

PINDAR *OLYMPIAN* 3: MAPPING ACRAGAS ON THE PERIPHERY OF THE EARTH¹

GRASPING THE PILLARS OF HERACLES FROM HOME

Olympian 3 celebrates the victory of Theron of Acragas in the four-horse chariot race in 476 B.C.² The inscription to *Ol.* 3 and the ancient scholia place its performance within the festival of the Theoxenia held annually at Acragas in honour of the Dioscuri, whom the poet invokes in the ode's opening lines, and many scholars accept this as a possible and plausible scenario.³ The mythical narrative, which occupies almost two thirds of the poem, dwells on the transport of the olive tree – the leaves of which were used for the wreaths awarded to Olympic victors – from the Istrian land to Greece by Heracles. As the story goes, after founding the Olympic games Heracles realized that the Olympian field lacked trees. This bareness of the landscape awoke in him the desire to plant at Olympia some of the olive trees he saw in the land of the Hyperboreans, when he was pursuing the hind of Artemis, which Taygeta had in the past dedicated as sacred to the goddess.⁴ The post-mythical section begins with the praise of the Emmenidae (Theron's clan), extolling their piety and virtue, and the ode closes with an encomium of Theron, in which the tyrant is proclaimed to have reached from home the Pillars of Heracles:

¹ Many thanks are due to Prof. Bonnie MacLachlan who, despite her hectic schedule, kindly accepted to read and comment on an earlier version of this paper, as well as to the anonymous referee and editors of *CQ* for their valuable suggestions.

² The same victory is commemorated in *Ol.* 2.

³ Σ *ad Ol.* 3 (Drachmann I, 105); E. Robbins, 'Intimations of immortality: Pindar, *Ol.* 3.34–35', in D.E. Gerber (ed.), *Greek Poetry and Philosophy: Studies in Honour of L. Woodbury* (Chico, 1984), 219–28, at 219–20. W.J. Verdenius, *Commentaries on Pindar*, vol.1 (Leiden, 1987), *ad Ol.* 3.1, maintains that the poem was not sung during but before the feast of the Theoxenia. Contrast H. Fränkel, 'Schrullen in den Scholien zu Pindars Nemeen 7 und Olympien 3', *Hermes* 89 (1961), 385–97, at 394–7, who challenges the validity of the scholiasts' view arguing that this conclusion was probably drawn from the misreading of line 34 (ταύταν ἐορτάν), which was wrongly understood as referring to the ongoing victory celebration. See also the detailed discussion in S.C. Shelmerdine, 'Pindaric praise and the third *Olympian*', *HSPH* 91 (1987), 65–81, at 65–7.

⁴ According to the myth, Taygeta was transformed into a hind by Artemis in order to escape Zeus' erotic pursuit. As an expression of her gratitude, Taygeta then dedicated a hind to the goddess. One of the major puzzles concerning the mythical account is whether Heracles conducted one or two journeys to the Istrian land. The aorists which Pindar employs with reference to the two journeys (ἐνθα Λαρούς ἵπποσά θνγάτηρ δέξατ' 26–7, τὼν νῦν γλυκὺς ἡμέρος ἔσχειν, 33) place them at the same temporal level thus leaving it unclear whether Heracles brought the olive tree back home while chasing the hind or at a later stage. On this issue see the detailed discussion in A. Köhnken, 'Mythical chronology and thematic coherence in Pindar's third *Olympian* ode', *HSPH* 87 (1983) 51–2 with bibliography. More recently, L. van den Berge, 'Mythical chronology in the odes of Pindar: The cases of *Pythian* 10 and *Olympian* 3', in R.J. Allan and M. Buijs (edd.), *The Language of Literature. Linguistic Approaches to Classical Texts*. Amsterdam Studies in Classical Philology 13 (Leiden, 2007), 29–41.

εἰ δ' ἀριστεύει μὲν ὕδωρ, κτεάνων δὲ
 χρυσὸς αἰδοιέστατος,
 νῦν δὲ πρὸς ἔσχατιν
 Θήρων ἀρεταῖσιν ἱκάνων ᾗπτεται
 οἴκοθεν Ἡρακλέος
 σταλάν.

(Ol. 3.42–4)

If water is best, while gold is
 the most revered of possessions,
 then truly has Theron now reached the furthest point
 with his achievements and
from his home grasps the pillars
of Heracles.⁵

The Pillars of Heracles are normally associated with the two rocks standing on either side of the Straits of Gibraltar which lead from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic Ocean. According to Apollodorus (2.106–7), the Pillars were set up by Heracles on the borders of Europe and Africa on his way to perform the tenth labour imposed on him by Eurystheus, namely the killing of the monstrous shepherd Geryon who was living on the island of Erytheia, also known as Gadeira. As Pindar says in *Nem.* 3.22–3, Heracles established the Pillars to be the ‘famous witnesses of his furthestmost voyage’. The Pillars were believed to be at the very ends of the human world beyond which was only the unknown and untracked Ocean (ἀβάταν ἄλα, *Nem.* 3.21)⁶ and exotic places and people, such as the Isles of the Blessed, the Hyperboreans and the Aethiopians. Because of their position, the Pillars were soon equated with the world’s limits and gradually ‘became a vivid symbol of the gateway barrier between inner and outer worlds’.⁷

In antiquity the expression ‘to grasp the Pillars of Heracles’ had gnomic value and was used metaphorically in order to indicate ultimate achievement and success.⁸ All Pindarists agree that this is how we should read the closing lines of *Ol.* 3: through his prowess and virtues Theron has reached the outer limit of the human world, namely the utmost success, and accordingly the ultimate point of happiness. There is less agreement though on the meaning of the adverb οἴκοθεν in line 44. The ancient scholia take this metaphorically to mean ‘on account of his own virtues’ (διὰ τῶν οἰκείων ἀρετῶν).⁹ This interpretation found acceptance with Verdenius, who notes that οἴκοθεν is equivalent to φνῆ and emphasizes that the victory was gained by Theron’s own (= inherited) efforts.¹⁰ Some suggest that οἴκοθεν serves to express the difficulty of the task. Gildersleeve observes that the expression οἴκοθεν οἴκαδε is proverbial for ease and comfort of transmission and transition (see e.g. *Ol.* 6.99; 7.4), and that the omission of οἴκαδε here implies trouble and arduous effort.¹¹ Another group of scholars prefers to take οἴκοθεν literally and translate it ‘from his home’. Farnell, for instance, argues that οἴκοθεν

⁵ All texts and translations are taken from the Loeb edition of Race (1997).

⁶ See also *Nem.* 4.69: Γαδείρων τὸ πρὸς ζόφον οὐ περατόν. Gadeira (now Cádiz) was a city northwest of Gibraltar.

⁷ J.S. Romm, *The Edges of the Earth in Ancient Thought: Geography, Exploitation, and Fiction* (Princeton, 1992), 17.

⁸ M.M. Willcock, *Pindar: Victory Odes* (Cambridge, 1995), ad *Isthm.* 4.11–13.

⁹ Σ ad *Ol.* 3.79a (Drachmann I, 126).

¹⁰ Verdenius (n. 3), ad *Ol.* 3.44.

¹¹ B. Gildersleeve, *Pindar: Olympian and Pythian Odes* (New York, 1890), 161.

has local force and indicates the starting place (Acragas) of the path of Theron's glory.¹² Hubbard contends that the word 'evokes the literal image of the *oikos* and all the domestic virtues associated with the *oikos*' and that its conjunction with the Pillars of Heracles 'bring(s) into play a near/far dialectic'.¹³ He adds that Theron can reach the ends of the earth without having to leave his *oikos* because of the power of Pindar's song to spread his fame in time and space thus producing 'a universalizing dissemination of [his] domestic virtue'.¹⁴ Given that all the above renderings of *οἴκοθεν* are plausible and do justice to the text, I would rather take the view of a third group of readers which takes *οἴκοθεν* as bearing a meaning that is both literal (from home/Acragas) and metaphorical (by his own powers/because of his innate excellence).¹⁵

At this point it is significant to mention that the proverbial couplet which closes *Ol.* 3 appears in an almost identical form in *Isthm.* 4, a victory ode for Melissus of Thebes, roughly belonging to the same period.¹⁶ In praising his *laudandus*' family, Pindar extols their well-known fame and great achievements once again asserting that they 'have grasped from their home the Pillars of Heracles':

ὄσσα δ' ἐπ' ἀνθρώπους ἄηται
μαρτύρια φθιμένων ζωῶν τε φωτῶν
ἀπλέτου δόξας, ἐπέψαν-
σαν κατὰ πᾶν τέλος· ἀνορέαις δ' ἐσχάταισιν
οἴκοθεν στάλαισιν ἄπτονθ' Ἡρακλείαις

(*Isthm.* 4.9–12)

And as for all the testimonials wafted among mankind
of endless fame won by men living or dead,
they have attained them in all fullness,
and by their unexcelled manly deeds
have grasped from their home the pillars of Heracles

As in *Ol.* 3, the Pillars of Heracles serve to express utmost achievement and success, while the adverb *οἴκοθεν* can be translated either literally (from home/Thebes) or metaphorically (through their innate excellence).¹⁷

In spite of the fact that the expression 'to grasp the Pillars of Heracles' was a topos and had gnomic value in antiquity, in what follows I would like to read it in conjunction with the performative context of *Ol.* 3 and to propose that – at least for the ode's first audience – this gnome might have taken on an additional, more nuanced and localized dimension. As I will attempt to show, whereas on a first level the expression retains its proverbial meaning and it is used to underscore Theron's great deeds and attainments, on a second level it might serve as a playful

¹² L.R. Farnell, *The Works of Pindar*, vol. 3 (London, 1932), 29.

¹³ T.K. Hubbard, *The Pindaric Mind. A Study of Logical Structure in Early Greek Poetry* (Leiden, 1985), 12–18, at 13.

¹⁴ Hubbard (n. 13), 12.

¹⁵ See e.g. M. Fernández-Galiano, *Pindaro Olímpicas* (Madrid, 1956), 168; M.S. Silk, *Interaction in Poetic Imagery, with Special Reference to Early Greek Poetry* (Cambridge, 1974), 137 n. 8.

¹⁶ Melissus is believed to have won at the Isthmian games in 474 B.C.; see e.g. U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, *Pindaros* (Berlin, 1922), 341; Willcock (n. 8), 73.

¹⁷ See e.g. A. Privitera, *Le Istmiche* (Milan, 1992²) *ad Isthm.* 4.9–12 and Willcock (n. 8) *ad Isthm.* 4.11–13. Willcock translates the adverb *οἴκοθεν* literally as 'starting from their home base'.

allusion to one of Acragas' most significant and grandiose temples, the Temple of Zeus (Olympieum) built at the time of the performance of *Ol.* 3.¹⁸ Of course, as will become clear, far from being playful for its own sake, this allusion aims at aggrandizing Theron's encomium and at binding his local interests to the ode's Panhellenic outlook.

THE EPINICIANS' 'CONTEXTUALIZED' CONTEXT

During the last few years there has been an attempt by a group of Pindarists to read Pindar's epinicians in the context of contemporary monuments and architectural sculpture.¹⁹ As these scholars have shown – rightly in my view – apart from drawing upon the design and inscribed contents of material monuments in order to designate his art,²⁰ Pindar also often engages – in an implicit and veiled way – with actual visual representations and contemporary constructions. *Pyth.* 6, an ode for the Pythian victory of Xenocrates of Acragas in 490, provides an eloquent and striking example of this practice. The opening lines of the ode with its verbs in the first and second person plural ('Listen', 'we are ploughing', 'we proceed') and the reference to the 'enshrined navel of the loudly rumbling earth'²¹ leave it to be inferred that the poem must have been sung during a procession to the temple of Apollo at Delphi via the Sacred Way, the main road leading to the god's temple built with treasuries alongside.²² This touch of Delphic topography is followed by the praise of Xenocrates, his family and Acragas, and by two mythical exempla, which Pindar explicitly associates with Xenocrates' young son, Thrasybulus, who figures prominently in the poem. The second exemplum recounts the story of the young Antilochus, who sacrificed his life to save his old father Nestor when the latter was attacked by Memnon, leader of the Aethiopians (28–42). Thrasybulus

¹⁸ On the temple's chronology see the discussion below.

¹⁹ A. Burnett, *Pindar's Songs for Young Athletes of Aegina* (Oxford, 2005) has recently examined Pindar's Aeginetan Odes against the Temple of Aphaea on Aegina, while Lucia Athanassaki explores Pindar's engagement with sculptural iconography in a number of forthcoming articles: 'Pindar's seventh Pythian, the Alcmeonid temple, and the politics of performance' in L. Athanassaki and E.L. Bowie (edd.), *Archaic and Classical Song* (Berlin); ead. 'Giving Wings to the Aeginetan Sculptures: The Panhellenic Aspirations of Pindar's Olympian Eight in Aegina', in D. Fearn (ed.), *Aegina: Contexts for Choral Lyric Poetry* (Oxford); ead., 'Performance and reperformance: the Siphnian treasury evoked', in P. Agocs, C. Carey and R. Rawles (edd.), *Proceedings of the London Conference on Epinician Poetry* (Cambridge). See also M. Pavlou, 'Pindar Nemean 5: real and poetic statues', *Phoenix* 64.1–2 (2010), and a number of articles in the forthcoming collection by D. Fearn, *Aegina: Contexts for Choral Lyric Poetry* (Oxford).

²⁰ See e.g. A. Ford, *The Origins of Criticism: Literary Culture and Poetic Theory in Classical Greece* (Princeton, 2002), 113–27; D. Steiner, 'Oggetti Parlanti', *HSPH* 95 (1993), 159–80; ead., *Images in Mind: Statues in Archaic and Classical Greek Literature* (Princeton, 2001), 251–94.

²¹ *Pyth.* 6.1–4: Ἀκούσατ'· ἥ γὰρ ἐλικώπιδος Ἀφροδίτας | ἄρουραν ἢ Χαρίτων | ἀναπολίζομεν, ὀμφαλὸν ἐριβρόμου | χθονὸς ἐς νάϊον προσοιχόμενοι.

²² See e.g. R.W. Burton, *Pindar's Pythian Odes* (Oxford, 1962), 15; B. Gentili, P.A. Bernardini, E. Cingano and P. Giannini, *Pindaro: Le Pitiche* (Milan, 1995), 183; T. Gelzer, 'Μοῦσα αὐθιγενής. Bemerkungen zu einem Typ Pindarischer und Backylideischer Epinikien', *MH* 42 (1985), 95–120, at 98–9. Contrast A. Morrison, *Pindar's Sicilian Odes*, *BICS* Supp. 95 (London, 2007), 42–3, who argues that the first performance was at Acragas.

is here equated with Antilochus and is praised for his filial devotion to his father Xenocrates.²³

This association has puzzled scholars, who have found it rather excessive and have challenged the myth as being irrelevant.²⁴ Yet, new archaeological evidence at the site of Delphi has helped to explain Pindar's choice of myth, and has proved its pertinence. Based on Brinkmann's readings of the inscriptions on the Siphnian treasury,²⁵ one of the most significant votive monuments built in a conspicuous place on the Delphic Sacred Way,²⁶ Shapiro has convincingly shown that the treasury's east frieze does not depict a scene from the *Iliad*, as was commonly believed, but an episode from the Cyclic epic; more specifically, the battle of Achilles and Memnon over the fallen Antilochus.²⁷ In the light of this, Shapiro put forward the attractive and plausible suggestion that the second mythical exemplum in *Pyth.* 6 is actually closely associated with the visual representations on the east frieze of the Siphnian treasury.²⁸ So, even though Pindar omits any explicit and direct reference to the Siphnian treasury throughout the poem, the contextualization of *Pyth.* 6 sheds new light upon his choice of the specific mythical exemplum and shows that it was most likely inspired by the treasury's sculptural representations.

By rooting Pindar's diction and thematic choices in the physical (and social) landscapes of performance, and by trying to integrate his mythological narratives with sculptural and monumental iconography this group of scholars seeks to emphasize Pindar's active engagement with the context of his performances and the situational relevance of certain myths, and to refine our understanding of the strategies and techniques he used in order to 'mask' the local and particular for the sake of the Panhellenic and general. The current article is offered as an addition to this approach. My intention is to examine the subtle way in which Pindar engages with the Acragan Olympieum and the purpose that his engagement might serve.

²³ Contrast S.L. Schein, 'Unity and meaning in Pindar's sixth Pythian ode', *Métis* 2 (1987), 235–47, at 245, who maintains that Thrasybulus is not equated with Antilochus.

²⁴ The poem's erotic tone, in conjunction with the fact that a similar tone diffuses the encomium that Pindar composed for Thrasybulus (fr.124a–b), led many scholars to interpret the attention given to him in *Pyth.* 6 as the outcome of Pindar's love and affection. Wilamowitz-Moellendorf (n. 16), 136–9 referred to Pindar's erotic infatuation for Thrasybulus, while Gildersleeve (n. 11), 320 characterized the poem as 'highly sugary'; see also M. Vetta, 'La giovinezza giusta di Trasibulo: Pind. *Pyth.* VI 48', *QUCC* 31 2 (1979), n.s. 87–90; F.J. Nisetich, *Pindar's Victory Songs* (Baltimore, 1980), 195. L. Kurke, 'Pindar's sixth *Pythian* and the tradition of advice poetry', *TAPhA* 120 (1990), 85–107, has recently attempted to explain the poem's peculiarities by adopting a different approach. According to her, in *Pyth.* 6 Pindar appropriates the conventions of advice poetry (ὑποθήκαι) for epinician purposes.

²⁵ V. Brinkmann, 'Die aufgemalten Namensbeischriften an Nord- und Ostfries des Siphnierschatzhauses', *BCH* 109 (1985), 77–130.

²⁶ See R.T. Neer, 'Framing the gift: the politics of the Siphnian treasury at Delphi', *CA* 20 (2001), 273–336, at 289.

²⁷ For a detailed description of the east frieze of the Siphnian treasury see Neer (n. 26) 297–302.

²⁸ K.D. Shapiro, 'Ὑμνων θησαυρός' Pindar's sixth *Pythian* ode and the treasury of the Siphnians at Delphi', *MH* 45 (1988), 1–5.

THE TEMPLE OF ZEUS AT ACRAGAS

During the sixth and fifth centuries there was a great development in architecture in Sicily and Magna Graecia. For a variety of reasons, including the availability of softer building materials, the willingness to combine and amalgamate different Greek designs and the contact with non-Greek neighbours, architects in those areas experimented with new architectural forms and ideas.²⁹ One of the most extraordinary and innovative outcomes of this 'avant-gardism' was the temple of Zeus Olympius at Acragas. As Winter remarks, the Olympieum was 'one of the most original, as well as one of the largest and most imposing temples in the history of Greek architecture'.³⁰ The temple was built in the Doric order but did not conform to the Doric norm, as it included many non-Doric elements. For instance, its columns were set on bases and did not stand directly on the pavement (stylobate). Furthermore, their arrangement was anomalous; instead of an open colonnade (peristyle) the temple had a perimeter wall, as well as a hypaethral court.

Unfortunately, almost nothing remains today of the temple's past grandeur and its regrettably poor and fragmented condition has given rise to a number of debates over its reconstruction. We are, however, fortunate to have a description of the Olympieum by Diodorus.³¹ According to him, the temple was 340 feet long, 160 feet in width and 120 feet in height, numbers which correspond to modern measurements carried out by Koldewey and Puchstein in the nineteenth century.³² Diodorus adds that a man could easily fit inside the flutings of the exterior columns, a detail which helps us visualize the building's magnitude.³³ He also informs us that the temple had pedimental sculptures: on the east gable the battle between Gods and Giants was portrayed, while the western gable showed the capture and fall of Troy.

One of the most impressive, extraordinary and distinctive features of the Olympieum must have been the series of colossal nude male figures which were used as a supporting device in the temple's exterior and were placed in every intercolumniation. These figures, known as 'Atlantes' or 'Telamones',³⁴ were about 25 feet tall and were made of blocks of stone which were then covered with plaster. They had their arms folded and their necks bent as if they supported the temple's

²⁹ F.E. Winter, 'Tradition and innovation in Doric design I: Western Greek temples', *AJA* 80 (1976), 139–45, at 139.

³⁰ Winter (n. 29), 143. On the temple see P. Marconi, *Agrigento: Topographia ed Arte* (Firenze, 1929), 57–66 and 168–71; M. Guido, *Sicily: An Archaeological Guide* (London, 1967), 122–5. See also H. Berve and G. Gruben, *Greek Temples, Theatres and Shrines* (London, 1963), 437–40; W.B. Dinsmoor, *The Architecture of Ancient Greece* (New York, 1975), 101–5; G. Gruben, *Griechische Tempel und Heiligtümer* (Munich, 2001), 328–32.

³¹ Diod. Sic. 13.82.3.

³² R. Koldewey and O. Puchstein, *Die griechischen Tempel in Unteritalien und Sizilien* (Berlin, 1899). For a detailed analysis of the temple's proportions see M. Bell, 'Stylobate and roof in the Olympieion at Akragas', *AJA* 84 (1980), 359–72.

³³ Diod. Sic. 13.82.3–4: καὶ τοῦ μὲν ἐκτὸς μέρους ἐστὶν αὐτῶν [columns] ἡ περιφέρεια ποδῶν εἴκοσι, καθ' ἣν εἰς τὰ διαξύσματα δύναται ἀνθρώπων ἐναρμόζεσθαι σώμα.

³⁴ See Vitruvius, *De arch.* 6.7.6: 'Again, if statues of the male figure support brackets or cornices, we call them *telamones*, nor do we find in any treatises what they are and why they are so called. But the Greeks call them *Atlantes*. For, in history, Atlas is represented as sustaining the universe, because he was the first by his powerful intellect and skill to set forth to mankind the sun's course and the revolutions of the moon and all the stars. And therefore because of this service he is represented by painters and statuary as sustaining the world.' Cf. J. Rykwert, *The Dancing Column: On Order in Architecture* (Cambridge, MA, 1996), 129–33.

huge architrave. Archaeologists found the heads of a few of these figures, while one Atlas has been reconstructed and is today lying *in situ*.³⁵

It is these massive Atlantes, as I will presently argue, that provide the linchpin between the Olympieum and the gnomic statement that closes *Ol.* 3. To be sure, at first glance there is no obvious connection between the monumental Atlantes and the Pillars of Heracles. Even though the Titan Atlas and the Theban hero do meet when the latter is trying to obtain the golden apples from the garden of the Hesperides, their encounter and the establishment of the Pillars belong to two different 'labours' and are temporally distinct events in the mythographic tradition. The affinity is rather a spatial one and emerges only if we remember that, just like the Pillars, the mythical Atlas was believed to hold the heavens upon his shoulders at the edge of the earth.³⁶ Not only this, but Atlas was actually located near the Pillars of Heracles in the western extremity of the world.³⁷ Based on this geographical proximity between the two, I would suggest that Pindar's reference to the Pillars of Heracles could – and probably would – incite the audience to perceive it as a playful allusion to the Olympieum and its most distinctive feature, its Atlantes. The Olympieum's proximity to the temple of Heracles, a long building whose construction began before Theron, at the end of the sixth century (c. 510), would certainly encourage such an association; the reference to the Pillars of Heracles standing at the periphery of the earth near the heaven-bearing Atlas would easily – and quite naturally – bring to mind Heracles' temple and the monumental Atlantes standing nearby. The adverb *οἰκοθεν*, in its literal meaning 'from home', would also propel the audience to make such an association and see in Pindar's gnomic statement a veiled reference to the Olympieum. Even though

³⁵ At this point it must be noted that the integration of human figures into a building's facade was by no means a new architectural feature. Pausanias mentions a Persian Stoa in Sparta, erected circa 480 from spoils taken from the Persian Wars, in which male figures were used in lieu of columns. However, as Pausanias (3.11.3–4) tells us, these figures did not represent Atlantes but Persians, and among them he recognizes Mardonius and Artemisia. The same portico is described by the Roman architect Vitruvius (*De arch.* 1.1.6). Elsewhere female figures were juxtaposed with columns, although it seems that this practice was more Ionian than Dorian; see Rykwert (n. 34), 133. Examples are to be traced as early as the sixth century in some of the treasuries at Delphi (e.g. the Siphnian treasury); the most famous example is the Athenian Erechtheum with its six massive Caryatids, fashioned in the late fifth century.

³⁶ Even though the term 'Atlantes' used for such architectural *colossi* is first attested by Vitruvius (*De arch.* 6.7.6), from what Vitruvius says it is clear that by his time this term was already in use and was probably widely known. Whether the identification of such colossal male figures as 'Atlantes' was current in the fifth century, it is difficult to say; yet, it is significant to bear in mind that the term 'Atlantes' was not arbitrary and fortuitous but was chosen exactly because of the similarity between these architectural elements and the Titan Atlas. Therefore, with or without the identification the audience attending the performance of *Ol.* 3 would still be able to make the connection. It must also be noted that a similar pose as adopted by these architectural colossi is found in association with Atlas on many sixth- and fifth-century vases (see e.g. a fifth-century amphora from Campania, in the British Museum inv. GR 1722, 0320.432; a lecythus dated to the late sixth/early fifth century now in Athens Archaeological Museum inv.1132, BA 330739). The exact same pose is found on the metope which depicts Atlas, Heracles and the collection of the apples of the Hesperides on the east side of the temple of Zeus at Olympia, built a few years later (470–456).

³⁷ See [Aesch.] *PV* 348–9; Hdt. 4.184–5. See also Hes. *Theog.* 517–20 and Eur. *Hipp.* 742–51 who situate Atlas before the clear-voiced Hesperides. The garden of the Hesperides was normally believed to be at the western edge of the Earth. Contrast Apollod. 2.114, 119–20, who places both Atlas and the Hesperides at the northern extremity of the Earth, among the Hyperboreans.

my suggestion might seem far-fetched, it is important to bear in mind that at the beginning of the fifth century the Olympieum would have been a matter of lively and enthusiastic discussion in Acragas and elsewhere, not only because it was a newly built temple but also, and most importantly, because of its size, grandeur and innovative architecture.

There could be two main objections to the situational reading of the *gnome* advanced here. The first concerns chronology and the Olympieum's inherent message. Dinsmoor placed the temple's construction in the late sixth century, around 510, arguing that it was built as a reaction to the construction of temple GT at Selinus, dated around 520.³⁸ Others, based on the account of Diodorus that the Acragantines used Carthaginian captives for the construction of a number of works designed to extol their city,³⁹ argue that the temple was constructed after the battle of Himera, between 480 and 470, as a monument to victory.⁴⁰ In this 'reading', the huge Atlantes are taken to represent Carthaginian prisoners and are proposed as symbols of the victory of Greek civilization over barbarism. A third argument places the temple's construction before the battle of Himera, between 490 and 480. According to this, the Olympieum was not intended as a monument to victory, but as a votive to Zeus Olympius.⁴¹ From this standpoint, the gigantic Atlantes seem to symbolize Zeus' glory and justice.⁴² Based on the numbers and proportions of the temple's design Bell also put forward the attractive suggestion that the Olympieum might have been influenced by Pythagorean doctrines,⁴³ and that it demonstrated 'the harmony of nature perceived in number. It stood as a microcosm, an offering to Zeus who was perceived as the embodiment of the order of the cosmos'.⁴⁴ Moreover, according to Bell the Olympieum must also be associated with Theron himself: following the example of other tyrants, Theron opted for a building which would reflect his religious beliefs and manifest his power.⁴⁵ A somewhat similar suggestion has been recently put forward by Barbanera, who argues that the Olympieum might be linked to 'eventi interni' and to Theron's attempt to stress his dominance over his political opponents.⁴⁶

³⁸ Dinsmoor (n. 30), 101.

³⁹ Diod.Sic. 11.25.2–3.

⁴⁰ J.A. De Waele, 'Der Entwurf der dorischen Temple von Akragas', *AA* (1980), 180–241, esp. 190–209; Rykwert (n. 34), 131.

⁴¹ See e.g. Bell (n. 32), 371; B.A. Barletta, 'An "Ionian Sea" style in Archaic Doric architecture', *AJA* 94 (1990), 45–72, at 71; see also the summary of a more recent AIA paper by Barletta, 'The temple of Zeus Olympius at Akragas: Archaic temple or Early Classical victory monument?', *AJA* 101 (1997), 370.

⁴² According to the story, Zeus punished Atlas for arousing the other Titans to rebel against him by imposing on him the task of holding the sky's vault at the borders of the earth.

⁴³ Cf. R.R. Holloway, 'Architettura sacra e matematica pitagorica a Paestum', *PP* 21 (1966), 60–4, who makes a similar suggestion for the temple of Athena at Poseidonia.

⁴⁴ Bell (n. 32), 372.

⁴⁵ Bell (n. 32), 371–2.

⁴⁶ M. Barbanera, 'Il significato della Gigantomachia sui templi greci in Sicilia' in L. Bacchielli and M.B. Aravantinos (edd.), *Scritti di Antichità in Memoria di Sandro Stucchi II*, vol. 1 (Rome, 1996), 149–53. Having examined the purpose and significance of Gigantomachy scenes in Athens and Selinus in the sixth century, Barbanera puts forward the suggestion that such scenes were often used by tyrants in periods of political unrest in order to indicate their triumph over their political opponents. He proposes that the Gigantomachy depicted on the east of the Olympieum might have served similar purposes, especially if we take into account the unstable political situation at Acragas during the reign of the Emmenidae; see esp. 152 and 153.

Whatever the symbolic meaning of the Atlantes may have been (whether Theron's political power, or the justice and supremacy of Zeus, or Greek victory over the Carthaginians), I see no compelling reason to assume that this would prevent the audience from seeing in Pindar's reference to the Pillars of Heracles a veiled hint at the 'monumental' Atlantes of the Olympieum. Even if we place the inception of the temple's construction after the battle of Himera and suppose that it was only partially built when the ode was performed (between 476 and 472), this does not necessarily diminish the thrust of the suggestion; the Atlantes would still be emblematic of the temple and a source of inspiration for Pindar. Take the contemporary example of the Roman Catholic *Sagrada Familia* church at Barcelona: its construction, which began in 1882, is estimated to be completed no earlier than 2026 and yet, because of its unique architecture and sculptural iconography, the church is one of the most popular attractions in Spain and is visited by thousands of tourists every year.

A second objection to my proposal could be that it is not legitimate to 'wrest' an acknowledged gnomic sentiment from its proverbial setting and make it instrumental to an occasional reference. That the locution 'to grasp the Pillars of Heracles' had a gnomic value does not exclude, however, its situational interpretation and the additional, more localized dimension proposed here. Indeed, it would be simplistic to argue that Pindar's audience would fail to trace in the closing gnomic sentiment a playful allusion to the Olympieum merely because this was a proverbial expression.⁴⁷ During the last few decades, there has been a shift in the attitude towards wisdom expressions and more emphasis has been laid upon the importance of context for their full appreciation. Notwithstanding their generalizing quality, gnomes are not autonomous and self-contained but are embedded in a social, historical and linguistic context.⁴⁸ Accordingly, their meaning can change depending on their position vis-à-vis the context within which they occur. The context within which *Ol.* 3 was performed and the distinctive architecture of the Olympieum allow Pindar to 'pun' on and 'historicize', so to speak, the ode's closing gnome. In *Isthm.* 4 this gnome could not and would not have had this additional dimension, not even if it had been performed after *Ol.* 3, precisely because in that case the performative context and the pragmatics of the utterance would have been completely different.

ACRAGAS AT THE ... ἄκρα γᾶς

If we accept that, in addition to its gnomic value, the closing sentiment of *Ol.* 3 has a more specific and localized charge, then what Pindar seems to be claiming here is not merely that Theron has achieved the greatest deeds to which mortals can

⁴⁷ It is worth noting here that the example of Antilochus sacrificing his life for his father, mentioned above in relation to *Pyth.* 6, also seems to have been proverbial (see Gildersleeve [n. 11], 319, who cites Xen. *Cyn.* 1.14: Ἀντίλοχος δὲ τοῦ πατρὸς ὑπεραποθανὸν τοσαύτης ἔτυχεν εὐκλείας, ὥστε μόνος φιλοπάτωρ παρὰ τοῖς Ἕλλησιν ἀναγορευθῆναι; a similar observation is made by Burton [n. 22], at 20 n. 2, who notes that Pindar has chosen 'a proverbial example of a son giving his life for his father in order to illustrate an important virtue which he felt his friend had'). Yet, nobody would argue that its gnomic value would have stopped the audience from forging associations between Pindar's account and the visual representations on the east frieze of the Siphnian Treasury.

⁴⁸ On this matter see A. Lardinois, 'Modern paroemiology and the use of gnomai in Homer's *Iliad*', *CPh* 92 (1997), 213–34, esp. 213–17, who also cites relevant bibliography.

aspire without leaving his home (if we take *οἴκοθεν* literally), or through his own native efforts (if we take *οἴκοθεν* metaphorically), but also, and most importantly, that through his achievements and attainments he has managed to ... bring the Heracleian *Stelae* home, so to speak. In other words, by triggering his audience to assimilate the monumental Atlantes of the Olympieum with the 'real' Atlas at the western extremity of the world, Pindar manages to 'collapse' the distance between Acragas and the Pillars of Heracles.

The implications of this are significant and can be fully appreciated only if we take into consideration Greek beliefs about existence in far-off lands bordering on the world-encircling Ocean.⁴⁹ Life at the periphery of the Earth was considered to be superior; people living at the *ἐσχατιαί* were thought to lead a blissful and blessed life and enjoy the company of the gods, who often sojourned and feasted with them.⁵⁰ Among these extraordinary people were the Homeric Aethiopians,⁵¹ the Phaeacians, the horse-milking Abii or Gabii,⁵² as well as the Hyperboreans, whom Pindar refers to in the mythical account of *Ol.* 3. The blissful and toilfree existence of the Hyperboreans, as well as their constant dances and songs, is extensively described in *Pyth.* 10.37–44:

Μοῖσα δ' οὐκ ἀποδαμεί
τρόποις ἐπὶ σφετέροισιν· παντᾷ δὲ χοροὶ παρθένων
λυρὰν τε βοαὶ καναχαὶ τ' αὐλῶν δονέονται·
δάφνη τε χρυσέα κόμας ἀναδήσαν-
τες εἰλαπινάζουσιν εὐφρόνως.
νόσοι δ' οὔτε γῆρας οὐλόμενον κέκραται
ἱερὰ γενεᾶ· πόνων δὲ καὶ μαχάν ἄτερ
οἰκέοισι φυγόντες
ὑπέρδικον Νέμεσιν.

And the Muse is no stranger
to their ways, for everywhere choruses of maidens,
sounds of lyres, and pipes' shrill notes are stirring.
With golden laurel they crown their hair
and feast joyfully.
Neither sickness nor accursed old age mingles
with that holy race, but without toils or battles
they dwell there, having escaped
strictly judging Nemesis.

By linking Acragas and the Pillars of Heracles Pindar actually claims for Theron's city a status similar to the one that characterizes places at the physical extremities of the earth. That Pindar wanted to steer his audience to put Acragas on a par with those places is also supported by the similarities he tries to establish between Acragas and the Istrian land. The first link he forges between the two

⁴⁹ On life at the periphery see among others Romm (n. 7); B. MacLachlan, 'Feasting with Ethiopians: life on the fringe', *QUCC* n.s. 40 (1992), 15–33.

⁵⁰ See Hdt. 3.106 who says that 'the *eschatiai* of the inhabited world have been given all the finest things'; see also 3.116. Cf. Pl. *Phaed.* 111a6–c3, where Socrates describes existence on the periphery of the earth.

⁵¹ On the Aethiopians see Hom. *Od.* 4.84–9, Hdt. 3.18 ff., 21.3, 23.1. See also the extensive discussion by MacLachlan (n. 49), 15–33.

⁵² See Hom. *Il.* 13.6 and Aesch. fr. 196 (Radt) from *Prometheus Lyomenos*.

concerns the notions of hospitality and piety.⁵³ As Shelmerdine rightly points out, the Hyperboreans epitomized the condition of hospitality between gods and men.⁵⁴ Throughout *Ol.* 3 Pindar lays claim to a similar relationship between the gods and the Acragantines; and he emphatically stresses the piety of Theron and his family and the special relationship that they share with the gods. As he remarks, ‘of all mortals they [Emmenidae] attend them [the Dioscuri] with the most numerous feasts of welcome as with pious minds they preserve the rites of the blessed gods’ (39–41). In fact, the glory of Theron and his clan is even presented as a gift (κῦδος) from the Dioscuri.⁵⁵

It is the olive tree, however, that seems to provide the vital link between Acragas and the Istrian land. As we know from Diodorus, during the fifth century Acragas was overgrown with olive trees. The Greek historian also reports that many Acragantines gained fortunes by olive-oil trading in Libya:

καὶ τὸ πλεῖστον τῆς χώρας ἐλαίας κατάφυτον ἐξ ἧς παμπληθῇ κομιζόμενοι καρπὸν ἐπώλουν εἰς Καρχηδόνα. οὐπω γὰρ κατ’ ἐκείνους τοὺς χρόνους τῆς Λιβύης πεφυτευμένης, οἱ τὴν Ἀκραγαντίνην νεμόμενοι τὸν ἐκ τῆς Λιβύης ἀντιφορτιζόμενοι πλοῦτον, οὐσίας ἀπίστους τοῖς μεγέθεσιν ἐκέκτηντο.⁵⁶

And the greater part of their territory was planted in olive-trees from which they gathered an abundant harvest and sold to Carthage, for since Libya at that time was not yet planted in fruit-tress, the inhabitants of the territory belonging to Acragas took in exchange for their products the wealth of Libya and accumulated fortunes of unbelievable size.

This point, which paradoxically has escaped scholars’ attention, is significant and serves to bring Acragas and the Istrian land closer. At the same time it helps us to explain yet another troubling aspect of the poem, that is the relation that Pindar registers between the olive tree and the Hyperboreans. Although Herodotus (4.34.2) informs us of the existence of an olive tree on the tombs of the Hyperborean maidens in the shrine of Artemis on Delos, *Ol.* 3 provides the first literary evidence for the Hyperborean provenance of the olive tree. The majority of scholars take this link to be Pindar’s innovation, arguing that such an association would enable him to heighten and enhance Theron’s encomium by claiming for him future bliss and happiness.⁵⁷ Diodorus’ remark, however, makes one think that Pindar’s choice (and possible alteration) of the mythical narrative must have also been determined

⁵³ On this see Shelmerdine (n. 3).

⁵⁴ Shelmerdine (n. 3), 75–6.

⁵⁵ *Ol.* 3.38–40: ἐμέ δ’ ὦν πα | θυμὸς δτρύνει φάμεν Ἐμμενίδαις | Θήρωνί τ’ ἐλλθεῖν κῶδος εὐδόντων διδόντων Τυνδαριδᾶν, ὅτι πλείστασι βροτῶν | ξεινίας αὐτοὺς ἐποίχονται τραπέζαις ... (‘and so, I believe, my heart bids me affirm that to the Emmenidae and Theron glory has come as a gift from Tyndareos’ horsemen sons, because of all mortals they attend them with the most numerous feasts of welcome ...’).

⁵⁶ Diod. Sic. 13.81.4. Some scholars argue that, by choosing to refer to the olive trees that Heracles brought to Greece with the term ἐλαία instead of κότινος, Pindar does not specify whether Heracles brought to Greece the olive trees in general or merely the olive trees of Olympia. P. Sfyroeras, ‘Olive trees, north wind, and time: a symbol in Pindar, *Olympian* 3’, *Mouseion* 3 3rd ser. (2003), 313–24, has recently put forward the attractive suggestion that this omission might have political implications, in so far as it ‘enables the Pindaric narrative to challenge several Athenian claims that Athens was the birthplace of olive trees’ (322).

⁵⁷ See among others, Köhnken (n. 4), 55–6; Verdenius (n. 3), *ad Ol.* 3.26; Shelmerdine (n. 3), 75; Sfyroeras (n. 56), 314. Contrast E. Robbins, ‘Heracles, the Hyperboreans, and the hind: Pindar *Ol.* 3’, *Phoenix* 36 (1982) 295–305, at 299–300, who argues that Pindar is actu-

both by the prominent place that the olive tree had in the Acragantine life and economy at the time, and by the fact that such an association would help him to reinforce the similarities he tries to establish between Acragas and the Istrian land.

Based on the above, one could say that the links that Pindar forges between Acragas and the Istrian land act as scaffolding for the playful (but significant) allusion he makes at the end of the poem. Indeed, such a bold comparison would not be difficult to impress upon the audience, especially if we take into account the immense prosperity at Acragas during Theron's time. Diodorus gives an informative description of the felicity and economic strength of the city in the late fifth century⁵⁸ and a somewhat similar situation should be assumed for the early fifth century as well, if we are to judge from Theron's major building programme and the extensive water system designed by Phaeax.⁵⁹ It is also important to keep in mind that, most likely, the ode was performed within the Theoxenia, a specific type of festival in which heroes and gods were invited to feast with the worshippers who were setting tables and laying out couches for their divine or semi-divine guests. As the scholiasts remark, during the Theoxenia the Dioscuri were thought to be present in the city of Acragas 'in a special way'.⁶⁰ Therefore, the broader setting within which *Ol.* 3 was performed enhanced and at the same time acted out the idea of Acragas as a city blessed and favoured by the gods.

CONCLUSION

To sum up: the hypothesis that in addition to their proverbial value the closing lines of *Ol.* 3 might also serve as a playful allusion to the Olympieum is speculative and cannot be supported by conclusive evidence. Nevertheless, as I hope to have demonstrated, the reading I suggest for the ode's final strophe is a possibility which at least deserves to be taken into consideration. As Guido has aptly observed, the Olympieum 'must have stirred public admiration and wonder at its revolutionary break with the accepted architectural canon, quite as much as ... the Crystal Palace 2,400 years later'.⁶¹ It is, therefore, quite reasonable and legitimate to assume that the temple's immense size and architecture would have inspired a high-flown and grandiose poet like Pindar, even if it was not entirely completed at the time of the ode's composition.

In discussing the implications of such an allusion, I argued that it enabled Pindar to reinforce the association he attempts to make between Acragas and the Istrian

ally correcting an existing myth, according to which Heracles obtained the olive tree from the Hyperboreans by using violence.

⁵⁸ Diod. Sic. 13.81.4–5; cf. a comment attributed to the Acragantine philosopher Empedocles (c. 490–430): *Ἀκραγαντῖνοι τρυφῶσι μὲν ὡς αὔριον ἀποθανοῦμενοι, οἰκίας δὲ κατασκευάζονται ὡς πάντα τὸν χρόνον βιωσόμενοι.*

⁵⁹ On the situation in Acragas under Theron see, among others, N. Luraghi, *Tirannidi archaiche in Sicilia e Magna Grecia. Da Panezio di Leontini alla caduta dei Dinomenidi* (Florence, 1994), 239–72. On Acragas' water system see D.P. Crouch, *Water Management in Ancient Greek Cities* (Oxford, 1993), 205–13, at 208.

⁶⁰ According to the Σ ad *Ol.* 3. On the Theoxenia see the informative study of M.H. Jameson, 'Theoxenia', in R. Hägg (ed.), *Ancient Greek Cult Practice from the Epigraphical Evidence* (Stockholm, 1994), 35–57; cf. D. Gill, 'Trapezomata: a neglected aspect of Greek sacrifice', *HThR* 67 (1974), 117–34.

⁶¹ Guido (n. 30), 123.

land. What seems to deserve more critical questioning, however, is Pindar's decision to allude to the Olympieum through a gnome. If such an association would enhance and heighten the glory of Theron, why does he not make his point more explicit? A reason might be that he wanted his final statement to have a broad and more general appeal. As scholars have observed, Pindar makes as few explicit references as possible to the specific time, space and physicalities of his performance in order to liberate his odes from a specific time and place.⁶² By choosing to allude to the Olympieum through a gnome Pindar manages to both have his pie and eat it too. I have argued above that for the premiere audience the gnome would likely bear a more localized and specific meaning, and could/would be taken as an allusion to the Olympieum. However, for subsequent audiences (unless well acquainted with the ode's initial performance venue) Pindar's closing sentiment would have retained its gnomic value. Accordingly, the subtlety and obscurity of the allusion to the Olympieum must not be taken as an index of our ignorance, but rather as a deliberate authorial strategy that aims at broad spatial and temporal appeal. A point to be made here is that, although knowledge of the performance venue is not essential or crucial for the understanding of a poem, a tacit grasp of Pindar's localized allusions supports an ode's economy and is conducive to its full appreciation.⁶³

Another issue that our analysis has brought to the fore is the stance that Pindar adopts toward art and architecture. As Shapiro correctly remarks in relation to *Pyth.* 6, far from merely providing a description of the frieze on the Siphnian treasury, Pindar moves a step further and transforms it. Pindar's chief objective is not to describe or verbally replicate the visual representations and material monuments he is engaging with, but rather to expand their significance and endow them with new meaning. His aim is to 'manipulate' these physical constructions in order to heighten the praise of his *laudandus* and increase the *éclat* of his poetry.⁶⁴ Through his playful allusion to the most conspicuous monument built during Theron's time, Pindar manages to cast Theron not merely as a blessed individual who has reached ultimate happiness by 'grasping from home the Pillars of Heracles', but also, and most importantly, as the *εὐεργέτης* of his community, a title that he explicitly ascribes to him in *Ol.* 2.⁶⁵ After the performance of *Ol.* 3 the Olympieum would no longer symbolize merely the power and justice of Zeus, or the victory of the Greeks over barbarism, or Theron's dominance over his political opponents – depending on how one would like to interpret the building's inherent meaning – but also the magnitude, greatness and benefaction of Theron, who through his virtue and achievements managed to guarantee for the Acragantines a privileged and blissful existence similar to the one enjoyed by people on the periphery of the earth, and

⁶² See e.g. C. Carey, 'Pindar, place, and performance', in S. Hornblower and C. Morgan (edd.), *Pindar's Poetry, Patrons, and Festivals* (Oxford, 2007), 199–210, at 199: 'This elision in turn facilitates the process of projecting the song and its honorands beyond their polis into the larger performative context of Greece in fulfilment of the boast/promise of the panegyrist that their song provides a fame which transcends the boundaries of time and space ...'.

⁶³ See H.-G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York, 1975), 129, who with regard to the Pindaric epinicians notes that 'the occasional in such works has acquired so permanent a form that, even without being realised or understood, it is still part of the total meaning' (cited in Schein [n. 23], 246–7).

⁶⁴ *Nem.* 5 and Pindar's engagement with the Aeginetan Aeaceum provides another telling example of this practice; see Pavlou (n. 19).

⁶⁵ On this see B. Currie, *Pindar and the Cult of Heroes* (Oxford, 2005), 170 and 286–7.

to transform Acragas from the city built on the river Acragas into the city built on the ... ἄκρα γᾶς.

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