Greece & Rome, 67.1 43–53 © The Classical Association (2020)
doi:10.1017/S001738351900024X

ISTHMIAN 2: COMMODITY OR GIFT?*

Isthmian 2 was composed for Xenokrates of Akragas' chariot victory, probably in 471–470 BC.[1] The winner was dead by the time that the ode was performed, and as a result the recipient of the ode was his son, Thrasyboulos. The victor's family, the Emmenidai, was politically prominent and one of the founding families of Akragas: Theron, son of Ainesidamos and tyrant of Akragas (488–487 BC), was Xenokrates' brother, and Xenokrates is also commemorated by Pindar in *Pythian* 6 for his victory at a chariot race (490 BC).

This ode is one of the most problematic and *sui generis* items of the Pindaric corpus. It is unusual in adopting a highly personal tone towards the victor's son. Even more unusually, it dwells on the delicate topic of commissioned poetry. The Bundyist approach, with its exclusive emphasis on the idea that every single aspect of Pindaric poetry serves the praise of the *laudandus* (the person glorified in the ode), risks creating false assumptions based on a true premise,[2] because it fails to take sufficient account of the poet's broader ideological agenda, which transcends any single specific commission. A more promising approach is that offered by Kurke, who uses Polanyi's concepts of embedded and disembedded economy to explain how market economy

* I am grateful to Richard Seaford for his support and comments. His *Money and the Early Greek Mind* inspired the way I approached Greek literature. I am also grateful to Vayos Liapis for his attention, comments, and patient proofreading.

[1] Xenokrates may have been victorious at the Isthmian Games sometime between 488 and 476 BC. His victory seems to have been celebrated by Simonides: see J. H. Molyneux, *Simonides. A Historical Study* (Wauconda, Illinois, 1992), 233–4. The dating of *Isthmian* 2 has been a matter of debate. U. von Wilamowitz, *Pindaros* (Berlin, 1922), 310–11, dates it after the fall of the Emmenids (472 BC); see also G. Norwood, *Pindar* (Berkeley, CA, 1945), 152; and C. M. Bowra, *Pindar* (Oxford, 1964), 124. B. Snell and H. Maehler, *Pindari carmina cum fragmentis*, 2 vols. (Leizpig, 1980–9) date it to 470 BC, while C. Pavese, 'XPHMATA, XPHMAT' ANHP ed il motive della liberalità nella seconda Istmica di Pindaro', *QUCC* 2 (1966), 103, argues that the first performance of the ode must have been sometime between 476 and 472 BC. I follow L. Kurke, *The Traffic in Praise. Pindar and the Poetics of Social Economy* (Ithaca, NY, 1991), 192–3, who dates the ode after the fall of the Emmenids (i.e. to *c.*471 BC), arguing that Thrasyboulos is praised as an aristocrat of high prestige and not as a member of a ruling family.

[2] See F. J. Nisetich, 'Convention and Occasion in *Isthmian* 2', *Californian Studies in Classical Antiquity* (1977), 133–6, 139. According to E. L. Bundy in his semantic work *Studia Pindarica* (Berkeley, CA, 1962), the odes should be approaches as encomia. For him – and his followers – there is nothing in the odes that does not have a laudatory or rhetorical function. Thus, the study of Pindar becomes a study of genre.

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is integrated into Pindaric poetry in a way that does not contradict aristocratic morality.[3] Starting from the thesis that the ruling class was hostile to coinage and traders, Kurke shows how Pindar devises a way to incorporate money into epinikian ideology not as a means of controlling social relations but as a link in the continuous chain of relationships within the framework of gift economy. Specifically in *Isthmian* 2, the poet subsumes money and exchange into the traditional framework of aristocratic *megaloprepeia* ('munificence'), thereby leaving the fundaments of gift economy intact.

This way of reading Pindar presupposes that money and trade are incompatible with the values of the ruling class. However, as Seaford has pointed out, the important distinction here is not between aristocrats who are hostile to coinage and traders who welcome it, but rather between those who are imagined to be economically self-sufficient (the 'free') and those who have to work for others. The introduction of abstract value embodied in coinage actually reinforces this imagined self-sufficiency, for it conveniently concentrates automatic (and so self-sufficient) power (over labour) in durable objects that are easy to transport, to store, and to conceal.[4]

We may add that money, by encouraging intermarriages between traditional aristocrats and *nouveau riche* upstarts (as lamented by Theognis 189–92), potentially undermines the fundamental concept of inherited excellence.[5] It would appear, then, that elite scepticism or even hostility towards money – and Pindar's ostensible embarrassment over poetry composed for a fee – derives not from an implicit rejection of trade as a money-making activity, or even of money per se, but rather from the observation that money and monetary exchange introduce new boundaries between traditional aristocracies (namely, the patrons of epinikian poetry), who imagine themselves as being self-sufficient without having to work, and the new moneyed classes, whose livelihoods are dependent on the production and sale of their products. It is in this latter class that Pindar belongs, which explains the frank and unembellished language he employs, in *Isthmian* 2, in presenting his

[3] Kurke (n. 1), 240–56. Elsewhere in this work, Kurke states that coinage represented a tremendous threat to a stable hierarchy of aristocrats and others, while 'the aristocratic monopoly on precious goods within a closed system of gift-exchange guarantees an absolute (naturalized) status hierarchy' (ibid., 46–7).

[4] R. Seaford, *Money and the Early Greek Mind. Homer, Philosophy, Tragedy* (Cambridge, 2004), 15.

[5] On the Theognis passage, see Kurke (n. 1), 254; Seaford (n. 4), 161–2.

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ode as a commodity, but also in attempting to divest the concept of commodity of its negative associations. As will become clear below, my perspective is distinct both from that of Kurke and also from Polanyi's concepts of embedded and disembedded economy which she follows. I shall explain the theoretical foundations of my approach in the following paragraphs.

The central idea of Polanyi's work is the concept of 'embeddedness', which he sees as constituting the fundamental difference between ancient and modern economies.[6] According to him, in ancient societies, what we would call 'economic relations' were embedded in non-economic frameworks, such as kinship and religious institutions. In 'embedded' economies, the production and preservation of wealth, although an undeniably important pursuit, is only part of a broader system of fundamentally social values, which, albeit in some cases including material assets, serve not the individual's personal material interests but his or her social standing.[7] By contrast, in modern (post-nineteenth-century) 'market societies', the economy has become a distinct and autonomous sphere of activity concerned exclusively with the production of wealth and aimed at maximizing profit; in other words, it has become 'disembedded' from its social contexts: 'Instead of economy being embedded in social relations, social relations are embedded in the economic system.'[8]

Applying Polanyi's scheme to her analysis of Pindar, Kurke argues that, in the rapidly monetized society of Pindar's time,

[6] Polanyi did not explicitly use this term; it has become established, however, by subsequent scholarship based on his work. See J. G. Ruggie, 'International Regimes, Transactions, and Change: Embedded Liberalism in the Postwar Economic System', *International Organization* 36 (1982), 379–415.

[7] For a concise definition of 'embeddedness', see F. Block, 'Introduction', in K. Polanyi, *The Great Transformation. The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*, second edition (Boston, MA, 2001), xxiii: 'The term "embeddedness" expresses the idea that the economy is not autonomous, as it must be in economic theory, but subordinated to politics, religion, and social relations.' For Polanyi's treatment of embeddedness in premodern societies, in which the principal motors of economic activity are reciprocity, redistribution, and 'householding' (production for the use of one's own social group, free of profit-making calculations), see Polanyi (this note), 45–58. It is important to keep in mind that Polanyi repeatedly insisted 'that the goal of a disembedded, fully self-regulating market economy is a utopian project; it is something that cannot exist' (Block [this note], xxiv). See e.g. Polanyi (this note), 3: 'Our thesis is that the idea of a self-adjusting market implied a stark utopia. Such an institution could not exist for any length of time without annihilating the human and natural substance of society; it would have physically destroyed man and transformed his surroundings into a wilderness.'

[8] Polanyi (n. 7), 57–61.

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the economy has become disembedded, [and] money by itself is taking over and breaking down the proper social categories. Pindar's strategy is to re-embed wealth, to ground it completely in its uses in society. Once this is done, money no longer has to be a negative thing; it is, rather, a powerful tool to win prestige in socially acceptable forms.[9]

The actual economy of Pindar's time, following a course of gradational disembeddedness, has commodified labour, land, and money, and functions under the rules of the market. However, according to Kurke, Pindar, wishing to accommodate this reality into the traditional ideology of aristocratic *megaloprepeia*, adopts a strategy whereby he 'guides his aristocratic listeners step by step from complete antipathy to a money economy to a willing utilization of it, so that by the end they can meet Thrasyboulos on common ground – the public space of the poem and of *megaloprepeia*'.[10] In an embedded economy, as argued by Kurke, gifts are exchanged on the basis not of commensurability of value but of moral obligations and of customary and religious factors.[11] In addition, a gift is not always practically useful for its recipient, as its value often depends on the giver's assessment. Commodities, on the other hand, must have usefulness, which is expressed as use-value. They must also have commodity value, which takes the form of exchange-value in the course of exchange.

Despite Kurke's insistence on Pindar's attempt to integrate money exchange and commoditization into the old aristocratic value system, Pindaric poetry is actually inconsistent with the ideal of a fully

[9] Kurke (n. 1), 249.

[10] Ibid., 222.

[11] The discussion about the differences between commodities and gifts has many dimensions. According to C. A. Gregory, *Gifts and Commodities* (London, 1982), gifts belong to the sphere of household and personal relationships, while commodities belong to the sphere of trade and impersonal relationships. Gregory argues that gift-exchange is conducive to the creation of qualitative relationships, to the interdependence between the actors, and to a feeling of indebtedness after a gift has been received. In addition, gift economies are characteristic of clans, whereas commodity-based economies are characteristic of social classes. M. Strathern, *The Gender of the Gift* (Berkeley, CA, 1988) focuses on the role of gender in the process of exchange and production. A. B. Weiner, *Inalienable Possessions. The Paradox of Keeping-While-Giving* (Berkeley, CA, 1992) argues that some goods cannot be exchanged at all, although J. Parry and M. Bloch, *Money and the Morality of Exchange* (Cambridge, 1989) add that in traditional Indian societies – as also happens in Homer (see e.g. *Od.* 21.35 ff.) – some gifts are actually alienable. V. Veleri, 'Buying Women But Not Selling Them: Gift and Commodity Exchange in Huaulu Alliance', *Man*, 29 (1994), 1–26, and A. Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things. Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge, 1986), cannot accept the strict division between gift- and commodity-economies, and emphasize that gift exchange is also a matter of self-interested calculation. See also on this point P. Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. R. Nice (Cambridge, 1977), 171–83.

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gift-based society. On several occasions, Pindar is explicitly aware of the economic aspect of his relationship to his patrons, which he unabashedly presents in terms of a financial debt or business contract. Thus, in *Olympian* 10.1–12, he refers to his commission as a 'debt' (ὀφείλων, 3; χρέος, 8) owed his patron;[12] and in *Pythian* 11.41–2 (Μοῖσα. . .εἰ μισθοῖο συνέθευ παρέχειν | φωνὰν ὑπάργυρον, 'Muse it is your duty, since you have contracted to hire your voice for silver'), Pindar explicitly states that his Muse works for a fee, that she is a worker for hire (see especially μισθοῖο and φωνὰν ὑπάργυρον). Even if, as Kurke argues, the Pindaric ode is conducive to the patron's *megaloprepeia*, Pindar's role is still that of a labourer, and the poem is the product of his labour exchanged, as a commodity, for money. In other words, the focus is not on the type of transaction but on the status of the poet and his poem.

Isthmian 2 begins with a contrast between 'poets of old' and 'poets nowadays' in terms of whether they composed for a fee or not (*Isthm*. 2.1–13):

οἱ μὲν πάλαι, ὦ Θρασύβουλε, φῶτες, οἳ χρυσαμπύκων
ἐς δίφρον Μοισᾶν ἔβαινον κλυτᾷ φόρμιγγι συναντόμενοι,
ῥίμφα παιδείους ἐτόξευον μελιγάρυας ὕμνους,
ὅστις ἐὼν καλὸς εἶχεν Ἀφροδίτας
εὐθρόνου μνάστειραν ἀδίσταν ὀπώραν. 5
ἁ Μοῖσα γὰρ οὐ φιλοκερδής πω τότ᾽ ἦν οὐδ᾽ ἐργάτις·
οὐδ᾽ ἐπέρναντο γλυκεῖαι μελιφθόγγου ποτὶ Τερψιχόρας
ἀργυρωθεῖσαι πρόσωπα μαλθακόφωνοι ἀοιδαί.
νῦν δ᾽ ἐφίητι τὸ τὼργείου φυλάξαι
ῥῆμ᾽ ἀλαθείας ἐτᾶς ἄγχιστα βαῖνον, 10
'χρήματα, χρήματ᾽ ἀνήρ', ὃς φᾶ κτεάνων θ᾽ ἅμα λειφθεὶς καὶ φίλων.
ἐσσὶ γὰρ ὢν σοφός, οὐκ ἄγνωτ᾽ ἀείδω
Ἰσθμίαν ἵπποισι νίκαν

The men of long ago, O Thrasybulus, who used to mount the chariot of the golden-wreathed Muses, taking with them the glorious lyre, freely shot their honey-sounding hymns of love at any boy who was beautiful and had the sweetest bloom of late summer that woos fair-throned Aphrodite. For that time the Muse was not yet greedy for gain nor up for hire, nor were sweet, soft-voiced songs with their faces silvered over being sold from the hand of honey-voiced Terpsichore. But now she bids us heed the Argive's adage, which comes closest to the truth: 'Money, money makes the man', said he who lost his possessions and friends as well. But enough, for you are wise. Not unknown is the Isthmian chariot victory that I sing.[13]

[12] See G. Kromer, 'The Value of Time in Pindar's *Olympian* 10', *Hermes* 104 (1976), 421–2.

[13] Throughout this article, I use W. H. Race's translation, *Pindar. Nemean Odes. Isthmian Odes. Fragments* (Cambridge, MA, 1997), and W. H. Race, *Pindar. Olympian Odes. Pythian Odes* (Cambridge, MA, 1997), with slight modifications.

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These lines articulate a contrast between the poetry of the past and the commodified poetry of Pindar's time. Poets of old composed love poems motivated by the beauty of the *laudandus*, and they did so spontaneously and without delay (ῥίμφα). Spontaneous composition seems to be causally associated with the fact that, in times of old, the Muse had not yet become a 'worker up for hire' (ἐργάτις): she was not a 'lover of profit' (φιλοκερδής), nor indeed were her 'sweet, soft-voiced' songs (γλυκεῖαι. . .μαλθακόφωνοι ἀοιδαί) up for sale, like a prostitute's charms (ἐπέρναντο, 'were sold', is etymologically akin to πόρνη, 'prostitute').[14] In the present time, things have changed: poets nowadays must put their songs up for hire, like labourers working for their livelihood. 'Money is the man' (χρήματ' ἀνήρ) suggests that money 'has become a distinct basic value that is implicitly or explicitly compared to other basic values', and that it even threatens to substitute those values.[15]

Before we turn to Pindar's seemingly unflattering comparison of his Muse to a hired worker, or even a prostitute, a word must be said about the role and function of time, which, as we saw, is foregrounded through ῥίμφα ('spontaneous', line 3). Gift-exchange forges links between subjects that typically persist over time: reciprocally dependent transactors exchange inalienable items, thereby establishing long-term relations that may extend over successive generations, as is often the case in Homer. For instance, in *Il.* 6.119–236 Glaukos and Diomedes realize that they are united by inherited bonds of guest-friendship, initiated by the exchange of 'beautiful gifts of guest-friendship' (ξεινήϊα καλά; 218) between their respective grandfathers; consequently, they decide to forego fighting each other and renew the guest-friendship by the exchange of further gifts. By contrast, commodity exchange is a short-term, non-durational transaction. It establishes relations between objects: that is, alienable things exchanged between reciprocally independent (alien) transactors on the basis of a price-forming process, a system of purchase and sale, rather than on the basis of affective bonds

[14] Wilamowitz (n. 1), 311 with n. 1, noted that the vocabulary (ἐργάτις and ἐπέρναντο) used to describe the Muse alludes to prostitution. He cites Archilochos' fr. 206 W (ἐργάτις, an offensive reference to Neoboule). Also possibly relevant here is Archilochos' fr. 35W, if indeed βοῦς. . .ἐργάτης is an allusion to Neoboule suggesting a prostitute's labour. For the relation between πέρνημι and πόρνη, see J. Davidson, *Courtesans and Fishcakes. The Consuming Passions of Classical Athens* (London, 1997), 117.

[15] Seaford (n. 4), 161.

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or of social obligations.[16] Once the alienable objects (commodities, money) have changed hands, the transaction is concluded: it is an inherently instantaneous act, which is not, in principle, conducive to the creation of enduring relationships.

In monetized credit transactions, time is a crucial factor in the accrual of (monetary) interest, which increases in direct proportion to the time elapsed since the debt was contracted. In *Olympian* 10, Pindar claims that his 'forgetfulness' led to his debt to the *laudandus* becoming overdue (γλυκὺ γὰρ αὐτῷ μέλος ὀφείλων ἐπιλέλαθ'; 3), as a result of which he now finds himself in the position of a debtor in arrears (βαθὺ χρέος; 8). Thus, the poet is now willing to pay back his debt with interest (τόκος; 9), an interest so lavish that it will wash over, like a wave, the pebbles (ψῆφον; 9) used as counters on an abacus to calculate debt and interest.

The antithesis between the long-term, durational character of gift-exchange and the short-term, non-durational nature of monetary transactions is actually less sharp than it may appear at first sight. Contrary to monetary transactions, gifts need not, and indeed must not, be reciprocated instantly.[17] However, as Bourdieu has shown,

> the lapse of time interposed [between the giving of a gift and its reciprocal return] is what enables the gift or counter-gift to be seen and experienced as an inaugural act of generosity, without any past or future, i.e. without *calculation*.[18]

Gift-exchange, according to Bourdieu, is no more disinterested than monetary exchange; on the contrary, it is driven by the anticipation of returns over time. Its supposedly disinterested character is (to use Bourdieu's term) a 'sincere fiction' in which the calculation of personal interest is disguised by the *lapse of time* interposed between gift and counter-gift. This 'sincere fiction', this fictive antithesis between long-term gift-exchange and short-term monetary exchange, is unmasked and undermined when Pindar, in *Olympian* 10, presents the lapse of time as essential in the accumulation of his financial debt to the *laudandus* (a debt presumably initiated by the commission agreed upon by the transactors). Conversely, in *Isthmian* 2, he stresses that the non-

[16] See Gregory (n. 11), 19, 42–3; R. Seaford, *Reciprocity and Ritual. Homer and Tragedy in the Developing City-State* (Oxford, 1994), 14.

[17] See, for example, S. von Reden, 'The Commodification of Symbols: Reciprocity and Its Perversion in Menander', in C. Gill, N. Postlethwaite, and R. Seaford, *Reciprocity in Ancient Greece* (Oxford, 1998), 258.

[18] Bourdieu (n. 11), 171–2, emphasis in original.

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mercenary praise of the *laudandus* by the poets of old was delivered 'instantly' (ῥίμφα), as if it were part of a short-term, non-durational monetary transaction. Pindar attempts neither to conceal the economic aspects of his relationship with the *laudandi* nor to depart from the logic of interested calculation.

In view of our remarks above, the question suggests itself with renewed urgency: why does Pindar contrast his own self-avowedly commodified poetry with the supposedly disinterested, non-mercenary song-making of the poets of old? And why the opposition between his own 'prostituted' Muse and the spontaneous eroticism of earlier poetry? In order to answer these questions, we must first take into account the fact that *Isthmian* 2 articulates around the antithesis between erotic and non-erotic/epinikian poetry a broader contrast between two different types of poetry, two different types of *laudandi*, and two different sources of inspiration. The recipients of the poetry of old were καλοί ('beautiful'), and it was their beauty rather than the anticipation of material gain that attracted 'spontaneous' (ῥίμφα) poetic praise.[19] By contrast, the evocation of the contemporary Muse, presented in terms suggesting a prostitute with silver-painted face, whose work is her only means of sustenance (ἐργάτις), performs a shift from the disinterested eroticism of earlier poetry towards commodified sex and, by implication, towards commodified poetry. This shift, I submit, is not meant to disparage outright Pindar's song-making; rather, it is designed to offer an accommodation of the 'new' commodified poetry into traditional aristocratic attitudes towards those who must work for their living, including poets who compose for a monetary fee. The problem of commissioned poetry must have been felt all the more acutely if poets in Pindar's time had to compete for a commission, and/or composed poetry for different patrons concurrently.[20] In view of song-making having been reduced to a paid occupation, and poetic

[19] R. Rawles, 'Eros and Praise in Early Greek Lyric', in L. Athanassaki and E. Bowie (eds.), *Archaic and Classical Choral Song. Performance, Politics and Dissemination* (Berlin and Boston, MA, 2011), 139–59, discusses the embarrassment that poets felt at the commercialization of poetry, and the consequent presentation of their poems as erotic and disinterested. L. Woodbury, 'Pindar and the Mercenary Muse: *Isthm.* 2.1–13', *TAPhA* 99 (1968), 532, based on the scholia, claims that the 'old poets' are specifically Alkaeus, Ibycus, and Anakreon. However, his interpretation in the light of epinikian conventions is not very persuasive and, as Nisetich (n. 2), 138, points out, it does not explain Pindar's concern about the old poets as love poets.

[20] On this point, see N. J. Nicholson, *Aristocracy and Athletics in Archaic and Classical Greece* (Oxford, 2005), 67.

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praise having adopted the attributes of a financial transaction, Pindar seeks to defend his poetry and his own status against accusations of covetousness, by making his praise for the victorious athlete contingent upon precisely this defence.

The seemingly despondent realization, at line 11, that 'money is the man', that money defines human identity, implies that every aspect of human life and activity, including social relations and personal friendship, depends on money, and that no-one, not even Pindar, or Thrasyboulos, or Xenokrates, is exempt from this distressing fact of life. Significantly, however, Pindar refrains from discussing this matter any further, by claiming that such a discussion would be needless, since the recipient of the ode is 'wise' (σοφός). This is a cunning rhetorical stratagem which allows him to move to the praise of the victorious athlete: namely Thrasyboulos' father, Xenokrates, who is dead at the time of the ode's performance. The emphasis on Thrasyboulos' wisdom implies that, although he is aware of how easy it is for a wealthy patron to purchase praise for himself, since poetry is now a commodity, he prefers nonetheless to direct epinikian praise not to himself but rather to his father's achievements.[21] In other words, Thrasyboulos' wisdom consists not only in an awareness that 'money is the man' but also in the knowledge that Pindar's commissioned song celebrates events known to everyone (οὐκ ἄγνωτ᾽ ἀείδω; 12), namely Xenokrates' Isthmian victory, and is not merely motivated by the expectation of monetary gain. Pindar's ode may be the product of a commodity transaction but it is also made possible, crucially, by Xenokrates' well-known and indisputable victories; thus, it may be exempted from the category of purely commodified poetry. The realization that 'money is the man' may well be 'a truthful saying' (ῥῆμ᾽ ἀλαθείας ἐτᾶς ἄγχιστα βαῖνον; 10), but it is not incompatible with, nor can it negate, the truth of Xenokrates' athletic achievements. Pindar may no longer practice the 'spontaneous', emotion-driven poetry of earlier poets, but he can at least keep the right balance between commoditization and truthfulness.

This delicate balance between a focus on monetized value and the praise of traditional aristocratic values (such as beauty or athletic excellence) is, I submit, characteristic of *Isthmian* 2 as a whole. The old

[21] Pavese (n. 1), 103–12, and Kurke (n. 1), 240, argue that the point of σοφός is that Thrasyboulos possesses an understanding of the nature and uses of wealth; but there is nothing in this passage to suggest that wisdom specifically concerns the wise use of money. See also Nisetich (n. 2), 137, for a refutation of Pavese's claims.

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aristocratic value system and the new monetized economy are brought together into a symbiotic state, in which traditional values are still perceived as valid and desirable, except that now they can be acquired by those who appreciate them, at a (monetary) price: that is, they are commodified. Likewise, Pindar's ode is a valuable item of symbolic capital, which starts life as a commodity that may be acquired for a certain amount of money – without, however, compromising its status as valuable symbolic capital.[22] As has been demonstrated by Kopytoff, Osteen, and others, it is possible for possessions that start life as commodities to become singularized as uniquely personal, inalienable items, including as emblems of the personhood of their owners, or as symbols of power, hierarchy, and social status. In other words, commodities may give rise, over time, to non-market relationships between transactors: relationships that move away from the impersonality of market exchange and towards personal bonds of mutual obligations.[23]

It is this fundamental duality of commodities – as possessions convertible to and from symbolic capital – that Thrasyboulos is able to perceive thanks to his wisdom. He understands that, in a rapidly expanding monetized economy, praise is something that can be bought on the 'poetry market', as it were; at the same time, he understands (as does everyone else in Akragas and elsewhere) that the praise he has so acquired on behalf of his deceased father is fully deserved. What is more, the epinikian praise conferred by Pindar's commissioned song is divested of the negative connotations of commoditization by being presented not as an exclusively individual possession, but as an emblem of Xenokrates' exemplary embodiment of the values of his social class. For Xenokrates is repeatedly credited in the ode with attributes underlining his leadership and societal involvement: he was 'a light to the inhabitants of Akragas' (Ἀκραγαντίνων φάος; 17); he was renowned for his acts of hospitality (φιλόξενον ἔργον, 24; ξενίαν, 39), for athletic excellence and appreciation of music (30–2), for his 'sweet disposition' towards all men (ὀργὰν |...ὑπὲρ ἀνθρώπων γλυκεῖαν; 35–6), and for his pious observance of religious feasts (39); and he was revered by his fellow-citizens and respectful towards them (αἰδοῖος μὲν ἦν ἀστοῖς ὁμιλεῖν; 37).[24]

[22] On the mutual convertibility between symbolic and material capital, see further Bourdieu (n. 11), 179–83.

[23] I. Kopytoff, 'The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process', in Appadurai (n. 11), 73–7; M. Osteen, *The Question of the Gift. Essays Across Disciplines* (Routledge, 2002), 233–47.

[24] For the ambiguity of αἰδοῖος here ('revered' but also 'respectful'), see *Σ* 54a (III 219 Drachmann).

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Indeed, Pindar's epinikian praise of Xenokrates is given added value by serving as an incitement to Thrasyboulos to continue the family tradition of noble deeds:

> μήτ᾽ ἀρετάν ποτε σιγάτω πατρῴαν,
> μηδὲ τούσδ᾽ ὕμνους· ἐπεί τοι
> οὐκ ἐλινύσοντας αὐτοὺς ἐργασάμαν (44–6)

Let the son never keep silent his father's excellence nor these hymns, for I truly did not fashion them to remain stationary.

The appearance of ἐργασάμαν ('I did not fashion them') at the end of the poem is anything but fortuitous: on the contrary, it is deliberately chosen as an echo of ἐργάτις at the beginning of the ode. What was presented, at the outset, as a commodity transaction – namely the Muse's 'labour' in exchange for a fee – is now transformed into a different kind of labour – namely, the creative activity of an individual who (in contrast to the hired-out services of a prostitute) chooses to establish a lasting personal relationship with his patrons, the family of Xenokrates, through a labour of love, one that is as pleasurable for himself (see 33–4: 'the road is not steep, nor an uphill climb, when one brings the honours of the Muses to the home of a famous man') as it must be for its recipients. Contrary to the alienation inherent in impersonal commodity transactions, Pindar's ode, albeit having originated in precisely such a transaction, transforms itself into a vehicle of intensely personal relations (so much so that he can take the liberty of advising Thrasyboulos in lines 44–6). Having started life as an item ostensibly valued only for its exchange-value, the ode is progressively singularized as a symbol of a personal relationship between poet and patron, as well as symbolic capital capable of generating surplus value (in terms of social status) for its recipient.

GIANNA STERGIOU

giannastergiou@gmail.com

https://doi.org/10.1017/S001738351900024X Published online by Cambridge University Press