the lesson, and the match is struck
not in malice but in earnestness—for no one told them otherwise.

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VII

But this poem answers her—not with denial, but with weight.
Yes: the columns of the Parthenon were raised by hands in chains,
and the Forum's law was written while the lash was still in use.
We do not blot that out. We set it in the scale beside the rest—
beside the Renaissance that rediscovered the ancients,
the scientific method that sprang from Greek curiosity,
the engines that lifted billions from poverty,
the rule of law that restrains the tyrant and protects the weak,
the slow and self-inflicted abolition of the trade the West itself began to hate.
The Hellenic-Roman tradition is superior not because its people are gods,
but because its ideas are true and fruitful—
and because no other tradition so turned its own blade upon itself,
produced the conscience that indicted its own crimes,
and wrote the critique that the teacher now recites as if she found it.
We do not take our measure from the desert,
from the voice in the burning bush or the tablets on the mount,
from the god who is jealous and who demands the firstborn.
We take it from the mountain where the gods held council,
from the law that men debated in the open air,
from the column and the stadium and the measured line.
The West is not Sinai; it is Olympus and the Forum.
And when the prophets of shame came preaching in the desert's name,
it was the Hellenes who taught the world to answer them with reason.
The Hellenic-Roman tradition is superior not because its people are gods,
but because its ideas are true and fruitful:
that the cosmos is ordered and knowable,

that man is capable of reason and of virtue,
that liberty under law is better than equality under chains,
that beauty is not a social construct but a reflection of the real,
that arete—excellence pursued for its own sake—
is the proper aim of a human life.

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VIII

Hear now the turn of the song: from the forum to the hearth.
Parents, hear this: your first duty is not to the ideology of the age,
but to the transmission of the flame.
Teach your sons the names of Leonidas and of Scipio,
of Alexander who carried Greek culture to the Indus,
of Cicero who defended the Republic with words sharper than swords.
Teach your daughters the strength of Penelope and of Cornelia,
the mothers of the Gracchi who raised citizens of Rome,
the women who kept the hearth while the men kept the walls.
Read to them Homer by the firelight.
Show them the marble and the bronze.
Let them stand before the statues and feel the proportion of the human form
raised to its ideal, not reduced to grievance.
Tell them the West did not invent slavery—almost every people practiced it—
but tell them plainly, too, that the West practiced it,
and that the West, through the slow working of its own principles,
abolished it—and that this is the harder and the truer story.
Tell them that conquest and empire are the common story of mankind,
but that the Hellenic-Roman tradition produced the self-criticism
that could restrain the conqueror with law and with conscience—
and tell them that this self-criticism is not the enemy of the tradition
but its finest fruit, and that the teacher who wields it wields a Greek blade.
Do not let the teachers of shame have the last word.
Your children will inherit either a civilization or a ruin;
the choice is made in the stories you tell at the table.

IX

Families of the West, of Greece, of the Roman inheritance wherever it lives:
gather close.
The fire is not racist; it is human, and it is particular.
Every people has the right—and the duty—to prefer its own high tradition;
the fire is not a race but a birthright of tending, and all real loves are particular.
The Chinese revere their sages; the Japanese their ancestors;

the Indians their epics.
Only the West has been taught that self-preference is the one forbidden love.
Reject that teaching.
Love your own without hating the other.
Defend the inheritance without apology.
The arete of the Hellenic-Roman way is not the property of one blood alone;
it is a light offered to all who will receive it—
yet it remains our light, kindled in our hills and our forums,
and we will not let it be extinguished by those who never tended it.

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X

Marxism promised a classless paradise and delivered gulags and famine;
postmodernism promised the end of grand narratives and delivered
the inability to distinguish beauty from ugliness, truth from power,
man from woman, excellence from mediocrity.
Yet hear the teacher once more, for she is not a fool:
she says the gulags were never the dream, and the dream was just;
she says the grand narratives were the tyrant's tool, and she is not wholly wrong.
Classicism answers both, and answers her: the forms are real, the virtues are real,
the hierarchy of value is real—and it is not the tyrant's tool but the tyrant's leash,
for a man who knows what excellence is cannot be told that rubble is a cathedral.
We choose the column over the wrecking ball,
the epic over the grievance manifesto,
the family over the state as the primary school of the soul.

E'

XI

Rise, then, sons and daughters of the West.
Remember Gaugamela, where the many broke the great king's host.
Remember the Republic that fell and rose again in law and in spirit.
Remember the universities that kept the light through the Dark Ages.
Remember the explorers who mapped the globe, the inventors who unlocked the atom,
the poets who sang of both glory and limit.
This is not arrogance; it is gratitude.
A people that forgets its gratitude becomes a people that forgets itself.

Orpheus, lend your lyre once more.
Sing the song that can move the stones of indifference,
that can call the dead heroes to stand again in the memory of the living.

Sing also the harder song, that the children may learn to answer:
that the house of the fathers is not without stain, and yet is worth the keeping;
that to love a thing is to see it whole, and having seen, to tend it still.
Let the fathers teach the sons, the mothers the daughters,
until the flame burns bright in every household.
Let no ideologue persuade the child that the house of his fathers
deserves to be demolished.

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For if the foundations are challenged tomorrow,
we shall answer with the full weight of three thousand years:
with Homer and Virgil, with Aristotle and Cicero,
with the blood of free men and the wisdom of free minds.
The fire is not quenched.
It waits in the marble, in the texts, in the blood,
in the quiet resolve of parents who will not surrender the inheritance.

Kindle it.
Guard it.
Pass it on.
For the Hellenic-Roman tradition is not a museum piece;
it is the living form of civilization itself.
And a people who know why their civilization deserves to survive
will make certain that it does.

XII

Thus the song ends, yet the fire continues.
Sing it in the homes.
Sing it against the captive mind.
Sing it until the children answer not with shame
but with the ancient pride that built the West—
and will rebuild it still.