

# APPROACHING PINDAR

THE POET'S ACCESS

TO THE  
GREEKTEXT

## Pythian 8

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## PREFACE

Of all the literature which we have from the world of Ancient Classical Greece, nothing is more brilliant and more astounding than the great Epinician odes of Pindar. The greater part of the early thrust of Greek lyric and choral poetry through the 6th century has been lost. We have mere chips and fragments of a host of major figures which were still in the collections of Alexandrian libraries in the 4th c. BC. But in the case of Pindar, we have two hundred text pages of poems keyed to the Olympian, Pythian, Nemean and Isthmian games. This is by no means a major portion of Pindar's original poetic output, but a welcome treasury when compared to Sappho's precious but moth-eaten papyri or Archilochus' scrappy citations from the grammarians.

We do have complete poems, but they are unusually difficult to read in terms of their words and their sub-meanings, especially in the complex web of ideas on which the poet weaves the fabric of his poetry. It is not surprising that so difficult a poet as Pindar would have fared badly with the medieval copyists from whom our editions draw their text. There are passages where words are missing or garbled, lines which have puzzled our scholars for centuries. But beyond problems with the actual text, there are problems with the words themselves and the way they are woven together, questions about what the poet is actually trying to say. Add to this the complex references to a mythology already fading from the society, at a time when the Mysteries occupied the populace more and more as the real religion of Greece. Pindar continues to use the ancient myths as a system to weld together the historic identity of states and places which were losing their historical pedigree in the face of an oncoming Peloponnesian War.

The Festivals which mark the Greek system of dating as far back as the time of the First Messenian War in the 8th c. BC had become a pan-Hellenic summertime competition which took place every fourth year, and became the standard system of Greek historical dating for the future cen-

turies, with the title of "Olympiad" and a number. This may seem a loose dating system when compared with the astronomical accuracy of the Incas and Aztecs, especially in Hellenistic time when astronomical studies could have fixed dates with reasonable accuracy. Olympiadic dating for the birth of Pindar is more reasonable than our dating of Greek history by an annual backward count from the birth date of a Jewish quasi-Messiah who wasn't to be born for some five hundred years.

Writing Odes in commemoration of winning athletes in the series of annual competitions may seem far removed from the world of our modern Olympic Games, where an "Ode" on the Gold Medal Cyclist or Shot-putter would probably seem more comical than out of place. We have inherited the idea of athletic Festivals from Greece, but little of the sense of brilliance in the pursuit of arete which the 5th c. century Greeks found so important. Greece in later centuries became commercial in the Games, much as we did in this last century as our Olympic Games turned into big business with contracts, rewards beyond the value of the medals, advertising of products, media coverage, and eventually questions of bribes and corruption. But one thing remained the same. Modern nations are as much concerned with their athletic winners as a mark of national rank and identity, as the Greek city-states were twenty five hundred years ago. Prestige and political rank now as then tend to be defined most clearly in terms of special individuals and their performance, which may be a basic trait of human competitiveness far more humane than that other criterion for excellence, which is continually resuscitated under the name of War.

Already in ancient times grammarians were trying to define Pindar's difficult wording, his complicated system of metrics, and the meaning of his mythologizing figures. Our texts come from Renaissance copies of MSS with various connections back to reading copies of the late Hellenistic period, accompanied by scholiasts' marginal glosses and comments, at times reinforced by passages in the more readable segments of papyri. Since Boeckh's great edition of Pindar at the start of the 19th century, there has been a constant flow of philological and scholarly interest in the Odes, which has extended beyond books and monographs to the vast world of Journals in a dozen assorted languages worldwide.

Assembling everything written on Pindar and his poetry since 1800 would take the shelving of a modest size academic library, as each generation produces in turn a staff of scholars who are able to master, control and amplify the accumulated materials on this quizzical poet. Pindar does require interpretation, but when the interpretation becomes so complex that a literary reader of Greek poetry is all but excluded from the table of the Philologists, we run the danger of losing the Poet in the paperwork.

The purpose of this paper is to "approach" the poetry of Pindar with intent to elucidate the soluble problems of interpretation, while setting aside for the time being the accumulations of speculation and problem-solving which stand between the intelligent interested reader and the words of the Greek text he is reading. Comment is often needed for sensible interpretations, sometimes for any interpretation at all, but our eye must be on the words and the base meaning of the poetry first and last. This is not an easy task with a poet far removed in time, in culture and even in textual authenticity, but if we are interested in the Epinician Odes as literature, as poetry and as very curious personal expression from one of the great poetic minds of the West, we must travel light and go on the narrowest pathway which will lead us to the poems.

In the interpretation of Pindar, there are three factors to consider: First there is the Text as it stands, with needed corrections and some patchwork included. Second there must be sufficient comment to draw out meaning from groups of words which have interior and inter-twined associations, or we will simply pass over deep meanings with a quick glance. The third element in this association is Ourselves, as persons of the twenty-sixth century or the seventy-fifth generation distant from Pindar's world, living in a very different time-space and an even more different social culture. We do not lose our own sense of personal perspective when we look outside our immediate social world. We can try to think as ancient Greeks or as modern Japanese, and can learn a great deal about an "other" world which interests us. But we are rooted in our society by our years of growth, and when we try to understand a foreign experience, we load it unconsciously with our own perceptions, along with much of our own psychological and linguistic baggage.

At the start of the 18th century Richard Bentley said that he thought he knew about as much about ancient Greek as an Athenian blacksmith, something which we may easily forget while perusing the shelves of scholarship in the dark library stacks. There are many places in Greek literature and culture where we can only estimate how much we do not know.

But in certain realms of human behavior, we often feel a confidence of communication, and sense that we and the ancient Greeks may not be so distant. We represent moments at the far end of the long trail of human experience, but we live our lives on the same human pathway. Love, morality, national identity, pride and humility, a longing for achievement in the face of possible failure and sure death ---- these are matters which tend to recur in the passage of the ages. They make take different forms and appear at time in unrecognizable formats, but these elements seems to be human durables and probably part of our psychological and social givens. Reaching across time to Pindar we have links which can help us connect, if we understand that what we find will be less in the order of identities, than possible parallels.

Pindar's choral Odes were group-sung, the words were one part of a Performance from which the musical part which has totally disappeared, but for the performance the music was clearly essential. We cannot go far in reconstructing Greek music, but when we read Pindar as a literary document with correct attention to the syllable durations and pitches, we do have the rhythmic or metrical score fairly intact. The Durations of the syllables is built into the way in which Greek is written, with long and short syllables clearly marked out. In Homer the system of versification is fairly easy to master since it is based on just two cadences of "feet" as "finger = dactyl" with a long bone and two shorts, and "thumb = spondee?" with two long bones. Much of the Aeolic lyric poetry of Sappho and Alcaeus tends to use repeated cadencing lines in stanzas, so we can read these poems with some ease.

But Pindar has a much more complex sense of metrics. We, on the other hand, schooled as we are in Western musical tradition where regularity of the "beat" and the measured cadences of time signatures are a needed part of instrumental composition and group performance, have a very poor sense of complex rhythms. Indian music with rhythmic series of 17 / 19 are beyond our grasp, and the African drum and dance sequences are even further removed from our society's learning experience. With the rhyming couplet of our traditional Western poetry using even-syllable measured lines, we stand at the low end of the global scale of metric possibilities.

But Pindar is at the high end. When we try to read his lines, looking back and forth to the pre-scanned pattern at the head of the poem and painfully adjusting our durations to this abstracted schematic, we quickly recognize that for sensitive reading of poetry, we are simply out of our league. Pindar must be approached by another path. To read Pindar rightly, we must memorize the rhythmic beats of a line until they are an automatic part of our memory, and only then can we proceed to read the Greek aloud with the rhythm intact. Then we must do the next line, and then very painfully the next. This is slow and very inconvenient, but it is the only way to make up for the rhythmic insufficiencies of our Western world.

We will speak of this later in this study, where I maintain that if you do not take the trouble to expand your sense of rhythmic sufficiently to encompass the wording of the Odes, proceeding line by line before trying to get the overall rhythmic patterns of a single strophe, you are immeasurably far from understanding the forms, the sound and basic construction of Pindar's poetry.

But there is another level. The usual "accent" diacritics which are always printed with Greek texts are NOT stresses as we learn them in our Attic Introductions, but musical pitch indicators. This requires further explanation and discussion, but I state here that only when you have mastered the Rhythmics as discussed in the previous paragraph, will you be ready to place pitch changes of a musical fifth or so on top of the syllable durations, as a tone based part of the musical score. This will have to come later.

This is all quite difficult for us, as rhythmically unsophisticated English speakers, often musically monotone in ordinary speech especially as American speakers. It will take a special effort to do all this while reading the actual words of the Greek text. For this I suspect the only reasonable approach will be through a conventional modern music scoring, with the Staff Score (which most of us can read ) visually representing both Durations in "timed notes" as well as pitches by vertical placement of "pitched notes" in the staff. The Greek can be written with syllables spaced properly for the notes on the score, and read off directly by anyone who can read a church hymn or a popular song from sheet music.

But for a start, we can use a simpler system of measuring out the metrics, which I will discuss below. I only want to state at the start what this study is about, and where it will be going on what pathways. After some necessary introductions, we can examine the Greek text of Pythian 8, which is the last poem Pindar wrote in his extreme old age, his farewell Ode as it seems, and get the meaning of the words and the phrasing of his constructions firmly in mind. This is a serious undertaking in itself, and will constitute the first part of this paper, as Part I.

In the process we can examine Pindaric rhythmic and try to find ways to extend our experience reading aloud varied sequences of ten to twenty syllables. There is no easy way into this matter, here we can outline the basics and the rest is up for long hours of private practice.

Later it should be possible to try super-superimposing Pitches, and even construct musical lines experimentally with "passing tones" between the raised Acutes and melismatic Circumflexes. Putting together the Greek words, the syllable metrics and the tone pitches on a music score, we will have something which we can realistically deal with in real-time reading. This will take some time and practice, but it can be done, and then we will be much nearer the sound and general effect of Pindar's original choral Odes as performance based poetic compositions. But this is something which extends beyond the scope of this study, which we may be able to go into at another time in a separate article.

All good things require time and effort. Now even intentionally misquoting Pindar I would like to note that:

" if a man would say he could reach high excellence with<out>  
long drawn effort, we would call him a fool among wise men...."  
Pyth. 8, 73-4

So let it be in this case, and with the words of Aeschylus, with a good wind favoring, let the good win out in the end.

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## Chapter I: Biography and History

Little is known about the biography of most classical authors, but in the case of Pindar we know more than we might expect. He was born about 520 BC at a town near Thebes, from the stock of a noble Spartan family of the Aegidae as he states in Pythian 5. Starting life from a local aristocracy with a strong Doric cast, both culturally and linguistically, he went to Athens at an early age to study music and poetry and found acceptance in the intellectual circles of the Peisistrasian dynasty, very possibly becoming acquainted with Aeschylus who came out of a similar aristocratic and traditional background. During the Persian Wars of 480-79 BC he appeared to back the position of Thebes which was unfortunately pro-Persian, and when Thebes fined him for his praise of Athens, the Athenians generously paid his fine in respect for his early poetic reputation. In his middle years he was invited to Syracuse in Sicily where he stayed for several years and wrote several of his mature Odes. He is reported to have lived to the age of eighty, which would place his death at Argos around 440 BC, just before the serious start of the Peloponnesian War. The great ode Pythian 8, which is the example of interpretation in this study, was his last poem and reflects the thoughts of his old age, in thoughtful contrast to the brilliant early style and language of Olympian I.

The four series of Festival Odes, the Olympian, Pythian, Nemean and Isthmian, represent his best known choral poetry, but his total output was much larger and many times the two hundred pages of the athletic Odes. He wrote in the modified literary Doric dialect shared by Aeschylus and retained in the choral passages of the later Greek drama, based on the southern Greek speech sounds which share many features with the lyric Aeolic as against the Ionic of Homer.

For those of us who learned our Greek from textbooks based on the Attic language, which for all intents and purposes became standard Greek after the Peloponnesian Wars through the Hellenistic period, Homeric and Aeolic and Doric will seem very different from the Attic grammar. This is a wrong linguistic way to study Greek, especially nowadays since the dominant position of Homer and the archaic poets has become clear. But we do the same thing in English, teaching the modern language first and then reaching back to the variations we find in Shakespeare and Chaucer.

From the other direction, if we learn Greek from Homer first, we can get a much clearer sense of the development of the Greek language, as we see with pellucid clarity the uncontracted forms of noun and verb before their consolidation in Attic grammar.

The great Games as scheduled for every fourth year, were from the earliest time the virtual Calendar of the Greek's sense of history, and everything of importance was dated with an Olympic year number. The Olympiad series dated from its inception in 776 BC, and the first to use it for historical dating and a check on chronology seems to have been the Sicilian historian Timaeus (c. 356 - c.260 BC). But a listing of the names of victors was compiled up through the 4th c. AD as preserved by Eusebius. The games were apparently discontinued around the start of the fifth century AD.

A great deal of information can be garnered from the Olympiad lists, the names of victors which in many cases can be identified with important ruling families, and connections with various states since the games were in essence designed to be pan-Hellenic as a unifying force among the many city-states. There has been much historical investigation of the names of victors and their countries in Pindar criticism, at times so much that the poet seems to be more of an illustration to history, rather than a poet with interesting historical associations. The historical use of the titling of the Odes is important, but only indirectly valuable for appreciation of the poetry as poetry, and at times it seems to overshadow the poems in their artistic and literary aspect.

Preoccupation with the historical associations of the Odes can get in the way of perceiving them as poetry. Philology does have the unfortunate potential of converting Poetry into its own style of scholarship. Samuel Johnson remarked two centuries ago that:

"No man forgets his original trade: the rights of nations and of kings sink into questions of grammar, if grammarians discuss them."

Pindar's poems, if they are studied by "grammarians" of any persuasion, have the potential of becoming a sub-chapter in history, with minute investigations as the topics of small articles in the Journals. If we can hold in respectful abeyance for a moment the scholarship which has settled down on the Odes of Pindar, and make a fresh approach to understanding his poetry as Poetry, as constructs of form and meaning which involve the configuration of words with rhythms echoing behind the semantics, we may be able to get a better sense of what this curiously difficult and unapproachable poet has written.

Next we will see how an intelligent Greek critic of the Roman Augustan period, who was still in the Hellenic language tradition, viewed Pindar's poetry as word-art, and this may be a first step toward a better understanding of the poet.

## Chapter II: Ancient Criticism

Dionysus of Halicarnassus, the critic and historian living in Rome around 26 BC in the Augustan literary age, wrote a number of books on literary style, Greek language and literature in general. His work shows taste, clear appreciation of good writing, and his book "On Literary Composition" has the special value of coming from a critic of sound judgment who was still within the cultural earshot of the classic Greek literature of the past. His four hundred year distance from the Fifth Century is about the same as the time lapse between us and the Elizabethan writers. In both these cases there have been changes in the language and of society, but the strain of linguistic continuity remained uninterrupted. Dionysus is concerned with taste and judgment, he is clearly not an Alexandrian grammarian or a library collector of literary curiosities. He examines the best examples of the ancient Greek literary tradition and furnishes us with an authentic snapshot of how an educated and critical Hellenistic writer approaches the literary masterpieces of his past.

Dionysus is interested in the works and mechanics of writing, as well as the effect on him and his readers, in a twofold sense. He examines sample texts of authors with an eye to the actual sounds and their configurations and the way the intimate fabric of the acoustic text is constructed, much as a modern phonetician would analyze a sound sample. But he also feels that "words give a virtual image of each person's soul/mind" (*εικόνας εἶναι τῆς ἐκάστου ψυχῆς τοὺς λόγους*), and this balances the formal phonetic side of his analysis well. All in all, Dionysus is not only an interesting critic of literature, but also in several ways a model for us in a confusing post-Modernist era which continues to verge away from the actual words of the text. Here we have an intelligent sweep of the critical eye, starting from the vowels and consonants of a poem or piece of art-prose, moving on to the impression which is made on the reader's mind, and finally recognizing that writing is in fact an Image or Reflection of the author's mind and per-

sonality (psyche). I find this kind of analysis unusually valuable because it remains closely connected to the text at hand, prior to discussing meaning, allusions or historical influences. It demands close reading first of all and returns us coherent linguistic and literary information.

Add to this the living Hellenic tradition which Dionysus taps into as a native Greek speaker, and we have a guide to the interpretation of classic Greek word-art as seen at near focus. His close analysis is a far cry from the critic Longinus writing some two centuries later, who understood the elements of a writing as subservient parts contributing a main purpose, the Overall Effect. It is the effect which commands his attention, not unlike the attention to development and story-line which interest modern academic readership. We academics are experts in the wide-angle view, bringing into the picture myriad interests on the far intellectual horizon from sociology and anthropology and psychology, while quickly passing over the actual words and details of configuration which constitute the Microstructure of written materials. Dionysus is therefore for us not only a peep-hole into the mind of the ancient literary world, but perhaps a corrective to some of our expanding critical peripheralism in the study of Literature.

The title of Dionysus' book in English is usually translated as "On Literary Composition", as in Roberts' excellent 1910 edition of the Greek with an English translation. But the Greek title is different: ΠΕΡΙ ΣΥΝΘΕΣΕΩΣ ΟΝΟΜΑΤΩΝ which means literally "On the Assembly of Words". The close attention to Words and how they are assembled in a mosaic of sounds on a papyrus sheet, is always on his mind, and although he is clearly an esthetic critic of the full range of meaning in words, he never forgets the building blocks out of which word-art is formed.

Chapter XX is devoted to Pindar, and is titled "On the Austere Style" , employing the same adjective as the we have in English directly from the Greek *αυστηρός*. But the English word "austere", clearly a borrowed word from Greek, is quite different, with several non-Greek meanings: First "austere" in English means 'bare' of ornaments, so we can speak of the "economic austerity" of a country in recession, or of a room decorated in a

stiff style. But the word also has a moral connotation, which calls up the image of a row of robed judges, of moral stiffness and stern disapproval.

This is quite different from the Greek word, which starts etymologically with the adjective *ἄνθος* "dry" to which is added the comparative extension *-teros* "rather, more". The adjective *ἄνθος* itself has Aeolic smooth breathing while the Attic form is aspirated as a result of disappearance of initial sigma, so English 'sere' should be connected. Also note the Hesychian gloss of *ἄνθος* as *ξηραίνω* "dry out". Greek use points less to dryness than to roughness of texture, harshness of sound and bitterness of taste, but it is also used for excessive moral rigorousness. Etymologies often throw light on the inner meaning of words, here the light is somewhat cloudy, but the overall sense of dry harshness, roughness and crabbed tightness does dominate.

This "harsh austerity" may come as a surprise to those of us who first read Pindar in Lattimore's little 1941 booklet from *New Directions*, where high soaring thought, bold figures, and the elegance of finely wrought English verse left us with the grand impression of glorious poetry. That is certainly the way Lattimore's *Pythian 8* speaks out in translation, which evinces a reminder that poetry does not translate at all well, that the inner meanings of words do not transplant to another country's gardens. Let us go back and see Dionysus' description of Pindar the Doric poet from the ancient critic Dionysus' point of view:

"The characteristic feature of the austere arrangement is this: It requires that the words should be like columns firmly planted and placed in strong positions, so that each word should be seen on every side, and that the parts should be at appreciable distances from each other, being separated by perceptible intervals. It does not shrink from using frequently harsh sound-clashes which jar on the ear. It is like blocks of building stone that are laid together unworked, blocks that are not square and smooth, but preserve their natural roughness and irregularity. It is prone to expansion for the most part by means of using spacious words. It objects to being confined by short syllables, except under occasional need.

"In its clauses it pursues these objects but also impressive and stately rhythms. and tries to make its clauses non-parallel in structure or sound, not slaves to a rigid sequence but noble, brilliant and free. It wishes to suggest nature rather than art, to stir emotion rather than delineate character.

"And as to sentences, its does not generally even attempt to compose them in such a way that each is complete in itself. If it falls into this by accident, it tries to show its own simple and unstudied character. It does not use descriptive words to round out and complete the sense, cares not for show or smoothness, nor sets clauses for the speaker's breath or any such minor matters.

"Arrangement is marked by flexibility of the cases, variety in the use of figures, with few connectives, lacking articles, and often disregarding natural sequence. It is the opposite of "florid" it is aristocratic, plain speaking, unvarnished, with an old-style mellowness which constitutes it beauty."

With this as preface to "The Austere Style", Dionysus proceeds to discuss authors who use this style, and he cites Pindar first as the example for lyric poetry (μελοποιΐα), with Antiphon and Thucydides as prose parallels in this class. Surely Dionysus would be content to mention the Roman historian Sallust who was certainly trying for the same effect in recreating a stern and old-fashioned mode of writing as suitable for a Roman's writing of history.

We can amplify these comments with the words of Horace who was writing in Rome at the same time and certainly knew Dionysus' work if not the author personally.

Pindarum quisquis studet aemulari,  
Iulle, ceratis ope Daedalea  
nititur pinnis, uitreo daturus  
nomina ponto.

Monte decurrens uelut amnis, imbres  
quem super notas aluere ripas,  
feruet inmensusque ruit profundo  
Pindarus ore,

laurea donandus Apollinari,  
seu per audacis noua dithyrambos  
uerba deuoluit numerisque fertur  
lege solutis,

Horace stresses the difficulty of "imitating" Pindar", that is writing new poetry in his style (which is what Horace was doing with Greek verse) with the graphically portrayed dangers of falling short, a la Icarus. As nature based parallels, we have the rushing springtime floods, rivers running over their banks as the Great Poet rages on with his grand voiced sounds, his new poetic devices (dithyrambos) and the freedom of his verse which reaches away from metrical exactness even toward prose (numeris solutis). Horace continues the poem with mention of myths and the storyline of the gods, much as a modern teacher of poetry would do. But as the well versed and polished poet Horace was, he was completely aware of the finish and microstructure of Pindar's form. Everything Horace did was filed and polished with ultimate care, down to the shape and contours of the words, much in the spirit of Dionysus' practice.

These citations from the ancient tradition leave us much to consider when we approach the poetry of Pindar. We will want to keep in mind several of Dionysus' characteristics to watch for in reading the Odes. First in importance will be the architectural stateliness of the "columns" which support his roof of his poetry, the open spacing and measured distancing of the parts which we find in architecture in the proportions and parts of the Parthenon. Dionysus clearly has architecture in mind with these comments, and living



in Augustan Rome he would have been as aware of Agrippa's domed Pantheon and Vitruvius' new book *De Architectura* from 28 BC, as well as of Iktinus and the classic structure of the Parthenon.

Next would come his insistence on the rough texture of the poetry, the unpolished stonework and "art-no-art" positioning of the blocks as if partly by chance and nature, rather than contrived by great refinement and care. If there is a conflict between naturalness and force, between art of nature and artiness of man, and too much attention to details, Pindar is always on the side of the rough and the "austere".

In language too, Dionysus notes the lack of connectives, of unnecessary amplifications and modifiers, even of grammatical order in the construction of sentences. All must be done with great and strong force, all must dash with vigor even at the expense of clarity and meaning. The "article" which is so important to the style of later Greek writing, is avoided. Parts of a sentence can be widely dispersed, not by inattention but as a mark of a nervous grandeur of speaking.

The metrics will be a part of this grandeur, strong and solid, but not regular marching beats at all. The later Greek metrical writers have much detail on Pindar's metrical patterning, some of it probably much more refined and analytical than the author's intention, and based on paper scoring of the durations rather than metrical memorization of long rhythmic cadences which Doric choral artists had mastered. Later we can discuss the matter of Metrics in more detail, in a new and more musical manner than the grammar books maintain. Musical metrics is a matter for musical artists, not for word grammarians in the final tally.

When Dionysus speaks of the old-world plainness of speech, the measured cadencing of the sounds and the dignity of Pindar's style, he brings us back to the Doric and Spartan source of these characteristics, which certainly come from Pindar's early life and upbringing. His family came from a Spartan stock which can explain part of his sense of plainness of talk, verbal conciseness, and avoidance of verbal fancification. Brought up at Persian Thebes, but appreciated as a young man at Athens, he faced the

hard risk of confining his poetry to one geographical area, which he seemed to have conquered by becoming a pan-Hellenist in word and spirit with the Epinician Odes .

The aristocratic tone of his language, combining the poetic language of his time with the ancient myths and rituals of the ancient traditions, became a mark of his style and cast of mind, which at that early 5th c. point in time, had wide appeal throughout Hellas. He and Aeschylus are our indicators of the manner of the old-guard Doric poets, rich in their embrocade of verbal tradition, defiant of the democratic simplification which would end up with Euripides and lead to a kind of poetic New Comic Drama. If there was a time to be high-minded and aristocratically noble in the world of poetry, this conservative Persian War generation would find that the ripe time for their art.

There are two sides to Pindar's artistry. On the one hand we see clearly the weaving of complex myth into poems of standing majesty, rich in complex metrical intonations housing remarkable phrases which at times defy understanding in their trail of words. This is the upper surface of Pindar's art, which the English Pindaric poets of the 17th century admired and sought to bring into a crabby English tradition. But there is a second side, the one which Dionysus outlines so clearly, with its verbal elements standing like columns in a great spacious temple, its bases still rough with unfinished almost Cyclopean rock-work, while the pediments are block-outlined and mythically suggestive, unlike the delicate and finished artwork of the mid-century Parthenon. This is characterized by verbal surprises and non-sequiturs. "Sudden flashes of lightning against black velvet" was the way John Finley described these momentary effects. Brilliance combined with an

aristocratic verbal archness, this is no easy for us to imagine in our very different style of living, where poetry has become quiet reading for armchair relaxation, while blockbuster cinema with overdone effects beyond the cope of imagination may be the nearest thing we have to parallel the rush of the Pindaric Odes.

We should keep some of these impressions in mind as we proceed on our approach to examine in detail one poem of Pindar, his last Ode Pythian 8, written in his extreme old age,. If we can interleave these comments with our reading of the words of the Greek text, we may be somewhat nearer to the sense and power of the ancient poet. Pindar's myths and the his mythic involvements have been studied and unraveled in such detail for two centuries now, that these aspects of the Odes need be discussed only in outline here. Modern historically oriented criticism has found a host of political and social concatenations in the workings of the myths, which can become a sub-texture in the poems, and can lead us away from the sound and rhythms of the Poetry into a world of ill-understood religious themes. Cross culture study of religion and myth is one of the best traps for the incautious mind.

Reading Pindar with a manual of Classical Mythology at hand, one can put the ends of various mythic references together, but this must be done while firmly gripping the words of the text, to provide a deeper enrichment and enlightenment for the poems. But we can not reconstruct the religious atmosphere of the Greek mythic tradition. That is first of all because that tradition is not the daily religion of the Hellenes who understood the Mysteries (themselves in small part still a mystery to us) as their real Religion. And second, the myths early became the property of city-states and ancient families, thus acquiring a social and historical status quite apart from a seriously religious "religion". Furthermore we have inherited since the days of the Renaissance another path into the Greek Myths, with those popular stories which have enchanted Western readers for centuries, stemming from the collections of Apollodorus' 1st c AD cataloging "Bibliotheca of Myths".

Here we find the shell of a once alive mythopoeia, reduced to library curiosities in Hellenistic times, and waiting to be reborn in the Eighteenth Century as a classical themes of antique value. But this is a long distance from the mythic mind of Pindar in his time. Time has changed the nature, the use and sense of the myths, and the overcrusting of the original forms now obstructs our sense of what Myth originally was, and what it may have meant to Pindar's generation.

## Chapter III: Metrics and Rhythm

Dionysus has one remark about the text and how it should be approached, which involves special important metrical considerations. Speaking in an example of the roughness of the words *εν χορον* (nasal and aspirated guttural !) in the first "clause" of a passage he cites for examination, he mentions almost as an aside a consideration about Clauses:

You must understand me to mean when I say "clauses" or κῶλα not those which Aristophanes Byzantinus or other metricists used for their odes but those which Nature or φύσις uses for dividing up the passage, and by which the disciples of the Rhetoricians divide up their sentences.

This casual remark has far reaching meanings. It was only earlier in the 1st c. BC that the Alexandrian scholars had divided the Odes of Pindar into the lines which we now use, basing this arrangements on their interpretation of the metrics of the poems. Dionysus pointedly remarks on the validity of this kind of metricization of the lines, which he feels are not suitable to the austere style of Pindar although natural for the highly refined metrics of the lyrics of the Lyric poets. He is concerned with clause-sense, and states bluntly that we should be reading Pindar by clauses so defined, not by the "lines" of the Alexandrian text editors. Horace must have had something of the sort in mind when he said of Pindar's poems "with relaxed metrics" as *numeris solutis*.

From this it would seem that there is a clause-based quasi-prose proclivity in Pindar, according to which, as Dionysus warns us, we must read the text, not worrying ourselves about the identity of individual lines or even the enjambment of strophe and antistrophe. For a sensitive reader, this makes a great deal of difference in the way we read Pindar. If the poems were composed with clause consciousness, then they must be read with the same

spirit, and part of our trouble with the "difficult" language of the poet may be due to an error in the way we are reading the text. These "clauses" or kola would be as important to the interpretation of the poems as the phrasing is to Western music, which often goes to the trouble of putting an arc over a phrase in order to make it clear to the performer that at this place there must be a beginning and an end, however slight. If we are attuned to the idea of a verse line in Greek poetry, and read verses intuitively as phrases, we will of course miss the individuality of the poetic Clause.

What is worse, when the meaning runs over from one verse line to another, we may be inclined to think of this as a special kind of emphasis. In Homer where the lines are clearly demarcated, an over-the-line written word is clearly emphatic and special. But Homer and Pindar are worlds apart, not only in terms of historical time but also in style and verse technique.

Analyzing Homeric lines in terms of "feet" is reasonable, since in epic verse are only two kind of feet, the dactyl with its three segments not unlike the bone length of the human finger, and the spondee which might have been better named the "thumb" with its two long bones. There are pattern variations and some substitutions, but an acoustic awareness of these two rhythmic patterns will surface as soon as one reads Homeric lines with attention to the long / short syllabification. (The diacritic marked pitches are another property of the syllables of a word, one which is musical, rather than the usual incorrect stress pronunciations ).

But when one turns to Pindar, everything metrical seem to be going awry. If we follow the metricist writers who reflect Alexandrian scholarship of the 2nd c. BC, we would have to say that Pindar does use dactyls in some places but unevenly accompanied with epitrites, and he can easily employ pure Aeolian metrics where suitable. This means to the orderly ear of a modern Western poet or musician, that the rhythmic of Pindaric composition will be infinitely more complicated in metrics than what we have in our poetry, and also in our music well along until the 20th century musical reforms.

Since the Middle Ages music in the West has been regularized in rhythmic, possibly because of the requirements demanded by multi-voice and multi-instrument performance. Baroque composition only with difficulty breaks out of the standard bar-delimited measure, becoming really free only when the music follows a sacred text line in non-secular musical pieces.

To say we are rhythmically deprived in our musical and poetic performance may seem harsh, but compared with the complexities of music in other parts of the world, we are indeed restricted. The rhymed and metrically perfect couplet which persisted in English well into the 19th century as the dominant verse form, is parallel in its rigidity to the four segment development of a basic musical theme in composition, where a melodic segment is played, repeated, repeated again with a variation, and concluded as a reflection of the original musical thought. This musical pre-set format is regularly found in song, in sonata, in concerto and symphony until the changes of taste in the early 20th century, and still dominates the world of popular Western music.

Ancient Greece lies outside any such set of simple metric parameters. We like to point to Greece, usually meaning no more than Athens, as a source of our ideas of art, architecture, democracy and philosophy, but looking deeper we find much which does not fit the neat academic pattern we teach as Cultural Inheritance. We are adept at documenting the social and psychological parallels between us and the Greeks., but here in the matter of Rhythmics and musical sensibility we find the Greeks much more varied and sophisticated than we are.

Pindar shows a range of rhythmic which is virtually beyond our perception and performance. He can throw out a pattern of some eighteen syllable in the first two lines ( or first kolon) of Pyth. VIII which is the poem we will use as a study, and have it so perfectly encoded in his memory that eight lines down he can read a new set of words with virtually the same rhythmic cadencing running through it, although it can be entirely different in tone, style and meaning. This is something which can easily floor the aspiring graduate student of Greek, who has in his experience heard nothing of this sort before.

Look at the schematic of the rhythmic of Pythean VIII which Snell compiled. This poem is in Aeolic meters, and the marginal notes at the right are a (vain) attempt to explain the passages in terms of traditional Greek prosodic description. This can be done with great effort, as Rosenmeyer shows in his practical study of Greek Rhythms (Halporn, Ostwald, Rosenmeyer: *The Meters of Greek and Latin Poetry*, 1963, p. 41 ff.), in fact with undue effort as he admits, noting that the person reading Pindar Ol. I we will probably have to go another way to make sense out of Pindaric metrics. In Snell's layout traditional feet simply do not appear, and many critics believe that for the Aeolic passages the individual lines must be taken as composite parts of the strophe, which is the only level on which sense can be made of Pindar's metrical sense.

metrum: *aeolicum A'-E'*

*ΣΤΡ*

1	u u u - u u - u -	gl
2	- u - u u u -	gl vel chodim
3	- - u - u u -	achodim
4	u - u - - u u - u -	u - gl vel chodim u -
5	- u u - <sup>-45.65</sup> x - u - u u - u -	cho - x gl vel cho chodim u -
6	x - u - u u - <sup>-6.93</sup> x - u - u -	achodim (gl)
7	x - u - - x - <sup>47</sup> u - u -	ia (agl)

*EII*

1	u - u - u u - <sup>35?</sup> - - <sup>55?</sup> - u -	achodim ba ia
2	- - u - u u - - x - u u - -	achodim pher
3	- u - u u - u - -   - - u u - -	gl pher
4	- - u u - - u u - u - u -	agl <sup>c</sup> u -
5	u - - u u - u - - - u - u u - u -	gl gl
6	- - <sup>60.100</sup> u - - <sup>60.100</sup> u u - u - u - -	- - x gl ba

Sturtevant had remarked in the 1920's with great good sense that the doctrine of the caesura was in effect a "philological ghost", by which is meant that it was an academic distinction which was not based in the Greek language or the poetic structure of Greek poetry. One might go further with the metrical "feet" of Pindar, and even state that there are no actual Feet in

the above schema line by line, nor even a distinct separate of lines of verse (periods marked here by || ). The structural unit can be better taken as the Strophe, which has a distinctive metrical feel to it as reflected closely in the Antistrophe, and then contrasted with the arrangements of syllables in the Epode. Thus Snell's traditional use of markings like "|| finis periodi", and the "| finis verbi per totum carmen" can be seen as unnecessary, wince they refer to foot and verse/period "ghosts" which stem from the Alexandrian academicians of the 2nd c BC.

What is essential is developing an acoustic grasp of the Strophe as a coherent metrical unit, which it certain was when sung to the lost music of Pindar's performance, by a trained choral group of singers. Reading the words we have only one element of the performance to observe. Staying close to that preserved area, we have to note the long and short syllables and read the lines aloud until we have a section sufficiently memorized, to speak it out as a single continuous run of concatenated speech sounds.

There will be arbitrary breaks, as Dionysus has warned us, writing over the lines too, and emphatic surprises of the sort which Pindar loves. Reading Pythian 8 there will be logical places to pause, some of which are obviously demanded by the texts. Changes of pace and meaning need musical "rests", and the original musical part of an Ode was certainly performed with spaces, shadings of tempo and dynamics. Lacking the music, we have to make full use of our imagination in expanding the "reading" from what is after all a very bare text-scoring of the poem.

Can we remember the metrics of a hundred syllables, noting long and short durations, perhaps even adding pitches as our diacritic "accents" define them, and do this all with some sense of expression? From the modern trained music reader or singer's point of view, this should not be hard to grasp, since in the Western common system of music scoring the rhythmic are written in the staff so as to correlate with the syllables of the words as written below the staff matching the notes. In reading or singing a line of Pindar as scored in modern music style, the rhythmic will come out automatically from the musical score, and will also be aligned with the text syllable by syllable.



We may later have to write out Western style score of an Ode to get everything in order for a serious performance, but in the meantime we can approach the syllable-metrics as the reader's first duty owed to this poet's texts.

When we find ourselves stopping short with Pindar, looking first at the text words and then at Snell's syllabic layout above as the metrical schema of the strophe, we show the results of our own bad practice. First of all because of the way Greek is taught, we have been learning Greek with stress on the (unrelated) diacritics, and have got the wrong pronunciation of every word into our Greek vocabulary. The nature of the Greek language involves Long and Short syllables, some marked over-long incidentally by the circumflex. So a Greek chorus member who was practicing the performance of an Ode could simply memorize the words, and then be automatically using the correct syllable lengths, which are in musical terms the Durations. Reading Greek poetry we pay the price of our misunderstanding every time we face a new poem, switching from stressed Prose Pronunciation of prose to the durative syllabification of Verse.

Homeric dactyls have an average syllable count of from 14-18. I find that many of the Pindaric clauses (not the verse lines! ) have a similar count, but some especially in the Epodes may be longer. If we can extend our mental grasp of rhythmic patterns to something around the count of twenty, we should be in a good position to continue with our approach to Pindar's rhythmical patterning. This does not come easily and may take some practice, but with practice it can be done and become an automatic process. Without an ability to read Greek verse at a real-time rate with the syllable metrics sounding strong and natural, we are missing the whole purpose of reading the poetry of the ancient Greeks.

## Chapter IV: Metrics and the Text

Pythian VIII is classed as Aeolic in metrical terms. Keeping this in mind we will expect a freedom of expressions which some of the more formal Odes will not have. But whatever freedom we find in the first two lines, will be almost perfectly reproduced in the antistrophe, so we see that are dealing with a special kind of freedom, one free in the individual lines but tightly bound in the repeating antistrophe. This is consciously designed and not what we mean by free verse at all.

*φιλόφρον Ἕσυχία Δίκας  
ὦ μεγιστόπολι θύγατερ*

or perhaps we should be reading it as one clause thus:

*φιλόφρον Ἕσυχία Δίκας ὦ μεγιστόπολι θύγατερ*

— · · — · · — · — — · · · · · · · —

( I am using this metric notation as an alternative to the usual diacritics which are readable signs rather than sounds; but also because this font does not support these diacritics!)

Diacritics are in a sense our metrical enemy here, since they are reading signs not sounds. In order to establish the rhythmic of this segment, we will want to sound it out acoustically, since it will be used half a dozen times again in this poem. So we will go to a system we are all familiar with in sounding vocally out tympany parts, as follows:

DA da da DA da da DA da DA DA da da da da da da DA

After memorizing this pattern until it is something we can recite without the text, we can go on to fuse it with the text of strophe A this way:

*φιλόφρον Ἕσυχία Δίκας ὦ μεγιστόπολι θύγατερ*  
DA da da DA da da DA da DA DA da da da da da da DA

If this seems loose, rather than the well planned acoustic pattern of an artistic verse system, consider how perfectly the pattern applies to the first segment (again with two lines conflated) of the antistrophe:

*τυ δ' ὀπότεν τις αμείλιχον καρδία κότον ἐνελάση*  
DA da da DA da da DA da DA DA da da da da da da DA

and the beginning of the second strophe, which by now you can recite on your own from rhythmic memory:

*ἔπεσε δ' οὐ Χαρίτων ἕκας ἅ δικαιοπόλις ἀρεταῖς*

and its antistrophe:

*τα δε και ανδράσιν εμπρέπει. ειμι δ' άσχολος αναθέμεν*

The ancient performers had no problem with this, since when they memorized the words which the poet provided, they could chant them rhythmically since the rhythms are built into the syllabification of the Greek. The real question is this: How did the poet manage to write new material in strophe after strophe, with the same rhythmic patterns falling perfectly into place, while the words and their denotated meanings are wandering through a maze of entirely different topography?

This complex rhythmical echoing of a dominant verse pattern is the essence of the Greek choral poet's craft. This is what Pindar went to Athens to study, and this is what many other poetry craftsmen learned all over Europe in that ancient world which stretches poetically from the complexities of the Vedas to the remarkable poetic composition of the ancient Irish poet-seers.

This was not something a poet learned from a manual, it was a matter of years of study by those who had talent, not unlike the apprenticeship of young poets to a master in modern classic Indian verbal art. What Pindar learned as a young man was a serious study of a great art, and when he was accredited as a real Poet, he became the voice of the pan-Hellenic world.

What we miss reading the Epinician Odes in a modern printed text, is the intense background of years of training which was need to produce such verse. We also lack the understanding of what this art-form was, as a sung performance art, written by a master poet with rhythms which were under-sung to the words as chanted by a trained choral group.

Reading ancient Poetry of such sort today, we must retrace the stages of this kind of composition, which can be done by learning the sounds of a number of clauses of verse so thoroughly that we can repeat them metrically in our sleep. Then and only then are we ready to read aloud the words of the Odes. Without that we are as devoid of the total art of the Odes as if we were reading the text of a Mozart opera as a book of quasi-verse called "Figaro", with no sense of the music, the setting, the rhythmic and the art of the theater setting.

Recreating the extravagant art of a Pindaric performance is probably impossible by now, but we can with imagination and some toil perform in our private readings some sense of what it may have been like. Without this labor and this difficult re-creation, it is hardly worth trying to read the complex and puzzling Greek of Pindar at all.

## Chapter V: A Modern Parallel

What is important to recognize at this point is the ultimate rhythmic mastery of the Poet who can extend his memory span to a segment of a hundred syllables, and then recreate the same pattern in another segment with different words and meanings. How this was done by Pindar is much of a mystery to us, since we have no training and little experience in this kind of venture. But the Greeks came into their homeland with a long poetic tradition which apparently goes back to the period before the Indo-European migrations had spread divergent peoples throughout the ancient world. The work of Calvert Watkins and others makes it clear that the Greek had behind them a long poetic tradition, much longer and older than the depth of their artistic tradition in sculpture and architecture, which had to be imported for development from Egypt and the Near East after the 8th century.

If this discussion of a super-poet's metrical mastership seems impossible of achievement, let me turn to a modern counterpart which was in part based on the Welsh poetic tradition. I am going to discuss a poem by Dylan Thomas, not himself a scholar of ancient Celtic poetry, but a 20th c. poet from Wales who had in mind the tradition of his ancestral bards. The poem "Lament" which he was finishing in the spring of 1951, is written in what some modern critics have called a modular mode of composition, since this is based on the exact parallelism of the elements of meaning in the five stanzas of twelve lines each. The poem is arranged to summarize the five stages of a man's life from boyhood to extreme old age, and each stanza represents a stage in life with subtle changes in energy, tone and references.

Behind the meaning there lies a subtle use of varied metrical devices. English verse is based on Stressed as against Unstressed or passing syllables, which seems different from the length-based organization of Greek poetry. In fact the Greek lengths eventually turned into stresses somewhere in the late Hellenistic period, and may have done so much earlier in popular speech.

Length of syllables was, of course, something basic to the ancient Greek language and not a device used only in poetry, as modern study of ancient Greek might seem to infer. Using the diacritic Pitch accents as Stresses in reading prose, and then inexplicably shifting to Lengths when reading poetry is irrational and nonsensical. This is the kind of error which once introduced into a teaching system is very hard to eradicate. Reading Pindar's duration or length based syllabification correctly, we can make a reasonable comparison of these metrics to the stress-based metrics of English in this poem.

Let me give the first two stanzas of the Thomas poem :

When I was a windy boy and a bit  
And the black spit of the chapel fold  
(Sighed the old ramrod, dying of women)  
I tiptoed shy in the gooseberry wood,  
The rude owl cried like a telltale tit,  
I skipped in a blush as the big girls rolled  
Ninepin down on the donkey's common,  
And on seesaw sunday nights I wooed  
Whoever I would with my wicked eyes,  
The whole of the moon I could love and leave  
All the green leaved little weddings' wives  
In the coal black bush and let them grieve.

When I was a gusty man and a half  
And the black beast of the beetles' pews  
(Sighed the old ramrod dying of bitches)  
Not a boy and a bit in the wick-  
Dipping moon and drunk as a new dropped calf,  
I whistled all night in the twisted flues,  
Midwives grew in the midnight ditches,  
And the sizzling beds of the town cried, Quick!-  
Wherever I dove in a breast high shoal,  
Wherever I ramped in the clover quilts,  
Whatever I did in the coal-  
Black night I left my quivering prints.

We note immediately the difference between the acoustically rich wording of Thomas, with its highly worked threads of assonance, alliteration, sound repetition in separate words and constant appeal to the ear. This is unlike the dry and at times clashing sounds of Pindar which Dionysus had noted, as phonetic details which were immediately apparent to his finely tuned ear. Remember that Dionysus was still within the perimeter of the ancient classical Greek pronunciation.. But if we by-pass the dynamics of the sounds and focus solely on the rhythmic, we find a remarkable similarity of the successions of sounds in Thomas' poem..

Look at the start of the poem line by line, with a stress marked metrical scheme for each line, starting with the first stanza:

When I was a windy boy and a bit  
 . / . . / / / . . .

And the black spit of the chapel fold  
 / . . / . . / / /

Now compare these lines with the first two lines of the second stanza:

When I was a gusty man and a half  
 . / . . / / / . . .

And the black beast of the beetles' pews  
 / . . / . . / / /

The match is exact. Now take a pair of parallel lines further down:

Ninepin down on the donkey;s common,  
 / . / . . / . / /

Midwives grew in the midnight ditches,  
 / . / . . / . / /

The stolid heaviness of this pair of lines, is quite different from the following ones which have an entirely different and much lighter metrical scheme:

Whoever I would with my wicked eyes,  
. / . . / . . / . /

Wherever I dove in a breast high shoal,  
. / . . / . . / . /

If we go through these two stanzas, we will find small variants but a remarkable retention of the metrical layout of each line through these two segments, and reading through the rest of the poem, we find the metrics remarkably consistent throughout. In another modular of "strophic" poem, "Sir John's Hill" from the same later period of Thomas' composition, we find an even more metrical Pindaric parallel, since the verse lines are of widely varying length, unlike the metrically even Lament.

"Over Sir John's hill  
The hawk on fire hangs still;  
In a hoisted cloud, at drop of dusk, he pulls to his claws  
And gallows, up the rays of his eyes the small birds of the bay  
And the shrill child's play  
Wars  
Of the sparrows and such who swansing dusk in wrangling hedges  
And blithely they squawk....."

Behind these two parallel systems, viewed from a span of over two millennia, lies the common inheritance from an Indo-European language source. This is no more surprising than the parallel traits which we find in the developed Western musical systems, in folk tales and in the widespread characteristics of folk beliefs and mythology. But what is surprising is the complexity of the acoustic craft which both Thomas and Pindar exhibit. They are both able to retain a pattern of metrical rhythms over a long stretch of words, and then come back with an entirely different set of words and match these with the previously established metrical pattern.



This cannot be done by a poet writing and noting out a metrical layout as I have done above, and then selecting words to fit the pattern. That is simply impossible, and no more feasible than our practice of trying to correlate a long-short schematic layout with the words written out in a separate paragraph below. What is important is the extended memory span of a poet which is so developed in the loops of his memory, that he can speak out new phrases and sentences within the actual limits and patterns of his pre-set code.

Doing this requires talent of course, but also extensive training in a poetic and artistic tradition. In the case of Dylan Thomas, whose lines have about nine syllables each in stanzas of a dozen lines, we see that he is capable of mentally processing a series of about a hundred syllables while composing a full stanzic strophe. In Pindar's case, the numbers are about the same, so I believe the comparison of these two very different poets should turn out to be enlightening for the reading of Pindaric verse.

In the 18th century Thomas Gray was called "the English Pindar" largely in respect to his long and impressive poem "The Bard" . This poem is founded on a Welsh tradition that under Edward I all bards were to be put to death. Gray uses old Welsh history and myth, written into strophe-like paragraphs with uneven lines a la Pindar, and creates a certain kind of gruff roughness which would have pleased Dionysus well. At the same time the poem is accompanied by pages of footnoted references to Greek and Latin poetry, with notes as full of detailed scholarly allusions as the famous notes to T.S. Eliot's Wasteland. Combining these factors with Gray's interest in pre-Elizabethan English poetry, which was just then being unearthed by Bishop Percy and others, we see some of the influences on F.A Wolf and the German scholars, who soon recast Homer as an ancient "Bard", ultimately creating "The Homeric Problem". Gray had many bardic notions available.

Writing in a bardic tone, with rough written stanzas of irregular lines while suppressing most of the traditional English couplet rhymery, Gray does initially give a sense of Pindaric style poetry, which was certainly his intention. But when we look at the metrics of the lines, we find the iambic texture, which is so natural for English verse, to be dominant. In this area

Gray is the least Pindaric. In fact *The Bard* is a reading poem in the modern sense of what private poetry is about, not in any way thought of as a group chanted Ode performed at a British Poetry Festival. If the poetic text were to be read in the background of a new UK historical action film, it would have to be supported by strong musical track to supply rhythms to support the driving action of the poem. Since Gray is little read today, let me give one strophe as an example:

"Cold is Cadwallo's tongue  
That hushed the stormy main:  
Brave Urion sleeps upon his craggy bed"  
Mountains you mourn in vain.  
Modred who magic song  
Made huge Plinlimnon bow his cloud topt head

On dreary Arvon's shore they lie  
Smeared with gore, and ghastly pale.  
Far, far aloof the frightened ravens sail;  
The famished eagle screams and passes by.  
Dear companions of my tuneful art  
Dear as the light that visits these sad eyes,  
Dear as the ruddy drops that warm my heart,  
Ye died amid your dying country's cries  
No more I sleep. No more they weep.....

Some day when "Gray-the-Pindaric" is rediscovered this may perhaps be seen as tough poetry quite different from the usual 18th century casual verse and Poems on Several Occasions. With deep historical roots woven with detail into the story, he might again be compared to the Greek Master for his mythic storyline drenched in antique history. But the coruscating slash of brilliance of the Greek with his long metrical memory and choral performance at state fests is a far cry from the closet poet Gray, an un-robust man of few words cautiously suturing words together at his desk with quill in hand. These worlds are very different and of course so are the poets. Yet Gray is worth mentioning if only for the differences, while the similarities are in themselves artistically quite pertinent.

## Chapter V: Background to Pythian VIII

There has been so much detailed scholarship about the place of each Epinician Ode's place and meaning in the history of Greece, that the sheer volume of books and articles can hardly be listed, let alone summarized in a study of this length and nature. In fact so much historical scholarship has accrued that the process of familiarizing oneself with it tends to obscure the poetic content of the poems. Yet a certain bare minimum of historical background is essential for reading a poem like Pythian 8, which can be outlined briefly as preface to reading the poem.

The traditional date for this poem is fairly sure at 446 BC. It was written for one Aristomenes who won the Pythian wrestling contest, and is interesting as the sole poem of Pindar on a man from Aegina, which had lost her independence after the Athenian victory in 457. Aegina had been suspected of a pro-Persian attitude before the Persian Wars, and since Pindar was Theban and Thebes was suspected of Persian sympathy before the wars, he may have found himself at one time between the interests of Thebes, Aegina and a hostile Athens. But his reputation as a poet permitted access to Athens, where he studied the poetic art in his youth and was valued for his poetry.

At the time this Ode was written Pindar was near eighty and this is so far as we know his last victory Ode, and the only one which celebrates Aegina, which had opposed the imperialist policies of Athens and was repopulated later around 430 after its defeat, as an Athenian colony. In this poem Pindar is aware of the difficult position of the island and hopes she will remember her old glory from the days of the pious and just founder-hero Aeacus, and still find a place in the new pan-Hellenic world. Aegina in fact never recovered its former standing as a great naval power rivaling Athens earlier in the century, and praise of this state in this poem must be seen as a sad hope which was not borne out by history.

References in the poem to Dike as the personification of justice may have had more meaning for the Aeginetans than one would at first assume, and the name of Aeacus in the poem calls up a reputation of piety from a time when Aegina was infested by plague. Zeus rewarded him for his concern and aid to the people, and gave him as many people as there were ants on the island, henceforth named Myrmidons from the word for ant.

The name Aegina also has a special history, as a nymph loved by Zeus who bore Aeacus and brought her name to this island. The names of Aeacus and his son Telamon who fathered the greater Ajax and Peleus father of Achilles are all brought together at the end of the poem, in a resounding prayer for peace with Zeus and Aegina presiding, thus confirming the mention of Hesychia or "Quietude" with which the poems starts.

There are other famous names in the poem which must have touched deep resonances in the politico-religious mythology of the people of that age. For us many of the names are just items to look up in a book of classical reference, since the Greek mythic tradition has a mainly literary value in the new world of the West. Put the other way around, how could an ancient Greek respond to the name of St. Simeon Stylites or St. Francis of Assisi? And how do we respond to the names of Indra and Vishnu, still alive in Hindu society? Mythic and religious names depend on their social setting for meaning and impact.

The constant in-weaving of mythic names and actions in Pindar's poetic fabric is not decorative. It is critical to the poems, but at the same time it is impossible for us to conjure up their effect in the vivid way he employed it. Scholarship in the West has had a long tradition of turning history into dates, and myths into stories a la Bullfinch. For Pindar the poet, this blocks understanding the art of the poetry. But if we can conjure up the depth of mythic relevance and excitement in early 5th century Greece, and expand this with a generous dose of imagination and subjective sympathy, we may come close enough to the spirit of that age to begin to read the poems of Pindar as the rich and complex compositions which they are.

## Chapter VI: TEXT Pythian VIII

First of all, we should lay out the entire text of this poem, so we can get a look at its length, sections, strophic arrangement and the "shape" and arrangements of the lines in the strophic stanzas. The following is the way the text is printed in standard editions, although we may want to reconsider the lines as Clauses in view of Dionysus' specific remarks about Alexandrian changes in format.

After a quick scan of the poem, you can go to the start of the examination and analysis which follows it directly. Translation will accompany the discussion which follow this text page, which is given here mainly to set the stage for discussion of the poem as a whole.

### ΑΡΙΣΤΟΜΕΝΕΙ ΑΙΓΙΝΗΤΗ ΠΑΛΛΑΙΣΤΗ

στρ 1

φιλόφρον Ἕσυχία Δίκας  
ὦ μεγιστόπολι θύγατερ  
βουλᾶν τε και πολέμων  
έχοισα κλαΐδας ὑπερτάτας  
Πυθιόνικον τιμαν Αριστομένει δέκεν.  
τυ γαρ το μαλθακον έρξαι τε και παθειν όμως  
επίστασαι καιρῶ συν ατρεκει·

αντ 1

τυ δ' οπόταν τις αμείλιχον  
καρδία κότον ενελάση  
τραχεία δυσμενέων  
ὑπαντιάξαισα κράτει τιθεις  
ὑβριν εν άντλω ταν ουδε Πορφυρίων μάθεν  
παρ' αϊσαν εξερεθίζω κέρδος δε φίλτατον  
έκόντος εί τις εκ δόμων φέροι.

εποδ 1

βία δε και μεγάλαυχον έσφαλεν εν χρόνῳ.  
Τυφως Κίλιξ εκατόγκρανος ού νιν άλυξεν  
ουδε μαν βασιλευς Γιγάντων· δμᾶθεν δε κεραυνῶ  
τόξοισί τ' Απόλλωνος · ὃς ευμενεῖ νόῳ  
Ξενάρκειον έδεκτο Κίρραθεν εστεφανωμένον  
ύιον ποία Παρνασσίδι Δωριεῖ τε κώμῳ.

στρ 2

έπεσε δ' ου Χαρίτων έκας  
ά δικαιοπολις αρεταῖς  
κλειναῖσιν Αιακιδᾶν  
θιγοῖσα νᾶσος· τελέαν δ' έχει  
δόξαν απ' αρχᾶς πολλοῖσι μεν γαρ αείδεται  
νικαφόροις εν αέθλοις θρέψαισα και θοαῖς  
ύπερτάτους ήρωας εν μάχαις·

αντ 2

τα δε και ανδράσιν εμπρέπει.  
ειμι δ' άσχολος αναθέμεν  
πάσαν μακραγορίαν  
λύρα τε και φθέγματι μαλθακῶ  
μη κόρος ελθων κνίση το δ' εν ποσί μοι τράχον  
ίτω τεον χρέος ὦ παῖ νεώτατον καλῶν  
εμᾶ ποτανον αμφι μαχανᾶ.

εποδ 2

παλαισμάτεσσι γαρ ιχνεύων ματραδελφους  
Ολυμπία τε Θεόγνητον ου κατελέγχεις  
ουδε Κλειτομάχοιο νίκαν Ισθμοῖ θρασύγυιον·  
αύξων δε πάτραν Μιδυλιδᾶν λόγον φέρεις  
τον ὄνπερ ποτ' Οἰκλέος παῖς εν έπταπύλοις ιδων  
ύιους Θήβαις αινίξατο παρμένοντας αιχμᾶ

στρ 3

ὀπότ' ἀπ' Ἀργεος ἤλυθον  
δευτέραν οδὸν Ἐπίγονοι.  
ὦδ εἶπε μαρναμένων·  
--- φυᾶ το γενναῖον ἐπιπρέπει  
ἐκ πατέρων παισι λῆμα θαέομαι σαφες  
δράκοντα ποικίλον αἰθᾶς Ἀλκμᾶν' ἐπ' ἀσπίδος  
νωμῶντα πρῶτον ἐν Κάδμου πύλαις.

αντ 3

ὁ δε καμῶν προτέρα πάντα  
νῦν ἀρείονος ἐνέχεται  
ὄρνιχος ἀγγελία  
Ἄδραστος ἤρως· το δε οἴκοθεν  
ἀντία πράξει μῶνος γὰρ ἐκ Δαναῶν στρατοῦ  
θανόντος οστέα λέξαις υἱοῦ τύχα θεῶν  
ἀφίξεται λαῶ συν ἀβλαβεῖ

εποδ 3

Ἄβαντος ευρυχόρους ἀγυιάς τοιαῦτα μεν  
ἐφθέγξατ' Ἀμφιάρηος χαίρων δε και αὐτος  
Ἄλκμᾶνα στεφάνοισι βάλλω ραίνω δε και ὕμνῳ  
γείτων ὅτι μοι και κτεάνων φύλαξ ἐμῶν  
υπάντασεν ἰόντι γᾶς ὀμφαλον παρ' αἰδίμον  
μαντευμάτων τ' ἐφάψατο συγγόνοισι τέχνηαις.

στρ 4

τυ δ' Ἐκαταβόλε πάνδοκον  
ναον ευκλέα διανέμων  
Πυθῶνος ἐν γυάλοις  
το μεν μέγιστον τόθι χαρμάτων  
ὠπασας· οἴκοι δε πρόσθεν ἀρπαλέαν δόσιν  
πενταθλίου συν ἑορταῖς ὑμαῖς ἐπάγαγες.  
ἀναξ ἐκόντι δ' εὐχομαι νόῳ

αντ 4

κατά τιν' ἄρμονίαν βλέπειν  
ἀμφ' ἕκαστον ὅσα νέομαι.  
κώμῳ μὲν ἀδυμελεῖ  
Δίκα παρέστακε· θεῶν δ' ὅπιν  
ἀφθονον αἰτέω Ξείναρκες ὑμετέραις τύχαις.  
εἰ γάρ τις εσλα πέπαται μὴ συν μακρῶ πόνῳ  
πολλοῖς σοφός δοκεῖ πεδ' ἀφρόνων

εποδ 4

βίον κορυσσέμεν ὀρθοβούλοισι μαχαναῖς·  
τα δ' οὐκ ἐπ' ἀνδράσι κεῖται δαίμων δε παρίσχει  
ἄλλοτ' ἄλλον ὑπερθε βάλλων ἄλλον δ' ὑπο χειρῶν  
μέτρῳ καταβαίνει Μεγάροις δ' ἔχεις γέρας  
μυχῶ τ' ἐν Μαραυθῶνος ἼΗρας τ' ἀγῶν' ἐπιχώριον  
νίκαις τρισσαῖς Ὀριστόμενες δάμασσας ἐργῶ·

στρ 5

τέτρασι δ' ἔμπετες υψόθεν  
σωμάτεσσι κακὰ φρονέων  
τοῖς οὔτε νόστος ὁμῶς  
ἐπαλπνος ἐν Πυθιάδι κρίθη  
οὐδε μολόντων παρ ματέρ' ἀμφι γέλως γλυκὺς  
ῶρσεν χάριν κατα λαύρας δ' ἐχθρῶν ἀπάροι  
πτῶσσουντι συμφορᾷ δεδαγμένοι.

αντ 5

ὁ δε καλόν τι νέον λαχων  
ἀβρότατος ἐπὶ μεγάλας  
ἐξ ἐλπίδος πέταται  
ὑποπτέροις ἀνορέαις ἔχων  
κρέσσονα πλούτου μέριμναν ἐν δ' ὀλίγῳ βροτῶν  
το τερπνον αὔξεται οὔτω δε και πίτνει χαμαί  
ἀποτρόπῳ γνώμα σεσεισμένον.

εποδ 5



επάμεροι τί δέ τις; τί δ' ού τις; σκιᾶς ὄναρ  
ἄνθρωπος ἀλλ' ὅταν αἶγλα διόσδοτος ἔλθῃ  
λαμπρον φέγγος ἔπεστιν ἀνδρῶν καὶ μείλιχος αἰών·  
Αἶγινα φίλα μᾶτερ ελευθέρῳ στόλῳ  
πόλιν τάνδε κόμιζε Δι καὶ κρέοντι συν Αἰακῶ  
Πηλεῖ τε καγαθῶ Τελαμῶνι σύν τ' Ἀχιλλεῖ

---

You may want to print out these pages of the Grek text to have them on hand separately from this commentary.

Now we can proceed to a detailed step by step analysis of the Ode in the following pages:

## Chapter VII Text with Comment

### Strophe 1

φιλόφρον Ἕσυχία Δίκας  
 ὦ μεγιστόπολι θύγατερ  
 βουλᾶν τε και πολέμων  
 έχοισα κλαῖδας ὑπερτάτας  
 Πυθιόνικον τιμαν Ἀριστομένει δέκευ.  
 τυ γαρ το μαλθακον έρξαι τε και παθειν όμως  
 επίστασαι καιρῶ συν ατρεκει·



φιλόφρον Ἕσυχία Δίκας  
 ὦ μεγιστόπολι θύγατερ

"Thought loving Peace, Justice's daughter, of the greatest of states"

or metrically:

φιλόφρον Ἕσυχία Δίκας  
 . . . — . . — . —

We can hardly miss the striking rhythmic pattern of this line when we read it aloud. The central word *Hesychia* stands out with its balanced rhythmic pattern  $\_ \cdot \cdot \_$  for the word on which the whole poem is based and focused. But the word is complicated by its special use in Pindar's poetic vocabulary, and also by the enormous use of the word in the history of the later Western world.

The noun "*hesuchia*" appears in Ionic garb just once in the line of Homer at Od.18.22 in the sense of peace and quiet: "let there rather be *hesuchia* to me = let me have peace and quiet" as Odysseus argues with the Ithacan vagrant Irus avoiding having a fist fight. The word is used here not a restful state of the mind, but as an alternative to violence, and Homer uses the adjective only once in the Iliad 21.598 again in the same sense. Boeckh in the early 19th c. thought that the spelling ἠσυχία would be better in a choral Doric setting, with a nice ring of alphas encircling the word. But to our ears attuned by history to *Hesychia* as a familiar word, this sounds odd and his spelling has not taken hold.

A web search comes up with over a thousand occurrences of *Hesychia* in current use, including sites concerned with spiritual enlightenment, references to the Eastern Christian Church, Health Sites and a wide swatch of commercial advertisements for services of all sorts. A colony of *Hesychiasts* at Mt. Athos in the 14th century devoted themselves to enlightenment through quiet and meditation, and the word has generally been taken to refer to spiritual matters operating through formal meditative practices.

Some have felt that Pindar uses *Hesychia* as a divine figure, the Goddess of Peace, but this is no formal Personification like Aristophanes' *Eirene* or the Roman personified deity *PAX*. Quite to the contrary, ἠσυχία is a general word for quiet restfulness, something like "quietude" perhaps, and a subtle notion which is not to be imagined as a stone stature for a temple. It is elusive as a word, just as the quiet of the mind has an elusive quality. Pindar's use of it in this passage places it in the midst of a series of social and political terms, where its calm appearance is somewhat surprising. He uses the word half a dozen times in all, but with various subtle shadings

which avoid the idea of a single fixed and formal Principle of Peace. It is the variation of setting and coloring which makes his use of the word interesting in a shaded web of poetic wording. As Finley pointed out half a century ago, Pindar uses a number of abstract nouns in a fluid and almost transcendental way, avoiding hard personification in favor of a gentler mist of mythic association.

The initial word in the poem, *φιλόφρον*, is also a word of the mind. As "thought or thoughtfulness-loving" it is clearly a quiet and meditative term. Interestingly the metrics are light and airy, with three short syllable which lead up to and stop short before the rhythmically formal word *Hesuchia*. On the other side of *Hesuchia* stands the formal term *DIKH* which is a word connected not only with Justice, the courts and legal decision making, but with the name of the Lord of the Gods, Zeus. The proverb ( *ἐκ Διὸς δική* ) "from Zeus (comes) justice" was not repeated through the Hellenic centuries without meaning. If there were still question about Personification of *Hesuchia*, the appearance here of a well personified principle of *Diké* would prove the non-personification of *Hesuchia*, since two such Personifications would not stand beside each other in a careful poet's verse. Note how emphatically *Diké* rings out with an iambic thrust, ending the line as strongly as it had begun in a different rhythmic pattern.

ὦ μεγιστόπολι θύγατερ

O great citted daughter

*Dike* is mentioned to illustrate the hard edge of JUSTICE, but it turns out that her daughter is soft, evanescent and quietly composed *hesychic quietude*, which I write in italics to help remove it from becoming a special word, which would lead to personification. But this soft edged daughter is concerned with reality in her own way, and was of course the requirement for economic stability in the cities of the Aegean world. In a maritime trading society *hesuchia* means profit, something which soon after Pindar's death would be completely forgotten in the forty years of the devastation of the Peloponnesion War.

Homer can never use the adjective "megalopolis" because of the three short syllables in the adjective, but Pindar with access to a wide range of rhythmic patterns seem to rejoice in the word, using it in the plural form "megalopolies" twice with the plurals Athenai and Syracusai. But here he goes one step further, using the Superlative form of the Adjective, *megisto-*. If Athenai and Syracusai are the Great States of the Greek world, then the desirable but elusive quality of Hesuchia will be the clue to the "Greatest of States", the key to overall excellence.

And that is exactly what Pindar says of her. She holds the Highest Level Keys, which can unlock the gates of two components of a great city's constitution. On the one hand there are Councils, the boulai which are commemorated in thousands of inscriptions from ancient Hellas, as laws are laid out and unfolded into practice. But there are also Wars which are declared in a different spirit, not from the measured Councils of the State, but often in response to the ugly side of nationalistic politics. So in the first line below, we have the unbalanced equation of the two factors which make the Greek city-state work, while in the following words stands the spirit of CALM, holding in her hands the keys (kleides) of cities.

βουλᾶν τε καὶ πολέμων  
ἔχοισα κλαῖδας ὑπερτάτας

"of councils and wars  
possessing the highest keys"

We have a semantic problem with that critical word "the Keys", since the word is used in many different ways both through history and even now. We give the new Mayor "the Keys to the City" as a sign of confidence, hoping that they will not be used to unlock the city's treasury of bank notes. Budapest was called the Key to Christendom in resistance against the Turks, Gibraltar the Key to the Mediterranean, and St. Peter hold the Keys to a Heaven which is apparently locked to all but the elect. Whether our Keys start the car or open the house door, we consider a key to be an unlocking device, which is quite different from the meaning of the Greek word klais/klaides (Att. kleis) as Pindar uses it here.

Homer is our earliest witness here as often, and his Key will be either a bar set across metal catches which lock the bi-folding gates of a town or a house, or the in a Homeric house the sliding bar which is pulled horizontally into door-locking position by a catch rope. These are locking devices, and the idea of a key which un-locks is something which only appears much later. So in this passage the Keys of the Greatest of Cities must refer to the massive bars on the city gates which are in possession of the spirit of Peace and quiet. When the councils decide, the gates can be opened to metics, wholesalers of goods, trading of all sorts, but when War comes those gates are closed and locked firm. The exact parallelism goes some awry here as often in Pindar, who is poet first and grammatical logician only by chance, with Quietude opening the gates to the countryside in generous freedom but losing control under condition of warfare. She is not a controlling spirit at all, but a "condition" of being which can determine the greatness of states in the long run. She cannot enforce the way Dike can, she can only smile benignantly on the days when great states are free to prosper, as she does in this poem on the troubled history of Pindar's Aegina.

Now look back from the meaning of the words to their rhythmic display:

*βουλᾶν τε και πολέμων*  
 - - · - · · -  
*έχοισα κλαῖδας ὑπερτάτας*  
 · - · - - · - · -

On such heavy associations of meaning, the rhythms mark out a steady pace, with more longs than short syllables, and a steady pattern which seems to be avoiding an unbalanced rhythmic pace. Then just as this paced and stately introduction reaches a static pose, the poet switches to an entirely different rhythmic message, almost flinging away with a gesture of his right arm from the somber thoughts of councils and wars, to:

*Πυθιόνικον τιμαν Αριστομένει δέκευ.*  
 - ·· - - - · · - · · - · -

The words blocked will show a jammed and startling order:

**Pytho          victory          honor          (for A.....)          receive now**  
"Receive for Aristomenes the Pythian victory honor"

This is not one clause in a communicative sentence, but a flash of images which display a glorious place, great action and grand honor, a man honored in public view, and a gracious gesture to enter the hall of glory. One might wonder why this is addressed to Quietude, remembering that the victory at games was a microcosmed mimic of warfare, done with great fervor and beyond all the intent to win. But we must remember that all great activity finally rests in repose, all wars will end in peacefulness, and this poem which is about to verge into the frantic forces of mythic violence as preface to the struggle at the games, will conclude with a special kind of restful and peace-assigning Quietude. But that is later, now we continue with the address to the Spirit of Quiet, with direct wording as if speaking to a person of wide mind and wise ways:

*τυ γαρ το μαλθακον έρξαι τε και παθειν όμως  
επίστασαι καιρῶ συν ατρεκει·*

"To do a gentle things and to receive it likewise  
You have knowledge --- at the exact right moment "

Rearranging the words we get a better sense of the progression of ideas, starting with the informal "you/ tu" which is suspended until "you understand / epistasai" while the object of understanding is inserted perhaps somewhat breathlessly in-between:

*τυ γαρ  
το μαλθακον έρξαι τε και παθειν όμως  
επίστασαι  
καιρῶ συν ατρεκει·*

"You know: how to do a gentle thing, and how to receive it too..."

There is something curiously unbalanced about this line's meaning, which makes it very interesting. It is clear that the Spirit of Quiet can do a deed of gentleness, and that is to be sure the nature of her being. But does she also receive that which is a part of her very nature? Is the receiving a part of the gentle experience for her as quietude? It seems the poet is thinking of the balanced situation which involves both Giving and Receiving, and has joined this with a petition to Goodness of Heart to give the gentle gift at this Ceremony of Honors. Giving does involve receiving, there is something quite reciprocal about these two acts, and Pindar cannot mention the one without thinking of the other. Later he notes that the "best thing is to receive from one who gives willingly", as the honors of the Games are willingly bestowed out of a mind which does not calculate the difference between giving and receiving. There is here, as often in Pindar a light cloak of mystery about patches of words, which may worry the conscientious scholar more than the poetry minded reader. This line is a good example of something important but delicate which is not exactly meant to be understood.

One more phrase summarily concludes this thought and the strophe together, a hard and tough consideration which is consciously added onto the soft givingness of the previous clause:

*καίρῳ̂ σὺν ἀτρεκέλῃ̂·*

— — · — · —

"when the moment is exactly right"

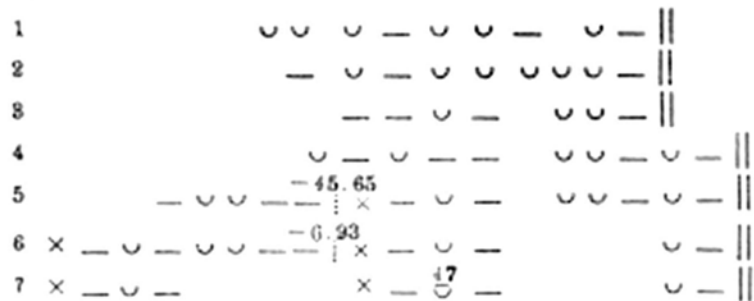
The Greek word "kairos" is very different from the English "time" which refers to a long series of discrete moments seen in retrospect as a continuum. But the Greek word refers to just one of those moments of time which make up the continuum, and although the word originally was used for "a point, a measure, an exact location" it was more generally used later for "Time" in our sense, but as composed of many moments of time seen telescoped and compacted. The ancient proverb that "ἐν καιρῷ οὐ πολὺς



χρονος" meant anciently that "in the Moment (kairos) there is not much time {chronos}", and was probably intended as a pointed and clever saying. In English "There's not much time in time" would be silly, and we don't have a supply of words to match the Greek time-based notions.. But we can in English define the same time distinctions with phrases like "getting to school in time" (punctual) as against "he'll get it done in time " (durative).

Here the meaning of "kairos" is clear and pointed. The gift of gentleness is given and received at the Pythian ceremony in a spirit of graciousness at the moment of final repose when the game is won and the victory proclaimed. But that is only done at the critical moment of winning which cannot be fudged or compromised. The victory is won or lost by a hair's breadth, and at the final moment of truth on this critical day, it becomes clear that this is a day of glory for the young man from Aegina. It is this hard edge of critical discrimination which makes the difference between a real winner in a real competition of honor, as against someone who receives gifts gladly given, but does not earn the victory of the final moment of competition. This line both concludes and hardens the tone and meaning of this first strophe. Now we can look at the strophe as it stands:

φιλόφρον Ἕσυχία Δίκας  
 ὦ μεγιστόπολι θύγατερ  
 βουλᾶν τε και πολέμων  
 έχοισα κλαῖδας ὑπερτάτας  
 Πυθιόνικον τιμαν Αριστομένει δέκευ.  
 τυ γαρ το μαλθακον έρξαι τε και παθειν όμως  
 επίστασαι καιρῶ συν ατρεκει·



## Antistrophe 1

*τυ δ' οπόταν τις αμείλιχον  
 καρδία κότον ενελάση  
 τραχεία δυσμενέων  
 ὑπαντιάξαισα κράτει τιθεῖς  
 ὕβριν εν άντλω ταν ουδε Πορφυρίων μάθεν  
 παρ' αἴσαν εξερεθίζω κέρδος δε φίλτατον  
 ἐκόντος εί τις εκ δόμων φέροι*



*τυ δ' οπόταν τις αμείλιχον καρδία κότον ενελάση*

"...and you (whom one thrusts in his heart anger without mercy)"

Repeating the exact format of the verse structure of the strophe, we have:

*τυ δ' οπόταν τις αμείλιχον κ...*  
 . . . — . . — . —

At this point we realize the poet has in memory the whole sound and rhythm of the first strophe, and it is so vividly etched in his mind (even as we might remember without thinking of it, the repeating sound of the stanzas of a well known Schubert song) that he can compose with new words

out of his patch of memory perfectly. In a musical setting we understand this better than in a poem in a foreign language where our learned use of words does not work with the same pinpoint accuracy as wording in our own intuitive speech. To understand the metrical quality of this antistrophe, we must have the strophe perfectly memorized, words and sounds alike, and only then can we proceed to read this new stanza with the previous rhythmic ringings in our ears.

If we don't take the trouble to memorize sections of this poem, we remain deaf to its cadences, and no amount of diacriticizing will make the rhythmic become real. We can comment on the relationship between rhythm and meaning as important, but when they are separated the quality of the poetic line disappears. We must learn how to master the rhythmic patterns first, and then read the segments of the poem as meaning conjointly with the meters, as the only reasonable way to approach Pindar's Odes. We can continue with discussion of the words as meaningful units, so long as we remember that we are dealing with just one partial of a poem.

*τραχεία δυσμενέων ὑπαντιάξαισα κράτει  
τιθεῖς ὑβριν ἐν ἀντλῷ*

"fierce countering the power of the hateful,  
you put pride in the bilge"

The remarkable switch of tone from the intimations of gentleness in the first strophe, to Hate in the counter segment, is striking indeed. It begins with someone driving hate into his heart, then the spirit of Quietude turns savagely fierce in retaliation. Fastening on the catchword of Hubris with its many religious as well as personal associations, it hurls Pride into the dirty ballast water in the hold of the ship.

The first thrust at anger is posed in lofty terms, but as the line closes we face the reality of slop in the bilge making the ugliness of the situation more real. Pindar loves this kind of un-announced topic switching, part of his roughness and dislike of preset sentence structure. In ages of academic imitators from Alexandria

through the 19th century, this kind of abruptness is rarely found, while later a poet of Pound's imagination will use it as part of his poetic vocabulary. Logicalness and poetry do not have a great deal in common.

*ταν ουδε Πορφυρίων μάθην  
παρ' αἴσαν εξερεθίζω*

"this Porphurion understood not,  
beyond measure vexing you"

In a gust of new association, we allude to the monstrous Giant Porphurion, who tried rising up from the depths to scale the mountain home of the gods, failing in the end. It is not clear why P. is referred to here, except as a giant myth failing, but the name must be associated with the purple dye from Tyre which was mark of royalty, as was the name of the 2nd c. NeoPlatonist Porphyry as a Greek rendering of the Tyrian Malchus, a name clearly cognate with its triconsonantal "m-l-ch" for King. The etymology of the name is less important than the suddenness of his appearance, followed by another abrupt break in the thread of the poem:

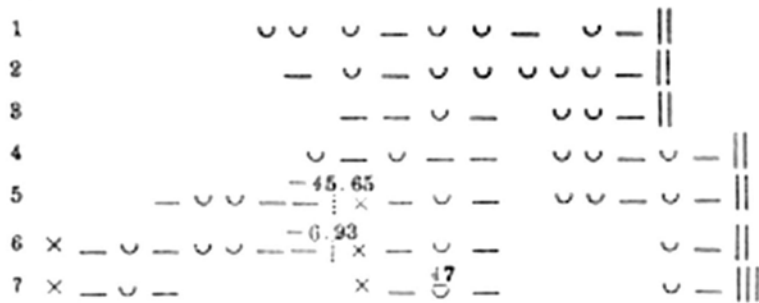
*κέρδος δε φίλτατον  
έκόντος εί τις εκ δόμων φέροι.*

"Gain is sweetest  
if you bear it from the home of a willing giver"

This is inserted almost as an aside, with meaning emanating more from its proverbial wording, than from the overbearing pridefulness of Porphurion. before Typhos the Kilician comes soon after in the next strophe, with similar import but it seems no special hidden mythic message.

Having worked through the lines and clauses, this would seem a good time to do a careful metrical reading of the strophe and see how the acoustics work to amplify the poetic theme.

τυ δ' οπόταν τις αμείλιχον  
 καρδία κότον ενελάση  
 τραχεία δυσμενέων  
 υπαντιάξαισα κράτει τιθεῖς  
 ὑβριν εν άντλφ ταν ουδε Πορφυρίων μάθεν  
 παρ' αἴσαν εξερεθίζω κέρδος δε φίλτατον  
 ἐκόντος εί τις εκ δόμων φέροι





βία δε και μεγαλαυχον έσφαλεν εν χρόνῳ.

· – · – · – · – · – · –

This is clearly what Dionysus meant by a natural Clause of sense,. Being longer than the clauses of the strophe, it demands a different metrical treatment. We are not sufficiently sensitive to the metrical shifts which Pindar uses so deftly, but this line does seem to have a wider range of expressions than we saw before in the strophe. There seem to be a certain thrust to the line as we move past the middle point of .....αυχον έσφαλεν εν .....to a plainer iambic ending, but not being attuned to the natural cadences of the language, we cannot with certainty mark out for ourselves the subtler kind of effects.

But this gnomic remark feeds directly into the resumed thread of the unruly giants revolting against the gods:

Τυφῶς Κίλιξ εκατόγκρανος ού νιν άλυξεν  
ουδε μαν βασιλευς Γιγάντων·

"Typhos the Kilician of the hundred heads escaped not this  
nor the king of the giants..."

With this we can confirm the rotation of themes from start to end, thus:

- a) Porphyrion
  - b) hubris as Pride
  - b) bia as Violence
- a) Typhos and giant king

Control is now coming from the wide-reaching mind of Zeus and also Apollo.

δμᾶθεν δε κεραυνῶ  
τόξοισί τ' Απόλλωνος

"He was conquered by the thunderbolt (of Zeus),  
by the arrows of Apollo"

That was done long time past in ages gone. But now with an almost apothestic apparition, Pindar introduces Apollo in a present situation, as archer of the arrows of justice, and also as virtual Master of Ceremonies at this festive moment, here in actual presence to receive and bless the winning athlete. This is a remarkably strong pivotal swing from the stories of the giants, to this moment at this juncture in the Ode, also at the ceremonial festivities where a gracious and favoring Apollo appears to congratulate the winner of the wrestling competition.

This switch of range begins with the first line below, continuing:

ὄς ευμενεῖ νόῳ  
 Ξενάρκειον ἔδεκτο Κίρραθεν  
 εστεφανωμένον ἕλον  
 ποίᾳ Παρνασσίδι  
 Δωριεῖ τε κώμῳ.

WHO (apollo) *with gracious mien*  
 Xenarkes' son back from Kirrha  
 has received, garlanded with Parnassan leafery  
 and with Dorian songfest.

This starts so easily with Apollo's gracious reception that we might not be prepared for this intertwining of word connections .

<u>Xenarkes'</u>	(he received)	from Kirrha	wreathed	<u>son</u>
			+	
			with leaves	
			+	
			with song	

Where there is ease and clarity, the poetic artist knows that complex knots of wording are soon in order, as a contrastive device and as a part of the dynamics of the performance. Hoydn's Surprise Symphony may be noted as a case in point, responding to the truism that art need never be dull. Typhos the Kilician may have



had a hundred heads, but Pindar the Theban was one grade better having the full use of a hundred temperaments.

Now we can put these parts together to see the shape of the passage we have just been examining:

βία δε και μέγαραυχον έσφαλεν εν χρόνω.  
 Τυφως Κίλιξ εκατόγκρανος ού νιν άλυξεν  
 ουδε μαν βασιλευς Γιγάντων· δμᾶθεν δε κεραυνῶ  
 τόξοισί τ' Απόλλωνος · ὃς ευμενεῖ νόφ  
 Ξενάρκειον έδεκτο Κίρραθεν εστεφανωμένον  
 υἱον ποία Παρνασσίδι Δωριεῖ τε κώμφ.

ΕΠ

1	υ	—	υ	—	υ	υ	—	35?	—	—	55?	—	υ	—										
2	—	—	υ	—	υ	υ	—	—	—	×	—	υ	υ	—										
3	—	υ	—	υ	υ	—	υ	—	—		—	—	υ	υ										
4	—	—	υ	υ	—	—	υ	υ	—	υ	—	υ	—											
5	υ	—	—	υ	υ	—	υ	—	—	υ	—	υ	υ	—										
6	—	—	υ	υ	—	υ	—	—	υ	υ	—	υ	υ	—	υ	—	—	υ	—	—		—	—	×

\

## Strophe 2

στρ 2

*έπεσε δ' ου Χαρίτων έκας  
 ά δικαιοπολις αρεταις  
 κλειναϊσιν Αιακιδάν  
 θιγοίσα νάσος· τελέαν δ' έχει  
 δόξαν απ' αρχάς πολλοίσι μεν γαρ αείδεται  
 νικαφόροις εν αέθλοις θρέψαισα και θοαίς  
 ύπερτάτους ήρωας εν μάχαις·*



We return with the second strophe to the reality of the cities of the Greek world, and to Aegina the unhappy loser of a real-world contest with Athens. Aegina has a place near to Pindar's heart and was hopefully to have a rising star for the future years. This was a just city, he even calls it the *δικαιοπολις νησος*, Isle of Justice. perhaps taking a chance with his Athenian censors. There is a real note of sadness implicit in the first line, almost an apology for the losses of power which Aegina had suffered, and an appeal to the virtues which she always had.

*έπεσε δ' ου Χαρίτων έκας  
 ά δικαιοπολις αρεταις  
 κλειναϊσιν Αιακιδάν  
 θιγοίσα νάσος·*

"she has not fallen far from the Graces  
 the city of justice, that island  
 which touches the famed  
 virtues of the sons of Aeacus"

In fact Aegina was in bad times, it was losing out to the commercial expansion of an Athenian expansionism, and for Pindar who was long associated with that city, the best thing to say now is to call attention to her moral sense of Dike and justice, and Aegina's ancient fame reaching back to the days of the old mythology.

There has been much comment on the meaning of the words "fallen away..."; the scholiast takes it much as I do : "The island has not fallen from favor of the deities" which makes good poetic sense, along with a touch of sadness and regret. But there is a use of the verb *πιπτω, πεσ-* "fall out" in the shaking of lots out of a bowl or vessel, and thissome have thought might mean the fateful turn of bad luck against the island.

But then an island itself does not get bad lots, so it is felt that "island" means "the affairs of the island", and this is becomes comment on the political turn of Aeginetan affairs. I take this to be unnecessary reconstruction of a meaning, which is clear in the eyes of the ancient scholiast, and an example of the hyper-intellectual approach of much modern criticism of the classics. It seems best to use a poetic approach first in reading a poem, and defer political and social investigation for possible illustrative use in the margin.

Pindar continues with this appeal to the glorious history of past ages:

*τελέαν δ' έχει  
δόξαν απ' αρχᾶς*

"she holds perfect  
reputation from the beginnings"

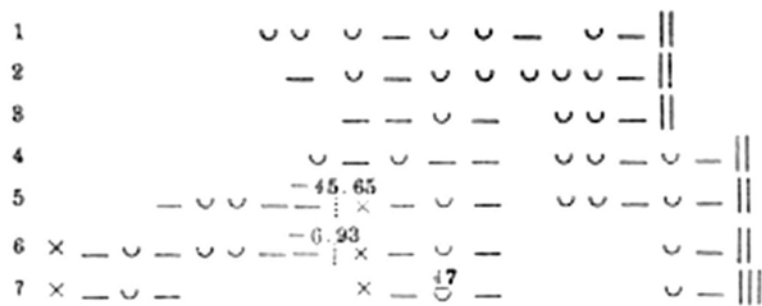
and swinging back to the athletic competition such as the one now held in close view, he adds:

πολλοῖσι μεν γαρ αείδεται  
νικαφόροις εν ἀέθλοις θρέψαισα και θοαῖς  
ὑπερτάτους ἥρωας εν μάχαις·

"...and is sung by many in victory bearing  
athletics, fostering the greatest heroes  
also in fast-moving fighting."

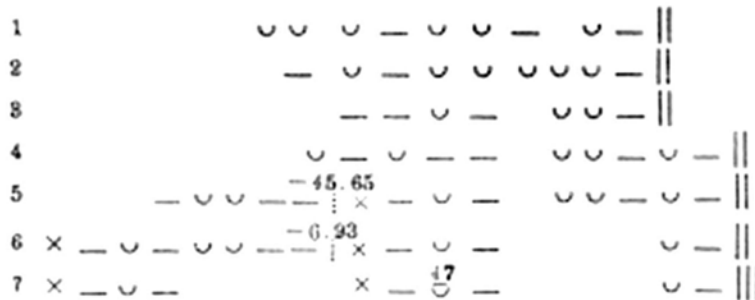
If the first passage in this segment was intended to be moral, the second clause moves into the dynamics of the athletic scene at hand which is seen as physical training for character and a demonstrable evidence of Aegina's moral traits. The constant re-connections of moral and just background from the days of Aeacus, with the present ceremonies in the athletic Field of Honor are essential to Pindar's concept of an epinician Ode. Winning is nothing without character, and if one wins it must be done from a deep background and performed in the right moral manner.

έπεσε δ' ου Χαρίτων έκας  
ἀ δικαιοπόλις αρεταῖς  
κλειναῖσιν Αιακιδᾶν  
θιγοῖσα νᾶσος· τελέαν δ' έχει  
δόξαν απ' αρχᾶς πολλοῖσι μεν γαρ αείδεται  
νικαφόροις εν ἀέθλοις θρέψαισα και θοαῖς  
ὑπερτάτους ἥρωας εν μάχαις·



## Antistrophe 2

τα δε και ανδράσιν εμπρέπει.  
 ειμι δ' άσχολος αναθέμεν  
 πάσαν μακραγορίαν  
 λύρα τε και φθέγματι μαλθακῶ  
 μη κόρος ελθων κνίσση το δ' εν ποσί μοι τράχον  
 ίτω τεον χρέος ὦ παῖ νεώτατον καλῶν  
 εμᾶ ποτανον αμφι μαχανᾶ.



Now as the second antistrophe begins, the tone of the setting of the poem, and the voice of the sung passage experience a dramatic change. It seems that Pindar or possibly his lead agonist, as if in a play, is stepping out before the choral group and delivering a personal "song" within the format of choral drama, much as Aeschylus was doing in dramatic playwriting. This sudden shift of attention from the singing group of trained choristers to the voice of a lead singer is surprising in the middle of a highly concentrated victory Ode, and stands out as a passage demanding great attention. Some scholars see a problem about who is talking and who is being talked about. This misses the inherently lyric sense of the words which give us an interior view into the poet's creative thinking as seen personally and at close range. This passage is a virtual zoom into the poet's private thinking.

*τα δε και ανδράσιν εμπρέπει.*

"these things shine out even in her men." (written over from prev.)

*ειμι δ' άσχολος αναθέμεν  
πάσαν μακραγορίαν  
λύρα τε και φθέγματι μαλθακῶ  
μη κόρος ελθων κνίση*

"I have no leisure to lay  
grand wording at length  
upon my lyre with delicate singing,  
lest excess come to grate...."

How remarkable that in the midst of a formal choral presentation, the poet imagines himself extemporizing on a theme to the accompaniment of the lyre, fashioning Aeolic cadences with delicately sung voicing. It is as if the choral presentation has receded into the background with lowered amplitude, and the poet is stepping forth to offer a most curious excuse for what he apparently would like to do, but cannot in the present ambiance. Is he feeling confined by the choral style and almost wishing he were solo singing with his lyre in the manner of the great lyric masters of the Aeolic tradition? With this in mind, it would be no accident that this Ode is written in Aeolic cadences, which allow him great freedom of expression, yet perhaps not quite enough as he engages to sing a song as "Praise of Great Men".

He has gone past Aristomenes the athletic winner now, and is singing the files of past heroes, those who made Aegina once great. In such a song of sadness the soul of the lyric poet naturally comes to the fore, if only for a moment and with an apologetic explanation.

*το δ' εν ποσί μοι τράχον  
ίτω τεον χρέος ὦ παῖ νεώτατον καλῶν  
εμᾶ ποτανον αμφι μαχανᾶ.*

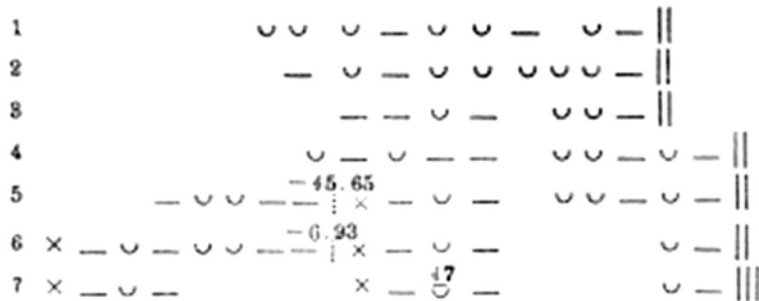
"let this, your due debt go forth  
running at my feet, my lad, latest of glories  
made soaring now by my craft."

In this unexpected passage, we may well wonder exactly what the "debt" is and who is talking to whom. The due debt is certainly the well earned reward which is owed to the victor, and the addressee is certainly Aristomenes himself. The Greek word παῖ refers to any young man above puberty, as Anacreon's "ὦ παῖ = lad looking a girlish glance". This is not specifically a child as in English.

This elaborate interlocking of several elements into a single poetic clause is something Pindar loves, and if it at first complicates understand and at the same time denies the logic of a complete sentence, this is perhaps so much the better artistically and poetically. In this passage we have interfused a) the just reward or chreos b) the lad who raced and now received it c) the reward re-identified with the Ode itself d) which is informed and vividified by the poet's art and craftsmanship in poetry.

Again, an overview of what we have been reading:

τα δε και ανδράσιν εμπρέπει.  
 ειμι δ' άσχολος αναθέμεν  
 πᾶσαν μακραγορίαν  
 λύρα τε και φθέγματι μαλθακῶ  
 μη κόρος ελθων κνίση το δ' εν ποσί μοι τράχον  
 ίτω τεον χρέος ὦ παῖ νεώτατον καλῶν  
 εμᾶ ποτανον αμφι μαχανᾶ.



## Epode 2

παλαισμάτεσσι γαρ ιχνεύων ματραδελφους  
 Ολυμπία τε Θεόγνητον ου κατελέγχεις  
 ουδε Κλειτομάχοιο νίκαν Ισθμοῖ θρασύγυιον  
 αύξων δε πάτραν Μιδυλιδᾶν λόγον φέρεις  
 τον ὄνπερ ποτ' Οἰκλέος παῖς εν ἑπταπύλοισι ιδων  
 υἱους Θήβαις αινίξατο παρμένοντας αιχμᾶ

1	υ	—	υ	—	υ	υ	—	35?	—	—	55?	—	υ	—								
2	—	—	υ	—	υ	υ	—	—	—	×	—	υ	υ	—	—							
3	—	ο	—	υ	υ	—	υ	—	—		—	—	υ	υ	—	—						
4		—	—	υ	υ	—	υ	υ	—	υ	—	υ	—	υ	—							
5	υ	—	—	υ	υ	—	υ	—	—	υ	—	υ	υ	—	υ	—						
6	—	—	60.100	υ	—	—	—	—	—	60.100	υ	υ	—	υ	—	υ	—	—		—	—	×

If an Epode is intended to serve contrastively against the preceding antistrophe, this initial line with its three massive words and their stiff nominal formation surrounding the subject "tracking" (*ιχνεύων* pres. ppl. n.sg.), serve as a good example.

παλαισμάτεσσι γαρ ιχνεύων ματραδελφους  
 "in wrestlings tracking after maternal-uncles"

Now this next passage becomes complicated, with additional personal connections. Walking in the footsteps of your uncles, you do not disgrace (*κατελέγχεις*) two other persons, who are Theognotus at Olympia (who is identified centuries later by Pausanias 6.9.1 as a known hero) and Kleitomachus at Isthmian games, a man unknown to history.



Ολυμπία τε Θεόγνωτον ου κατελέγχεις  
ουδε Κλειτομάχοιο νίκαν Ισθμοῖ θρασύγυιον

To avoid parallelism there is a shift of the two names.

"You do not disgrace Theognotos himself,  
OR the bold limbed Victory of Kleitomachus."

And continuing.....

αύξων δε πάτραν Μιδυλιδᾶν ----- λόγον φέρεις  
τον ὄνπερ  
ποτ' Οἰκλέος παῖς εν ἑπταπύλοις ιδων  
ύιους Θήβαις αινίξατο παρμένοντας αιχιμᾶ

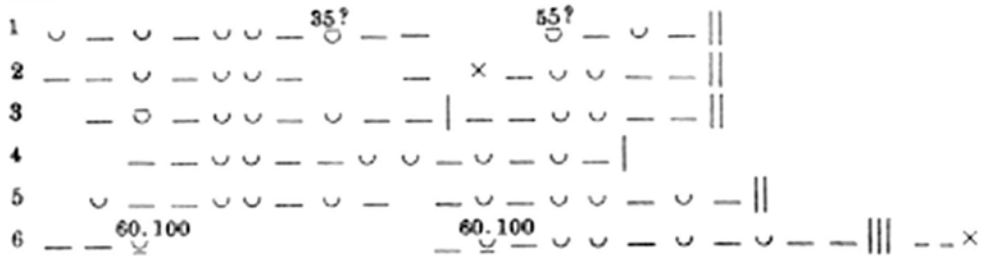
"raising up the clan of the Meidulidae ----- you bear it,  
that very word which  
once the son of Oikleus (Amphiareus) seeing the sons  
firm-standing in battle at seven-gate Thebes ----hinted ....."

The son of Oikleus is the hero Amphiaraus, an ancient Argive hero associated with Thebes and the story of the Seven Against Thebes, who dying was avenged by his son Alcmaeon. You have to read the complex story of these two heroes to get the sense of the historical detailing to which Pindar is referring, an intertwined skein of myth and history which is the base from which this segment of the Ode is sprung. And just as the story of these heroes is complex and involved, so the grammar of the above passage is innerly complex, with words separated from their congeners, and an organization which can only have been intentional. Again, the Epode is contrastive to the previous strophe, and now involves contrastive writing itself. Observe the interlocking structures:

ποτ' Οἰκλέος παῖς εν ἑπταπύλοις ιδων  
ύιους Θήβαις ΑΙΝΙΞΑΤΟ παρμένοντας αιχιμᾶ

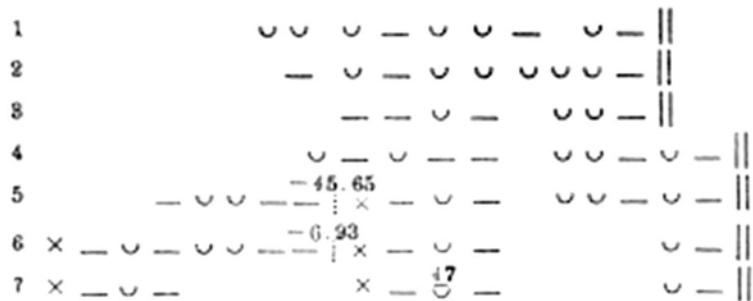
Note the word "hinted in riddle" *αινίξατο* as the carry-over word which goes right into Strophe 3, continuing the thread of the story but in the metrical texture of the first strophic rhythm of the Ode. The Epodic contrast is suddenly concluded ..... and the quotation of what the hero Amph. said plunges back with Strophe 3 into a mode which is softer, short claused, and perhaps gentler. It is as if nothing has happened. This is a special contrastive writing of verse, obviously intentional and surely a part of what Dionysos was referring to as rough-texture, improvising done in a hurry while thrusting idea onto idea.

παλαισμάτεσσι γαρ ιχνεύων ματραδελφους  
 Ολυμπία τε Θεόγνητον ου κατελέγχεις  
 ουδε Κλειτομάχοιο νίκαν Ισθμοῖ θρασύγυιον  
 αύξων δε πάτραν Μιδυλιδᾶν λόγον φέρεις  
 τον ὄνπερ ποτ' Οἰκλέος παῖς εν ἑπταπύλοις ιδων  
 υἱους Θήβαις αινίξατο παρμένοντας αιχμᾶ



### Strophe 3

*ὀπότ' ἀπ' Ἀργεος ἤλυθον  
 δευτέραν οδὸν Ἐπίγονοι.  
 ὦδ' εἶπε μαρναμένων·  
 --- φυᾶ το γενναῖον ἐπιπρέπει  
 ἐκ πατέρων παισι λῆμα θαέομαι σαφες  
 δράκοντα ποικίλον αἰθᾶς Ἀλκμᾶν' ἐπ' ἀσπίδος  
 νωμῶντα πρῶτον ἐν Κάδμου πύλαις.*



*.....ὀπότ' ἀπ' Ἀργεος ἤλυθον  
 δευτέραν οδὸν Ἐπίγονοι.  
 ὦδ' εἶπε μαρναμένων·*

"when the Epigonoι from Argos came  
 a second expedition,  
 thus he spoke as they fought:"

The Epigonoι or "Afterborn Ones" were the generation after the death of those who had fought and died at Thebes, and according to Herodotus 4.32 the title of the lost Epic cycle about them was "Epigonoι". What follows now as words from Amphiaraus the son of Oileus , is spoken in an archaic and oracular style of language, which suits the nature of the quotation quite naturally.

φυᾶ το γενναῖον επιπρέπει  
εκ πατέρων παισι λῆμα

"by nature the noble strain shines out  
from fathers to sons."

Under this rubric of inherited nobility, Pindar continues with the train of successors to the noble line:

θαέομαι σαφες  
δράκοντα ποικίλον αιθᾶς Αλκμᾶν' επ' ασπίδος  
νωμῶντα πρῶτον εν Κάδμου πύλαις.

"I see clearly  
Alcman, the colored snake on his shining shield  
Wielding, first at the gates of Kadmos"

Amphiaros was both warrior and also a seer and the scholiast remarks that the snake on Alcman's shield was thus recognized by his prophetic powers.

ὁπότ' απ' Αργεος ἤλυθον  
δευτέραν οδον Επίγονοι.  
ὦδ εἶπε μαρναμένων·  
--- φυᾶ το γενναῖον επιπρέπει  
εκ πατέρων παισι λῆμα θαέομαι σαφες  
δράκοντα ποικίλον αιθᾶς Αλκμᾶν' επ' ασπίδος  
νωμῶντα πρῶτον εν Κάδμου πύλαις.



### Antistrophe 3

ὁ δε καμων προτέρα πάθρα  
 νῦν αρείονος ενέχεται  
 ὄρνιχος αγγελία  
 Ἄδραστος ἤρωσ· το δε οίκοθεν  
 αντία πράξει μούνος γαρ εκ Δαναῶν στρατοῦ  
 θανόντος οστέα λέξαις υἱοῦ τύχα θεῶν  
 αφίξεται λαῶ συν αβλαβεῖ



ὁ δε καμων προτέρα πάθρα  
νῦν αρείονος ενέχεται  
ὄρνιχος αγγελία  
Ἄδραστος ἤρωσ· το δε οίκοθεν  
αντία πράξει

"But he failing in a first defeat  
 Adrastos the hero is now met with news  
 of a better bird-omen --- but the things  
 of his own house work opposite...."

The first part of this paragraph is worked with typical Pindaric involvement of words, couching the heralding of news of augury omen, to which the following five words serve as counterfoil by their brutal simplicity. The words *το δε οίκοθεν* are clear in present meaning but elliptical and indirect, while *αντία πράξει* negate the good news without saying so, a good example of flash contrast at word.

μῦνος γὰρ ἐκ Δαναῶν στρατοῦ  
 θανόντος οστέα λέξαις υἱοῦ τύχῃ θεῶν  
 ἀφίξεται λαῶσιν ἀβλαβεῖ

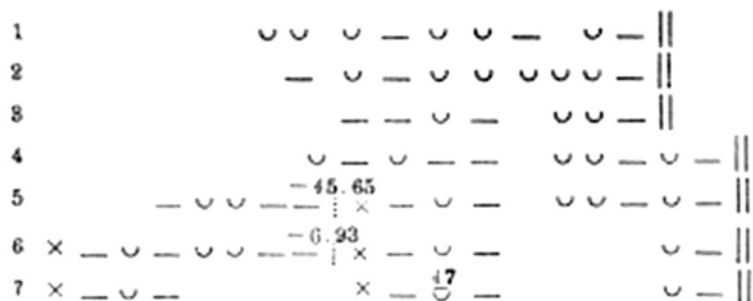
Ἀβαντος εὐρυχόρους ἀγυιάς

"he alone from the Danaan force  
 gathering the bones of his dead son, with gods' favor  
 will approach, with his people unharmed,

the wide streets of Abas"

In the flow of prophetic wording, the pronouncement somehow goes over the limit of the Antistrophe, and we find it concluding in the first line of the Epode. This remarkable overwriting of the line and section must be part of what Dionysus had noted as rough stonework jammed into place in the wall, or what Horace referred to as the rush of a springtime river overflowing its margins. This cannot have been done by Pindar out of error or miscalculating the line, it startles and that is surely the effect intended.

ὁ δὲ κάμων προτέρα πάντα  
 νῦν ἀρείονος ἐνέχεται  
 ὄρνιχος ἀγγελία  
 Ἀδραστος ἥρωσ' το δὲ οἴκοθεν  
 ἀντία πράξει μῦνος γὰρ ἐκ Δαναῶν στρατοῦ  
 θανόντος οστέα λέξαις υἱοῦ τύχῃ θεῶν  
 ἀφίξεται λαῶσιν ἀβλαβεῖ

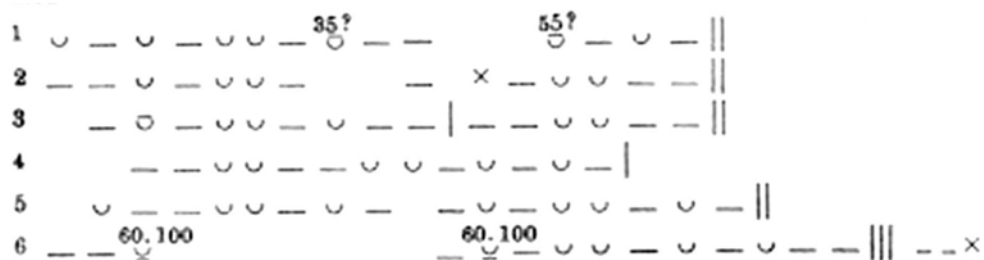


## Epode 3

Αβαντος ευρυχόρους αγιιάς

τοιαῦτα μεν

εφθέξατ' Αμφιάρηος χείρων δε και αυτος  
 Ἄλκμᾶνα στεφάνοισι βάλλω ραίνω δε και ὕμνω  
 γείτων ὅτι μοι και κτεάνων φύλαξ εμῶν  
 υπάντασεν ἰόντι γᾶς ομφαλον παρ' αοίδιμον  
 μαντευμάτων τ' εφάψατο συγγόνοισι τέχνηαις.



Αβαντος ευρυχόρους αγιιάς (goes with previous passage)

τοιαῦτα μεν  
 εφθέξατ' Αμφιάρηος

"So spoke Amphiaros....."

These are words of greatest conciseness to end the previous oracular divagation. But this is not just a tight formula like a Homeric "so spoke he !", but a bit of intentional abruptness between two complicated and flowing passages, serving as a pivot to go on to the next section, where something quite remarkable occurs.

Pindar speaks right out of the choral setting, with a directness almost suiting the words of a lyric poet. Despite some scholarly questioning, it can hardly be the voice of the choristers singing these personally oriented words:

χαίρων δε και αυτος  
'Αλκμᾶνα στεφάνοισι βάλλω  
ραίνω δε και ὕμνω

"I myself am full of joy  
I cover Alcmaeon with wreathes  
I sprinkle him with song"

Note: Alcman is the Doric form of Alcmaeon.

These three short phrases are surely clauses in the way Dionysus had described them. There are special inner arrangements of verbal element in the three clauses a) first b) last c) first again, with *δε και* in a) and c) only. Note also that a) and c) each have six syllables, while the intervening b) has a much longer sequence with ten. But this is not all a matter of arranging and counting! This little cluster of lines is eminently singable, it has balance and a swinging rhythm, and sings right out of the tighter and more formal choral ambiance to announce the following words, which are even more of a surprise:

γείτων ὅτι μοι και κτεάνων φύλαξ ἐμῶν  
υπάντασεν ἰόντι γᾶς ομφαλον παρ' αἰίδιμον  
μαντευμάτων τ' ἐφάψατο συγγόνοισι τέχνηαις.

"because as neighbor and as guardian of my possessions  
he met me as I was going to the singfest center of the world  
he touched upon Prophecies with his inherited skills."

Now here again we have a triple arrangement, but of whole and indivisible lines with over fifteen syllables, each complete in meaning by itself. But exactly what that meaning may be is a different matter, and scholars ancient and modern have worried these lines back and forth with the energy of a terrier after a rat. Some explanations are due, and perhaps the best way is to stick with the simplest set, remembering that in the world of poetic utterance "fact" is a part of the poetry, not the other way around.



*γείτων ὅτι μοι και κτεάνων φύλαξ ἐμῶν*

"because as neighbor and as guardian of my possessions....."

The most direct interpretation of this line is that since Pindar's home was at Thebes, he knew of a shrine of the hero Alcmaeon which was near his house, and he had deposited some portion of his wealth in gold or silver securities in the precinct of Alcmaeon. Shrines were in a sense the banks of antiquity, since nobody would dare to steal from a holy precinct under fear of social as well as religious punishment. If the famous Treasury of the Athenians at Delphi was a secure place for Athenian funds, the smaller and less formal shrine of Alcmaeon may well have served the same function for private moneys.

This may seem an unusual matter, but it is exactly what the poet says, in terms of his "neighbor" in the region serving as virtual banker to Pindar personally. We can wonder at the words but there is little room for argument.

The next line is surprising, but just as clear in meaning from the text:

*ὑπάντασεν ἰόντι γᾶς ομφαλον παρ' αἰίδιμον*

"he met me as I was going to the singfest center of the world"

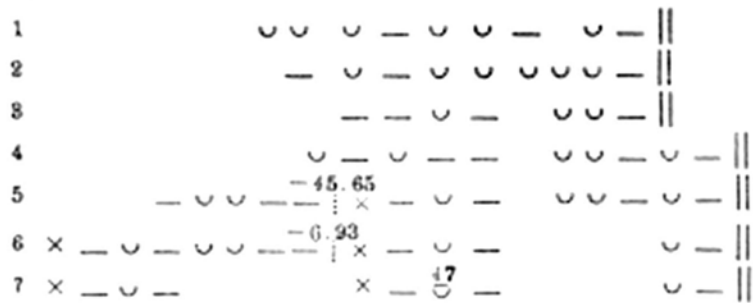
Here we have the startling encounter of the poet traveling on the road to the Pythian games where he is to celebrate the subject of this very Ode, and meeting face to face (antiazein) the hero Alcmaeon. The modern commentators note this with surprise as an "epiphany", supporting their perception by referring to various appearance of gods and spirits in the ancient world to prove the case. In the ancient world such Appearances were frequent and not a matter of surprise. If a person has sufficiently concentrated on his holy mentor, and his mind is emptied of peripheral thinking at a specific and special moment (kenosis), then the holy presence can appear to him as a matter of faith and natural happening. It may be Indra or Jesus or Alcmaeon, but the appearance will be vested in the same sense of reality in each case.



## Strophe 4

*τυ δ' Ἐκαταβόλε πάνδοκον  
 ναον ευκλέα διανέμων  
 Πυθῶνος εν γυάλοις  
 το μεν μέγιστον τόθι χαρμάτων  
 ὅπασας· οἴκοι δε πρόσθεν αρπαλέαν δόσιν  
 πενταθλίου συν ἑορταῖς ὑμαῖς ἐπάγαγες.  
 ἀναξ ἐκόντι δ' εὐχομαι νόφ*

*κατά τιν' ἀρμονίαν βλέπειν (cont. to antistrophe 4)  
 ἀμφ' ἕκαστον ὅσα νέομαι.*



Note: In the excitement of his formal address to the god which will preside over the Pythian games and ceremonies, Pindar writes the end of the strophe right into the first two lines of the antistrophe, with a thrust of intent which overrides the stanza-like regularity of the Doric music schema. In metrics, in choice and arrangement of words, and even in the strophic indignity, Pindar is free and innovative again and again.

From our traditional focus on the later 5th century as the core of Greek culture, we often think of Pindar and Aeschylus as the last of the old-style poetic tradition, dark and inscrutable in the meanings and anciently wordy in their poetic utterances. In comparison with the bare style of Euripides, this may be true, but Pindar was, in terms of the poetry which came before his time, a rule-breaking icono-

clast. He knows how to be rough when other were metrically smooth. He knows how to break thoughts off, how to leave sentences puzzling. He says things which stir questions without answers, he knows the value of mystery in idea and in words, and we simply cannot pass him off as the last of an old school of poets. In the last fifty years the world Archaic Greece has come into full view and we are now in a much more favorable position to re-read and rethinking the Odes of Pindar.

*τυ δ' Ἐκαταβόλε πάνδοκον  
ναον ευκλέα διανέμων  
Πυθῶνος εν γυάλοις*

"But YOU, Apollo, governing  
the famous pan-Hellenic shrine  
in the hollows of Pytho...."

Here we come to the central point and focus of the Ode, the moment in which the figure of Apollo, Homer's "far-darter" and Hecatobolist is to appear as presiding Deity of the actual ceremonial procedure. Since Apollo is both master of Athletics and also lord of the Arts, his invocation turns the tide of the fluctuations of this poem into a straight course, which will continue from this point right until the final words of the poem. It is as if the sun has come out with Apollo, who oversees the games, shedding light on success and on good thinking, on morality and on the moment of grace in which human life blossoms.

It is no fortuitous occurrence that the address to Apollo occurs at this moment in the poem. By setting the stage first with past glories of ancient heroes of the Aeacid strain, and then at closer range speaking of Alcman and his gifts of action and also of prophecy, we lead inexorably up to the magic moment at which we find ourselves in the presence of the highest authority, the celestial reigning deity who now presides over the actual ceremony which is taking place. It is no longer looking backward to the remote historical and mythic past. Nor is it the epiphanic meeting with Alcman on the road coming to the games. We are now actually

speaking with the ruling Lord of the games, and invoking his gifts of grace and victory in the time honored manner of a praying suppliant.

The ancient Greek prayer is outlined in a formal procedure, which first gives the ritual name of the god as a way of identifying the access of the suppliant. In Homer it is Chryses the priest using the ritual name for Apollo "Smintheus" which nobody else would know. In Sappho Frag.I it is correctly "athanata" as immortal and poetically as "doloploka" or wile-weaving. Here it is the old Homeric name "hekatobolos" the Far Archer used as the introductory key-word.

Next must come the reminder of past supplications which succeeded with favors granted. In Homer Iliad I it is the temple roofed and flesh offering burned, Sappho does it impatiently with "at some other time" but the reference is clear. Here the reminder is quite specific:

*το μεν μέγιστον τόθι χαρμάτων  
ώπασας· οίκοι δε πρόσθεν αρπαλέαν δόσιν  
πενταθλίου συν έορταίς ύμαίς επάγαγες.*

"it was here that you granted the greatest  
joys, and before that at home the envied gift  
of the pentathlon with your festivities you did grant....."

So in due form Pindar completes the three part prayer formalities, and is now prepared to go on with the Prayer Proper, in which the suppliant asks his Lord for something new and special.

*άναξ έκόντι δ' εύχομαι νόφ  
κατά τιν' άρμονίαν βλέπειν  
αμφ' έκαστον όσα νέομαι.*

"O Lord, I pray that will a willing mind  
and with some harmony you look  
upon each (step) I take in my path."



## Antistrophe 4

κατά τιν' ἄρμονίαν βλέπειν  
 ἀμφ' ἕκαστον ὅσα νέομαι.  
 κῶμῳ μὲν ἀδυμελεῖ  
 Δίκη παρέστακε· θεῶν δ' ὅπιν  
 ἀφθονον αἰτέω Ξείναρκες ὑμετέραις τύχαις.  
 εἰ γάρ τις ἐσλα πέπαται μὴ συν μακρῷ πόνῳ  
 πολλοῖς σοφὸς δοκεῖ πεδ' ἀφρόνων

βίον κορυσέμεν ὀρθοβούλοισι μαχαναῖς· (with epode 4)



As often, a pithy moral statement is inserted into the strophic discourse, in this case echoing back to the start with a reiteration of the important of DIKE or Justice as the peace and harmony making factor between states.

κῶμῳ μὲν ἀδυμελεῖ  
 Δίκη παρέστακε·

"With sweet voiced choir of song  
 Dike has taken her stand."

And the prayer continues with the core of the request, which is:

θεῶν δ' ὄπιν  
ἀφθονον αἰτέω Ξείναρκες ὑμετέραις τύχαις.

"from the gods,  
un-grudging favor I request, (father) Xenarkes, for your family's  
fortunes"

The word "un-grudging" or a-phthonos may seem strange to modern ears, since in our religious atmosphere God is hardly likely to be one who holds a grudge. In Greek terms, however, there is a different course to the argument, which states that man's responsibility is to view himself and his fortunes as suitable for a man, and to avoid the overweening pride of Hubris which encourages a man to think of himself as more than a man. That would mean seeing himself as a god in some degree, which would offend those of the celestial realm into "holding a grudge". It may be the Engl. "grudge" is not the right word for this at all, perhaps 'ill-will' or disfavor would be nearer to the Greek word.

In any case, this request for favor and good fortune must not be so amplified as to cross the line between human and theic, and every Greek knew from myth and from common sense that there is a train of events which starts from man's Hubris, leading him into foolish blindness or Ate, which causes misjudgment and ultimately leads to Nemesis and destruction. Curiously Nemesis (from the verb nemo "allot, deal out, retribute") implies a degree of fatalism, man getting something which is his fated outcome, whereas the previous stages would imply that he is receiving the result of his own personal come-up-ance, that fine world from the older American morality.

εἰ γὰρ τις εσλα πέπαται μὴ συν μακρῶ πόνῳ  
πολλοῖς σοφὸς δοκεῖ πεδ' ἀφρόνων  
βίον κορυσσεμένον ὀρθοβούλοισι μαχαναῖς· (epode 4)

"If someone has achieved great things without long labor,  
he seem to many a wise man among fools  
and to crown his life with well planned devices"



## Epode 4

*βίον κορυσσέμεν ορθοβούλοισι μαχαναῖς·  
 τα δ' ουκ επ' ανδράσι κείται δαίμων δε παρίσχει  
 άλλοτ' άλλον ὑπερθε βάλλων άλλον δ' υπο χειρῶν  
 μέτρῳ καταβαίνει Μεγάροις δ' έχεις γέρας  
 μυχῶ τ' εν Μαραθῶνος ἼΗρας τ' αγῶν' επιχώριον  
 νίκαις τρισσαῖς Ὀριστόμενες δάμασσας έργῳ*

1    ∪    —    ∪    —    ∪ ∪    —    35?    —    —          55?    —    ∪    —    ||  
 2    —    —    ∪    —    ∪ ∪    —          —    ×    —    ∪    ∪    —    —    ||  
 3    —    ∅    —    ∪ ∪    —    ∪    —    —    |    —    —    ∪    ∪    —    —    ||  
 4          —    —    ∪ ∪    —    —    ∪    ∪    —    ∪    —    ∪    —    |  
 5    ∪    —    —    ∪ ∪    —    ∪    —    —    —    ∪    —    ∪    ∪    —    ∪    —    ||  
 6    —    —    60.100                               60.100    —    ∪    ∪    —    ∪    —    ∪    —    —    |||    —    —    ×

We have written over the strophe again, but the clause sense pulls us into the fourth Epode inexorably, right in the middle of a puzzling statement. Recapping, we go on:

*βίον κορυσσέμεν ορθοβούλοισι μαχαναῖς·*  
 "and to crown his life with well planned devices"

Again an inserted and compressed moralism, but one which explains the previous three lines, which must be read carefully to get its gist. Let us look at it again more carefully before going on:

*ει γάρ τις εσλα πέπαται μη συν μακρῶ πόνῳ  
 πολλοῖς σοφος δοκεῖ πεδ' αφρόνων*

It is the qualifying words "among fools" that are important. A man seems to be falling into success by good luck, no effort of his own but just sheer good-luck, which the Greek knew well under the name of the deity Tyche or TUXH. It is only fools who smile at luck without labor, and these next words make that clear:

*τα δ' ουκ επ' ανδράσι κείται*  
"These things do not rest with men!"

.....but with the gods above, who have their preferences and if pushed hard, their devastating grudges which will bring a high riding man down to the lowest level of poverty and despair.

*δαίμων δε παρίσχει*  
*άλλοτ' άλλον ύπερθε βάλλων άλλον δ' υπο χειρῶν*  
*μέτρῳ καταβαίνει*

"A superior being holds these things,  
at one time raising a man high and another one he puts down  
by hands with the count."

It is only the grammarians ancient and modern who warn us about mixed metaphors, which serve Shakespeare and Pindar so very well. The figure of the man raised high must refer to social and political stature, and cannot be a phrase from the wrestling floor where a lifted wrestler is clearly not the winner.

On the other hand, while incidentally changing the grammar from participle *βάλλων* to verb *καταβαίνει*, the following clause clearly refers to the wrestling mat, quite suitably since this is a wrestling competition. The god put the other man down, but down as a wrestler goes down forced onto the mat by the other man's grips (hands = *υπο χειρῶν*), and this is checked by the judges on measurement of time, by the Metron as the measurement.

The moral is accepted and now the poet turns to Aristomenes the Winner, and addressing him personally, changes from contemplation of Apollo and morality

and the twists of fateful Tyche, to the documentation of the winner's actual victories::

Μεγάροις δ' έχεις γέρας  
 μυχῶ τ' ἐν Μαραθῶνος ἼΗρας τ' ἀγῶν' ἐπιχώριον  
 νίκαις τρισσαῖς Ὀριστόμενες δάμασσας ἔργῳ·

"At Megara you have the prize,  
 and in the recess at Marathon, and the local prize of Hera  
 with triple victories, O Aristomenes, you have mastered by your effort."

At his home state of Aegina he won thrice in the Heraia, a local set of competitions imitating the great Competitions on the mainland. Mentioning the Triple Victories in the home setting may be intended to raise the status of the local Aeginetan Heraia, something dear to the poet's heart.

With the last word of the above strophe "by your work, by effort" (ἔργῳ· with its lost digamma is cognate with English "work") we connect back to the above lines about fools thinking a lazy man who prospers to be wise. No! Success must be won with much work, and this wrestling victory with supreme effort is witness to the role of action resulting in glory .

βίον κορυσσέμεν ὀρθοβούλοισι μαχαναῖς·  
 τα δ' οὐκ ἐπ' ἀνδράσι κέϊται δαίμων δε παρίσχει  
 ἄλλοτ' ἄλλον ὑπερθε βάλλων ἄλλον δ' ὑπο χειρῶν  
 μέτρῳ καταβαίνει Μεγάροις δ' έχεις γέρας  
 μυχῶ τ' ἐν Μαραθῶνος ἼΗρας τ' ἀγῶν' ἐπιχώριον  
 νίκαις τρισσαῖς Ὀριστόμενες δάμασσας ἔργῳ

1    ∪    —    ∪    —    ∪ ∪    —    35?    —    —    55?    —    ∪    —    ||  
 2    —    —    ∪    —    ∪ ∪    —    —    ×    —    ∪    ∪    —    —    ||  
 3    —    ∅    —    ∪ ∪    —    ∪    —    —    |    —    —    ∪    ∪    —    —    ||  
 4        —    —    ∪ ∪    —    —    ∪    —    ∪    —    ∪    —    |  
 5    ∪    —    —    ∪ ∪    —    ∪    —    —    ∪    —    ∪    ∪    —    ∪    —    ||  
 6    —    —    60.100    —    —    —    —    —    60.100    —    ∪    ∪    —    ∪    —    ∪    —    —    |||    —    —    ×

## Strophe 5

*τέτρασι δ' έμπετες υψόθεν  
 σωμάτεσσι κακα φρονέων  
 τοίς ούτε νόστος όμώς  
 έπαλπνος εν Πυθιάδι κρίθη  
 ουδε μολόντων παρ ματέρ' αμφι γέλως γλυκυσ  
 ώρσεν χάριν κατα λαύρας δ' εχθρών απάοροι  
 πτώσσουντι συμφορᾶ δεδαγμένοι.*



Now we move in close with a zoom effect to the scene of the wrestling match, with a momentary flash view of the winner ---- and of the loser's sad fate.

*τέτρασι δ' έμπετες υψόθεν  
 σωμάτεσσι κακα φρονέων  
 "Upon four bodies you fell in a leap  
 thinking in furious rage....."*

Note: The form *έμπετες* would be in Att. *εμπεσες* from *πιπτω*.

It is hard to find an English phrase to get the meaning of "thinking bad thoughts" *κακα φρονέων* since "bad" in English will have a moral effect. Our slang of this time has something more like the Greek in " he was wicked angry", and the meaning is not far from "fit to kill". Translating from meaning seems best here even if we have to leave the actual Greek words behind..

Now turning in detail to the loser, his sad homecoming and loss of face in a contest designed to raise his family and state's reputation aloft:

*τοῖς οὔτε νόστος ὁμῶς  
ἐπαλπνος ἐν Πυθιάδι κρίθη  
οὐδε μολόντων παρ ματέρ' ἀμφι γέλως γλυκὺς  
ῶρσεν χάριν κατα λαύρας δ' ἐχθρῶν ἀπάροι  
πτώσσοντι συμφορᾷ δεδαγμένοι.*

"For them similar happy homecoming  
was not awarded at the Pythia,  
nor returning to their mothers did sweet laughter  
raise up grace. Down alleys hanging aloof from enemies  
they cower, bitten by calamity."

We only know the word *ἐπαλπνος* from the scholiast's gloss as *ηδὺς* or sweet, a true hapax! Also *ἀπάροι*, *απηροί* needs comment as from *αειρω* "lift up" giving the meaning here meant "aloof". The bite of disaster comes from *δακνω* p.p.ppl.

The Pythian games were serious athletic and political competition, not games done as sport in our sense of the word. Modern notions of being a good sport in face of losing is something quite different. We are supposed to shake hands with the winner and go away with a smile, but when the going gets serious as in the modern Olympics, with rewards of much money beyond fame and a medal, the ancient scenario tends to come back to haunt the losers. Things remain the same over the centuries, with big money there is always very small change.

## Antistrophe 5

αντ 5

ὁ δε καλόν τι νέον λαχων  
 ἀβρότατος ἐπι μεγάλας  
 ἐξ ἐλπίδος πέταται  
 ὑποπτέροις ανορέαις ἔχων  
 κρέσσονα πλούτου μέριμναν ἐν δ' ολίγῳ βροτῶν  
 το τερπνον αὐξεται οὔτω δε και πίτνει χαμαί  
 αποτρόπῳ γνώμα σεσεισμένον.

1		υ υ υ - υ υ - υ -
2		- υ - υ υ υ -
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4		υ - υ - υ υ - υ -
5		- υ υ - <sup>-45.65</sup> υ - υ - υ υ - υ -
6	x	- υ - υ υ - <sup>-6.93</sup> υ - υ - υ - υ -
7	x	- υ - υ - x - <sup>47</sup> υ - υ -

ὁ δε καλόν τι νέον λαχων  
 ἀβρότατος ἐπι μεγάλας  
 ἐξ ἐλπίδος  
 πέταται ὑποπτέροις ανορέαις  
 ἔχων  
 κρέσσονα πλούτου μέριμναν

"But he who has got some new thing.  
 from his hope of great splendor  
 flies high on wings of manliness, having  
 a thought greater than wealth."

In these five lines we have a structured refinement of the winner's thoughts, first starting with his having got something new and unexpected, a strangely vague phrase to suit the achievement of a lifetime of training and desire. It is almost as if it is impossible to sum up the results of winning, all the person can think of in his

interior mind is "Yes, I got it..." where the IT is everything that he has worked for and desired.

Trying to get nearer to the actual achievement, we have an uneasy assortment of words which reflect different turns of the winner's thinking. Splendor is not really the right word for ἀβρότης from αβρος which means "delicate, lovely" and can be used of a parthenic maiden better than of a sweating athlete. Sappho had said "Above all I love delicacy (ἀβρότης). Glory is too large and showy, loveliness is too feminine for the situation. What we have here is an intentional lightness and delicacy in describing the rewards which come from his high hopes, to let his soul ride high in excitement and exultation.

Riding high on the wings of fancy may seem again a little too angelic, considering that although a Winged Victory was acceptable, nobody in Greece had ever seen a winged Athlete. Pindar therefor makes it "winged manliness" (ανορέα, Att. ηνορέα). What is interesting in this passage is first the undefinable quality of the winning as "something new, some new thing", followed by "loveliness" generated out of "hope", flying aloft on "wings" ----- but yet steered by "manly qualities". This alternation between the soft and the hard, at this critical juncture in the ceremony and also the poem, is intentional and artistically most interesting.

But the passage cannot conclude ethically with the rewards of winning at the Olympic contests, which will of course bring financial returns of some sort as well as sheer fame. Olympics has become a big business with high finance involved at every stage, so the final clause in this passage seems most relevant:

έχων  
κρέσσονα πλούτου μέριμναν

"having a thought grander than wealth"

And just as Pindar touches the critical matter of Wealth (almost as if sensing that in the long run the Olympics is going to become in Hellenistic times a crass money-making business with little of the ethical glory of the past) he subjoins an abrupt warning.

εν δ' ολίγῳ βροτῶν  
το τερπνον ἀύξεται οὔτω δε και πίτνει χαμαί  
αποτρόπῳ γνώμα σεσεισμένον.

"In short time mortals' delight  
waxes great. But so too it falls to the ground  
shaken by a backward-turning doom."

We know basically what is meant by these last words, but the words puzzle still. The adjective *αποτρόπος* is actually "turning away, off " and a scholiast remarks that it means contrary to expectation. Lattimore took it as "a backward doom ", stretching the Greek slightly but not unreasonably. Still the word *γνώμα* leaves us with a problem, since it is really a "thought, will, mental decision", and one which belongs to men as part of their thinking processes. But the context would seem to point to an external force, a contrary will of an offended daimon, a turn of fate and the fore-ordained which finally dashes a man to the ground.

The word *gnome* is a word for the thought and actions of human beings. So the meaning must be that just as WE make our own good fortune, by an off-turned piece of "judgment" or thought, we devise our own calamities. Responsibility for life depends on our thought, just as responsibility for winning at the games depends on the athlete's thought. This is human centrism at the peak, we are the makers of our own good (and bad) fortune, and Apollo presiding even as now at this ceremony is not really the controlling force, but at most the favoring and confirming authority.

αποτρόπῳ γνώμα σεσεισμένον.

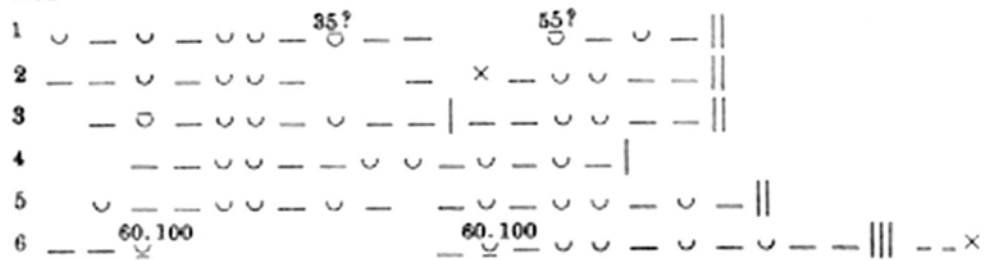
"But so too it falls to the ground  
shaken by a wrong-turning judgment.."

For the Greeks all is done under the cover of a theic supervision, yet man assumes responsibility for the good and bad which occurs. Modern society still likes to feel it operates under a celestial umbrella of some sort, whether Fate, or Luck-Of-The-Draw, or Astrology or any shade of religious belief.



## Epode 5

επάμεροι τί δέ τις; τί δ' ού τις; σκιᾶς ὄναρ  
 ἄνθρωπος ἀλλ' ὅταν αἶγλα διόσδοτος ἔλθῃ  
 λαμπρον φέγγος ἐπεστιν ἀνδρῶν και μείλιχος αἰών·  
 Αἶγινα φίλα μᾶτερ ελευθέρῳ στόλῳ  
 πόλιν τάνδε κόμιζε Δι και κρέοντι συν Αἰακῶ  
 Πηλεῖ τε καγαθῶ Τελαμῶνι σύν τ' Αχιλλεῖ



Coming to the Finale of this last great poem from the master of choral poetry, and remembering that he was then about eighty years old then, and had started this Ode with an unusual appeal to Hesychia as the spirit of universal peace under Justice, we might well pause before approaching his last words. He has shrouded the Finale with a sense of mystery, which raises deep questions about the meaning of human life, its expectations and its defaults, a philosophical and lyrical interlude of great beauty -----before plunging back to Aegina and the mythic mysteries of the heroes from a long gone past.

επάμεροι τί δέ τις; τί δ' ού τις;  
 σκιᾶς ὄναρ ἄνθρωπος

"Things of a day are we. What are we? What are we not?  
 The dream of a shadow, that is Man....."

Shakespeare had said as much, we are players on life's stage, here for the part and for the show, when the curtain fall we step off and disappear forever. This will probably be the way most of us would read Pindar's word *επάμεροι* at first sight, and that may in fact be one part of Pindar's meaning.

But there is a long tradition about this "ephemeral" word dating back to Homer's phrase at Od.21.85 *ephemeria phroneontes* (*εφημερια φρονεοντες*) which refers somewhat regretfully to the shortness and variability of man's span of attention. Then as now we think of the daily things first and the ultimate meanings only peripherally if at all. That is human nature, and so it appeared to the Greeks and it may not be entirely wrong several millennia later. Aeschylus in one of the fragments says "mortals think for the day" and adds the phrase that mental stability is no more than the shadow of smoke (*καπνου σκια*), a near parallel to Pindar's phrase "dream of a shadow"..

In terms of the ancient use of this critical word, we might better translate the line this way:

Thinking for the day! (as we are by our human nature)

What is one? What is one not? (Heraclitus ' Continuum of Change)

This does seem more consonant with Greek thinking, with the actual words Pindar uses, and if we feel robbed of some of the mystery of the wonderful wording of the close of this grand poem, we can console ourselves by knowing that with this interpretation we may be in Greek terms nearer to the poet's thoughts.

On the other hand, we as later-world readers of this venerable poetry have a right to use our own impressions and intuitions, and we are certainly not to be bound by the restrictions of a set of classical Greek quotations. There is much in Pindar as in every Greek writer which slips us by or tricks us in a wrong direction, as we read and interpret texts copied over and over again from an ancient lost manuscript. We adhere to the doctrine of reading in the light of philological

truthfulness, and scholarship can often correct aberrant impressions quite well. But

here is another area in which we must trust our own perceptions, where our subjective and personal impressions may carry a worthwhile message even if not completely consonant with the text we have at hand. Philology is one of our best tools for truth, so long as we recognize that it has a peculiar stamp of its own, which is too often non-literary and even at times anti-literary. We must use scholarship but we must not let it get in our way.

I mention this here because of the wonderful mysterious mist which these closing words cast over our eyes, words which we should in the final analysis read with our own personal and subjective bias. Where spirit is involved, footnotes may simply not be in order.:

επάμεροι τί δέ τις; τί δ' ού τις;  
σκιᾶς ὄναρ ἄνθρωπος

Let the words stand and slip into memory, and decide later what they may have meant to the author and what they seem to mean to you at this ephemeral moment of time.

επάμεροι Alas, we humans are mere things of a day,  
variable in our thoughts and gone in an instant of time.

τί δέ τις; What is a person after all, his achievements and wealth?

τί δ' ού τις; What has he failed to do, what life has he wasted...?

σκιᾶς ὄναρ ἄνθρωπος It all comes to nothingness. It is all  
Vanity of vanities!

However that is not the end of the situation or of the poem. We are almost at the end, but we have two more thematic strands to unravel before we are done. The first is signalled by an emphatic BUT which counters the previous mystical sadness about the meaning of life, with a flash of light and bright hope:

*..αλλ' ὅταν αἴγλα διόσδοτος ἔλθῃ  
λαμπρον φέγγος ἐπεστιν ἀνδρῶν καὶ μείλιχος αἰών·*

BUT when the god-given brightness comes,  
a shining light rests upon men, and a lovely life.

This changes the direction of the ending emphatically, with a note of faith and optimism and hope for a life which can be good and lovely for the winning athlete and for the rest of us too.

This terminating passage must be read altogether as a set of connected thoughts, in three parts:

- a) What is life, passing quickly by, constantly changing, a reminder of how ephemeral we are, how insignificant and what we have failed to become.
- b) BUT when a gleam of brightness shines on us, we are enlightened and from that moment on we will live a lovely and charmed life.
- c) And that brings back to mind the great mythic tradition, with its guidance in free will from Zeus above and from the ancient families of heroes tracing their line from Aegina and Aeacus down through the generations, to that last exemplar of the bright and the brilliant --- the incomparable Achilles.

This passage, moving from a) despair and measured desperation in the review of a spent life, to a b) flashing view of the brightness which can mysteriously come to enlighten and vivify our lives, leads inexorably to c) the mythic vision of the Heroes .

These vividly exemplify, in terms of ancient myth from a far heroic island, the traditional brilliance of the Greek word *αιγλη*, which exists in this world as a goal within the reach of ephemerals like ourselves, who can hear this poem sung with the last words ringing in our ears, with the names of heroes and victories in gallant rhythmic pulses of song, and thus have hope that Brilliance is not forever gone from this world

*Αίγινα φίλα μᾶτερ ελευθέρω στόλῳ  
πόλιν τάνδε κόμιζε Δι και κρέοντι συν Αιακῶ  
Πηλεῖ τε καγαθῶ Τελαμῶνι σύν τ' Αχιλλεῖ*

"Dear mother Aegina, with a free sailing forth  
accompany this city, along with Zeus and king Aeacus,  
Peleus and brave Telamon, and with Achilles."

There is much packed into these three lines. Aegina as dear to Pindar in many of his poems, is here mother of the victorious athlete. Now threatened by Athenian hegemony trading on the high seas where Aegina had been a major power, the poet prays for the guardian spirit Aegina to protect the city with free sailing, both as a poetic turn of phrase and also with a political and economic innuendo.

The lines verge backward into the ancient mythic past, proceeding from the city of Aegina backward to nymph Aegina as mother of Aeacus by Zeus, then on to Aeacus' one son Telamon who fathered the greater Ajax and also Teucer, and his other son Peleus who by the nymph Thetis fathered Achilles. Compressing these varied mythological strands together into three tightly packed lines has a double purpose. It dynamically arranges names of famous note together in short breath-like groupings of words, with the strong effect of sequenced compression:

<i>Αίγινα φίλα μᾶτερ</i>	Aegina our mother
<i>ελευθέρω στόλῳ</i>	with fair voyage
<i>πόλιν τάνδε κόμιζε</i>	this city
<i>Δι και</i>	zeus
<i>κρέοντι συν Αιακῶ</i>	Aeacus
<i>Πηλεῖ τε</i>	Peleus
<i>καγαθῶ Τελαμῶνι</i>	Telamon

(pause before the very end)

*σύν τ' Αχιλλεῖ*      AND WITH ACHILLES

This is no mere roster of famous names, a list from Apollodorus or Bullfinch of Aeacid Heroes of famous reputation. It is the tracing of the spiritual lifeblood of an island realm which was part of an ancient world, known for its high mountains, its ports for sailing to the known world, its hoplites fighting on foot with weapons in their hands, its new athletes who retain their ancestral righting spirit, and if this is all to be summed up in a single word or name, the list would conclude with one name only.

Telling all the rest of the names, we have to pause as the final breath brings forth the last words, which strikes the heart of every person who knows the Homeric world of epic song. The roster must end with a pregnant pause, and then the name of ACHILLES.

But looking back at the poem from the very first words, we realize there is a difference from start to end. At the first line it was the spirit of Quietude or Hesychia as quality if not a formal deity, which with Justice or DIKE from Zeus makes the

ways of cities straight and clean. But as the poem ends, it is not justice by the bright gleam of god-rewarded achievement with control, which calls up the names of ancient heroes known specifically for valiance and courage. We know that Achilles as the summation of all that was bright and brilliant, does have a fatal flaw in his samurai-like fighting mentality. Without tenderness or love or family, he wins the fights he engages, with a warrior's precision and coldness. He would seem to eb with out feelings, but there is a certain nascent tristesse about him as the Iliad comes to the end. Yet his was the brilliance, that indubitable shine of successful Glory which a hero aspires to, and in that light his name concludes this poem resoundingly.

We must remember that Pindar was an old man when writing this last poem, that Quietude was from the start the theme of the Ode, that near death he knew all about the empheralness of human existence. We wonder why his conclusion and his final emblematic titling would be with the name of Achilles as the paradigm of the man of blood and action, the ultimate warrior. Heaping praise earlier in the poem on Alcmaeon both as warrior and also as prophet, Pindar might seem to have had a better choice for his great Hero. But that was spoken within the range of his home and background at Thebes, and this at the Pythian ceremony, which had to be pan-Hellenic and to end with a drum roll which would stir all hearts throughout the Aegean world.

The Finale stirs us still, but perhaps with a warning about war, about hero worship, and and how easily we forget our thoughts about Hesychia and Quietude as our best preferences. Do we really prefer Peace and Quiet, or are we still tuned to the martial cadences of national histories and the excitement of the sounds of war? Still there is a heroic ring in our hearts as we think of our own fair city, when knowing that god is on our side, we hear the resounding list of the great men of our people who lived with courage and brilliance:

πόλιν τάνδε κόμιζε  
Δι και κρέοντι συν Αιακῶ  
Πηλεῖ τε καγαθῶ Τελαμῶνι  
σύν τ' Αχιλλεῖ

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