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THE ATHLETE AS WARRIOR: PINDAR'S P. 9. 97-103 AND P. 10. 55-59*

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Half a century ago K. Freeman remarked in an article on 'the function and technique of poetry' of Pindar that when he wrote of the victor and his success 'he was thinking of himself as the champion of the Muses, and his own progress in his art', that 'his poems are full ... of detailed and direct statements of his own methods', and that 'if all these passages be collected it is surprising to find the bulk to which they attain, and the wealth of precise information they afford ... But that would require a volume'.¹

The present article, part indeed of a much longer study,² will suggest that in praising the successful athlete Pindar sometimes uses terms and vocabulary used for the warrior, and therefore that probably he had in mind similar praises of the warrior from the elegiac poets, especially Tyrtaeus, Callinus or even Homer.

In P. 9 on the Cyrenean Telesicrates' victory in the race in hoplite armour, in a passage of triad 4 which must be part of the poet's victory catalogue, Pindar praises Telesicrates:

πλείστα νικάσαντά σε καὶ τελεταῖς
ὠρίαῖς ἐν Παλλάδος εἶδον ἄφωνοί θ' ὡς ἕκασται φίλτατον
παρθενικαὶ πόσιν ἢ
υἷὸν εὐχοντ', ὦ Τελεσίκρατες, ἔμμεν,
ἐν {τ'} Ὀλυμπίοισι τε καὶ βαθυκόλπου
Γᾶς ἀέθλοις ἐν τε καὶ πάσιν
ἐπιχωρίοις (97-103).³

Because of his many victories, mainly in the local games and seasonal Festival of Pallas at Cyrene, but also in other local contests in honour of Olympian Zeus or Gaia, Telesicrates was admired by the women; the maidens among them silently prayed (because of their modesty) to have him as their dear husband, and the matrons as a son. This erotic context (notice that Pindar mentions only παρθενικαί, the matrons being implied by analogy) corresponds very well to the previous erotic myth of Apollo — Cyrene and the following one of Alexidamus and

* I would like to express my thanks and gratitude to Dr A. J. Gossage and Professor P. E. Easterling who read and improved this paper, not only in regards to the English but also to the argument expressed; they of course carry no responsibility for whatever blemishes remain.

¹ Kathleen Freeman, 'Pindar — The function and technique of poetry' (*G&R* 8 (1939), 144-59), 146. Cf. similar treatment of Pindar's concept of poetry: C. M. Bowra, *Pindar* (Oxford, 1964), ch.1; J. A. Davison, 'Pindar's conception of poetry', *From Archilochus to Pindar* (London, 1968), 289-311; K. Svoboda, 'Les idées de Pindare sur la poésie', *Aegyptus* 32 (1952), 108-20; Stanislaw Stabryla, 'Some Observations on Pindar's Concept of Poetry ... the Function of Poetry', *Aischylos und Pindar. Studien zu Werk und Nachwirkung* hrsg. von Schmidt E.G. (Berlin Adakemie-Verl 1981), 21-38; M. Lefkowitz, 'The poet as athlete', *SIFC* 3a s.II (1984), 5-12; I. N. Perysinakis, *Wealth and Society in Early Greek Literature* (Univ. of London PhD dissertation, 1982), 543ff.

² On *Pindar's Imagery of Poetry* started before D. Steiner's *The Crown of Song, Metaphor in Pindar* (Duckworth, 1986) appeared; cf. G. B. Walsh, *The Varieties of Enchantment. Early Greek Views of the Nature and Function of Poetry* (Chapel Hill, London, 1984), ch. 3.

³ On this ode, see, among others, the sound commentary by C. Carey, *A Commentary on Five Odes of Pindar* (Arno Press, 1981), 65-103; G. Kirkwood, *Selections from Pindar, Edited with an Introduction and Commentary* (Scholars Press, 1982), 215-33; R. W. B. Burton, *Pindar's Pythian Odes* (Oxford, 1962), 35-69; B. L. Gildersleeve, *Pindar: The Olympian and Pythian Odes* (London, 1885), followed by later commentators, cites indeed Nausicaa's wish in *Od.* 6 244: αἶ γὰρ ἐμοὶ τοιοῦδε πόσις κεκλημένος εἴη.

(Antaeus' daughter) Barke (or Alceis). Occasions in which these prayers may have been prompted are not only the games themselves but also other religious festivals and other social events of everyday life.

A similar kind of praise and admiration is expressed in *P.* 10 in honour of Hippocles of Thessaly winner in the boy's double foot-race. But this time the athlete is admired both by men and maidens:

ἔλπομαι δ' Ἐφυραίων
 ὄπ' ἀμφὶ Πηνειῶν γλυκεῖαν προχεόντων ἐμὴν
 τὸν Ἴπποκλέαν ἔτι καὶ μᾶλλον σὺν ἀοιδαῖς
 ἕκατι στεφάνων θαητὸν ἐν ἄλιξι θησέμεν ἐν καὶ παλαιτέροις
 νέαισιν τε παρθένοισι μέλημα (55-9).⁴

Also, this time, it is not simply the victory which inspires admiration, but mainly Pindar's song; nor is a specific prayer expressed. Song will make Hippocleas θαητὸς to his fellows and the elders and μέλημα to the young girls, though both these predicatives may be taken in common for both the young men and the maidens; i.e. song will inspire admiration so that his fellows would compete to be like him, the elders would remember their youth and the maidens would want to have him (or a man like him) as a husband.⁵ Through the song Pindar himself competes and substitutes himself for the athlete. Notice also that the ἔρωτες (v.60) has been affected by the παρθένοισι μέλημα. The time and place in which these feelings may have been conceived are of course the time and place in which the song is performed but also the athlete's home-coming and the memory of the event for the rest of his lifetime.

A similar situation in some aspects, though in a different context, is described in *Pythian* 2 (vv. 18-20):

σὲ δ', ὦ Δεινομένειε παῖ, Ζεφυρία πρὸ δόμων
 Λοκρὶς παρθένος ἀπύει, πολεμίων καμάτων ἐξ ἀμαχάνων
 διὰ τεῶν δύνναμιν δρακεῖσ' ἀσφαλές.

The similarity lies in three points: the Locrian maidens, πρὸ δόμων and ἀπύει. Arguing from this same passage, and especially the πρὸ δόμων, and drawing parallels from *P.* 5.96, 3.78-9, *I.* 8.1ff, 1.47-51, *N.* 1.19-22, *Bach.* 6.14 (Sn.), L. Woodbury concludes that a position 'in front of the house', was suitable for a variety of manifestations, whether funeral, worshipful or celebratory, as is described in the shield of Achilles in the *Iliad* (18. 495-6) (cited by the scholia on Pindar's *P.* 2.46): αἱ δὲ γυναικες / ἰστόμενοι θαύμαζον ἐπὶ προθύροισιν ἑκάστη.⁶

Apart from this and the modern Greek attitude,⁷ this 'in front of the house' may be better understood if connected with the previous passages of admiration. Certainly here the praise of Hieron is that he defended Locri when it was in danger and saved its population from the perils of war and defeat;⁸ but this 'in front of the house', admiration of Telesicrates and Hippocleas, and praise by men and women are not to be understood only at the games and the relevant ceremony, but also at festivals, in the streets and in front of the houses and on other social occasions, either when the victor was coming back from the great games (or the war) or after

⁴ Cf. Kirkwood (n.3), 235-44; Burton (n.3), 1-14.

⁵ The admiration in the eyes of three groups may be a modification of the standard Laconian procedure of the three choruses of the three ages prescribed by Plutarch (*Lycurgus* 21): Ἄμμες ποκ' ἡμες ἄλκιμοι νεανῖα (said men of old age) / Ἄμμες δέ γ' εἰμεν· αἱ δὲ λῆς, πείραν λαβέ (said the men) / Ἄμμες δέ γ' ἐσσομεσθα πολλῶ κάρρονες (said the young men).

⁶ L. Woodbury, 'The Gratitude of the Locrian Maidens: Pindar, *Pyth.* 2.18-20' (*TAPA* 108 (1978), 285-99), 294-97.

⁷ It is still common in the countryside for women to stand 'in front of the house' at religious or wedding ceremonies, or to welcome a stranger or even to see 'what is going on', though the last is regarded as idle curiosity.

⁸ See Woodbury (n.6), 287ff, and Carey (n.3), 30-33.

The brave warrior when he is alive is honoured as if he were a demigod and in people's eyes he is like a tower and performs deeds equivalent to the deeds of many people.¹⁰

Certainly these elegies have been rightly connected with Homeric passages. From our point of view one is reminded of Sarpedon's assertion to Glaucus that they are honoured with eminent seats and more meat and wine in Lycia:

... πάντες δὲ θεοὺς ὡς εἰσορώωσι
... ἐπεὶ Λυκίοισι μετὰ πρότοισι μάχονται (Il. 12.312 and 321).¹¹

Therefore, praises of the victor such as that he is the object of the matrons' prayer for their sons to be like him, or the maidens' for having him or a man like him as their husband (*P.* 9), or that he is θαητός and παρθένοισι μέλημα (*P.* 10), have their equivalent in exhortations in elegy when the young warrior is ἐρατὸς γυναιξί (Tyr. 10) or πάντες τιμῶσιν him (Tyr. 12) or he is ἄξιος ἡμιθέων and ἐν ὀφθαλμοῖσιν ὄρωσι (Cal. 1).

Nevertheless Pindar himself cites side by side the athlete and the warrior in their gaining κῦδος ἄβρόν; not surprisingly indeed, if one bears in mind the conditions of the society depicted in the Homeric epics. There the *agathoi* fight in war-time or participate in athletic contests in peace-time or even during a war. Athletic excellences had been regarded as training for war — and not only in Homer.

In *Isthmian* 1, in honour of Herodotus of Thebes, winner in the chariot race, in a long passage on the relationship once more between patron and poet, Pindar ends:

ὄς δ' ἄμφ' ἀέθλοισ ἢ πολεμίζων ἄρηται κῦδος ἄβρόν,
εὐαγορηθεὶς κέρδος ὑψιστον δέκεται, πολια-
τᾶν καὶ ξένων γλώσσας ἄωτον (50-1).

All men are intent on trying to avoid famine and everyone has a wage (reward) earned from his work. Especially the poets willingly give noble recognition through their song honouring the man who has spent himself — his wealth and his efforts — on lofty achievements.¹² But above such men and such achievements are those who have succeeded in games or war and the praise they have gained, because of which they are highly regarded in the speech of their fellow-citizens; and the victor warrior or athlete is put at the top of a priamel of occupations and the satisfaction to be gained from them. One could add that Pindar's own fee is implied under μισθός and the whole passage may be understood as an inducement to pay;¹³ that under γλώσσας ἄωτον Pindar's poetry and this particular ode is implied and that κέρδος has been suggested by the previous μισθός. Also, πολεμίζων with its Homeric connotations has inspired the Homeric κῦδος ἄρηται; and it must be noticed that it is a middle verb denoting conscious bodily activity and power, and referring to the interest of the subject (cf. *N.* 9.46-7). Pindar twice uses war vocabulary in relation to song (and one may say to the athlete), on one occasion referring to the Aeacids:

καὶ γὰρ ἡρώων ἀγαθοὶ πολεμιστᾶι
λόγον ἐκέρδαναν· κλέονται δ' ἐν τε φορμίγ-
γῆσιν ἐν αὐλῶν τε παμφώνοις ὀμοκλαῖς
μυρίον χρόνον (*I.* 5.26-8),

¹⁰ Cf. A. W. H. Adkins, *Poetic Craft in the Early Greek Elegists* (Chicago and London, 1985), 55-66; P. P. Matsen, 'Social Status in Callinus I', *CJ* 69 (1973), 57-9.

¹¹ Cf. *Il.* 5.78 (of Dolopion) or of Telemachus' walking to ἀγορή (*Od.* 2.12-3) or of Odysseus' charm (*Od.* 6.229 ff, 8.457 ff, etc.), *Od.* 8.173 of a good speaker, or of Hector (*Il.* 22.394); Sappho's fr.31 (LP) φαίνεται μοι κῆνος ἴσος θεοῖσιν may be seen from this aspect, too.

¹² I paraphrase F. J. Nisetich's translation *Pindar's Victory Song* (Baltimore & London, 1980), vv.41-46.

¹³ Cf. Perysinakis (n.1), 549-50, 573.

and another occasion referring to the progeny of Thebes, or particularly to Hagesias and to himself in *O.* 6.86-7, saying:

ἀνδράσιν αἰχματοῖσι πλέκων
ποικίλον ὕμνον (but cf. *O.* 11.19, *N.* 5.7, *I.* 4.15 and 23-4).

Hieron's case, already mentioned, may be taken as a third instance (*P.* 2.58ff): in his youth he found glory that knows no measure (63-4), while he surpassed all Greeks in possession of goods and honour, or in athletic contests.

E. L. Bundy, too, seems to connect athlete and warrior; speaking of the 'poet's task' in *I.* 1.45f he cites an elegiac couplet from a memorial inscription:

οὐθεις μόχθος ἔπαινον ἐπ' ἀνδράσι τοῖς ἀγαθοῖσιν
ζητεῖν, εὐρηται δ' ἄφθονος εὐλογία.¹⁴

But it seems that Pindar intentionally uses the old-fashioned formula κῦδος ἀρέσθαι, which already in Homer had lost its magical sense and had entered into the repertory of heroic elegy on a par with κλέος ἀρέσθαι (cf. *Il.* 5.3). 'The royal or heroic κῦδος forms part of the powerful charms which the gods grant and withhold instantaneously at their own whim to one or another of the parties (or the heroes) in war.'¹⁵ Thus, Pindar had by analogy transferred κῦδος from war to the athlete and had put himself as poet in an intermediary position between Zeus, who alone holds and grants κῦδος, and the athlete, as his position is intermediary in relation to the Muse.¹⁶

Pindar, so far, not only praises the victor in terms of the warrior as praised by the elegiac poets, but also puts athlete and warrior side by side and grants them his song. This coupling is placed and expressed in a Homeric context and almost in Homeric language. It may be inferred that Pindar's own poetry is implied in this relationship. Furthermore it is worth noticing that in *P.* 10 Pindar puts the admiration and praise of Hippocleas by his fellows and the young girls in a similar context. Immediately after the passage cited above Pindar continues:

καὶ γάρ
ἑτέροις ἑτέρων ἔρωτες ἔκνιζαν φρένας·
τῶν δ' ἕκαστος ὀρούει,
τυχῶν κεν ἀρπαλέαν σχέθοι φροντίδα τὰν πᾶρ ποδός (59-62).

And of course it is at the top of such a priamel that Tyrtaeus, after rejecting other excellences puts prowess (ἦδ' ἀρετή), as ἀρετή *par excellence* (12W).¹⁷

But in the praise of the brave warrior in elegy, above, the contrast is between the coward and the brave who were killed in battle, and therefore one would expect to find an analogous contrast in Pindar's odes between the successful and the defeated athlete. And indeed, though,

¹⁴ *Studia Pindarica* II (Univ. of Cal. Publ. Cl. Ph. 18, 1962), 63: (*IG* II/III² 11169).

¹⁵ E. Benveniste, *Indo-European Language and Society*, trans. El. Palmer (Univ. of Miami Press, Faber and Faber, 1973), 346-56, esp. 351ff; the citation from 354-55. Perhaps even Pindar's (κέρδος) ὑψίστον has been suggested by the formula κῦδος ὑπέρτερον. On Homeric κλέος cf. E. D. Floyd, 'Kleos apthiton: An Indo-European Perspective on Early Greek Poetry', *Glotta* 58 (1980), 133-57; G. Nagy, 'Another Look at kleos apthiton', *WJ* 7 (1981), 113-16, and his influential study *The Best of the Achaeans* (Baltimore & London, 1979), passim. M. Finkelberg, 'Is κλέος ἄφθιτον a Homeric formula?', *CQ* 36 (1986), 1-5.

¹⁶ Cf. Pi. fr.52 (*Pa* VI) 5-6 (S-M) ἀοίδιμον Πιερίδων προφάταν and fr.150 μαντεύο, Μοῖσα, προφατεύσω δ' ἐγώ.

¹⁷ The fact that in Tyrtaeus 12 (W) athletic excellence is put in an inferior position in comparison with warlike prowess does not weaken any probability of relationship between Pi. *P.* 9 or *P.* 10 and Tyrt. 12. Since the particularization of *arete* had started already in Homer it is quite natural that in Pindar it denotes athlete excellence; I am suggesting that such priamels (as Tyrt. 12) may have given birth in Pindar's mind to such a climax at the top of which κῦδος is put as the highest reward.

as is obvious, it would be a bad omen for both Pindar and the athlete to mention defeat, there are some hints about the defeated.

The scholia commenting upon *σιγαλὸν ἀμαχανίαν* (*P.* 9.95) say ἀμήχανον δὲ τὴν σιγὴν εἶπεν, ὅτι κατηφεῖς εἰσιν οἱ νικηθέντες and cite fr.229 (S-M):

νικώμενοι γὰρ ἄνδρες ἀγρυξία δέδενται
οὐ φίλων ἐναντίον ἐλθεῖν.

This ἀμαχανία which Telesicrates (*P.* 9.95) has escaped denotes from his fellow-citizens' view-point the helpless misery of a joyless home-coming, and from the poet's one the silent helplessness of his Muse from whom a defeated athlete can awake no song.¹⁸

Also, in *P.* 8, praising Aristomenes of Aegina, winner in wrestling, Pindar says of the defeated opponents:

τοῖς οὔτε νόστος ὁμῶς
ἔπαλπνος ἐν Πυθιάδι κρίθη,
οὐδὲ μολόντων πὰρ' ματέρ' ἀμφὶ γέλως γλυκὺς
ῶρσεν χάριν· κατὰ λαύρας δ' ἐχθρῶν ἀπάροιοι
πτώσσοντι, συμφορᾷ δεδαγμένοι (83-7).

And in *O.* 8 praising Alcimedon of Aegina, winner in the boy's wrestling, the poet says of the victor that:

ὃς τύχα μὲν δαίμονος, ἀνορέας δ' οὐκ ἀμπλακῶν
ἐν τέτρασιν παιδῶν ἀπεθήκατο γυίοις
νόστον ἔχθιστον καὶ ἀτιμοτέραν γλώσσαν καὶ ἐπικρυφὸν οἶμον,
πατρὶ δὲ πατρὸς ἐπέπνευσεν μένος
γήραος ἀντίπαλον (67-71).

The νόστος ἔχθιστος and ἐπικρυφὸς οἶμος of *O.* 8.69, the absence of laughter and the slinking home along the back streets of *P.* 8.85ff, argues Burton, 'point clearly enough to the bitterness of the feelings between athletic cliques and to the survival in the contemporary attitude towards single-combat sports, of the Homeric customs of insulting a fallen warrior'.¹⁹ At the same time allusions to the defeated must be warnings to the victor, as seems to be the case in *P.* 8, about the vicissitudes of life. Pindar on the other hand must have restrained himself from ridiculing the defeated, because of his very strong sense of envy.²⁰ In both cases the home-coming of the successful athlete is called νόστος (ἔχθιστος), while οἶμος together with γλώσσα may be taken as ambiguous to imply the lack of the victor's song. But it must be νόστος which has dictated to the poet's mind the condition described in vv. 70-1. As with the athletes, νόστος was the second successful step for the warrior for a safe return home, as is the case in the Homeric epics and the Epic Cycle. Achilles and Odysseus many times speak in this way, and Homer himself combines a warrior's death with his lack of home-coming, with his father's sorrow and the fortune of his property (or vice-versa) in many combat scenes in the *Iliad*: Diomedes killed Xanthos and Thoon, the sons of Phainops who thus will have no other son to care for his property (5.152-58), while one of Dares' sons, Phregeus, was saved by Hephaestus, and so his father will not be entirely ἀκαχημένος (5.9-25); cf. Sarpedon's fear 5.685-88, and 24.493, 486, 534 of Priamus and Pelleus, etc.²¹ The successful athlete is like the

¹⁸ Cf. Burton (n.3), 53, and H. Fränkel, *Early Greek Poetry and Philosophy*, trans. by M. Hadas and J. Willis (Oxford, 1975), 448 n.18 (cited by Burton, too).

¹⁹ Burton (n.3), 189; cf. D. S. Carne-Ross, *Pindar* (Yale Univ. Press, 1985), 182. H. Fränkel (n.18), 497ff.

²⁰ There is no need to refer here to the much discussed topic of envy in Pindar (or in Herodotus and Aeschylus).

²¹ Cf. J. Griffin, *Homer on Life and Death* (Oxford, 1980), 103ff; B. Fenik, *Typical Battle Scenes in the Iliad*, *Hermes Einzelschriften* 21 (Wiesbaden, 1968), e.g. 12, 24 etc. Kevin Crotty's *Song and Action, The Victory Odes*

warrior returning home who gives pleasure to his father (wife, mother, etc.) and takes care of his οἶκος and property.

In passages of the above kind of praise of the athlete in place of the warrior one could expect to find mention or hints, though it would be a bad omen, of the defeated athlete; so the parallelism would be consistent. And, indeed, in one of the main passages discussed above (*P.* 9) and some other similar passages we found not only mention of the defeated but also of the successful athlete's homecoming, conceived in Pindar's mind by the analogy of the victorious warrior's νόστος.

In conclusion, then, in *P.* 9.97-103 and *P.* 10.55-9, as well as in *I.* 1.50-1, Pindar praises the successful athlete in terms in which elegiac poets had praised the brave warrior, and had enumerated the advantages he enjoys in social life: admiration among his fellow-citizens and desire of him by the maidens; his κῶδος ἄρηται is that of the Homeric warrior and his νόστος has been modelled upon the warrior's home-coming.

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of Pindar (The Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, Baltimore & London, 1982) includes a whole chapter on 'The Return Home', 104-38, mainly on the aspect of the athlete being initiated into the tribe.