

Praise of Relatives in Pindar's *Isthmian* 8 and *Olympian* 9

In 1987 Thomas Cole published a paper on “Pindar’s Arithmetic.” He assembled passages in Pindar’s epinicians in which the poet’s listing of victories is so fuzzy and ambiguous that Cole, as other scholars before him (Thummer, 1968; Hamilton, 1974), concluded that Pindar was trying to suggest that the victor had more wins than he actually possessed. Cole closely studied the diction of these ambiguous passages in isolation from the rest of their poems, noting similarities in structure and diction that suggest that Pindar’s strategies of ambiguity were well developed and recurrent across poems. Cole did not remark, however, on the fact that a significant number of the passages that he analyzes praise the victor and his brother or other relative.

More recently Monessa Cummins has argued that Pindar praises a *laudandus* and his victorious brother(s) with great care. She has demonstrated that Pindar and his audiences were sensitive to direct comparison of unequal achievements by siblings and that Pindar diplomatically smooths over any awkwardness caused by disparities of achievement (2009, 2010a, 2010b).

In this paper I bring together the work of Cole and Cummins in order to offer a new interpretation of *Olympian* 9, which was written for the Olympic wrestling-victory of Epharmostos of Opous in 468 BCE. One passage praises the victories of the *laudandus* and of his relative Lampromachos (81–7); Cole has identified this passage as an example of Pindar’s fuzzy arithmetic (1987, 554–56). I argue, however, that the vagueness of Pindar’s arithmetic is not because Pindar wishes to exaggerate the number of the *laudandus*’ victories, but because Pindar is at pains to effectively praise Lampromachos, a *relative* of the *laudandus*, whose fewer

victories nevertheless amplify the achievement of the *laudandus* and significantly contribute to a larger cumulative store of familial *kleos*. The praise of Lampromachos neither diminishes the achievement of the *laudandus* nor shows his victorious but less accomplished relative at a disadvantage. Such subtle diplomacy may be construed as deliberate ambiguity, but I argue that such ambiguity is not motivated for the reason that Cole has suggested.

I make this case by comparing the encomiastic strategy of *Olympian* 9 to that of *Isthmian* 8, which was written for the Isthmian victory of Kleandros of Aigina in the pancratium, perhaps in 478 BCE. The encomiastic strategy of *Isthmian* 8 is remarkably similar to that of *Olympian* 9. The *laudandus* in each poem has already won multiple Panhellenic and local victories, and Pindar splits mention of these victories between the beginning and conclusion of the ode. Between these victory-catalogues Pindar sets a mythical narrative in which Achilles plays a significant role and is a transitional figure to victor-praise. Pindar breaks off the myth in both poems with the motif of the Muses' chariot and pivots to praise of the Isthmian success of the victor's relative, whose victory is coincidental in some way with that of the victor. The lone or few victories of the relative then precede a catalogue of the *laudandus*' remaining victories. The concluding victory-catalogue apportions diplomatic praise to both the relative and the *laudandus*. In short, the praise of the relative is nestled within praises of the *laudandus*.

In spite of these similarities, the descriptions of the Isthmian victory of the relative are very different in the two poems. In *Isthmian* 8 the *laudandus*' deceased relative, Nikokles, is praised straightforwardly with a description of *his own* crowning at the Isthmos, while in *Olympian* 9, the victor's relative, Lampromachos, is mentioned because of his proxeny with the poet, and because in the past he and Epharmostos, the *laudandus*, coincidentally won a victory at the Isthmos on the same day. Epharmostos has just clinched his status as a *periodonikēs* with his

current Olympian win, and the mention of such a coincidental victory with Lampromachos in the past adds further luster to his achievement. Pindar declines, however, to specify unambiguously how many additional Isthmian victories Epharmentos and Lampromachos won as individuals. Pindar retains focus instead on their shared exploit at the Isthmus as a contemporary analogy to the shared valor of Achilles and Patroklos in facing Telephos at Troy (70–9).

Works Cited

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