

This paper offers a new interpretation of Pindar's *Ninth Pythian* lines 112-16, which relate the story of Danaos marrying off his forty-eight daughters. Previously, these lines have been understood as describing a footrace by the daughter's suitors to determine which suitor would marry which daughter. By reanalyzing Pindar's diction I suggest that this passage deliberately depicts Danaos' daughters in the marked terms of choral performance. This interpretation not only matches the representation of the Danaids as a performing chorus manifested by Aeschylus in his *Suppliants*, but it also further illuminates the way desire permeates and organizes this particular Pindaric ode.

Many commentators have passed over the Danaos passage with little remark (e.g. Gildersleeve, 1898, Schroeder, 1922, Carey, 1981). While those who have considered the passage have not noted the choral language (e.g. Farnell, 1930-32, Instone, 1996). My paper looks at three aspects of the diction of the Danaos story to argue that it describes the Danaids through language which is evocative of a choral performance. The traditional interpretation of this passage relies on a particular reading of lines 114-14a (*estasen gar hapanta choron/ en termasin autik' agonos*). Instone (1996) translates these lines to mean that prior to the race Danaos "set the whole group [of his daughters] straightaway on the course boundary." Farnell (1930) and Race (1997) render it similarly. I object to this reading on three grounds. (1) Farnell (1930), Slater (1969), and Instone (1996) understand *choros* in 114 to mean "a group." However, this is unparalleled in Pindar; every other use of *choros* refers to a performing chorus or to a dance (e.g. *N.* 5.23, *O.* 14.9, *P.* 10.38). (2) When Pindar applies the phrase *estasen gar hapanta choron* to Danaos, he uses the *terminus technicus* for arranging a chorus to perform (e.g. Pindar's *Paians* 52b.99 and Bacchylides' *Epinicians* 11.112; see also Calame, 1997: 45-8, Nagy, 1990: 361-2, Naerebout, 1997: 279). (3) The word *agon* in 114a has been understood as referring to the racecourse (e.g. Farnell, 1930, Instone, 1996) or to the race itself (e.g. Race, 1997). I discuss parallels in other early texts, where an *agon* is a space for dance performance (e.g. *Od.* 8.259-60, Alcman 3.8). Based on this evidence I contend that in 114a *agon* can flexibly refer to a space apt for both a male footrace and a female dance.

Scholars have long noted the erotic aspect of the *Ninth Pythian*. In particular, they have considered how the poem connects the *telos* of athletic victory with the *telos* of marriage, how it depicts different aspects of archaic wedding ritual, and how it treats the theme of *aidos* and *eros* (Winnington-Ingram, 1969, Felson-Rubin, 1978, 2004, Woodbury, 1972, 1982, Carson, 1982, Kohnken, 1984). The present paper builds on this discussion: I consider how the Danaos story adds a further dimension to the erotic theme of the poem by associating male athletic victory and with female chorality. My argument dovetails with that of Calame, who analyzes the connection between young women dancing and preparation for marriage (1997: 207, 222-45).

By evoking the image of a Danaid chorus in conjunction with a footrace Pindar connects two kinds of desire: one caused by athletic victory and the other aroused by choral performance. This analogy can be situated within the larger erotic themes of the *Ninth Pythian* and in the Pindaric corpus as a whole: Pindar draws a connection between athletes, choruses, and erotic desire to encourage the community to take part in the celebration and to protect against possible envy towards the victor. Thus, the Danaos story can be seen as a model for everyone present at the performances of Pindar's epinicians, including the *laudandus*, the audience, and the chorus to participate in the victory by placing themselves in the roles of desirer, facilitator of marriage, and object of desire.