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Genre, Rhetoric, and Craft in Pindar's *Pythian 3*

Thomas Cole calls *Pythian 3* "the single most elaborate piece of rhetoric that has survived from the archaic age" (*The Origins of Rhetoric in Ancient Greece* 1995, 49). If Cole's words aptly describe *Pythian 3* as a poetic letter, which many think it to be, they even more aptly describe *Pythian 3* as an epinikion. I argue (1) that *Pythian 3* is an epinikion, (2) that Pindar gives it the form of an epistle as a rhetorical strategy to win audience appreciation of Hieron's *arete*, and (3) that in so doing, the poet succeeds brilliantly in crafting a form to suit his praise-singing purpose.

The notion that *Pythian 3* is a poetic epistle goes back at least to Wilamowitz (*Pindaros* 1922, 280). Many agree with him. But if *Pythian 3* remains the only example of the archaic age poetic epistle (Young, *HSCP* 1983, 31-32), we must doubt the existence of the genre. Moreover, we can explain the epistle form without inventing a genre: Pindar crafts this epinikion in epistle form to make it achieve its rhetorical aim. He opens this ostensibly private epistle-to which Hieron's illness is appropriately (fragment 42) confined-to the public. By revealing the intimate interior of Hieron's life, his illness in particular, to an audience, Pindar asks it not merely to recognize Hieron's *arete* (here, as fragment 42 urges, "turned to the outside," 83, in 70-71 and 73-74) but to see its recognition as counterbalancing this illness. If the gods deny mortals a fair balance of good and bad in life (81-82), the poet can persuade his audience to provide some remedy. Pindar's epistle form thus perfectly suits his aim to praise the ill Hieron. The poet belongs (as he implies) in the company of the skilled craftsmen of whom he speaks at the end (113).