

Telesicrates would be a great groom: marriage imagery as structural element in Pindar, *Pythian 9*

Pindar's *Pythian 9*, dedicated to Telesicrates, winner of a footrace in full armor, features several myths with marriage as a central theme. Carson (1982) has discussed how marriage imagery structures the poem, following the event order in a traditional marriage ceremony, and Rubin (1978), using concepts from Narratology, demonstrates how the marriage myths organize parallels that structure the narrative of *Pythian 9*. Woodbury (1982) has recognized how the poem positions Telesicrates as an excellent potential husband, while arguing that marriage should be understood as the *telos* of both young men and maidens because it extends their lineage through childbirth. Hubbard (1995) and Woodbury (1972) mention how critics have connected this poem to Telesicrates' marriage expectations or to amatory advice. Building on the analyses of these scholars, I demonstrate the extent to which marriage imagery structures the poem also in thematic and linguistic terms, suggesting that the author embeds within the poem a proposal that the greatest victory of Telesicrates is one yet to come: a fulfilling marriage and glorious lineage.

First, I show how the first myth, the marriage of Cyrene and Apollo, identifies the achievement of marriage and successful reproduction as life's true fulfillment; the glory that Telesicrates brings to the city of Cyrene by winning the footrace is made possible only by the establishment of his lineage through Apollo and the maiden Cyrene. Though Cyrene's preference for the outdoors and rejection of traditional feminine practices like weaving makes her an unconventional maiden (14-28), she nevertheless submits to the domesticating social practice of marriage (united in a *ξυνὸν γάμον*, 13, with partners in equal standing) – even as the language of the episode, as De Boer demonstrates (2017), points to a domestication by force. The rapid fulfillment of the marriage, moreover, (ὠκεῖα δ' ἐπειγομένων ἤδη θεῶν / πρᾶξις ὁδοί τε βραχεῖαι,

67-68) implicitly parallels the velocity needed to win a footrace. Throughout, this myth emphasizes the significance of lineage for understanding a person's nature (as in Apollo's interest in Cyrene's ancestry) and for reproducing familial qualities (as in Aristaeus' inheritance of his mother's penchant for the outdoors).

Next, I show how the brief digression about Iolaus frames Telesicrates as an object of desire. Through Iolaus' familial connection to Amphitryon, an exile in Thebes, the theme of glory in a foreign land is entangled with the glorious birth of twins Iphicles (Iolaus' father) and Heracles from Alcmena (79-90). It is in this context—a story of a glorious lineage of victorious warriors—that women in the Panathenaic games are said to have desired Telesicrates as husband or son (97-100). The poem thus reminds us of the women's own *telos* as wives and mothers, where Telesicrates is centered as the object of desire, as Cyrene was for Apollo.

Finally, I examine the marriage stories embedded within the last part of the poem, showing how the poet's praise of the victor's ancestor Alexidamos (who won his bride in a footrace organized by her father) and his narration of the marriages of Danaus' daughters are linked thematically and lexically to the Cyrene narrative. The competitors' intention to "pluck off" (*ἀποδρέψαι*, 110) the maiden's youthful fruit links their erotic intention directly with Apollo's toward Cyrene (*καὶ ἐκ λεχέων κείραι μελιαδέα ποίαν*; 37). Antaeus seeks a "more glorious" (*κλεινότερον*, 112) marriage, while Danaus wants "the quickest" (*ώκύτατον*, 114): both adjectives also apply to Telesicrates' present victory. Both Alexidamos and Telesicrates are of the same lineage and were already well-known athletes, but Alexidamos is immortalized in this poem precisely through the race that resulted in his marriage. Telesicrates, here cast in the role of desirer and seeker of glory, is implicitly invited to consider a glorious marriage alongside his athletic career. This suggestion is further reinforced by the sequence of marriage myths that structure the

whole poem, all of them resulting in colonization and heroic lineages deriving from, or newly producing, athletic victories. Telesicrates' success as an athlete, it is emphasized, stems from a glorious lineage of competitors; the truest fulfillment of his legacy as a Cyrenaean would be, in the wake of athletic victory, to marry in kind.

Works Cited

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