

**INDECOROUS DINING, INDECOROUS SPEECH:
PINDAR'S FIRST *OLYMPIAN* AND
THE POETICS OF CONSUMPTION**

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In the opening lines of Book 18 of the *Odyssey*, the beggar Iros intrudes on the suitors' feast. With a few choice phrases, the poet characterizes the new arrival: he is notorious for his γαστήρ and for his insatiable appetite for food and drink (2–3). Even before the beggar opens his mouth, Homer endows him with one further attribute, prefacing his first speech to Odysseus with the participle νεικέϊων (9). As the term indicates, Iros is from the first marked as an abuser, one who frames and delivers invective. Within itself, this episode already features the combination of elements that I wish to explore: the coincidence between transgressions in the area of consumption and those in the realm of speech. More particularly, I want to suggest that composers in a variety of poetic genres were working within a social and linguistic paradigm that constructed intimate links between decorous dining and decorous speaking, and that saw breaches in the registers of eating and speech as joined and expressive of one another: what goes into the mouth and what comes out turn out to be very closely related. The larger ethical and other structures to which this particular poetic discourse belongs will be taken up at the paper's end.

My chief text is Pindar's first *Olympian*, a song whose preoccupation with eating and banqueting, both in the real and the mythical domains, is frequently noted (Slater 1977.200). Not only does Pindar imagine the performance of the ode within the context of the victory symposium hosted by Hieron at Syracuse (15–17), but much of the mythical portion of the song is concerned with what happened at a banquet prepared by Tantalus for the gods and with the hero's behavior on this and another sympotic occasion

(37–51, 60–64). Other allusions to feasting also appear, seeming to support the view that the song was suited to performance not only at a city-wide celebration of Hieron's triumph but also, in solo form, within the more private setting of the tyrant's banqueting hall.¹

Some way into the mythical portion of the ode, Pindar gives a graphic account of a notorious violation of alimentary etiquette. Lines 48–51 describe how the gods, invited by Tantalus to a feast, consumed Pelops, whom his father had cooked up in a cauldron and served as the *pièce de résistance*. No sooner does the poet evoke the scene than he takes pains to distance himself from the scurrilous story: ἐμοὶ δ' ἄπορα γαστρίμαρ- / γον μακάρων τιν' εἰπεῖν, "For my part, it is impossible for me to call any of the blessed gods greedy" (52). Commentators barely stop to register the term γαστρίμαργον, noting only that it means "gluttonous" rather than the expected "cannibalistic," or suggesting that it glosses over the more apposite but too harsh expression.² But I want to examine Pindar's word choice more minutely and begin by locating the expression within the particular social and generic registers to which it belongs. Only by filling in this background can we understand why Pindar has selected this particular formula and discern the larger issue that runs through the mythical portion of the song.

The closest precedent for the expression appears in the passage cited in my introduction. Γαστρίμαργον, itself a Homeric calc, strikingly recalls the Odyssean poet's description of Iros, "conspicuous for his greedy belly (γαστέρι μάργη)." Later uses of the Pindaric phrase confirm that γαστρίμαργία characterizes the individual who is low-class, vulgar, or simply unable to control his appetites. Aristophanes applies the expression to the raucous and disorderly Heracles (fr. 11 K–A), notorious for his riotous conduct and for eating everyone out of house and home, and Plato claims that γαστρίμαργία renders a man unfit for the elite pursuits of philosophy and the Muses (*Tim.* 73a). Elsewhere he comments, "Men who have engaged in bouts of γαστρίμαργία and hybris and drinking and have not avoided them are likely to assume the form of donkeys and animals of that sort" (*Phaed.* 81e); the donkey is the quintessence of behavior considered

1 On solo reperformance at symposia, see *Nem.* 4.13–16, Aristophanes *Nub.* 1355–58, Irigoin 1952.8–20. On the issue of whether the songs were originally performed chorally or as monodies, see the arguments and counterarguments in Lefkowitz 1988, Heath 1988, Burnett 1989, and Carey 1989.

2 For the first point, see Gerber 1982 ad loc.; for the second, Race 1997.53. Race comments on his translation of the term, "perhaps a euphemism for cannibal."

déclassé.³ Aristotle's discussion of temperance continues in the same strain: "People who overeat are called γαστρίμαργοι, meaning that they fill that organ beyond what is needed; it is persons of especially slavish nature that are liable to this behavior" (NE 1118b19).

If the word "belly-madness" characterizes those socially unfit for polite company, then the vice that it describes also has a central place within a particular poetic genre. Filling their ever-hungry bellies commonly preoccupies the characters featured in iambic song and comic ψόγος.⁴ Iros, whose model lies within the literary tradition of iambos,⁵ stands as our earliest example. Not only is gluttony his most salient characteristic, but, as a composer of abuse, he attempts to assimilate Odysseus to his low condition by charging him with his own particular failing and calling him μολοβρός (Od. 18.26). The scholia gloss the term with the adjective γαστρίμαργον and fancifully derive it from the phrase μολοῦντα πρὸς τὴν βρῶσιν ("one who goes after food"). Later iambic poets follow suit. Pericles, named as one of the frequent targets of Archilochus's invective (Ael. Arist. Or. 46), comes uninvited to the feast, there led into shamelessness by his γαστήρ (fr. 124 W),⁶ and, in fr. 118 W, Hipponax ridicules one Sannos for his gluttony ("you have no control over your appetite") and for the fact that he wastes away despite all his eating.⁷ So, too, when Hipponax's fr. 128 W speaks of "the stomach-carving of Eurymedontiades, who eats in no orderly manner," the fanciful expression "knife-in-the-stomach" (ἐγγαστριμάχαιραν) suggests that the individual does not take the time to cut up his food before swallowing it and that the stomach must perform this function in place of the

3 Plato's description exactly squares with the conduct of the elderly Philokleon of Aristophanes' *Wasps* when he disturbs the decorum of the symposium with his low-class behavior. Branded the ὑβριστότατος of those present, he prances about and chortles like "a donkey that's run off to a bran-heap" and has overstuffed himself with food (1303–10). For other instances of excessive consumption of food as low-class, see Euboulos fr. 41 K–A.

4 For greed as a topos in iambic poetry, see Miralles and Pörtulas 1983.34–35. Note, too, the suggestion (following Arist. *Poet.* 1448b28–38) in Nagy 1979.259 that we place the *Margites* attributed to Homer at an early point in this tradition, a work whose very title announces the theme of gluttony or wantonness. The term γαστήρ standing independently appears as a term of abuse as early as Hes. *Theog.* 26. See, too, Alc. fr. 429 LP, Aristophanes *Ran.* 200, Herod. 5.1.

5 Nagy 1979.228–29, Suter 1993.6–7.

6 Cf. Athen. 10.415d = Arch. fr. 167 W.

7 See Rosen 1988.40 for the charge of sexual voraciousness that the name Sannos (cognate with σάννιον, "penis") also involves.

knife.⁸ In a song of Alcaeus, in a striking breach of the high tone normally maintained in lyric poetry and with what has been identified as an abrupt shift in register,⁹ the poet calls his archenemy Pittacus φύσγων, “potbellied” (fr. 129 LP), and, according to Diogenes Laertius (1.81), he elsewhere charges him with being big-bellied (γάστρων), presumably on account of his corpulence and outsized appetite.¹⁰

But as Homer’s characterization of Iros also demonstrates, gluttony does not only belong within the arsenal of insults launched by the abuser and framer of invective. It is also the fault that poets working in other genres repeatedly lay at the door of the calumnist and iambic composer himself. Ibycus imagines the individual who will one day engage in verbal strife with him as “having the gluttonous mouth of Eris” (“Εριδός ποτε μάργον ἔχων στόμα, fr. 311a P), and Pindar’s Archilochus, who not only nourishes himself on hostile speech, but actually “grows fat (παινόμενον)” (*Pyth.* 2.56) on this unsavory diet, displays the same insatiable appetite.¹¹ Greed also declares itself at *Olympian* 2.95–98 where Pindar remarks:

ἀλλ’ αἶνον ἐπέβα κόρος
οὐ δίκᾳ συναντόμενος, ἀλλὰ μάργων ὑπ’ ἀνδρῶν,
τὸ λαλαγῆσαι θέλων
κρυφὸν τε θέμεν ἐσλῶν καλοῖς
ἔργοις·

But upon praise comes excess, which does not meet with
justice, but at the instigation of greedy men is eager to
chatter on and to conceal the good deeds of the noble.¹²

While here greed does not produce actual invective, it nonetheless shows itself inimical to the discourse of praise that stands as blame’s polar opposite.

But more troubling than the gluttony and insatiability of the blamer is the substance of his meal. As the work of Nagy has explored (1979, esp.

8 For other evocations of gluttony in Hipponax, see frs. 26, 114c W.

9 As argued in Kurke 1994.69–73.

10 Women featured in invective also lend themselves naturally to the charge of gluttony since the vice forms part and parcel of their larger inability to restrain their bodily appetites. For this, see Semon. 7.46–47 W and Just 1989.163–64.

11 Cf. Bacch. 3.68 and the comments of Nagy 1979.226 on the term παίνω.

12 All translations are my own.

225–27), those who engage in abuse and blame poetry within epic and lyric texts are repeatedly portrayed not just as eating, but as devouring their food in a particularly animalistic and/or cannibalistic fashion. Already in the Homeric songs, there is a hint of the link between invective and a diet of human flesh. At a particularly dark moment in *Iliad* 22, in a passage replete with threats concerning dogs tearing at and rending their victims' bodies (335–36, 354), Achilles abuses Hector by branding him κύον even as he declares his own gruesome and dog-like desire to feed off his enemy (347).¹³ Subsequent metaphoric representations of the impact of slander and blame confirm this particular link between invective and a canine, carrion diet, as the abuser and/or his words bite, tear at, and maul the victim, much as the dog does his dead prey. Prior to his visualization of Archilochus fattening himself on his “heavy-worded hatreds” (*Pyth.* 2.55), Pindar comments that he himself “must flee the persistent bite of censure (δᾶκος . . . καταγοριᾶν,” 52–53), as though the abuser’s speech was likely to turn its voracious mouth on the poet.¹⁴ *Nemean* 8 similarly conflates the dog’s ravaging with the language of detraction when it turns the object of verbal attack into the meal off which the slander (or slanderer, depending on how we construe the phrase) feasts: “Words are the morsels for those who have φθόνοϛ. It (i.e., φθόνοϛ) grabs at (ἄπτεται) the noble rather than quarreling with the inferior. It was that which feasted on (δᾶψεν) the son of Telamon when it rolled him onto his sword” (21–23).¹⁵ As Nagy demonstrates, the verb δάπτω selected here occurs in epic expressly in the context of dogs feeding off the bodies of the dead, and Pindar’s phrasing serves to cast the victim of the slander as a meal consumed by the discourse of blame, or by the blamer himself.¹⁶ And in *Nemean* 7, announcing himself incapable of the invective whose delivery assimilates the blamer to a dog, an animalistic eater/biter rather than a speaker, Pindar asserts that he has not “mauled” (ἐλκύσαι, 103) Neoptolemos with his words, just before he compares the individual who endlessly repeats

13 See, too, *Il.* 4.34–36 with *Il.* 8.483. For the more general link between dogs and invective, see Nagy 1979.226–27 and Graver 1995.53.

14 As Graver 1995.58 suggests, the characterization of Archilochus in canine terms may stem from the iambographer’s own self-description. For this, see *Hor. Ep.* 6.5–6, 12.3–6.

15 According to Nagy 1979.225, the lines should be differently understood. In his rendition, it is the individual who has φθόνοϛ, in this instance Odysseus himself, who does the grabbing and devouring, actually feeding off his victim.

16 Nagy 1979.226. It is striking how Alcaeus, in his characterization of Pittacus, again uses the language of abuse to figure his victim when he imagines him in fr. 70.6 “devouring” (δαπτέτω) the city of Mytilene.

the old slander against the hero to one “yapping” (μαψυλλάκας, 105) to children.¹⁷

As the examples cited above show, unmannerly, excessive, and cannibalistic eating is doubly linked with the practice of abuse. It forms a major element in the iambic (and, on occasion, lyric) poet’s vilification of his victim, and, in metaphoric representations of blame, describes the activity of the abuser and the impact of his words. This is the nexus of ideas, I suggest, informing Pindar’s account of the gods’ meal at Tantalus’s banquet and framing his editorializing comments on the rejected myth. In my reading, the alimentary violations (both greed and the eating of human flesh) that the text signals are necessarily implicated in the mode of discourse in which they appear; they do as much to characterize the deviser of the tale as the figures in his narrative.

Quite literally “standing off” from the charge of γαστριμαργία at line 52, Pindar reminds his audience that such a characterization has no place in his verbal register. Instead it appears, as it were, in quotation marks as the poet first cites and then, in his disavowal, summarizes the words of the speaker who first framed the tale of the gods’ cannibalism.¹⁸ The earlier description of this other spokesman and rival myth-maker at line 47 has

17 For detailed discussion of this passage and its combination of canine imagery with the discourse of blame, see Steiner 2001. This characterization of the abuser as a carrion-eating dog is, of course, closely tied up with the theme of gluttony that permeates representations of invective. Dogs in the Greek tradition are notorious for their insatiable appetites, and canine metaphors appear within epic diction when the poet or the speakers within the songs wish to underscore the clamorous demands of the stomach (most notoriously *Od.* 7.216, with its evocation of the “doggish belly”). So, too, the Aesopic tales feature the dog as the animal preoccupied with satisfying his hunger, whatever the cost his meal may exact. For this, and examples, see Graver 1995.47–48. In her account, the dog’s gluttony belongs together with the creature’s larger deployment as a symbol of material greed.

18 We are, perhaps, meant to register the double inappositeness of the charge, brought out by the juxtaposition of the terms γαστριμαργία and μακάρον. Not only are the gods supposed to remain blissfully free from the belly’s impetuous demands (indeed, as *H. Merc.* 130–35 make plain, the ability to withstand the stomach’s craving for food is the sine qua non of Olympian status; cf. *Od.* 7.209–17, 15.344–45, 17.286–87, *Hes. Theog.* 26 for the link between the γαστήρ and the mortal condition), but the divine guests are here imagined as eating meat. The earlier description of the preparation of Pelops anticipates the inversions. Cut up with the ritual μάχαρρα (49), and divided and distributed exactly in the manner of the sacrificial victim (51), the boy takes the place of the meal of meat that regularly follows the sacrifice and that the gods, from the time of Mekone on, notoriously eschew.

already clued us into his character, motivation, and the genre in which he works: ἔννεπε κρυφᾶ τις αὐτίκα φθονερῶν γειτόνων, “one of [Pelops’s] spiteful neighbors immediately said in secret . . .” As Gerber’s note on ἔννεπε observes (1982 ad loc.), the verb serves to point us back to the earlier strictures against mendacious language and to the ὁάτις at the beginning of 28b. But still more prominent than the glance at the issue of veracity is the focus on the spirit of blame that dictates these words. By characterizing the speaker as inspired by φθόνος, Pindar taps into the rich vein of association between the sentiment of jealousy or malice, and gainsaying or calumny. Φθόνος already motivates the abusive words of Iros, who, Odysseus suggests, begrudges him a share in the suitors’ bounty (*Od.* 18.16),¹⁹ and, in the encomiastic genre, the φθονεοί not only feel envy and spite at the good fortune of others, they also seek, by whatever means, to obstruct the praise that good deeds should win, an activity that constitutes its own form of invective.²⁰ So at *Olympian* 6.6–7, *Isthmian* 1.41–45, *Isthmian* 2.43–45, and *Isthmian* 5.24–25, the negation of φθόνος expresses the granting of high praise, and the very utterance of that praise is dependent on the lack of φθόνος among speakers and audience alike. Parallel expressions in Bacchylides (3.67–68, 5.187–98, 13.199–202) demonstrate the conventional quality of these sentiments and allow Nagy to conclude (1979.229) that φθόνος functions “as a traditional negative foil of praise poetry within praise poetry.” The secrecy that shrouds the dissemination of the scandalous story in *Olympian* 1 is of a piece with the character of the speech. The whisperers of *Pythian* 2.75 reappear as the φθονεοί of line 90,²¹ and covert activity, which carries with it implications of hiding and darkness, falls readily into the oppositions that structure the traditional distinctions between praise and blame. As Marcel Detienne has shown, blame seeks to occlude the praiseworthy deed, to place it in darkness and silence, while images of light, revelation, and sounding out surround the discourse of praise.²²

As blamer and composer of invective, and foil for Pindar’s encomiastic mode, the neighbor devises a story exactly consonant with his own nature, projecting the properties that the poetic tradition assigns to him and

19 See Nagy 1979.228–31 for this reading.

20 For the most detailed treatment of the motif, see Bulman 1992.

21 As noted by Gerber 1982 ad 47; cf. Aesch. *Ag.* 449–51, *Soph. Aj.* 148 and 157.

22 Detienne 1967.21–27. See, too, *Nem.* 8.26 and the discussion of the term κρυφάϊσι in Miller 1982.116.

his words (and that iambic song itself imputes to its targets) onto the characters featured in his tale. The gluttony that marks the calumnist and iambographer becomes the fault ascribed to the gods (as Méautis 1962.118 observes of the detail that Pelops was served up ἀμφὶ δεύτατα, or as the last course, “si Pélops avait été offert comme dernier service, au moment où les dieux devaient déjà être rassasiés, ils étaient de véritables goinfres d’en avoir mangé”), and the ravening, cannibalistic quality of invective manifests itself in the neighbor’s account of how Tantalus divided up his son’s body, and the gods then ate what he served around. Indeed, this scene of dismemberment and division recalls the scenario in *Nemean* 8 where abusive speech “rolled” Ajax about the sword—and might that term recall the preparation of a meal and the “spitting” of meat?²³—prior to consuming its victim.

Should we miss the distinction between the discourse of praise and that of blame, the manner in which Pindar opens and concludes his depiction of the gods’ transgressive banquet supplies the interpretative key. Just before turning to the neighbor’s account, the poet remarks (35–36):

ἔστι δ’ ἀνδρὶ φάμεν εἰκοδὸς ἀμφὶ δαι-
μόνων καλὰ· μείων γὰρ αἰτία.

It is seemly for a man to speak fair things of the gods; for
the blame is less.

While here Pindar seems chiefly preoccupied with issues of propriety and with the decorum that must govern his own speech, his term αἰτία sounds rather different concerns. It both expresses the necessity of speaking things that redound to the credit of their object (namely encomiastic discourse rather than the language of detraction) and nods towards the reciprocity that obtains between the speaker and the character of his words. According to epic, iambic, and epinician accounts, the speaker of praise inevitably earns praise, while the blamer (as the Homeric Iros and Thersites amply demonstrate) meets with both physical and verbal abuse.²⁴

23 It is striking how much themes of dismemberment and mutilation permeate the language of blame both in Pindar and elsewhere. The connection between ψόγος, the mutilated or grotesque body, and excessive or unmannerly consumption is one I aim to pursue elsewhere.

24 An issue more fully explored in Nagy 1979.222–42 and Suter 1993. For the dense reciprocity between the praiser and the praised, cf. *H. Ap.* 158–78.

The phrase that closes the recitation of the rejected myth returns again to the consequences that befall speakers and singers in different modes, describing this particular form of reciprocity: ἀκέρδεια λέλογχεν θαμινὰ κακαγόρους, “lack of gain regularly gets evil-sayers as its portion” (53). The statement not only reinforces the characterization of the jealous neighbor as one who devises invective, but articulates a topos associated both with the figures portrayed in the iambic tradition and with the iambic poets themselves. Because the greedy man is never satisfied, and hence feels himself impoverished however much he consumes, diminishment and straitened circumstances repeatedly afflict gluttons and those gluttonous individuals who compose abuse.²⁵ For all that Iros eats and drinks constantly (ἄζηχῆς φαγέμεν καὶ πείμεν), he has neither strength nor force (*Od.* 18.3–4). And that his noteworthy size (he is “large to look at,” 18.4) proves a false indicator of the physical prowess that resides within, his subsequent defeat at the hands of Odysseus roundly shows.²⁶ Sannos, the target of Hipponax’s invective, and Pindar’s Archilochus belong to this same tradition. The first wastes away for all his voraciousness, and the second’s attempts to fatten himself result in nothing more than ἀμηχανία (*Pyth.* 2.54). While this “resourcelessness” properly signifies poetic poverty, the absence of subject matter that afflicts calumny,²⁷ the introduction of the term πιαινόμενον prompts us additionally to connect it with Archilochus’s manner of eating. Greedily consuming his substance (and greed also incites the over-expenditure that precedes material poverty), he ends up with nothing to feed on and nothing to produce.²⁸ This tradition of the impoverishment, both economic and poetic, that claims the voracious calumnist may also underlie Pindar’s declaration at *Olympian* 1.52 that it is impossible or, more literally, that he is without ποποί, “ways” or “means,” to call the gods greedy. In the kind of litotes dear to the poet, he effectively suggests that his practice of praise will, on the contrary, furnish him with all the poetic resources that he needs and

25 The tale of Erysichthon in the mythical tradition dramatizes this notion.

26 Nagy 1979.229–30 n. 4, on the basis of the connection between the name Iros and the root *ui-, proposes that the soubriquet the suitors bestow on Iros after his defeat, Airos (73), can mean “strengthless.”

27 As argued in Miller 1981.139–41.

28 Overfeeding in nature results in the same barrenness. In a series of passages from Theophrastus’s *de Causis Plantarum*, plants that grow too abundantly on account of excessive feeding end up ἄκαρπος or without fruit (2.16.8, 3.1.5, 3.15.4). For detailed discussion of these passages, see Michelini 1978.

guarantee him that very κέρδος (here understood in a metaphoric rather than an economic, material sense)²⁹ denied his opposite number.³⁰

But Pindar's concern with greed and invective does not end here. As his own poetry states elsewhere and *Olympian* 1 will go on to demonstrate, the one occasion on which the encomiast may legitimately borrow the language and images proper to the abuse poet is when he is himself engaged in "casting blame upon sinners" (*Nem.* 8.39). In the lines that follow the retelling and rejection of the wrongful myth, Pindar turns the tables on his opponents, and, drawing from their own discourse of blame to frame his attack on a now legitimate object of censure, Tantalus, he dramatizes anew the traditional link between invective and disorderly consumption. Tantalus's crime turns out to involve yet another violation of banquet etiquette prompted by an excessive appetite, and his tale concludes with a fate very similar to the ἀκέρδεια that the speakers of ill have already encountered.

In a seeming vindication of Tantalus—after all, he wasn't guilty of dismembering and cooking his son—Pindar remarks in lines 54–55 that the gods honored the hero above all men (presumably because he was allowed to feast with them). But no sooner has Pindar exonerated his subject on one count than he faults him on another, still more grievous one: for all the dining privileges he enjoyed, Tantalus proved incapable of maintaining his good fortune (55–57):³¹

καταπέψαι
μέγαν ὄλβον οὐκ ἐδυνάσθη, κόρῳ δ' ἔλεν
ἄταν ὑπέροπλον

He was unable to digest his great prosperity, but through
insatiability took overwhelming ruin.

29 On the distinction, see Kurke 1991.228.

30 The term ἄπορα in Pindaric imagery also looks to the journeys or paths that the composer undertakes in praising his subjects. Contrast *Isth.* 4.1–3, where the poet evokes the "countless roads" that he can follow in celebrating Melissos.

31 As many readers point out, the trajectory that the lines describe is a very common one, and both Solon and Theognis note the impact that ὄλβος can have when directed at a recipient prone to κόρος (Solon fr. 6.3–4 W, Theognis fr. 153–54 W). For the relationship between ὄλβος, κόρος, ἄτη, and the ὕβρις of which Tantalus is clearly guilty, see the discussion of Gerber 1982 ad 56 and his note of the similar sequence in *Pyth.* 2.26–28.

Commentators regularly note the two alimentary terms in these lines, and observe that the earlier references to feasting would have dictated Pindar's highly colored vocabulary here. But κόρος, whose core meaning describes the excessive consumption of food,³² resulting in the condition of having one's belly full, does more than continue the banquetting motif. Since, as we have seen and Anhalt 1993.80 also points out, blame poetry traditionally makes greed an object of its censure and expresses that censure in language evocative of the voracious consumption of food, Pindar has answered those whose version of events he rejects by reassigning the accusation of gluttony to its appropriate target. Coupled with καταπέψαι, the κόρος that is the cause of Tantalus's downfall answers particularly closely to the γαστριμαργία earlier described. The hero's inability to digest his ὄλβος suggests his excessive appetite as he keeps trying to cram more in.

If Tantalus's greed assimilates him generally to other targets of blame, then the specific crime with which he is charged, and his ultimate fate, also locate him very squarely in this category. Modifying the traditional myth, Pindar now makes Tantalus guilty of an act of theft when he tries to get what does not belong to him³³ and steal from the gods the nectar and ambrosia that he already individually enjoys so as to give it to his fellow men. Iros, we recall, is similarly unable to remain content with the more than ample amount that he has,³⁴ although the φθόνος that he feels when witnessing the good things of others contrasts sharply with the misplaced generosity that Tantalus displays.³⁵ Like Iros, too, Tantalus is punished for

32 Michelini 1978.36. See, too, the very illuminating discussion of the evolution of κόρος from its original meaning ("repletion, satiety") to that of insatiability offered in Anhalt 1993.82–93. In an analysis of the particular relation of greed to ὕβρις, MacDowell 1976.16 outlines the relation of cause and effect between the two: "When a man eats and drinks too much . . . he becomes *hybristes*, and when he is *hybristes* he indulges in more eating and drinking." Graver 1995.50 observes the particular relationship of the term κόρος to the behavior of dogs; the verb κορέσασθαι regularly describes what dogs do with corpses as they glut themselves on human flesh (*Il.* 8.379, 13.831, 17.241, 22.509).

33 For the theft of food and the iambic tradition, see Miralles and Pörtulas 1983.24–28.

34 Odysseus suggests as much when he remarks "the door sill can contain both of us" (*Od.* 18.17). Note, too, Iros's own vexed relations to ὄλβος as suggested by Odysseus at *Od.* 18.19.

35 Tantalus's generosity may seem to sit oddly with his nature as sinner, but here Pindar is clearly borrowing from the Prometheus myth. On the intimate links between the two tales, see Hubbard 1987.9–12. Tantalus's two feasts can also be read as perversions of the norms that should prevail at the properly conducted banquet: generosity on the part of a host is a good thing but not when the object of that liberality is the result of a theft. For detailed discussion of these perversions, see Slater 1977.200.

violating the feast with his greed and theft by lasting banishment from its sphere. Where Iros, defeated by Odysseus, is dragged from the banquet hall to the courtyard outside, Tantalus is condemned to perpetual wandering far from εὐφροσύνη, a technical term that epinician poetry uses for the particular joy and felicity of the symposium (Bundy 1986.2). Tantalus even seems reduced to a condition like that of the beggarly Iros and his peers: cognate with ἀλᾶται is the term ἀλήτης, the wanderer frequently forced to beg a meal.³⁶ The overall result is the same: both Homer and Pindar have expelled the objects of their invective from the charmed circle of the banquet and guaranteed that the greedy consumer can no longer trouble the harmony of the feast.³⁷

Framing the accounts of Tantalus's transgressive banquets, as though to contain the threats they might pose, are the two paradigmatic and self-mirroring representations of properly conducted feasts that Pindar situates in the here-and-now. The first mention of Hieron describes him as host of a banquet occurring at this very moment (15–18), an occasion so exemplary of its kind that it can stand as an “epitome of classical culture.”³⁸ Exactly answering this first visualization is the image through which Pindar exits the world of myth and returns to present-day reality. While Tantalus wanders endlessly from the joys of the symposium, the dead Pelops is imagined lying in his house-like hero shrine (90–93):³⁹

νῦν δ' ἐν αἵμακουρίαις
 ἀγλααῖσι μέμικται,
 Ἄλφεοῦ πόρῳ κλιθείς,
 τύμβον ἀμφίπολον ἔχων πολυξενω-
 τάτῳ παρὰ βωμῷ·

36 Of course Tantalus's traditional punishment in the Underworld reinforces this theme of the deprivation of food and drink.

37 Within both episodes, the figures of the abused may be seen as taking on the character of the scapegoat, which accords with the traditional element of scapegoating in iambic invective. For this, cf. Hipponax frs. 5–11 W and Miralles and Pörtulas 1983.11–50. Note also Thalmann 1998.103–04, with a discussion of Iros and Thersites as scapegoats, and Thalmann 1988.21–24.

38 So Slater 1977.200. As Slater also notes, Pelops's role on Olympus, where he serves as wine pourer at the banquet of the gods, complements the exemplary feast down below, introducing the note of pederasty that formed so important an element of the institution of the symposium.

39 For the contrast between the wanderer and the housed Pelops, see Slater 1977.200 n. 43.

But now he is mixed with shining blood-offerings, reclining on the way of Alpheos, having a much-visited tomb beside the altar most frequented by strangers.

Replacing the *κεῖσθαι* more commonly used of the dead recumbent in their graves, Pindar has incorporated into his account one of the most salient characteristics of the symposium, its adoption of the oriental custom of reclining at banquets instead of sitting.⁴⁰ A series of echoing notions further establish the parallels between Pelops, the eternal symposiast, and Hieron presiding over his exemplary gathering. The emphasis on the hospitality of the hero's shrine answers to the tyrant's friendly table (16–17), the altar on which offerings are placed stands in for Hieron's *τράπεζα* (17), and the expression *ἀγλααῖσι* of the sacrifices looks back to the *ἀγλαίζεται* of line 14. Where Pindar's patron was mingled with victory (22), the dead Pelops is mixed with sacrificial offerings, the result of his own foundational athletic triumph.

But most important for my purpose is the mode of discourse made so integral a part of these model banquets. Hieron delights in or is glorified by “the finest songs, what sorts of things we men frequently play about the table of a friend” (15–17). The poet then goes on to supply an example of these most choice of compositions as he locates the performance of this very ode within the context of the feast at the victor's home: “But take down from the peg the Dorian lyre if at all the *χάρης* of Pisa and of Pherenikos has put your mind under the influence of sweetest thoughts” (17–19).⁴¹ Inspired by the delight generated by Hieron's Olympic victory, the singer will respond with a seemingly spontaneous outpouring of praise. Nor does Pelops go without his portion of musical *encomion*. After replacing the rejected myth with a narrative of an altogether more laudatory kind,⁴² Pindar closes his story by remarking that “his (sc. Pelops's) *κλέος* shines from afar in the courses of the Olympic games” (93–94). While the verb identifies the source of that renown to be the hero's grave, the tangible, visible monument of his

40 For this practice, see Murray 1983.263. As Murray points out, the *κλίνη* can do double service, describing both the banqueting couch and the bier; here Pindar plays off the versatility of the term. Kurke 1991.31 also notes the sympotic language here.

41 Through his choice of terms, Pindar may aim to recall another paradigmatic banquet, the one hosted by Alkinoos in *Od.* 8, where Demodokos's lyre similarly hangs from a peg (67).

42 Pindar has suppressed all dark elements, also emending the less than honorable tale of how Pelops won the chariot race against Oinomaos through trickery.

achievement, the term κλέος unmistakably describes the particular fame that depends on celebration in speech and song, and that here looks back in self-referential fashion to the story that Pindar has just told.⁴³

If Tantalus's faults are expressed through the language of gluttony, then Pelops's virtues declare themselves through his rejection of the paternal failing. In one final return to the alimentary motif, Pindar imagines his young hero choosing the path of valor and deciding to enter the chariot contest with Oinomaos in order to win his daughter as his bride. Since death claims all men, Pelops remarks (82–84):

τά κέ τις ἀνώνυμον
γῆρας ἐν σκότῳ καθήμενος ἔψοι μάταν,
ἀπάντων καλῶν ἄμμορος;

Why would anyone sit around in the darkness and boil
away a nameless old age in vain, without a share of all
good things?

The very striking term ἔψοι reminds the audience both of Pelops's own supposed plunge into the boiling water of the cooking pot⁴⁴ and, more recently in the sequence of the poem, of Tantalus's failure to "digest" his good fortune due to his voracity and constant search for more.⁴⁵ Pelops's choice to expend rather than husband his energies until the point at which they would go to waste does not so much repeat his father's profligacy as demonstrate a contrasting awareness of the finite and non-renewable nature of a man's resources and vitality. The same mentality informs the subsequent phrase, where the unmistakable culinary associations of ἔψοι would, perhaps, additionally color a listener's perception of ἄμμορος. The poetic form of ἄμοιρος, the expression evokes the μοῖρα that describes not only a man's fate, but also, in several Homeric contexts, the "cut of meat" that the diner receives at the feast (Nagy 1979.134–35, 1986.86 n. 83). In wanting only that portion of the meal that is rightfully his (and the desire is itself

43 Contrast Pelops's situation with that of the individual imagined as he "will lie (κέσεται) in the deep-rooted earth sharing no more in the symposia, and the lyre, or the sweet cry of flutes" (Anon. fr. 1009 Page).

44 For the connotations of Pelops's initial boiling, see Hubbard 1987.8.

45 *Contra* Gerber 1982 ad loc., who suggests that the earlier references to cooking "subconsciously" dictated the choice of imagery here.

modestly phrased with the negative ἄμφορος, “having no share”), Pelops again rejects his father’s greed and quest for more and practices a more limited and controlled mode of consumption.⁴⁶ And as the poet’s comment on his speech in lines 86–86b makes plain—“thus he spoke, and wielded no unfulfilled (οὐδ’ ἀκράντοις) words”—the hero, again turning his back on the paternal model, seeks only what is capable of satisfaction (Gerber 1982 ad loc.).

This emphasis on the son’s ability to limit and regulate his appetites forms part and parcel of the larger lesson that Pindar’s retelling of the myth is designed to deliver. As Thomas Hubbard has noted, “appetitive restraint,” particularly with regard to food and sex, is recommended throughout, with Hieron’s table and Pelops’s divinely approved marriage offering the paradigm in each sphere (cf. 114).⁴⁷ Allowing one’s appetites, whether gastric or sexual, free rein constitutes an obvious violation of the self-control that Greek ethical thinking from the archaic period on constantly advocates and that the select, elite subjects and audiences for Pindar’s songs are notoriously supposed to exercise—and nowhere more than at the symposium, which supplies such abundant opportunities for indulgence in food, drink, and sexual pleasures. But the motif of moderation that punctuates the song also has a particular bearing on the nexus of gluttony and abusive speech that informs the passages that I treat here. By linking the alimentary and verbal registers, and by equating the rhetoric of invective with a speaker’s indulgence in unregulated consumption and/or expenditure, the poetic tradition, and the larger society that plays audience to the songs, draws abusive speech into the broad ethical structure where greedy and transgressive eating belongs. The calumnist and blame poet, no less than the target of his barbs, is imagined as the individual who overindulges himself, who can no more regulate the contents and quantity of his speech than he can restrain the appetites of his body and its constant cravings for more.⁴⁸ Correlative with

46 Among the καλά that he seeks, we should include those that belong to the delights of the symposium; so Kurke 1991.28.

47 Hubbard 1987.13. He also notes the sexual and alimentary (a vegetarian diet) abstinence required of athletes participating in the Olympic games.

48 The very appearance of the abuser, whom the tradition imagines possessed of an ugly and/or misshapen body (so Iros, Thersites, and Hipponax himself) betrays this lack of self-regulation. For the allegation in the ancient sources that Hipponax was ugly, and the convention that the invective poet’s words may be seen as a function of his character and bodily appearance, see Degani 1984.21–24.

this is his assimilation to the ravening and voracious dog, also symbolic of an absence of self-regulation, of the pursuit of bodily gratification, and of material greed.

But perhaps this relationship between greed and abuse should be otherwise figured. Because the *καλά* to which men aspire are limited and non-renewable, as the examples of Tantalus and Pelops both demonstrate, one man's greedy appropriation and consumption necessarily means another man's loss, his deprivation of the share that is rightfully his. As Margaret Graver reminds us (1995.53), verbal abuse and invective precipitate just such a disturbance and disequilibrium among the parties to the relationship: "A speaker who indulges in unjustified blame is in effect robbing another of his dignity, in flagrant disregard of societal norms which distribute to each person his due portion of praise or blame." Because the communal meal supplies the site where, through the division of meat and the distribution of "portions," such questions of honor and status are regulated and articulated, one man's violation of alimentary etiquette, his quest for more than his fair share, necessarily affects all those present at the occasion.⁴⁹ Like the calumnist and abuser, he seeks a wrongful redistribution of goods and increases his store at another's expense.

While Pindar's first *Olympian*, as suits its encomiastic and possibly sympotic character, focuses on the link between unmannerly consumption and the discourse of blame, other texts show that unregulated, excessive, or cannibalistic eating, and the greed or over consumption of which this act is so frequently symptomatic, also accompanies other faults in the verbal domain. From Hesiod to Aeschylus and beyond, Greek poets and orators combine references to outsized and/or transgressive appetites with forms of speech that violate the rules of linguistic decorum, whether on account of being too abusive, too long, too vulgar, too incomprehensible, too fawning, or quite simply mendacious. The nature of what the mouth puts out repeatedly betrays the quantity and quality of what the speaker has ingested, and his character as eater necessarily conditions the emissions of his voice. We have only to think of the twice-cited "gift-gobbling (*δωροφάγοι*)" kings of the *Works and Days* (38–39, 263–64),⁵⁰ whose consumption of these surplus

49 The issue is particularly critical at the symposium where, as the seating arrangements demonstrate, parity among the *hetairoi* or equals is very much the order of the day. Note Theog. 493–95 where speech at the symposium is also to be placed *εἰς τὸ μέσον*.

50 The verb on which the compound is formed is reserved in epic for excessive and/or animalistic eating.

products Hesiod ties so closely to the crooked judgments that they utter, to see one early instance of what may be a much larger pattern.

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