

Foiled Again: Pindar *O.* 11.1-6

The first and only strophe of the 11th Olympian contains a famous priamel:¹

Ἔστιν ἀνθρώποις ἀνέμων ὅτε πλείστα
 χρῆσις· ἔστιν δ' οὐρανίων ὑδάτων,
 ὀμβρίων παίδων νεφέλας·
 εἰ δὲ σὺν πόνωι τις εὔπρασσοι, μελιγάρυες ὕμνοι
 ὑστέρων ἀρχὰ λόγων 5
 τέλλεται καὶ πιστὸν ὄρκιον μεγάλαις ἀρεταῖς.

Bundy calls this “a preliminary foil . . . of the occupational type . . . sailors and farmers, who have need of wind and rain, respectively, are foil for achievement in general.”² It seems a bit more closely integrated into the poem than that.

When I see wind and rain together, I think of the wind that is useful not only to sailors but to farmers, the wind that brings the gentle rains farmers need, the West Wind.³ Is it a coincidence that Zephyros is (a) the main wind that would have carried Hagesidamos from his home on the toe of Italy to Olympia,⁴ and (b) the wind his city is named for? He is what we and some ancients call an Epizephyrian Locrian, but Pindar calls him Zephyrian without the prefix both in this poem (*Ζεφυρίων Λοκρῶν γενεάν*, 15) and – reversing the order of the words – in the 10th Olympian, written for the same victory (*πόλιν Λοκρῶν Ζεφυρίων*, *O.* 10.13). It appears to me that Pindar chose these particular foils to suit the evocative name of the victor’s hometown.

¹ My text is quoted from B. Snell and H. Maehler, *Pindarus, Pars I, Epinicia*, Leipzig, 1971⁵. There are no significant variants. W. H. Race’s Loeb (1997) and Bruno Gentili’s Fondazione Lorenzo Valla edition (*Le Olimpiche*, 2013) differ only in lineation.

² E. L. Bundy, *Studia Pindarica* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1986 – first published 1962), 10.

³ R. A. B. Mynors provides numerous parallels in the note on 1.43-44 in his commentary on Vergil’s *Georgics* (Oxford, 1990).

⁴ I say “the main wind” because he would not of course have sailed straight across from Locri to Elis, but followed the sinuous Italian coast at least to the boot-heel, perhaps to Brundisium. That would mean catching several different winds along the way, but the west wind more than any of the others. Whether Pindar might have imagined him sailing straight across the open sea is an interesting question.