

Narrative Peculiarities in Pindar's Fourth Pythian Ode*

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The fourth Pythian Ode celebrating the chariot victory of King Arcesilaus IV of Cyrene in 462 BC is Pindar's longest composition. By far the greater part of its 299 lines is occupied by two different but interrelated selections from the Argonautic founding-legend of Cyrene, one momentary and proleptic (9-58: Medea's prophecy before the Argonauts on the island of Thera), the other a more or less coherent narrative of the Argonautic expedition (67-262) which at the end again refers to the significant island of Thera.¹ This latter narrative is summarized in B.K. Braswell's excellent commentary² as follows: The "main part of the Argonautic story falls into three clearly defined sections: (1) Iason in Iolcus and the preparations for the expedition ..., (2) the voyage and the first events in Colchis ..., and (3) the winning of the Golden Fleece and the return. ... The story moves forward without complication and with considerable expansion of details so that the effect is not unlike that of epic".³ Turning then to the beginning of this epic-style lyric narrative Braswell says:⁴ "Having asked the question how the quest for the Golden Fleece began Pindar first tells of the ora-

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¹ Compare 9f., τὸ Μηδείας ἔπος ἀγκομίσαι, ... Θήραιον ... τό ποτε ... ἀπέπνευσε, with 258f., ἐν ποτε καλλίσταν (= Θήραν) ἀπώκησαν χρόνω νῆσον: see Hdt. 4.147, Call. fr. 716 Pf., A.R. 4.1757ff., and Braswell, *Commentary* (next note), 355f. on ll. 258-9 (a) and (b), and 356 on l. 258 (a). Thera is the starting-point for the colonization of Libya by descendants of the Argonaut Euphamos.

² *A Commentary on the Fourth Pythian Ode of Pindar* (1988), 26.

³ But Braswell adds two important qualifications: "only selected incidents are told", and, "the transitions are rapid as always in choral lyric and not the more leisurely ones of epic".

⁴ *Loc. cit.*

cle which Pelias received warning him that the Aeolids would cause his death ...”.

If we compare this summary with the actual narrative in Pindar we may note two interesting discrepancies which call for comment, one concerning the “winning of the Golden Fleece” near the end, the other concerning the “oracle” given to Pelias near the beginning of the main narrative in P. 4.⁵ I take the second one first.

According to Braswell (and others before him),⁶ Pelias, the usurper king of Iolcus, receives in Pindar an oracle telling him that he will die by an Aeolid (i.e., a member of his own family), and earlier critics⁷ had even assumed there were *two* oracles. What we find in Pindar, however, are two separate statements about the same subject, the first reading (71f.) “it was fated that Pelias should die by hands or plans of one of the Aeolids” (θέσφατον ἦν Πελίαν ... θανάμμεν);⁸ the second (73ff.) referring to Pelias: “There came to him an oracle from Delphi warning him that he should be on his guard against the man with only one sandal” (ἦλθε δέ οἱ ... μάντευμα ... τὸν μονοκρήπιδα ... ἐν φυλακᾷ σχεθέμεν μεγάλα ...).

Thus there are not two oracles, nor is the one acutally mentioned foretelling to Pelias that he will be killed by one of the Aeolids. Rather, we have two different reports clearly distinguished as to content and recipient: the first, directed to the audience of Pindar’s ode, unambiguously stating what will be the end of Pelias, the second making it clear that Pelias himself had received only a warning from Delphi (ambivalent, as suits an oracle) which left him in the dark as to the exact nature of the danger awaiting him and the identity of the dangerous person.⁹ This dichotomy between two levels on which information is conveyed is of considerable importance for our understanding of Pindar’s subsequent narrative. Segal and Braswell, e.g., by assuming that Pelias already knows “that he

⁵ Lines 241ff. and 73ff., respectively.

⁶ Braswell, *op. cit.* (above, n. 2), 164 f. on ll. 71-78 and 71 (e); compare, e.g., G. Kirkwood, *Selections from Pindar* (1982), 162 (“Pelias’ knowledge that he must die at the hands of an Aeolid”).

⁷ E.g., L. Radermacher, *Mythos und Sage* (1943), 184; R.W.B. Burton, *Pindar’s Pythian Odes* (1962), 154; C.P. Segal, *Pindar’s Mythmaking: The Fourth Pythian Ode* (1986), 45; cf. below, p. 28 with note 12.

⁸ And not, as Segal has it (*loc. cit.* previous note), “It was prophesied for Pelias to die ...”. θέσφατον ἦν does not mean “was prophesied”, see Braswell, *op. cit.* (above, n. 2), 165 on 71 (e); and the text reads Πελίαν, not Πελίᾳ, as would be required by Segal’s translation.

⁹ That Pelias’ death is a foregone conclusion and that his murderer will be an Aeolid is only mentioned in the first sentence (directed to the hearer), whereas the second (the oracular warning addressed to Pelias) is intentionally vague on both issues (see 75, ἐν φυλακᾷ σχεθέμεν μεγάλα, and 78, ξείνος αἴτ’ ... ἀστός).

is fated or at least in danger to die by one of the Aeolids",¹⁰ miss a basic precondition of the confrontation between Pelias and Iason as told by Pindar. When the "man with only one sandal" duly makes his appearance in Iolcus (78ff.), the hearer of Pindar's story is aware that the man will turn out to be an Aeolid and will eventually be the cause of Pelias' death, but Pelias, when he first meets the fateful stranger in the story (94ff.), does not even know whether this man is of foreign or native origin (the oracle had left this open: ξείνος αἴτ' ὦν ἀστός, 78) until the newcomer himself discloses, at the end of his introductory speech, that he is Iason, son of Aison, and therefore a native of Iolcus and not a foreigner (Αἴσονος γὰρ παῖς ἐπιχώριος οὐ ξείναν ἰκάνω γαῖαν ἄλλων, 118).¹¹ Only here is one of the two initial ambiguities of the oracle resolved for Pelias, but the hearer is able to draw the conclusion already when the stranger appears, for Pindar juxtaposed definite information about the outcome (for the hearer) and indefinite information (given to one of the characters in the story) at the beginning of his narrative.¹²

The technique of viewing facts, events and persons from different angles and appealing to the reader's associative capacity is evident more than once in the ode. Thus Iason's first appearance in the marketplace of Iolcus is presented from three different viewpoints:¹³ first (78ff.) by the narrator ("a huge man with long locks carrying two spears and dressed in a strange combination of native and exotic clothing"), second (86ff.) as he appears to the crowd watching him ("is this perhaps Apollon or Ares? He cannot possibly be Otus, or Ephialtes, or Tityus, who are no longer alive"),¹⁴ and finally (101ff.) as he introduces himself

¹⁰ Segal, *loc. cit.*, (above, n. 7); Braswell, *op. cit.* (above, n. 2), 191 on ll. 99-100 (quoted above), cf. 164f. on ll. 71-78 (but it makes all the difference whether Pelias "is fated" or only "in danger" to die, and it is exactly on this issue that the two reports at 71f. and 73-78 differ).

¹¹ Line 118 answers the question implicit in the phrasing of the oracle in l. 7 (cp. Pelias' address to Iason, 97: ὦ ξείν').

¹² Lines 71f. (θέσφατον = πεπρωμένον, cf. Isthm. 8.31 and 32) and 73-78, respectively; Braswell, *op. cit.* (above, n. 2), 165 on l. 71 (e), rightly argues against taking 71f. as the first of two oracles but does not consider the possibility of two different levels of information.

¹³ Cp. I.J.F. de Jong, "Tijdspecten in Pindarus' Pythische vier", *Lampas* 24 (1991), 199-210, esp. 207f., who points out that "Jason niet minder dan drie maal object is van focalisatie door andere personages": Pelias in 95-6, Aeson in 120 and 122-3, and the Iolcians in 79-83 (she rightly draws attention to Pelias' and Aeson's reactions, and could have added the author's remarks, 78 ff., as a fourth instance). My approach differs from hers in that I concentrate on the varying presentations of Iason by different "speakers" (the narrator, the Iolcians, Iason himself; for Pelias, see below).

¹⁴ An anonymous comment in epic fashion, Braswell, *op. cit.* (above, n. 2), 182 on 86 (c), cf. 181 on 86-94.

in his reply to Pelias' demand to disclose his identity ("my teacher was Chiron, I have come to claim the royal prerogative of my father which was taken from him by the usurper Pelias, my name is Iason"). Again the poet's objective description is followed by the more personal views of characters in the narrative. Taken together, all three views add up to a complex, overarching representation of the leading figure in Pindar's story (gigantic and striking in his outfit, awe-inspiring and strangely attractive, calm and restrained in his behaviour). At the same time, the hearer is invited to contrast not only the information supplied by the narrator with the effect the stranger has on the Iolcians,¹⁵ but also king Pelias' first words in his address to the stranger (97ff.) with those of the Iolcian man in the street (87ff.):¹⁶ a revealing juxtaposition of conflicting assessments. The conclusions to be drawn from the different views and presentations of the stranger in our text are again left to the hearer. Pelias' address to Iason has to be put in perspective in order to be fully appreciated.

A further case in question is the double exchange of speeches between Pelias and Iason (94-168) as a result of which Iason twice tells his story, relating that Pelias was a usurper and that he himself was the rightful claimant to the throne: ll. 105-110 in his first speech¹⁷, in answer to Pelias' initial question but without addressing him, and ll. 148-155 in his second one,¹⁸ in a strikingly polite and stately address to Pelias. When repeating his claim Iason does not change its

¹⁵ And the way in which he presents himself in his first speech.

¹⁶ This latter comparison makes clear beyond any reasonable doubt that Pelias' treatment of the stranger is, *pace* Braswell, unduly hostile. While the Iolcians had hailed him as a godlike figure, Pelias, barely concealing his fear (96f.), pointedly addresses him as an ordinary, or rather lowly human. Pelias' question (97f.), ... καὶ τίς ἀνθρώπων σε χαμαιγενέων πολιᾶς ἐξανῆκεν γαστρός; (note the attributes), contrasts pointedly with the Iolcians' comment (87ff.), οὐ τί που οὗτος Ἀπόλλων Braswell's interpretation, *op. cit.* (above, n. 2), 191 on ll. 99-100, according to which Pelias' address to Iason is "brusque and impatient, but hardly insulting" (see also 186 on 94-120 and elsewhere), is hardly consistent with the context; cf. also, e.g., the reaction of Iason, who strikingly avoids addressing Pelias (Braswell's explanation, 205 on ll. 116-117, is unconvincing; contrast l. 138), and see my article "Lyrisches Erzählen: Das Beispiel P. 4", *Schriftenreihe der Universität Rostock*, forthcoming.

¹⁷ Line 105, ἰκόμαν οἰκάδ' ἀρχαίαν κομίζων πατρός ἐμοῦ βασιλευομέναν οὐ κατ' αἴσαν ... τιμάν. πεύθομαι γάρ νιν Πελίαν ἄθεμιν ... ἀμετέρων ἀποσυλάσαι βιαίως ἀρχεδικᾶν τοκέων; cf. Braswell, *op. cit.* (above, n. 2), 197 on l. 106 (b) and 199 on l. 108 (c).

¹⁸ Line 148, μῆλά ... τοι ἐγὼ ... ἀφίημ' ἀγρούς τε ... τοὺς ἀπούρας ἀμετέρων τοκέων νέμει ... ἀλλὰ καὶ σκάπτων μόναρχον καὶ θρόνος, ᾧ ποτε ... τὰ μὲν ... λύσων...

substance (both times he urges Pelias to give up the kingship he has usurped),¹⁹ but whereas in his first speech he had bluntly and uncompromisingly stated his claims and Pelias' lawlessness, in the second he seems to offer Pelias a compromise (Pelias is politely asked to give up the throne while keeping everything else of which he had deprived Iason's father).²⁰

Critics have often voiced their astonishment at the relative length and peculiar arrangement of these introductory scenes of dialogue. They have sometimes assumed substantial shifts in the positions of one or the other of the two leading characters and have searched for correspondences with Arcesilaus, the addressee of P. 4, or with Damophilus, the exiled Cyrenean introduced in the final part of the ode.²¹ However, it is hard to see any genuine change or development in the roles of either Pelias or Iason in the second dialogue as compared to the first. What the hearer of the two pairs of speeches increasingly senses is a change of atmosphere. Pindar's narrative moves from fruitless confrontation in the first scene (abruptly cut off at line 120)²² to a negotiated settlement in the second one.²³ This dramatic change, however, is, according to Pindar's account, due to Iason's diplomatic skill and efficiency;²⁴ or, to put it in terms of the paradigmatic character of Pindar's story, the double pair of speeches in the arrangement of events leading to the Argonautic expedition is designed to show the superiority of diplomacy to confrontation. And this is in accordance not only with the

¹⁹ 106ff., ἀρχαίαν ... πατρός ἐμοῦ ... τιμάν. 152ff., σκᾶπτον μόναρχον καὶ θρόνος, ὧ ποτε Κρηθείδας ἐγκαθίζων ... εὔθυσε λαοῖς δίκας (cf. 147f., οὐ πρέπει νῶν ... ξίφεισιν ... μεγάλην προγόνων τιμάν δάσασθαι).

²⁰ The latter ("sheep, cattle, and farmland") is not even mentioned in Iason's original claim (164ff.); it is introduced in Iason's second speech to make his position look more conciliatory (147ff.): the issue at stake is the kingship.

²¹ For conflicting views see, e.g., C. Carey, "The Epilogue to Pindar's Fourth Pythian", *Maia* 32 (1980), 143-152, and Braswell, *op. cit.* (above, n. 2), 198, 186 on ll. 94-120. Cary, 144: "Pindar offers Arcesilas two positive *exempla* in turn, first Iason and then Pelias"; according to Carey, 150f., Pelias softens his stance under the influence of Iason and becomes more conciliatory in the second encounter while Iason remains essentially the same. The search for analogies between the historical figures and those of the myth has a long tradition: see, e.g., for the 19th century, F. Mezger, *Pindars Siegeslieder* (1880), 203ff. Braswell, 27: "two different rôles" of Iason, "defensive epebe" at the first encounter, "mature leader" in the "offensive" at the second; cf. 370f. on l. 270 (b) and p. 30 (equations with Arcesilaus or Demophilus rejected).

²² See O. Schroeder, *Pindars Pythian* (1922), 40 on ll. 102ff., and cf. my article quoted above (n. 16).

²³ Line 168 σύνθεσιν ταύταν ἐπαινῆσαντες οἱ μὲν κρίθην

²⁴ See ll. 136-8, and cp. I. de Jong, *op. cit.* (above, n. 13), 206, who rightly points out that the emphasis is on Iason and his handling of situations ("De nadruk wordt duidelijk gelegd op Jason...een voraal op de manier waarop hij de moeilijke situaties naar hij zich voor gesteld ziet, te lijf gaat...").

role of Jason elsewhere in Pindar's narrative but also with the attitude for which Pindar praises Arcesilaus (270ff.).²⁵

Repeated references or allusions lend emphasis to and highlight the importance of the facts or events repeated. On the other hand, unanticipated breaks in narrative sequences, or the suppression of elements the hearer had been led to expect, may have a similar focusing effect. A peculiar case in question is the "winning of the Golden Fleece" (the third item in Braswell's summary quoted at the beginning of this paper). The manner in which this part of Pindar's story is unexpectedly cut short at its very climax (l. 246) is more surprising for the hearer than critics have been ready to admit.

I summarize the Argonaut story proper as told by Pindar and then discuss the effect of the interruption referred to.

Three main stages may be distinguished in the account:

(1) the catalogue of Argonauts and the departure of the Argo marked by good omens (169-201);

(2) the speedy voyage from Iolcus to Colchis (202-213);

(3) the events in Colchis (213-246): Iason's conflict with king Aietes; his struggle with the king's dangerous bulls to win the Golden Fleece; Medea's love and help enabling Iason to overcome the obstacles.

Of the third of these stages in Pindar's lyric narrative (211-246) R.W.B. Burton²⁶ gives the following assessment: Pindar's "interest is fixed upon the accomplishment In the whole of the narrative ... from the arrival of the Argonauts among the Colchians (v. 211) to the glimpse, just before the break at v. 246, of the Golden Fleece in the dragon's jaws, there is not a single irrelevant detail to check the vigour of its drive".

If this is correct the reader, from the nature of the details selected, should be able to discover the narrator's intentions with reasonable certainty. Are we justified to state (with Segal)²⁷ that there is "a clear progression toward a well-defined and tangible goal: winning the Golden Fleece"? Is the break in l. 246 in particular nothing else but a means to highlight "the Fleece in the dragon's jaws"?

The Golden Fleece is mentioned four times in the text of P. 4: (1) l. 68 τὸ πάγχρυσον νάκος κριοῦ, in Pindar's announcement that he is going to honour Arcesilaus the addressee with an account of the quest for the Fleece, in the course of which god-sent privileges were planted for Arcesilaus' family; (2) l. 161 δέρμα ... κριοῦ βαθύμαλλον, in Pelias' second speech which calls upon

²⁵ Cf. 270, ἐσσι δ' ἰατῆρ ἐπικαιρότατος ... χρὴ μαλακὰν χέρα προσβάλλοντα τρώμαν ἔλκεος ἀμφιπολεῖν ... (Arcesilaus), with 136, πρᾶυν δ' ἰάσων μαλθακᾷ φωνᾷ ποτιστάζων ὄσρον βάλλετο κρηπίδα σοφῶν ἐπέων; see also de Jong, *op. cit.* (above n. 15), 207 and n. 18.

²⁶ *Op. cit.* (above, n. 7), 164.

²⁷ *Op. cit.* (above, n. 7), 181.

Iason to take on the ἄεθλος (165) to retrieve the Fleece of the ram that once saved his relative Phrixus; (3) ll. 230f., ἄφθιτον στρωμνᾶν ... κῶας αἰγλᾶεν χρυσέῳ θυσάνῳ, when Aietes challenges Iason to the heroic ἔργον of yoking the fire-breathing bulls as a precondition for handing him the Golden Fleece; and finally (4) l. 241, δέρμα λαμπρόν, when Aietes tells Iason where the Fleece is after Iason has unexpectedly accomplished the task.

Listening to such series of emphatic references in an “epic-style narrative”, would not the hearer expect to be told of the actual winning of the Fleece as a natural, even necessary climax of the story? If we believe modern interpretations of the ode this reasonable expectation is indeed fulfilled.²⁸ But is this really true?

The lines immediately preceding the sudden interruption of the narrative read:²⁹

and at once Aietes told Iason where the knife of Phrixus had spread out the shining fleece hoping that this time he would not be able to accomplish that labour. For it was placed in a thicket near the greedy jaws of a serpent which in bulk and length surpassed a fifty-oared ship made by blows of iron.

Thus Aietes is setting a trap for Iason, and Pindar's hearer finds himself at the height of his expectations: How is Iason going to overcome this last and apparently most dangerous obstacle? But here of all places Pindar cuts his story short (247f.): “The journey is too long for me; I am pressed for time; I know a short-cut as I lead the way in poetic skill”. This is an elaborate variation of the so-called “break-off formula” common in Pindaric stories,³⁰ although in this case there is a peculiar stress on “quickness” which may seem surprising in a narrative of such dimensions but is appropriate in an ode designed for a chariot victory and is, in fact, a recurring motif in P. 4.³¹ But why this sudden breakoff

²⁸ See, e.g., Segal, *op. cit.* (above, n. 7), 66 (and cf. 79): “As in folktale, the hero wins both the bad king's Magical Object”, i.e., the Fleece, “and his Beautiful Daughter”; or Braswell, *op. cit.* (above, n. 2), 28, who thinks that “the final section of the main part of the Argonautic story tells of the winning of the Golden Fleece ...”.

²⁹ P. 4, 241-245: αὐτίκα δ' Ἀελίου θαυμαστός υἱὸς δέρμα λαμπρόν ἔννεπεν, ἔνθα νιν ἐκτάνυσαν Φρίξου μάχαιραι ἔλπετο δ' οὐκέτι οἱ κείνόν γε πρᾶξασθαι πόνον· κείτο γὰρ λόχημα, δράκοντος δ' εἶχετο λαβροτατᾶν γενύων, ὃς πάχει μάκει τε πεντηκόντερον ναῦν κράτει, τέλεσαν ἄν πλαγαὶ σιδάρου· see Braswell's notes, *op. cit.* (above, n. 2), 329ff., esp. 333-338 on the “Description of the serpent”.

³⁰ Cp. Burton, *op. cit.* (above, n. 7), 166f.; Braswell, *op. cit.* (above, n. 2), 339ff. on ll. 247-248, for details and parallels.

³¹ Compare 203ff., illustrating the speed of the Argo, or 17ff. concerning the Cyrenean offspring of the Argonauts eventually replacing swift ships by swift horses.

at the very climax? Surely, it will not do to comment, as O. Schroeder³² does: “Die Kürze des Abschlusses ... hat es mit sich gebracht, daß die Meldung von der Gewinnung des Vlieses ... schließlich ausbleibt”. Had not the hearer been led to believe that the Golden Fleece was the goal of Pindar’s Argonautic story (or in Burton’s words “The story ... moves urgently to its climax, the Golden Fleece”³³)? But instead of crowning his account with the decisive final exploit the lyric narrator startles his audience with a break-off formula. Pindar seems to have lost all interest in the Golden Fleece or in the danger imminent from its guardian, the gigantic dragon who has just been graphically described.³⁴ This impression seems to be confirmed by the lines which round off the mythical narrative after the break: “Jason killed the dragon by craft”, Pindar says here (249f.), addressing Arcesilaus, *and* — “took the Golden Fleece”, the reader might be tempted to add, but the second part of the sentence reads instead: “*and* stole away Medea with her own collaboration, Medea the murderess of Pelias” (κτεῖνε μὲν γλαυκῶπα τέχναϊς ποικιλόνωτον ὄφιν, ᾧ Ἄρκεσίλα, κλέψεν τε Μήδειαν σὺν αὐτᾷ τὰν Πελαιοφόνον).³⁵ “The Fleece is not explicitly mentioned again”, Braswell³⁶ notes, slightly puzzled it seems, adding: “but it is clearly implied that Jason took it as well”. This, however, is dodging the question: why is the Fleece, everything in the narrative has been leading up to (so much so that modern critics have sometimes been deceived into believing that its winning is actually told), suddenly and permanently dropped?

The first clue to an answer is the observation that where we would have expected the Fleece we get Medea. The effect of this replacement is a remarkable change of direction. The Golden Fleece which had been the goal of Jason’s endeavours now appears to be only a means to a further end. It had been introduced into Pindar’s narrative as the cause of the Argonautic expedition (68f.); Pelias had used it as a pretence to get Jason out of the way (159ff.); Jason for his part, in order to win it, had taken upon himself a heroic trial of courage and strength set by Aietes (229ff.); and Aietes had wanted to get rid of Jason when telling him where Phrixus had hung the Fleece without mentioning the dragon guarding it (241ff.). The curious exchange of the Fleece for Medea in line 250 draws the reader’s attention to the fact that both Pelias and Aietes who had had similar intentions each end up as victims of their own miscalculations. Aietes loses not only the Fleece but also his daughter Medea, and Pelias instead of riding himself of Jason by means of the Fleece unwittingly brings upon himself

³² *Op. cit.* (above, n. 22), 45 on l. 248f.

³³ Burton, *op. cit.* (above, n. 7), 153.

³⁴ See n. 29 above.

³⁵ For Πελαιοφόνον instead of Πελίας φονόν, see Schol. Pind. on P. 4, 446, p. 158f. Drachmann (Didymos), and Braswell, *Glotta* 58 (1980), 217-222, and *Commentary* (above, n. 2), 344f.

³⁶ *Op. cit.* (above, n. 2), 339 on 247-262.

his own destruction. (Pindar points to this implication by adding τὰν Πελιασοφόνον τὸ Μήδειαν in l. 250:³⁷ Pelias sent Iason to fetch the Fleece and in return got Medea.) Thus the divine ordinance Pindar had stressed at the beginning of his account (71f., θέσφατον ἦν Πελίαν ἐξ ἀγαυῶν Αἰολιδᾶν θανέμεν χεῖρεσσιν ἢ βουλαῖς ἀκνάμπτοις) is brought about in an ironical and paradoxical way.

But there are further aspects to this pointed exchange of the object gained for the person instrumental in gaining it. The device stresses the importance of Medea as Iason's helper without damaging Iason's own reputation. By dropping from his account the actual mastering of the dragon and the winning of the Fleece which would have put Iason in an awkward position stressing his dependence on Medea's arts,³⁸ Pindar lends added emphasis to the immediately preceding scene, Iason's successful struggle against the fire-breathing bulls of king Aietes. This heroic deed is given a striking prominence in contrast to the rather low-key reference to the killing of the dragon.

There are two direct dramatic descriptions of the bulls (first as they are dealt with by Aietes, then by Iason, ll. 224-229 and 232-238). The effect is not so much that of a test Iason has to pass or fail (as one would have expected in an epic narrative, Aietes setting the task and Iason carrying it out; compare, e.g., A.R. 3, 401ff., 1278ff.) as of an athletic contest between Aietes and Iason. Medea's aid is restricted to supplying Iason with the means to resist the fire from the bulls (221f. and 233); strength and athletic prowess, however, are Iason's (who is pointedly called βιατὰς ἀνὴρ in l. 236; cf. l. 79, ἀνὴρ ἔκπαγλος). After his success he is honoured by his fellow Argonauts like a victor in the Panhellenic Games (l. 240: "they crowned him", στεφάνοισί τέ μιν ποίας ἔρεπτον). P. 4 is, after all, an *epinikion*, and Iason's accomplishment is accordingly presented in terms of the genre.

Medea, however, whose long prophecy in favour of Arcesilaus and his family stood at the beginning of the ode (leaving no doubt about her relevance for Pindar's encomiastic purposes), takes the place of the Golden Fleece because she is the ultimate prize carried off by Iason.

In the framework of the ode Iason in the passages discussed is presented under two different aspects, "skilled diplomat" and "successful athlete", which both have their significance for the addressee. By suppressing some and stressing, by expansion or repetition, other key elements from his mythical material, while effectively taking into account the expectations of his audience, Pindar has

³⁷ This striking reference occurring as it does in a prominent final position should not be played down (as in Carey, *op. cit.* (above, n. 21), 149.

³⁸ See, e.g., A.R. 4, 145ff., or the summary in ps.-Apollod. *Bibl.* 1, 9, 23, and note the curiously ambivalent dative τέχνας in P. 4, 249.

managed to turn the Argonaut story into a highly suggestive encomiastic *paradeigma*.

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