THE STRUCTURE OF PINDAR'S *NEMEAN* 5

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On the surface Pindar's *Nemean* 5 seems to be a simple enough poem, and critics have for the most part found little complexity in either its structure or the meaning which it apparently intends to convey. Literary commentary on the mythic sections of the ode has been especially meager. Many scholars have stressed, for example, though usually without regard to its specific role within the total ode, the famous "hush passage,"[1] in which Pindar alludes to, but refuses explicitly to mention, the murder of Phocus by his half brothers Peleus and Telamon. Yet those who are not simply convinced by Farnell that Pindar is a "wayward and capricious" poet who has here made a *faux pas*[2] usually interpret this passage with only slightly more insight in the manner of Wilamowitz: "Das aber soll seine Scheu illustrieren, den Heroen üble Dinge nachzureden, auch wenn sie wahr sind."[3] At least a few interpreters will be found to agree on the more important point that in hinting at the murder of Phocus the poet means to "strike a note of strife and disorder" which is in tonal contrast to the "celestial song of the Muses."[4] The more extended myth of the ode—a well-known version of the Potiphar's-wife motif[5]—has for the most part been interpreted in an equally simple manner: "There Pindar is beyond reproach: with no fumbling he tells us that Peleus avoided adultery because he feared God's anger, and that God because of this rewarded him." "[This] one sole passage declares plainly that in this life God rewards righteousness as such, purely as a matter of principle . . ."[6]

Yet the structural complexity of this poem and the role of both the myth and the poet himself within the total unified ode have not been sufficiently understood. The basis of a fuller understanding is to appreciate that the tonal contrast already noted in the Phocus episode is pervasive throughout the ode.

We may begin with the Phocus episode itself. In that darkly told myth the three sons of Aeacus, still acting in friendly concord, pray to Zeus for success to attend the island of Aegina. It is notable in light of the sequel that, while Phocus'

1. As a selection the following could be mentioned: U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Pindaros* (Berlin, 1922), p. 171; K. Fehr, *Die Mythen bei Pindar* (Zurich, 1936), pp. 47 f.; G. Norwood, *Pindar* (Berkeley, 1945), p. 80; C. M. Bowra, *Pindar* (Oxford, 1964), p. 68; J. A. Davison, *From Archilochus to Pindar* (London, 1968), pp. 303 f. The text used here is *Pindari carmina cum fragmentis*, ed. B. Snell (Leipzig, 1959).

2. *The Works of Pindar*, ed. L. R. Farnell, I (London, 1930), 188.

3. *SPAW*, 1909, p. 813; in the main all of those mentioned above in n. 1 follow this interpretation. Somewhat more sophisticated are the comments by J. H. Finley, Jr., *Pindar and Aeschylus* (Cambridge, Mass., 1955), pp. 47 f.: "His thought follows the traditional story until it reaches a dilemma, at which his higher view asserts itself." The murder of Phocus is thought to be a mythological explanation of the migration of the Aeacidae from Aegina to Salamis and Thessaly: *Scholia vetera in Pindari carmina*, ed. A. B. Drachmann (Leipzig, 1927), III, *ad Nem.* 5. 25*a*; A. Lesky, "Peleus," *RE*, XIX (1937), 274; *Pindar: Die Isthmischen Gedichte*, ed. E. Thummer (Heidelberg, 1968), pp. 115 f., n. 102. A comparable situation occurs in *Ol.* 7. 24 f., where D. C. Young, *Three Odes of Pindar* (Leyden, 1968), pp. 82 f., suggests that Pindar is less interested in the homicide than he is in the foundation of Rhodes; but the specific reticence in *Nem.* 5 implies a more careful moral worry.

4. Bowra, *op. cit.* (n. 1), p. 301; Thummer, *op. cit.* (n. 3), p. 116.

5. For a general discussion of this motif in Greek myth, see A. Lesky, "Motivkontamination," *WS*, LV (1937), 26 f.

6. Both passages are from Norwood, *op. cit.* (n. 1), pp. 62 and 55; an equally simple moral is discovered by R. Rauchenstein, "Zu Pindars Nemeen," *Philologus*, XIII (1858), 258: "in dem mythos von den söhnen des Aeakos v. 14–18 die eintracht und in demjenigen von Peleus v. 25–37 die keuschheit und heilighaltung der ehe empfohlen werde." That there is in the version of *Nem.* 5 no reference, as in *Isth.* 8, to a quarrel between Zeus and Poseidon, and no violent reaction, as in *Nem.* 4, on the part of Thetis, has been well discussed by Fehr, *op. cit.* (n. 1), pp. 49 f.

presence is stressed with almost epic loquacity, the two better-known brothers are not even mentioned by name:[7] the poet's reticence seems to have extended to this detail. To have given the names would apparently have stressed too obviously their responsibility in the murder. It appears that, as much as he is able, Pindar attempts to lessen this responsibility by attributing ultimate blame to some unknown *daimōn*.[8] Yet despite this attempt there are indications of a veiled irony in the presentation of this scene: that the three brothers should be explicitly pictured as acting in friendly concord immediately before the murder takes place has already been mentioned. An even stronger indication is in the phrase *φίλαν ξένων ἄρουραν* (8). It is unquestionable that this is to be understood as a compliment to Aegina. It is equally unquestionable that the compliment cannot remain unaffected by the narrative context in which it appears: *xenia* later in the ode will in fact emerge as a major ethical principle, but in this first reference we find only an assertion of the island's *xenia* juxtaposed to the murder of one of its princes. The introductory scene of "strife and disorder" also affects what has rightly been described as the most pervasive symbol of the ode, the sea.[9] For it is Phocus (Seal), son of Psamathea (Sand), born *ἐπὶ ῥηγμῖνι πόντου* (13), who is murdered, and the guilty brothers Peleus and Telamon are driven to sail the sea in exile from the island.

Yet of each of these disastrous items there is later in the ode, after Peleus' rejection of Hippolyta, a specific revitalization: it is a structural pattern worked out in great detail. As the nadir of Peleus' history was the murder of a man of the sea, who was son of a Nereid, so it is marriage to a Nereid which symbolizes his regeneration: the point is simply put in the verbal echo of *Νηρηΐδων* (7 and 36).[10] As a somber influence was exerted on the image of the sea by the mode of Peleus' exile, *λίπον εὐκλέα νᾶσον* (15), so the ode itself sets sail to proclaim the glory of one of his descendants: *στεῖχ' ἀπ' Αἰγίνας* (3; cf. 51). As the murder of Phocus was mentioned in a context of the *xenia* of Aegina, and thus appeared all the more strikingly as a perversion of that *xenia*, so it is reverence for Zeus Xenios which explicitly accounts for the uplifting of Peleus' heroic stature. It is not the prudery of a Euripidean Hippolytus, but fear of the god of hospitality which accounts for Peleus' refusal of Hippolyta.[11] Finally, the point is illustrated by a clear instance of *Ringkomposition*. The Phocus episode is introduced by a group portrait of three brothers offering prayer at the altar of Zeus; the deadly sequel is, of course, known. Following the Hippolyta episode a parallel group portrait appears: it is now the *εὔφρονες ἴλαι* (38) welcoming Poseidon to the Isthmus, where the "strife" takes a less harmful form: *καὶ σθένει γυίων ἐρίζοντι θρασεῖ* (39). As the earlier of these scenes led to the assertion that it was a *daimōn* who drove the Aeacidae from Aegina, so the later scene gives a more sophisticated statement: it is now *πότμος συγγενής* (40)

7. L. Dissen *apud* A. Boeckh, *Pindari epiniciorum interpretatio Latina* (Leipzig, 1821), p. 395: "Coniuncti fecerunt illas preces Aeacidae etiam tum concordes; adfuerat igitur etiam is qui postea occisus est a fratribus; quod ut teneres, pluribus verbis designandus erat Phocus." So also Wilamowitz, *op. cit.* (n. 1), p. 171. Fehr, *op. cit.* (n. 1), p. 48, discusses the possibility that Pindar was the first to make Peleus and Telamon brothers.

8. This attempt to lessen but not remove responsibility recalls that aspect of the Homeric ethos so well discussed by E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley, 1951), chap. i. The reference to the *daimōn* in *Nem.* 5, however, appears a fairly blatant excuse.

9. See Finley, *op. cit.* (n. 3), pp. 46–49, *passim*, and *The "Nemean Odes" of Pindar*, ed. J. B. Bury (London, 1890), pp. 81–88, *passim*.

10. Noted and explained as "une sorte de réconciliation" by G. Méautis, *Pindare le Dorien* (Neuchâtel, 1962), p. 294.

11. With the possible exception of Norwood, *loc. cit.* (n. 6), most commentators realize with Bury, *op. cit.* (n. 9), p. 86, that "it is a typical instance, not of chastity—far from it—, but of reverence for Zeus Xenios."

which is held responsible. It is Peleus' lineage through Aeacus back to Zeus himself, as stressed in line 7, which had been repudiated in the murder of Phocus, but which now, after his reverence for Zeus Xenios and his marriage to Thetis, comes to the fore.[12] Whether the simultaneous attribution of evil to an unnamed *daimōn* and of good to *πότμος συγγενής* constitutes an adequate ethical position is not in this poem the question. We are in essence asked simply to believe that in the weighing of the crime and the virtue of Peleus, the addition of his "inborn destiny" tipped the balance in favor of virtue and thus revitalized the nobility of Peleus. It is this same "inborn destiny" which three lines later appears in the family of Pytheas and accounts for its greatness:[13] *κείνου ὁμόσπορον ἔθνος* (43).

If we move from the myth of Phocus to the story of Peleus' adventure with Hippolyta and his marriage to Thetis, a similar structural principle appears. In this case, as in the Phocus episode, the ominous undercurrent is obvious: it is represented by the sensuality and the falseness of Hippolyta. Both are sufficiently stressed; her plans are artful (*ποικίλοις*, 28), her speech to her husband false (*ψεύσταν*, 29), her supplication of Peleus insincere (*παρφαμένα*, 32). She herself is *ἁβρά* (26),[14] and she appears, at least momentarily, to have aroused Peleus: *τοῖο δ' ὀργὰν κνίζον αἰπεινοὶ λόγοι / εὐθὺς δ' ἀπανάνατο νύμφαν* (32–33). That Peleus refuses Hippolyta is clear from line 33, but line 32 is more subtle. It appears to have been generally translated with improper emphasis: "Her bold language stung him to wrath."[15] *αἰπεινοί* in the sense of "sheer" or "repugnant" presents no difficulty.[16] *κνίζω* means "scratch" or "provoke," and not infrequently it is used specifically of erotic provocation (cf. *Pythian* 10. 60).[17] But it is *ὀργά* which has caused most misunderstanding: this word does not mean "anger" in Pindar; in none of its appearances in the corpus does it refer to that emotion. It is used, often with a vagueness which only the context will clarify, primarily of character or disposition; at least once in Pindar it appears in a clearly erotic sense, at *Pythian* 9. 43.[18] In the context of *Nemean* 5, as the direct object of *κνίζον*, *ὀργά* will refer not to Peleus' "wrath" but to his "passion." The point is clear: Peleus is not a mere prig. Once it is established that he is not immune to the provocative appeals of Hippolyta, his refusal of her becomes even more a sign of his virtuous regard for Zeus Xenios: "She entreated him many times with all her heart, beguiling him; and her abrupt words aroused his passion. But, fearing

12. The significance of the lineage and its *potmos* is stressed by Rauchenstein, *op. cit.* (n. 6), p. 259.

13. With most editors (Schroeder, Sandys, Bury, Farnell, Turyn), I take *κείνου* to be Peleus; so also W. J. Slater, *Lexicon to Pindar* (Berlin, 1969), *s.v. ὁμόσπορος*.

14. The word has "une nuance de blâme" as Méautis, *op. cit.* (n. 10), p. 292, n. 2, mentions; he is also correct in noting that in words like *νυμφείας* and *λέκτροις* there appears to be a reference to the sacredness of marriage. Similar are the comments of P. Ahlert, *Mädchen und Frauen in Pindars Dichtung* (Leipzig, 1942), p. 88; he stresses that "*ἁβρὰ Κρηθεὶς* steht *σεμνὰν Θέτιν* im Vers vorher entgegen."

15. *The Odes of Pindar*, trans. J. Sandys (London, 1937), *ad loc.*; similarly, for example, Farnell, *op. cit.* (n. 2), *ad loc.* Much better is the version of R. Lattimore, *The Odes of Pindar* (Chicago, 1947): "The abrupt words had troubled his passion."

16. So, e.g., *αἰπύς* is frequent with *δόλος*: *H. Herm.* 66; Hes. *Theog.* 589, *Erga* 83.

17. The word is clearly used in an amatory sense at *Pyth.* 10. 60, where B. L. Gildersleeve, *Pindar: Olympian and Pythian Odes* (New York, 1890), comments: "*ἔρως* is a *κνίδη*. *κνίζειν* is used of love, Hdt. 6, 62." So also Bacch. 17. 8; Eur. *Med.* 568; Theocr. 4. 59, 6. 25. The word is, in general, used of things which, as Thummer, *op. cit.* (n. 3), II, 96, notes, "den Menschen in Unruhe versetzen, in eine angenehme oder in eine unangenehme." So, e.g., *Pyth.* 11. 23 (anger), *Pyth.* 8. 32 (*κόρος*), *Ol.* 6. 44 (birthpangs), *Isth.* 6. 50 (*χάρις*).

18. Slater, *op. cit.* (n. 13), *s.v. ὀργά*: "temper, disposition." R. W. B. Burton, *Pindar's "Pythian Odes"* (Oxford, 1962), p. 41: "Usually in Pindar *ὀργά* means impulse, mood, feeling, and in this neutral sense the word takes its colour from the context . . . In this passage of *Pythian* 9 it appears in an erotic context and may well have an erotic meaning." *orga* was apparently archaic for *tropos*: *Bacchylidis carmina cum fragmentis*, ed. B. Snell (Leipzig, 1961), Frag. 34 (with n.). J. B. Bury, *The "Isthmian Odes" of Pindar* (London, 1892), pp. 80 f., notes that both *orga* and *knizō* recur in *Isth.* 6; but that this is a conscious echo, as he asserts, is doubtful.

the anger of Zeus Xenios, he immediately rejected the bride."

Yet, as was found in the Phocus episode and in its sequel, there are also structural echoes later in the ode of the Hippolyta scene. In the earlier passage the revitalization of Peleus' heroic stature was defined primarily in terms of *xenia* and his relationship to the sea. The parallels to the Hippolyta scene present a similar development, but it is now described in erotic terms: its most obvious symbol is Peleus' marriage to Thetis. We have already noted that this is a marriage to the sea whose child Peleus had previously killed. To be stressed now is that it is also a divinely sanctioned marriage which is witnessed by the gods and granted as specific reward for Peleus' refusal of the seductive advances of Hippolyta. Certain verbal coincidences indicate the consistency of this pattern. The refusal, for instance, is immediate (*εὐθύς*, 33), and the reward is therefore swift (*ἐν τάχει*, 35). The participle *πείσαισ'* at line 28 stresses the deceptive wiles of Hippolyta and the danger in which Peleus stands; whereas at line 37, when the danger is over, the same word indicates the agreement of Zeus and Poseidon that Peleus is to be rewarded by legal marriage to Thetis.[19] Into this erotic context, as a further indication of the more joyful attitude toward physical love which emerges in the ode, Pindar also fits the victory of one of Peleus' descendants, Euthymenes, *Νίκας ἐν ἀγκώνεσσι πίτνων* (42).[20] The sensual personification of Nike parallels the marriage of Peleus to Thetis: both are rewards granted by the gods for persevering through danger, and both present a clear contrast to the provocation of Peleus by Hippolyta. The physical emphasis in the description of the victorious family seems to be continued elsewhere. Pytheas is apparently held in the arms of the hill of Nisos (*εὐαγκεῖ λόφῳ*, 46).[21] Euthymenes, while falling in the arms of Nike, is touched (*ἔψαυσας*, 42) by the artful strains (*ποικίλων ὕμνων*) of the poet himself.[22] The recollection here of the artful plans of Hippolyta indicates both the sense in which line 42 is to be taken and the advance which the ode has made in establishing a more positive attitude toward physical love.

What Pindar has said thus far about the development of his mythic hero applies also to his conception of his own poetry. It too is at first shrouded in darkness and grows to fulfillment by the very act of persevering through that darkness. Initially the poet had almost seemed not to control his own work; apparently without his volition the poem descends into the disastrous story of Phocus and must be abruptly called back. Pindar then turns to new themes, or at least appears to do so (18–19): *εἰ δ' ὄλβον ἢ χειρῶν βίαν ἢ σιδαρίταν ἐπαινῆ- / σαι πόλεμον δεδόκηται . . .* But here too the poet sets a program which he does not follow. In general terms it might be said that Peleus achieves *ὄλβος*, but there is in the myth which follows no reference to war and physical might.

19. Fehr, *op. cit.* (n. 1), pp. 49 f., rightly stresses that the version here is quite different from the quarrel of Zeus and Poseidon in *Isth.* 8: "Um so mehr scheint . . . das Zeus-Sohn-Motiv in Isthm. VIII, das hier noch völlig fehlt, eine pindarische Erfindung zu sein." Wilamowitz, *op. cit.* (n. 1), p. 175, suggests that Poseidon is introduced merely to provide an easy transition to the Isthmus, "an dem die Siege erfochten sind, von denen jetzt gehandelt werden soll." But the picture of the gods in concord also provides a nice contrast to the illusory friendship of the three sons of Aeacus.

20. Bury, *op. cit.* (n. 9), p. 86: "As Peleus won the *goddess* Thetis, so Euthymenes enjoyed the embraces of the *goddess* Victory." Farnell, *op. cit.* (n. 2), II, 278, compares *Isth.* 2. 26 and grants that the phrase is "voluptuous," although he doubts whether the "amorous idea is vividly present." Critics who know Farnell will be satisfied with "voluptuous."

21. This interpretation of *εὐαγκεῖ* is not inevitable, but it is strongly suggested by the fact that the word is a unique coinage for this context, occurring only four lines after *ἐν ἀγκώνεσσι πίτνων*. It is approved by Bury, *op. cit.* (n. 9), p. 87. It is typical of Pindar to personify geographical places.

22. Bury, *op. cit.* (n. 9), *ad* 42; Bowra, *op. cit.* (n. 1), p. 227; cf. *Ol.* 6. 35.

Instead, Pindar again changes direction and appears almost to give up on his task. He hands over to other poets—the Muses and Apollo—the job of completing his ode.[23] The change of theme is indicated by line 21: καὶ πέραν πόντοιο πάλλοντ' αἰετοί. This line is parallel to the single verb στάσομαι in 16: it signals the poet's sudden shift in theme and leads directly to his transference of poetical authority to Apollo and the Muses. But shortly after the song of the Muses has begun, a subtle merging takes place; and it soon becomes impossible to determine where the song of the divine poets leaves off and that of Pindar reasserts itself.[24] No editor attempts to punctuate this song within the ode by quotation marks. Here then is a revitalization of the ode itself which parallels the revitalization of Peleus: both descend to a nadir, but by a specifically stressed contact with divinity both also succeed in rescuing themselves from that depth. To this extent the merging of Pindar and the Muses into a unit represents exactly the same thing as the marriage of Peleus and Thetis and the uniting of Euthymenes and Nike.

The similarity between the development of the mythic hero and that of the ode itself is nicely demonstrated in a few key phrases. Like the homicide Peleus who must flee from Aegina, the ode departs from the island: λίπον εὐκλέα νᾶσον (15) appears to echo στεῖχ' ἀπ' Αἰγίνας (3). Like the deceit of Hippolyta's artful plans (28), the ode has artful strains (42).[25] Without the assistance of divine poets, the ode itself is as capable as Hippolyta of offering false adornments and deceiving with blandishments. For like Hippolyta the ode can descend into unwanted topics, and both can be controlled only by a refusal to speak. The αἰδώς which causes Pindar to hesitate at line 14 is like the fear of divine wrath which causes Peleus to reject Hippolyta at line 33.

Poetry, then, shows the same need for a maturing development which was found in the case of Peleus: neither is fixed and immobile like a statue. It is at least partially in this sense that the opening Οὐκ ἀνδριαντοποιός εἰμ' is to be understood. By setting sail to new territory the ode can develop, but we could not say of a statue that it experiences an ἀμοιβὰν μόχθων (48) like that which victor, mythic hero, and poet experience in *Nemean* 5.[26]

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23. Dissen, *op. cit.* (n. 7), p. 395: "ὅλβον ἢ χειρῶν βίαν ἢ σιδαρίταν πόλεμον lubentius se cantaturum profitetur, neque tamen haec omnia canit." Wilamowitz, *op. cit.* (n. 1), p. 171, notes that Pindar gives to the myth "die Form, dass er nur das Lied wiederhole, das die Musen bei der Hochzeit der Thetis gesungen haben."

24. See Young, *op. cit.* (n. 3), p. 84, n. 2, and Farnell, *op. cit.* (n. 2), p. 188, where the fact that "he takes no trouble to indicate where the song of the Muses ends" is understood as "a salient example of Pindar's heedlessness."

25. *Poikilos* in simple or compound form is a favorite word of Pindar, and is used frequently of his own poetry. Its sense is normally positive (e.g., *Ol.* 3. 8, *Ol.* 4. 2, *Ol.* 6. 87, *Pyth.* 9. 77, Nem. 4. 14); but that the adornments of poetry can also be deceptive and false is clear at *Ol.* 1. 29: ψεύδεσι ποικίλοις ἐξαπατῶντι μῦθοι. The negative sense of the word is also suggested by its use to describe monstrous beasts: *Pyth.* 4. 249 (the serpent slain by Jason), *Pyth.* 8. 46 (the dragon on Alcmaeon's shield), *Pyth.* 10. 46 (the Gorgon's head). For the sense of falsehood, cf. Bacch. 11. 33. There is thus precedent for both of the senses in which *poikilos* appears in *Nem.* 5, although the close juxtaposition is still striking. Pindar's thoughts on the ability of poetry to deceive are well known, esp. as they apply to Homer (*Nem.* 7. 20 f.); see for general comments Davison, *op. cit.* (n. 1), pp. 300 f.

26. See J. Duchemin, *Pindare, poète et prophète* (Paris, 1955), p. 260, for the connection of "le perpétuel mouvement des eaux" with the poet's claim that he is not a sculptor, whose work would be "condamnée à l'immobilité."