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Over There, Back Then: The Land of Cyrene in Pindar's *Pythian* 9

How does knowledge of the original performance site of an *epinikion* enable interpreters of any age to "read" more meaningfully its indexical signs, including deictics, and its use of geography, mythology, and other land-specific details? This is the question I pose for a re-reading of Pindar's *Ninth Pythian*, an ode that celebrates the victory of Telesicrates, garland of Cyrene, in the hoplitodromos of 474 BCE. My paper explores the hypothesis that an *epinikion* invites all readers to occupy the subject position of its original audience, an invitation that I take up as a reading strategy.

The ode, I believe, was originally performed *not* at Cyrene. Deictically, its language keeps the land of Cyrene over there and back then. The speaker neither invokes Cyrene nor transports his audience to that land in the here and now. All vicarious travel takes place in the past or future (or past in future) relative to performance time. This is in sharp contrast to the way readers experience the other two odes for a Cyrenean victor, *Pythians* 4 and 5. The former ode begins and ends at the land of Cyrene, and in between the hometown audience is taken vicariously to the land of their own insemination, the island of Thera (cf. N. Felson, "Vicarious Transport: Fictive Deixis in Pindar's *Pythian* Four," *HSCP* 99 [1999], 1-31). The performance of the latter ode is situated around the Gardens of Aphrodite at Cyrene: from that *origo*, or deictic center, the ode bids Arcesilas welcome home the driver of his victorious chariot, his brother-in-law Carrotus. In *Pythian* 9, however, in the final triad (a segment of poetry awakened by an "unquenched thirst for song") 3rd person distal as opposed to proximal deixis keeps the land of Cyrene remote from the *origo* at which narration occurs. The poet satisfies that thirst by recounting how the Libyan Antaeus, ancestor of the victor, once found a husband for his daughter through a foot-race. Nowhere in this final vignette, which took place "back then" (*pote*) and "over there" (at Irasa in Libya), does "I, here, now" break the descriptive frame.

I conclude by re-examining the Theban passage, beginning at line 79, which (using deictic indicators) I try to read as part of an original audience, first at Cyrene, then at Thebes. I find a Theban reading to be the more satisfying, with the poet pleading for his hometown audience to treat Telesicrates as their own, since, by the maxim of the old-man-of-the-sea, he deserves the encomium that he here and now receives. So it is a plea for hospitality and not an apology (cf. T. Hubbard, "Theban Nationalism and Poetic Apology in Pindar," *Pythian* 9.76-96, *Rh.M.* 134 [1991], 22-38). If we accept an older view of lines 79-103 as part of a lengthy list of Telesicrates' victories, these victories radiate outward not from the victor's homeland of Cyrene but from the poet's at Thebes. The catalogue then begins at Thebes, moves to Aegina and Megara, and ends up with local victories at Cyrene: it follows the same trajectory, in this reading, as Cyrene's journey to Libya and the victor's anticipated return home, from mainland Greece (Thessaly, Thebes, Delphi) to the north coast of Libya, the land of Cyrene.