

Pindaric (meta)poetics - again

1. Pindar fr.209

(τοὺς φυσιολογοῦντας) ἀτελῇ σοφίας καρπὸν δρέπ(ειν).

‘Pindar said that the physical philosophers plucked the unripe fruit of wisdom’

2. P.3.112-4¹

Νέστορα καὶ Λύκιον Σαρπηδόν’, ἀνθρώπων φάτις,

ἐξ ἐπέων κελαδεννῶν, τέκτονες οἷα σοφοί

ἄρμωσαν, γινώσκωμεν·

We know of Nestor and Lycian Sarpedon, whom men speak of, from melodious words which skilled craftsmen join together.

3. O.6.1-4

Χρυσέας ὑποστάσαντες εὐ-

τειχεῖ προθύρῳ θαλάμου

κίονας ὥς ὅτε θαητὸν μέγαρον

πάξομεν· ἀρχομένου δ’ ἔργου πρόσωπον

χρῆ θέμεν τηλαυγές.

Raising the fine-walled porch of our dwelling with golden pillars, we will build, as it were, a marvellous hall; at the beginning of our work we must place a far-shining front.

4. P.6.5-9

Πυθιόνικος ἔνθ’ ὀλβίοισιν Ἑμμενίδαις

ποταμία τ’ Ἀκράγαντι καὶ μὲν Ξενοκράτει

έτοῖμος ὕμνων θησαυρὸς ἐν πολυχρύσῳ

Ἀπολλωνία τετείχισται νάπα·

where, for the prosperous Emmenids and Acragas on the river, and especially for Xenocrates, a Pythian victor's treasure-house of songs has been built and is ready in the glen of Apollo, rich in gold.

5. Pindar Fr.150

μαντεύεο, Μοῖσα, προφατεύσω δ’ ἐγώ

Prophecy, Muse, and I shall interpret.

6. Pindar Fr.52k.25-40

ἐκράνθην ὑπὸ δαιμονίῳ τινί

λέχει πέλας ἀμβροσίῳ Μελίας

ἀγαυὸν καλάμῳ συνάγεν θρόον

μήδεσί τε φρενὸς ὑμ[ε]τέραν χάριν.

Λιτανεύω, ἐκαβόλε,

¹ Translations of the victory odes are by Diane Svarlien, 1990..

Μοισαίαις ἀν[α]τιθεὶς τέχνα[ι]σι
χρηστήριον.[.]πῶλοντ[..(.)]ι
By some might divine have I been prompted,
hard by the immortal couch of Melia, to compose,
for your sake, a noble strain with my flute, and
with my fancy. I pray to you, O Far-darter,
while I devote to the Muses' arts your oracular
shrine, Apollo. (trans Sandys adapted)

7a. N.3.40-5, 52-60

συγγενεῖ δέ τις εὐδοξία μέγα βρίθει.
ὅς δὲ διδάκτ' ἔχει, ψεφεννὸς ἀνήρ
ἄλλοτ' ἄλλα πνέων οὐ ποτ' ἀτρεκεῖ
κατέβα ποδί, μυριάων δ' ἀρετῶν ἀτελεῖ νόφω γεύεται.
ξανθὸς δ' Ἀχιλεὺς τὰ μὲν μένων Φιλύρας ἐν δόμοις,
παῖς ἔων ἄθυρε μεγάλα ἔργα·

A man with inborn glory has great weight; but he who has only learned is a man in
darkness, breathing changeful purposes, never taking an unwavering step, but trying his
hand at countless forms of excellence with his ineffectual thought. But golden-haired
Achilles, staying in the home of Philyra as a child, played at great deeds . . .

...

λεγόμενον δὲ τοῦτο προτέρων
ἔπος ἔχω· βαθυμήτα Χίρων τράφε λιθίνῳ
Ἴάσον' ἔνδον τέγει, καὶ ἔπειτεν Ἀσκληπιόν,
τὸν φαρμάκων δίδαξε μαλακόχειρα νόμον·
νύμφευσεν δ' αὖτις ἀγλαόκολπον
Νηρέος θύγατρα, γόνον τέ οἱ φέρτατον
ἀτίταλλεν <ἐν> ἀρμένοισι πᾶσι θυμὸν αὔξων,
ὄφρα θαλασσίαις ἀνέμων ῥιπαῖσι πεμφθεὶς
ὑπὸ Τροίαν δορίκτυπον ἀλαλὰν Λυκίων
τε προσμένοι καὶ Φρυγῶν

Δαρδάνων τε . . .

have this story as it was told by earlier generations. Deep-thinking Cheiron reared Jason
under his stone roof, and later Asclepius, whom he taught the gentle-handed laws of
remedies. And he arranged a marriage for Peleus with the lovely-bosomed¹ daughter of
Nereus, and brought up for her their incomparable child, nurturing his spirit with all
fitting things, so that when the blasts of the sea-winds sent him to Troy, he might
withstand the spear-clashing war-shout of the Lycians and Phrygians and Dardanians

7b. O.10.15-21

τράπε δὲ Κύ-

κνεία μάχα καὶ ὑπέρβιον
Ἡρακλέα· πύκτας δ' ἐν Ὀλυμπιάδι νικῶν
Ἴλα φερέτω χάριν
Ἀγησίδαμος, ὥς
Ἀχιλεῖ Πάτροκλος.
θάξαις δέ κε φύντ' ἄρετᾶ ποτί
πελώριον ὀρμάσαι κλέος ἄ-
νῆρ θεοῦ σὺν παλάμαις.

Battle with Cycnus set back even Heracles, strong and violent; let Hagesidamus, victorious as a boxer at Olympia, offer thanks to Ias, just as Patroclus did to Achilles. With the help of a god, one man can sharpen another who is born for excellence, and encourage him to tremendous achievement.

8. Aischylos *Agamemnon* 782-83

ἄγε, δῆ, βασιλεῦ, Τροίας πτολίπορθ',
Ἀτρέως γένεθλον,
πῶς σε προσείπω; πῶς σε σεβίξω
μήθ' ὑπεράρας μήθ' ὑποκάμψας
καιρὸν χάριτος;

Come, my king, sacker of Troy,
offspring of Atreus,
how shall I address you, how revere you
without exceeding or undershooting
the right mark of grace?

9. O.9.35-42

ἀπό μοι λόγον
τοῦτον, στόμα, ῥίψον·
ἐπεὶ τό γε λοιδορῆσαι θεούς
ἐχθρὰ σοφία, καὶ τὸ καυχᾶσθαι παρὰ καιρόν
μανίαισιν ὑποκρέκει.
μὴ νῦν λαλάγει τὰ τοι-
αῦτ'· ἔα πόλεμον μάχαν τε πᾶσαν
χωρὶς ἀθανάτων· φέροις δὲ Πρωτογενείας
ἄστει γλῶσσαν . . .

My mouth, fling this story away from me! Since to speak evil of the gods is a hateful skill, and untimely boasting is in harmony with madness. Do not babble of such things now. Keep war and all battles apart from the immortals. But lend your tongue to the city of Protogeneia . . .

10a. P.9.103-5

ἐμὲ δ' οὖν τις ἀοιδᾶν
δίψαν ἀκειόμενον πρᾶσσει χρέος, αὖτις ἐγείραι
καὶ παλαιὰν δόξαν ἑῶν προγόνων·
But while I am quenching my thirst for song, someone exacts an unpaid debt from me, to
awake again the ancient glory of his ancestors as well.

10b. N.3.1-12

ᾠή πότνια Μοῖσα, μήτερ ἀμετέρα, λίσσομαι,
τὰν πολυξέναν ἐν ἱερομηνίᾳ Νεμεάδι
ἵκεο Δωρίδα νᾶσον Αἴγιναν· ὕδατι γάρ
μένοντ' ἐπ' Ἀσωπίῳ μελιγαρύων τέκτονες
κώμων νεανίαί, σέθεν ὅπα μαϊόμενοι.
διψῇ δὲ πρᾶγος ἄλλο μὲν ἄλλου,
ἀθλονικία δὲ μάλιστ' ἀοιδὰν φιλεῖ,
στεφάνων ἀρετᾶν τε δεξιωτάταν ὀπαδόν·
τᾶς ἀφθονίαν ὅπαζε μήτιος ἀμᾶς ἄπο·
ἄρχε δ' οὐρανοῦ πολυνεφέλα κρέοντι, θύγατερ,
δόκιμον ὕμνον· ἐγὼ δὲ κείνων τέ νιν ὁάροις
λύρα τε κοινάσομαι.
Queenly Muse, our mother! I entreat you, come in the sacred month of Nemea to the
much-visited Dorian island of Aegina. For beside the waters of the Asopus young men
are waiting, craftsmen of honey-voiced victory-songs, seeking your voice. Various deeds
thirst for various things; but victory in the games loves song most of all, the most
auspicious attendant of garlands and of excellence. Send an abundance of it, from my
wisdom; begin, divine daughter, an acceptable hymn to the ruler of the cloud-filled sky,
and I will communicate it by the voices of those singers and by the lyre.

11. N.3.26-8

θυμέ, τίνα πρὸς ἄλλοδαπὰν
ἄκραν ἐμὸν πλόον παραμείβει;
Αἰακῶ σε φαμὶ γένει τε Μοῖσαν φέρειν.
My spirit, towards what foreign headland are you turning my voyage? I bid you to
summon the Muse in honor of Aeacus and his race.

12. O.2.1-2

Ἀναξифόρμιγγες ὕμνοι,
τίνα θεόν, τίν' ἥρωα, τίνα δ' ἄνδρα κελαδήσομεν;
Hymns that rule the lyre,
What god, what hero, what man shall we celebrate?

13. Hom.Od.22.347-8

αὐτοδίδακτος δ' εἰμί, θεὸς δέ μοι ἐν φρεσὶν οἶμας
παντοίας ἐνέφυσεν·
I am self-taught, and a god put all manner of songs in my mind.

14. O.6.1-4

Χρυσέας ὑποστάσαντες εὖ-
τειχεῖ προθύρῳ θαλάμου
κίονας ὥς ὅτε θαητὸν μέγαρον
πάξομεν· ἀρχομένου δ' ἔργου πρόσωπον
χρῆ θέμεν τηλαυγές.
Raising the fine-walled porch of our dwelling with golden pillars, we will build, as it
were, a marvellous hall; at the beginning of our work we must place a far-shining front.

15. N.4.33-4

τὰ μακρὰ δ' ἐξενέπειν ἐρύκει με τεθμός
ᾧραί τ' ἐπειγόμεναι·
The laws of song and the hurrying hours prevent me from telling a long story.

16. P.11.41-4

Μοῖσα, τὸ δὲ τεόν, εἰ μισθοῖο συνέθευ παρέχειν
φωνὰν ὑπάργυρον, ἄλλοτ' ἄλλα χρῆ ταρασσέμεν
ἢ πατρὶ Πυθονίκῳ
τό γέ νυν ἢ Θρασυδάῳ . . .
Muse, it is your task, if you undertook to lend your voice for silver, to let it flit now this
way, now that: now to the father, who was a Pythian victor, now to his son Thrasydaeus.

17. P.9.103-5

ἐμὲ δ' οὖν τις ἀοιδᾶν
δίψαν ἀκειόμενον πρᾶσσει χρέος, αὖτις ἐγείραι
καὶ παλαιὰν δόξαν ἐῷν προγόνων·
But while I am quenching my thirst for song, someone exacts an unpaid debt from me, to
awake again the ancient glory of his ancestors as well.

18. N.4.79-88

εἰ δέ τοι
μάτρῳ μ' ἔτι Καλλικλεῖ κελεύεις
στάλαν θέμεν Παρίου λίθου λευκοτέραν·
ὁ χρυσὸς ἐψόμενος
αὐγὰς ἔδειξεν ἀπάσας, ὕμνος δὲ τῶν ἀγαθῶν
ἐργμάτων βασιλεῦσιν ἰσοδαίμονα τεύχει

φῶτα· κείνος ἀμφ' Ἰχέροντι ναιετάων ἐμάν
γλῶσσαν εὐρέτω κελαδῆτιν, Ὀρσοτριάϊνα
ἔν' ἐν ἀγῶνι βαρυκτύπου

θάλησε Κορινθίοις σελίνοις·

But if in honor of your uncle Callicles you bid me to build a monument whiter than Parian stone, know that gold, when it is refined, shows all radiance, and a song in honor of noble deeds makes a man equal in fortune to kings. May that man, who dwells beside the stream of Acheron, hear my voice singing, where in the contest of the loud-roaring wielder of the trident he flourished with crowns of Corinthian wild celery.

19a. N.3.26-8

θυμέ, τίνα πρὸς ἄλλοδαπάν

ἄκραν ἐμὸν πλόον παραμείβει;

Αἰακῶ σε φαμὶ γένει τε Μοῖσαν φέρειν.

My spirit, towards what foreign headland are you turning my voyage? I bid you to summon the Muse in honor of Aeacus and his race.

19b. I.6.19-21

ὑμμε τ', ὦ χρυσάρματοι Αἰακίδαι,

τέθμιόν μοι φαμὶ σαφέστατον ἔμμεν

τάνδ' ἐπιστείχοντα νᾶσον ῥαϊνέμεν εὐλογίαις.

And as for you, sons of Aeacus with your golden chariots, I say that it is my clearest law to sprinkle you with praises whenever I set foot on this island.

20. P.11.38-40

ἦρ', ὦ φίλοι, κατ' ἀμευσίπορον τρίοδον ἐδινάθην,

ὀρθὰν κέλευθον ἰὼν

τὸ πρὶν· ἦ μέ τις ἄνεμος ἔξω πλόου

ἔβαλεν, ὥς ὅτ' ἄκατον ἐνναλίαν;

My friends, was I whirled off the track at a shifting fork in the road, although I had been traveling on a straight path before? Or did some wind throw me off course, like a skiff on the sea?

21. N.3.26-8

θυμέ, τίνα πρὸς ἄλλοδαπάν

ἄκραν ἐμὸν πλόον παραμείβει;

Αἰακῶ σε φαμὶ γένει τε Μοῖσαν φέρειν.

My spirit, towards what foreign headland are you turning my voyage? I bid you to summon the Muse in honor of Aeacus and his race.

22. O.13.93-7

ἐμὲ δ' εὐθὺν ἀκόντων

ἰέντα ῥόμβον παρὰ σκοπὸν οὐ χρή

τὰ πολλὰ βέλεα καρτύνειν χερσίν.

Μοίσαις γὰρ ἀγλαοθρόνοις ἐκὼν

Ὀλιγαιθίδαισιν τ' ἔβαν ἐπίκουρος.

But I, while casting the whirling javelins with straight aim, must not miss the mark, as I speed many shafts with the strength of my hands.

23. P.10.51-4

κώπαν σχάσον, ταχὺ δ' ἄγκυραν ἔρεισον χθονί

πρώραθε, χοιράδος ἄλκαρ πέτρας.

ἐγκωμίων γὰρ ἄωτος ὕμνων

ἐπ' ἄλλοτ' ἄλλον ὥτε μέλισσα θύνει λόγον.

Hold the oar! Quick, let the anchor down from the prow to touch the bottom, to protect us from the rocky reef. The choicest hymn of praise flits from theme to theme, like a bee.

24. P. 1.81-2

καιρὸν εἰ φθέγξαιο, πολλῶν πείρατα συντανύσαις

ἐν βραχεῖ, μείων ἔπεται μῶμος ἀνθρώ-

πων· ἀπὸ γὰρ κόρος ἀμβλύνει

If you speak in due proportion, twisting the strands of many themes into a brief compass, less blame follows from men.

25. O.6.86-7

ἀνδράσιν αἰχματαῖσι πλέκων

ποικίλον ὕμνον

while I weave my embroidered song for heroic spearmen

26. N.7.77-9

εἶρειν στεφάνους ἐλαφρόν, ἀναβάλεο· Μοῖσά τοι

κολλᾷ χρυσὸν ἐν τε λευκὸν ἐλέφανθ' ἀμᾶ

καὶ λείριον ἄνθεμον ποντίας ὑφελοῖς· ἐέρσας.

It is easy to weave garlands. Strike up the song! The Muse welds together gold and white ivory with coral, the lily she has stolen from beneath the ocean's dew.

27. N.10.19-20

βραχύ μοι στόμα πάντ' ἀναγή-

σασθ', ὅσων Ἀργεῖον ἔχει τέμενος

μοῖραν ἐσλῶν· ἔστι δὲ καὶ κόρος ἀνθρώ-

πων βαρὺς ἀντιάσαι·

My mouth is too small to tell the whole story of all the noble things in which the precinct of Argos has a share. And there is also the satiety of men, which is grievous to encounter.

28. Aristotle *Poetics* 1451a

Μῦθος δ' ἐστὶν εἷς οὐχ ὥσπερ τινὲς οἴονται ἐὰν περὶ ἓνα ᾗ· πολλὰ γὰρ καὶ ἄπειρα τῷ ἐνὶ συμβαίνει, ἐξ ὧν ἐνίων οὐδέν ἐστιν ἓν· οὕτως δὲ καὶ πράξεις ἐνὸς πολλαὶ εἰσιν, ἐξ ὧν μία οὐδεμία γίνεται πράξις. διὸ πάντες εἰκόασιν ἀμαρτάνειν ὅσοι τῶν ποιητῶν Ἡρακλῆϊδα Θησηίδα καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα ποιήματα πεποιήκασιν· οἴονται γάρ, ἐπεὶ εἷς ἦν ὁ Ἡρακλῆς, ἓνα καὶ τὸν μῦθον εἶναι προσήκειν.

A plot is not single, as some think, if it is about a single person. For many and limitless things could happen to a single person, some of which make no single entity. Likewise there are many act of a single person which do not make up a single action. For this reason it seems that all those poets are wrong who have composed a *Herakleis* or a *Theseis* or poems of the sort. For they think that, since Herakles was a single man, so the story should be single.

29. Pindar fr.94b.33-40

ἐμὲ δὲ πρέπει
παρθενήϊα μὲν φρονεῖν
γλώσσαι τε λέγεσθαι
ἀνδρὸς δ' οὔτε γυναικός, ὧν θάλασσις ἔγ-
κειμαι, χρή μ[ε] λαθεῖν ἀοιδᾶν πρόσφορον.
πιστὰ δ' Ἀγασικλέει
μάρτυς ἦλυθον ἐς χορόν
ἐσλοῖς τε γονεῦσιν . . .

For myself, maidenly thought and maidenly speech are fitting.
Neither for man nor for woman, whose children are
dear to me, ought I to forget a fitting strain. As a
faithful witness, have I come to the dance, in honour
of Agasicles and his noble parents . . . (trans Sandys adapted)

30. O.9.81-2

εἶην εὐρησιεπὴς ἀναγεῖσθαι
πρόσφορος ἐν Μοισᾶν δίφρῳ
May I be a suitable finder of words as I move onward in the Muses' chariot

31. N.8.19-22

ἵσταμαι δὴ ποσσὶ κούφοις, ἀμπνέων τε πρίν τι φάμεν.
πολλὰ γὰρ πολλὰ λέλεκται, νεαρὰ δ' ἐξευ-
ρόντα δόμεν βασάνῳ

ἐς ἔλεγχον, ἅπας κίνδυνος· ὄψον δὲ λόγοι φθονεροῖσιν . . .

I stand with feet lightly poised, catching my breath before I speak. For many stories have been told in many ways. But to find something new and submit it to the touchstone for testing is danger itself. Words are a dainty morsel for the envious . . .

32. Lysias 3.10

οὕτω δὲ σφόδρα ἠπορούμην ὅ τι χρησαίμην, ὦ βουλή, τῇ τούτου παρανομία, ὥστε ἔδοξέ μοι κράτιστον εἶναι ἀποδημῆσαι ἐκ τῆς πόλεως· λαβὼν δὲ τὸ μειράκιον (ἅπαντα γὰρ δεῖ τὰληθῆ λέγειν) ὥχόμην ἐκ τῆς πόλεως.
So confused was I how to deal with this man's lawless behaviour, council, that I decided that it was best for me go abroad from the city. And taking the boy (I must tell the whole truth) I left the city.

Some modern sources

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