

Pindar *Pythian* 2.52-56, *παιίνομαι*, and *Πιερίς*: Unhealthy and Healthy Fats in Greek and Indo-European

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I investigate the inherited phraseological background of Pindar, *Pythian Two*, lines 52-56, which include a number of metaphorical expressions for Archilochus’ poetry of blame. I identify Indo-European phraseological parallels for δάκος ... κακαγοριᾶν (53) and βαρυλόγοις ἔχθεσιν (55). As Plato *Laws* 934d-935e reveals, metaphors found in *P. 2.52-56* belong to the semantic field of ‘food/eating’. In this connection, I provide a comparative overview on the tie between verbal abuse and gluttony in Greek and linguistically related traditions. Blame/praise-related food/drink images are the same: blame-metaphors often reverse praise-metaphors. The use of *παιίνομαι* at *Pi. P. 2.56* may offer an instance of the same process: the Indo-European root **peiH-* ‘swell’, from which *παιίνομαι* is derived, underlies Greek *Πιερίς* and Vedic *payi* ‘swell’, which describe prosperity associated with praise-poetry within the Greek and Old Indic traditions.¹

1. Introduction

In this paper I focus on 52-56 of Pindar’s *Pythian Two*,² which reads:

... ἐμὲ δὲ χρεῶν
φεύγειν δάκος ἀδινὸν κακαγοριᾶν.
εἶδον γὰρ ἐκάς ἐὼν τὰ πόλλ’ ἐν ἀμαχανία
ψογερὸν Ἀρχίλοχον βαρυλόγοις ἔχθεσιν
παιινόμενον

But I must flee the unrelenting bite of slander, for standing at a far remove I saw Archilochus, the man of blame, often helpless, fattening himself on heavy-worded hatreds.

After framing the passage within its literary context (§2), I compare expressions found at 53 and 55 with those attested in other Indo-European traditions (§3). I then argue that Plato’s (*Laws* 934d-935e) diluted paraphrase of *P. 2.52-56* allows us to place the Pindaric verses in a wider system of metaphors, connecting envy/blame and praise with the semantic field of eating and drinking (§4). The same poetic images are found in other Indo-European traditions: special attention is drawn to blame-poetry food/drink-metaphors reconfigured as reversed versions of praise-poetry metaphors (§6). Eventually, the focus on verbal and nominal derivatives of the Indo-European root **peiH-* ‘swell’, such as Greek *Πιερίς* and Vedic *payi* ‘swell’, shows that these terms apply to the notion of prosperity correlated with good poetic foods/drinks in Greek and Old Indic (§6).

2. Contextualizing Pindar *Pythian Two* 52-56: *χάρις* and the Lack of It

A poem fraught with questions concerning its status as epinician, occasion, and composition date,³ Pindar’s *Pythian Two* honours Hieron of Syracuse, recalling a victory of his with the four-horse

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² In this paper, Pindar’s text is according to the Snell and Maehler 1987 edition. The quoted translations are taken from Jamison and Brereton (2014) and Stokes (1891).

³ For the debate in ancient exegetic Pindaric literature cf. Cingano 2006: 43-44. Cf. also Gantz 1978, and Young 1983, who provide an overview of the date problem, representing opposite views: following a claim first made by Wilamowitz (1922: 310-313), Gantz (1978: 19) considers the ode a ‘poetic epistle’, conversely, Young surmises that *Pythian 2* actually celebrates Hieron’s victory at Olympia in 468 BCE.

chariot without specifying where it was obtained.⁴ This omission has led scholars to doubt that the poem is a victory ode after all. Further issues are embedded with the enigmatic coda of the poem (72-96).⁵ Without aiming to provide an overall exegesis of *Pythian Two*, I will only spotlight thematic elements evidenced at 1-71 which are relevant to our passage, namely, the opposition χάρις ('reciprocity'/'gratitude/grace')⁶ vs. ἀχαριστία (lack of χάρις).⁷

After a majestic incipit mentioning the laudandus and his victory (4-7), at 14 Pindar defines his hymn as a "reward (ἄποινα) of the sovereigns' excellence (ἀρετά)"⁸ and recalls the positive example of Kinyras (15-17a), the king sovereign of the Cyprians (cf. *Il.* 11.19-21) who is still celebrated by his people, stating "the χάρις, due as a reward (πόνιμος) for (Kinyras') deeds and felt by the loving ones (i.e., the Cypriots) leads them (*sc.* to celebrate Kinyras)." Conversely, Ixion's story (21-48) exemplifies the lack of χάρις: Ixion failed to acknowledge and repay the gods' favours (cf. 24, where the lesson learned by Ixion is: "go and repay (τίνεσθαι) your benefactors (τὸν εὐεργέταν) with deeds of gentle grace!"). As a consequence of his impious actions, he was punished; moreover, his ἀχαριστία reflected upon his offspring, the Centaurs (42 "without the graces (ἄνευ Χαρίτων) she (*sc.* Nephela) generated to him an arrogant (ὑπερφίαλον) offspring").⁹ Our verses follow a *gnōmē* about the unchallengeable power of the gods (49-52) which concludes the mythological excursus. They are thus bound to this same system of oppositions, although the contrast χάρις vs. ἀχαριστία applies to the poetic sphere. Archilochus¹⁰ embodies the lack of χάρις: his poetic activity ultimately roots in 'helplessness' (ἀμαχανία);¹¹ growing fat on hatred, he is wealthy, but miserable. Conversely, Hieron's prosperity relies upon his ἀρετά. Pindar, a praise-master, is sending him a song (cf. the ring-structure built by μέλος, at the beginning of 4, 68) about his excellence (62-63 ἀμφ' ἀρετῆ || κελαδέων), as a 'gift of gratitude' (cf. 70 ἄθρησον χάριν).

This brief summary shows that 52-56 are part of an ode-internal conceptual system in which blame poetry (cf. ψογερόν, 55) and praise poetry (ῥυμνον, ἄποιν' ἀρετᾶς, 14) are counterposed. As a phraseological comparison will make evident, the contrast between praise and blame is articulated by means of expressions paralleled in Greek and other Indo-European traditions. It is thus worth examining a few phraseological highlights before delving into further interpretative matters of the passage.

3. Indo-European Inheritance in *Pi. P. 2.52-56: A Phraseological Survey*

3.1 Biting Words

If Bossi's (1990) integration to Archilochus' fragment 23 W κα[κοῖς δακεῖν] is correct, δάκος ... κακαγοριᾶν (*P.* 2.53) is a iambic innuendo. At the same time, δάκνω 'bite' combines with 'word/saying' elsewhere, cf. *Il.* 5.493 δάκε δὲ φρένας Ἔκτορι μῦθος, *Od.* 8.185 θυμοδακῆς ... μῦθος.¹²

The semantic development 'bite/eat = evil' is common in Indo-European languages. Several terms for 'pain' are lexicalised derivatives of the Indo-European root **h₁ed-* 'bite, eat' (Schindler 1975: 62), take, e.g., Greek ὀδύνη (Aeolic ἐδύνᾱ) 'birth pain', Armenian *erkn* 'birth pains', possibly, Old Irish *idu* 'pain, labour',¹³ and Hittite *idalu-* 'evil, bad' (adj.), which remarkably applies to 'word' in

⁴ The mention of the place of victory is a standard feature of the epinician cf. Carey 1981: 21.

⁵ Recent selected references on the topic are Philippides 2009, Steiner 2011.

⁶ For a discussion of the meaning of the term in ancient Pindaric scholarship see Pontani 2013.

⁷ On χάρις as connected with the idea of "positive exchange" cf. MacLachlan 1993: 68-76; Kurke 1991: 17-33.

⁸ On ἄποινα ἀρετᾶς cf. Massetti 2020: 474-475.

⁹ On *P.* 2.42-48 cf. Brillante 1995: 33-38.

¹⁰ On Archilochus in these Pindaric verses, cf. Miller 1974, Gerber 2008.

¹¹ On the concept of ἀμαχανία cf. Martin 1983: 9-40, 49-50. On the interpretation of this term in the passage cf. Held 2003: 30-48, who argues for a socio-political meaning.

¹² Besides being reprised by Eur. *Hipp.* 1314, an analogous combination is found in Anacr. fr. 37.9 W δακέθυμά μοι λέγοντες. Gk. δάκε δὲ φρένας, θυμοδακῆς (*Il.* 5.493, *Od.* 8.185) are comparable to δάκνω/ομαι ... θυμόν (Hes., etc.), δακέθυμος (Ib., Sim.).

¹³ Matasović 2009 s.v. PCelt. **fedon-* proposes a different etymology for OIr. *idu-*. According to him, this term must go back to IE **ped-* (without a given meaning and followed by a question mark, but identical to the IE root for 'foot') because the expected outcome of the cluster **dw* (allegedly, *idu-* **h₁edwol/n-*, in Matasović's entry) in OIr. is **db*. I must here stress that Schindler (1975: 59) does not actually set up **h₁edwol/n-* as a direct formal antecedent of OIr. Differently, he

KUB XVII 4.3 ḪUL-lu (: *idālu*) *uddar* “evil word” and KBo V 13 ii 26-27 *idaluṣ memiyaṣ* “evil utterance.”

3.2 The Unbearable Heaviness of Hatred

The juncture βαρυλόγοις ἔχθεισιν (*P.* 2.55) parallels Greek phrasemes of the type ‘heavy evil’ (de Lamberterie 1990: 534-535), namely junctures of the type ‘heavy conflict’: βαρεῖα ἔρις (e.g. *Il.* 22.55),¹⁴ βαρὺ νεῖκος (*Pi. N.* 6.52); ‘heavy badness’: βαρεῖα κακότης (*Il.* 10.71); and ‘heavy negative feeling’: βαρὺς χόλος (*Hes. Th.* 615, cf. also βαρυπάλαμος χόλος in *Pi. P.* 11.23), βαρὺς κότος (*Aeschl. Eum.* 801, etc. matching βαρύκοτος in *Eum.* 780, 810), βαρεῖα ὀργή (*Soph. Phil.* 368), βαρεῖα μῆνις (*Soph. Aj.* 656).

Moreover, in several Indo-European languages derivatives of the root **g^herh₂-* ‘heavy’, on which Greek βρίθω ‘press’,¹⁵ βαρὺς, Latin *gravis*, Vedic *gurí-* ‘heavy’ are based, combine with terms meaning ‘evil/bad thing(s)’, cf. Latin *grauē bellum ... grauior ... seditio* (*Liv.* 6.11.1, etc.); Old High German *kreg* ‘war’ (cf. German *Krieg*) reflects **g^hrih₂-kó-* and thus lexicalises ‘the heavy (thing)’ (Kölligan 2013).¹⁶ The middle step of this semantisation process from ‘heavy/pressing (thing)’ to ‘heavy war’ to ‘war’ is found in *Il.* 7.343 ἐπιβρίση πόλεμος “the war presses heavily.”¹⁷ ‘Heaviness’ is additionally predicated of verbal abuse, cf., e.g., Latin *gravis contumelia* (*Caes. Civ.* 3.81.1). Even more remarkable are instances of Vedic *gurí-*, cf.

RV 1.147.4cd

mántro gurúḥ púnar astu só asmā , ánu mṛkṣīṣṭa tan_uvāṃ duruktaiḥ

Let this **heavy spell** be back at him: he **should bring harm** upon his own body by **his evil words**.

Vedic *mṛkṣīṣṭa tan_uvāṃ duruktaiḥ* (at [d]) matches the state of things underlying Greek βλασφημία ‘insult’, a compound whose second member is based on the Greek φημί ‘talk’. The first member βλασ- can be traced back to **m₁ḱ^h-s-*, a zero-grade first compound member based on the Greek *s*-stem βλάβος ‘damage’ exhibiting consonant simplification βλασ- from **βλαψ-*, derived from the Indo-European **melk^h-* ‘damage’,¹⁸ the same root underlying Vedic *mṛkṣīṣṭa* (RV 1.147.4d). Significantly, *mántro gurúḥ* partly corresponds to βαρυλόγος— *gurí-* is identical to βαρὺς and *mántra*-semantically overlaps -λογία—, while the compound *duruktá-* is structurally akin to Greek κακαγορία ‘evil-talking’, its first member *dur-* meaning ‘bad/evil’, its second member *-uktá-* ‘said’ being a *to*-derivative to the Indo-European root **uek^h-* ‘say’. Additionally, ‘heavy hatred’ as opposed to ‘praise’, cf.

RV 7.56.19cd

imé śámśam vanuṣyató ní pānti , gurú dvéṣo áraruṣe dadhanti

They (*sc.* the Maruts) protect **the laud** from the rapacious; they establish **heavy hatred** for the ungenerous.

To the reader of Pindar’s *Pythian Two* the contrast between ‘laud’ (*śámśa-*, at [c]) and ‘heavy hatred’ (*gurú dvéṣas-*, at [d]) is reminiscent of the Pindaric antinomy between the gift of χάρις and ‘heavy-worded hatreds’ (cf. §2).

proposes (p. 59) that *idu-* in any case derives from an analogical substitution and envisages two scenarios: (a) that a OIr. *edun-s* (> OIr. *idu-*) analogically substituted **edūō-*; (b) that OIr. **iud-* (< **h₁edūō-*) was analogically replaced on the model of feminine *-iōn*-stems.

¹⁴ Cf. also the Mycenaean man’s name *pu₂-ke-qi-ri /P^huge-g^hrīns/* (PY, Ta 711.1).

‘who escaped (ἔφυγε) the heavy one (βρῖ-), on which cf. García Ramón 2009.

¹⁵ Beekes (2009 *s.v.* βρῖ) points out that the expected outcome of **g^hrh₂-i-* in Greek is **βαρι-*. However, as de Lamberterie (1990: 551) explains, one can imagine that *βρῖ-* derives from a metathesized form **g^hrh₂-i-* > **g^hrih₂-*.

¹⁶ ὄβριμος Ἄρης, Handout: Treffen der Arbeitsgruppe im Rahmen des DAAD-VIGONI-Projekts ‘Divine Epithets in Ancient Greece’, Milano February 14, 2013.

¹⁷ Cf. also the collocations of Hittite *nakki-* ‘heavy’, ‘difficult/grievous’ (cf. Widmer 2005: 190-208), a congener of Greek ὄγκος ‘weight’ found in KUB 24.9 ii 9 (MH/NS) *nakki kurur* “the grievous enmity” (cf. García Ramón 2010a: 78-80).

¹⁸ On βλάβος cf. Frisk 1960-1972 *s.v.*

The comparative-phraseological analysis of the verses thus reveals that the Pindaric expressions may reflect inherited conceptual patterns, such as the polarity ‘praise’ vs. ‘blame’.¹⁹ However, the presented material does not disclose how Pi. P. 2.52-56 were interpreted by a Greek audience/readership more or less contemporary to Pindar. A Platonic passage which, I will argue, is referring to Pindar’s *Pythian Two* 52-56, provides us with an interpretative insight into the metaphoric system underlying these verses. This system, I submit, is imbued with further Indo-European poetic metaphors. Let’s then turn to Plato’s *Pythian Two* 52-56.

4. Plato’s *Pythian Two*

I propose that the following passage from Plato’s *Laws* contains a diluted paraphrase of Pindar’s *Pythian Two* 52-56:

Pla. *Leg.* 9.934d-935e

Μηδένα **κακηγορείω** μηδεῖς· ὁ δὲ ἀμφισβητῶν ἐν τισὶ λόγοις ἄλλος ἄλλω διδασκέτω καὶ μανθανέτω τὸν τε ἀμφισβητοῦντα καὶ τοὺς παρόντας ἀπεχόμενος πάντως τοῦ **κακηγορεῖν**. [...] πρῶτον μὲν **ἐκ λόγων**, κούφου πράγματος, ἔργῳ μίση τε καὶ **ἔχθραι βαρύταται γίνονται· πράγματι** γὰρ **ἀχαρίστω**, **θυμῷ**, **χαριζόμενος ὁ λέγων**, ἐμπιπλὰς ὀργὴν κακῶν ἐστιαμάτων, ὅσον ὑπὸ παιδείας ἡμερώθη ποτέ, πάλιν ἐξαργιῶν τῆς ψυχῆς τὸ τοιοῦτον, θηριούμενος ἐν δυσκολίᾳ ζῶν γίγνεται, **πικρὰν τοῦ θυμοῦ χάριν ἀποδεχόμενος**. [...] **ποιητῆ δὲ κωμωδίας ἢ τινος ἰάμβων ἢ Μουσῶν μελωδίας** μὴ ἐξέστω μήτε λόγῳ μήτε εἰκόνι μήτε θυμῷ μήτε ἄνευ θυμοῦ **μηδαμῶς μηδένα τῶν πολιτῶν κωμωδεῖν**· ἐὰν δέ τις ἀπειθῆ, τοὺς ἀθλοθέτας ἐξείργειν ἐκ τῆς χώρας

No one **shall abuse** anyone. If one is disputing with another in argument, he shall either speak or listen, and he shall wholly refrain **from abusing** either the disputant or the bystanders. For from those light things, **words**, there spring in deed things **most heavy to bear, even hatreds** and feuds, and **the man who utters such words is gratifying a thing most ungracious and sating his passion with foul foods**, and by thus brutalizing afresh that part of his soul which once was humanized by education, he makes a wild beast of himself through his rancorous life, **and wins only gall for gratitude from his passion ... A composer of a comedy or of any iambic or lyric song shall be strictly forbidden to ridicule any of the citizens** either by word or by mimicry, whether with or without passion; and if anyone disobeys, (the Presidents of the Games) shall banish him wholly from the country.

The phraseological data speak for themselves:

- (a) In both texts *κακα/ηγορία* denotes ‘verbal abuse’;
- (b) The expression *ἐκ λόγων ... ἔχθραι βαρύταται γίνονται* (Plato) is built with the same lexical material of *βαρυλόγοις ἔχθεσιν* (Pindar);
- (c) The Platonic comparison between negative emotions and food, *ἐμπιπλὰς ὀργὴν κακῶν ἐστιαμάτων* may be connected to the use of *δάκος* and *παινόμενον* in Pindar;
- (d) Plato mentions ‘a poet from the comedy or iambs’ to give an example of a potentially abusive speaker. The reference immediately reminds us of Archilochus’ paradigm in Pindar.
- (e) Last but not least, the opposition *χάρις* vs. *ἀχαριστία*, Pi. P. 2’s leitmotiv, is emphasised by Plato: insulting is a “thing which lacks *χάρις*.”²⁰

The comparison between Pi. P. 2.52-56 and Pla. *Leg.* 9.934d-935e thus shows us that Pindaric expressions such as *δάκος ... κακαγοριᾶν* (v. 53), *βαρυλόγοις ἔχθεσιν || παινόμενον* (55-56), came to be conceptually associated with the semantic field of ‘poetic junk food’ already in the 5th-4th century BCE. Some Pindaric commentators did suggest linking the inelegant portrayal of blame

¹⁹ On the counterbalancing principle of praise and blame in Indo-European speaking world cf. Dumézil 1943 and Ward 1973.

²⁰ Note also the connection between *παινομαι* and *χαίρω* established by ancient Pindaric commentators, cf. Σ 101b Drachmann *ἐπεὶ βαρυλόγοις ἔχθεσιν ἐπαινετο καὶ ἔχαρεν*.

poetry in *Pythian Two* and gluttony (Nagy 1999: 224-229; Brown 2006: 36-46). However, as *παιίνω/ομαι* does not exclusively apply to body-fat in Ancient Greek and, in particular, in Pindar, where it also refers to material wealth (cf. *P.* 4.150 *πλοῦτον παιίνων*), the link between *ἔχθεσιν παινόμενον* (55-56) and ‘bad food’ may be missing, at least for modern-day readers of Pindar. Yet ‘fattening’, ‘envy’ and ‘satiety of foods and feelings’ are interconnected concepts in Greek choral lyric and beyond.

5. Poetic Food and Drinks in Greek and Indo-European

As Nagy (1999: 224-229) points out, within Greek and other Indo-European traditions ‘gluttony’ and ‘verbal abuse’ often go together. In *Odyssey* 18, Irus, the beggar who attacks Odysseus, is “renowned for his greedy belly” (*μετὰ δ’ ἔπρεπε γαστέρι μάργῃ*).²¹ In a complementary way, in the Old Irish saga *Cath Maige Tuired* 26-27, the mouth of the satiric poet Cridenbél grows out of his breast causing him to never eat his fill.

Cath Maige Tuired 26

& atclighed daul esba isin tech, Cridenbel a ainm, a beolæ di suide asa bruindie

And he (*sc.* Dagdae) used to meet an idle blind man named Cridenbél, whose mouth was out of his breast.

I would add that the triad ‘verbal abuse, envy, drunkenness’ lies at the basis of the Scandinavian poem *Lokasenna* (“Loki’s Insults”, henceforth *Ls.*), a dialogue between Loki and the gods: a drunken Loki breaks into Æsir’s feast to insult all the guests. In the prose introduction to the poem, we learn that Loki was expelled from the feast because he had killed one of Æsir’s serving-men, whom the guests had praised:

Ls. Introduction

Menn lofoðo mjök, hversu góðir þjónustomenn Ægis vóro. Loki mátti eigi heyra þat, ok drap hann Fimafeng. Þá skóko æsir skjöldo sína ok æppo at Loka, ok elto hann braut til skógar

The guests praised much the ability of Ægir’s serving men. Loki might not endure that, and he slew Fimafeng (*sc.* one serving-man). Then the gods shook their shields and howled at Loki and drove him away to the forest.

In Greek choral lyric too, ‘feeding’ the laudandus and the audience with excessive praise is dangerous. In Pindar the term *κόρος*, a nominal cognate of *κορέννυμι* ‘feed’,²² means ‘satiety (of songs), which causes annoyance and envy in the listeners’ or ‘greed, insolence’ (Slater 1969 *s.v.*): as such, it contrasts with ‘praise’, cf. *O.* 2.95 *ἀλλ’ αἶνον ἐπέβα κόρος* “but enough: upon praise comes satiety of songs”, and ‘excellence’, *Pi.* fr. 169.15 *οὐ κό]ρω ἀλλ’ ἀρετᾶ* “not by greed but by excellence.” As expected, *κόρος* is also associated with verbal abuse, cf. *O.* 13.10 *Υβριν, Κόρου ματέρα θρασύμυθον* “Hybris, the bold-tongued mother of Greed.” In this connection, Nagy links the Pindaric notion of *κόρος* to the use of *κορέννυμι* in hexameter poetry, pointing out that the verb applies to animals of prey, cf. *Il.* 8.379-380 *τις καὶ Τρώων κορέει κύνας ἢδ’ οἰωνούς || δημῶ καὶ σάρκεσσι* “one of the Trojans will surely feed the dogs and birds with his fat and flesh.”²³ Analogously, Nagy submits, slanderers who bite like dogs (cf. again *P.* 2.53 *δάκος*) ‘grow fat’ on envy, the main ingredient of blame poetry, as stated by Bacchylides and Pindar:

Ba. 3.67-68

Εὖ λέγειν πάρεστιν ὄσ[τις] [μ]ὴ φθόνῳ παιίνεται

Anyone who does not **fatten himself on envy** may **praise** (this warrior).

²¹ On *γαστρίμαργος* (*Pi.* *O.* 1.82) cf. Steiner 2002. On the theme of consumption of food/goods combining with *ὑβρις* cf. Levine 1982: 200-204.

²² According to García Ramón and Helly (2007), *κόρος* reflects **kórh₁-o-*, a derivative of Indo-European **kerh₁-* ‘make grow’, *contra* Rix and Kümmel 2001: 329, which reconstruct a root **kerh₃-* ‘saturate’.

²³ In *Pi.* *N.* 9.23 the corpses ‘fatten’ (*παιίνω*) smoke.

There is however a component of enjoyment also in envious people. Indeed, Pindar says that envious people feed on ‘words’ as they would on a delicacy:

Pi. N. 8.22-25

ὄψον δὲ λόγοι φθονεροῖσιν,
ἄπτεται δ’ ἐσλῶν ἀεὶ, χειρόνεσσι δ’ οὐκ ἐρίζει.

κεῖνος καὶ Τελαμῶνος δάψεν υἱόν

Words are a **delicacy-to-eat** for **those who are envious**. | He **grabs-at** the noble rather than quarrel with the inferior. | That one [= Odysseus] even **feasted-on** the son-of-Telamon ... (trans. Nagy, bold is mine)²⁴

As Nagy highlights, in *Nemean Eight* “the idea of *phthónos*, meaning ‘envy’, is metaphorized as a voracious appetite for delicious food to be devoured by speakers of negative wording.” The use of ὄψον ‘delicacy-to-eat’ harks the metaphor to a system of images connected with sweet, enjoyable poetic foods (see immediately below). However, ἄπτεται ‘grabs-at’ (used in connection with food in *Od.* 4.60, 10.379 and dogs in *Il.* 8.339), and δάψεν ‘feasted-on’, which hints at the envious words spoken by Odysseus against Ajax, reveal the brutal feeding nature of the envious. Conversely, Pindar compares non-blame poetry to a *sweet, envy-free meal*, cf.

Pi. fr. 124c

δείπνου δὲ λήγοντος γλυκὸν τρογάλιον
καίπερ πεδ’ ἄφθονον βοράν

When the dinner ceases, **dessert** is pleasant even after an **envy-free meal**.

This passage may in turn be connected with several other ones, which equate poetry to

- (a) a food/meal, μεταδόρπιον ‘dessert’ (Pi. fr. 123ab.2), ἔτνος ‘soup’ (Alcm. fr. 17 P), αἰκλον ‘evening meal’ (Alcm. fr. 95b P);
- (b) something that can be ‘tasted’ (Greek γεύομαι), e.g., Pi. *I.* 5.19-20 τὸ δ’ ἐμόν ... κέαρ ὕμνων γεύεται “but my heart tastes hymns”, paralleling Old Indic passages, in which *jos* ‘take pleasure’ (from Indo-European **ǵeus-*, like Greek γεύομαι) combines with terms meaning ‘song/poetry’;
- (c) a drink, a metaphor articulated in a variety of interrelated poetic images in Greek and other Indo-European languages. Poetic expressions of the type ‘sprinkling (ἄρδω, ραίνω) with songs’ or ‘pouring (χέω) poetic words/voice/song’ (Kurke 1989) are widely attested in Greek Archaic poetry and may originate from the concomitance of speech and libation-gestures,²⁵ e.g.

Pi. fr. 6b

ἄρδοντ’ αἰοδαῖς

They **sprinkle** with **songs**.

Pi. *P.* 5.98-101

[...] μεγαλᾶν δ’ ἀρετᾶν

δρόσῳ μαλθακᾷ

ῥανθεισᾶν κόμων {θ’} ὑπὸ χεύμασιν,

²⁴ Cf. also Nagy 2021, who notes “In the wording of Pindar, it is as if Ajax, as a noble character in epic, had been skewered not by his own sword, nor even by any envy felt against him by Odysseus, but, rather, by the actual words spoken by an ostensibly envious Odysseus or, even worse, by the indiscriminate words of epic quoting the envious words of an ostensibly ignoble character in epic.” In the quoted translation I have removed the Greek transliterations.

²⁵ On (a), (b), and (c) in Greek cf. Nünlist 1998: 178-199, 314-316, West 2007: 89-90. For Indo-European comparanda cf. also García Ramón 2010b: 69-106. On literary passages in which the sweetness of poetry is compared to a liquid substance (‘honey’ in Greek, ‘hydromele’ in Old Norse) cf. also Bader 1989: 30-32.

ἀκούοντί ποι χθονία φρενί

Perhaps they hear with their minds beneath the earth of the great achievements **sprinkled with soft dew beneath the outpourings of revel song.**

These passages parallel expressions of the type ‘pour voice’, or ‘fill [with liquid] words’ found in several Indo-European traditions. Phrasemes of this description regularly feature derivatives of IE *ǵʰeu- ‘pour’ (cf. χεύμασιν, *P.* 5.100), e.g., Vedic *imá girah ... juhomi* “I pour these songs” (RV 2.27.1ab), Latin *fundere preces* (cf. Verg. *Aen.* 5.233-238); derivatives of Indo-European *pleh₁- ‘fill’ in Vedic, e.g., *tvām girah ... á pṛñanti* “you do the songs fill”, Latin, e.g., V.F. *Arg.* 4.81 *laetis hortatibus implet* “(Iris) fills ... with the glad spurs”, Old Norse, e.g., *Skáldskaparmal* 10a *Óðreris ... fyllr* “Fill of Óðreyrir”, a kenning for ‘poetic art’, and the roots *seuh₃- ‘to fill’ or *sh₂eu- ‘sprinkle’ in Hittite, e.g. KBo LIII 12 A iii 36f., 43 *A-NA DINGIR.MEŠ anda šunni* “pour the words to the gods.”

Pindar also describes his poem as a ‘song-drink’, i.e. through a metaphor paralleling Old Norse kennings ‘drink of X’ designating ‘poetry/poem(s)’, e.g. *drykkir Dúrnis* “drink of Durnis” (*Laufás Edda* 8), cf.

Pi. N. 3.77-79

πέμπω μεμιγμένον μέλι λευκῶ

σὺν γάλακτι, κίρναμένα δ’ ἔερσ’ ἀμφέπει,

πόμ’ αἰοίδιμον Αἰολίσσιν ἐν πνοαῖσιν αὐλῶν

I send you **this mixture of honey with white milk**, which the stirred foam crowns, **a drink to sing on**, accompanied by the Aeolian breaths of pipes.²⁶

6. Metaphoric Reversals: *Lokasenna*

With reference to the theme of praise and blame as good and bad foods/drinks, a final comparison is relevant. In the *Lokasenna* (see above, §5), Loki’s slandering is described by means of expressions which are reminiscent of those applying to praise-poetry in Old Norse and other Indo-European traditions. In announcing his intention to crash the gods’ party to Eldir, Loki likens his own blame to a substance which blends with the mead of Æsir’s sons, cp.

Ls. 3

iðll ok áfo

færi ek ása sonom

ok blend ek þeim

svá meini mjǫð!

(Loki:) “I will bear strife and hate to the sons of Æsir and **so mix their mead with poison!**”

Loki’s slandering is thus the opposite of ‘praise-poetry’, or may be regarded as, say, a polluted version of it. Indeed, Old Norse kennings for ‘poem’ occasionally feature the term ‘mead’ (Ginevra 2020: 73-74), like *mjaðar Yggs* “the mead of Yggr” (Einarr skálaglamm Helgason, *Vellekla* 36) and *miði burar Bors* “the mead of the son of Borr” (Þblǫnd fr. 1). Old Norse *ok blend ... meini mjǫð* “to blend their mead with my poison” is comparable to the Pindaric “mixture of honey, the drink of song”, denoting praise poetry in *N.* 3.78-79 (see §5). The Indo-European praise-poetry metaphor of ‘drink/food of poetry’ is thus reversed in the *Lokasenna*: if Pindar wished to offer an ‘envy-free’ meal (ἄφθονον βοράν, Pi. fr. 124c.2) to his dedicatee, Loki intends to offer a drink which is all but ‘poison-free’. Another instance of the same ‘metaphor-reversal’ process, is seen at *Ls.* 4:

hrópi ok rógi

ef þú eyss á holl regin: á þér muno þau þerra þat!

(Eldir:) “If you (*sc.* Loki) **sprinkle the gods with contumely and clamour**, they will wipe it all off on you!”

“Sprinkling ... with contumely and clamour” is a blame/reversed version of both Old Norse

²⁶ On this passage and Indo-European parallels cf. Massetti (forthcoming).

kennings for ‘poetry’ featuring Old Norse *regn* ‘rain’, a cognate of *regin* ‘sprinkle’ (*Ls.* 4), such as *dimmt dvergregn* “the dark dwarf-rain” (HallarSteinn, *Rekstefja* 31), *regn rekka Þorins* “the rain of the men of Þorinn” (Þórðr Kolbeinsson, *Eiríksdrápa* 14) and poetic expressions of the type ‘sprinkle (with) odes’, cf. ἄρδοντ’ αἰδαῖς (Pi. fr. 6b etc., cf. §5).

In summa: the way in which ‘poetic junk food/drink’ is portrayed in different Indo-European traditions occasionally relies upon food/drink-metaphors. The terms occurring within these expressions take on positive or negative nuances depending on the contexts in which they are employed. The use of *παινώμαι* at Pi. *P.* 2.56 might ultimately reflect a ‘metaphor-reversal’ process. Indeed, ‘fat’, ‘swelling’ and ‘nourishing’ apply to praise-metaphors in Greek and at least another Indo-European tradition, i.e., Old Indic.

7. Unhealthy and Healthy Fats: *παινώ/ομαι* and *Πιερίς*

Greek *παινώ/παινώμαι*, a derivative of Indo-European **peiH-* ‘swell’ underlying Vedic *payi*, Young Avestan *pay* ‘swell’, and Lithuanian *piyù* ‘to receive milk’, is a cognate of *Πιερία*,²⁷ the name of a region located to the North of Olympus. Occasionally recalled as a place where gods stop off on their way to their different destinations, in Hesiod (*Th.* 53-54) the Pieria is the homeland of the Muses, hence their epithet *Πιερίδες*, i.e., ‘from the Pieria’, cf.

[Hes.] *Scut.* 206

Μοῦσαι Πιερίδες, λιγὺ μέλομένης ἐκκυῖαι

The **Pierian Muses**, and they looked as though they were singing piercingly.

Martin West (1966: 174) suggested that the epithet ‘Pierian’ points to the Olympus-Pieria district as a “principal centre of [the Muses’] cult.” If so, one may still wonder why the poets’ deities came to be associated with the ‘fattest land’. In this regard, I figure two possible explanations, which may be considered as two sides of the same system of images related with the exchange-mechanisms peculiar to praise poetry in ancient societies, namely (i) that the Muses are from Pieria because this is a region rich in cattle, the currency used to remunerate ancient poets, and (ii) that the association ‘Muses’-‘Pieria’ relies upon the poetic image of poetry as a food/drink- offer which makes the god/dedicatee ‘fat’, i.e., stronger, wealthier, and more glorious.

My account for (i) comes from afar. In the *Fourth Homeric Hymn*, Hermes cattle-theft is repaid with Hermes’ musical gift to Apollo. As P. Jackson [Rova] shows (2014: 101-117), the episode exemplifies crucial poet-patron exchange dynamics in Indo-European speaking societies. As Rigvedic sages plainly tell us, if an abundant payment in cattle is disbursed, the poet secures his patron’s name a place among the gods, cf.

RV 10.62.7cd

sahásram me dádato aṣṭakarnīyàḥ

śrávo devéṣuv akrata

Giving me a thousand (cows) with cut-branded ears, they (*sc.* the patrons) made fame for themselves among the gods.²⁸

It is thus significant that in the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, the cattle stolen by Hermes are located in Pieria, cf.

HH. 4.70-71

Πιερίης ἀφίκανε θεῶν ὄρεα σκίοεντα,

ἔνθα θεῶν μακάρων βόες ἄμβροτοι αὐλιν ἔχεσκον

(*sc.* Hermes) arrived hurrying to the shadowy mountains of Pieria, where the divine cattle of

²⁷ The place name *Πιερία* may be built on the feminine *πίερα* with apologetic loss of -ι-; no Greek word displays a sound-sequence -ιειρι-. It is uncertain whether *Ériu* ‘Ireland’ belongs to the same root, cf. O’Rahilly 1946: 7-28 for critics.

²⁸ As cows are acquired by means of (poetic) words, the goddess Speech (*Vāk-*) milks refreshments to the poets, cf., e.g., RV 8.100.11.

the blessed gods had their steeds.

It is conceivable that the land in which the tutelary deities of poets were born is the place where immortal cows are raised, i.e., the rich/fertile land par excellence. In this connection, it is also tantalizing to link the image of the fertile poetic land to the Pindaric kenning ‘Pierian plowmen’, which applies to the poets in Pi. N. 6.32-33 Πιερίδων ἀρόταις || δυνατοὶ παρέχειν πολὺν ὕμνον “(They, sc. the laudandi) can supply the Pierians’ plowmen an abundant laud.”²⁹ The ‘Pierian ploughmen’, i.e., praise poets, are thus poets who ‘fatten’, i.e. ‘achieve material prosperity’, by ploughing the pasture of poetic praise, that is, the fattest land (Pieria), where the Muses themselves were born. In this scenario, the metaphor of ‘fattening on poetic hatreds’, applying to Archilocus in Pi. P. 2.55-56 configures as the reversal of the praise-poet, who ‘fattens’ with praise-words inspired by the Pierian Muses.

(ii) In a complementary fashion, Περία and Περὶς may be framed within the system of food/drink-metaphors partly illustrated above (§4). Linguistic cognates of πιαίνω/ομαι and Περία apply to the poetic words offered to the gods in Old Indic religious hymns.³⁰ The poetic vision of poets ‘swells’ (Vedic *pay*³) among the gods, while their poetic word is ‘nourishing’, cf.

RV 2.2.9

evá no agne amṛteṣu pūrvya , dhīṣ pīpāya bṛháddivēṣu mānuṣā

In this way, O foremost Agni, (**hymnic**) **vision swells** for us among the immortals dwelling in lofty heaven through the human (lifespans).

RV 1.101.1a

prá mandīne pitumád arcatā vácaḥ

Address a **nourishing speech** to the exultant one.

Vedic *pitumánt-* is a *mant-*derivative of Vedic *pitú-* ‘nourishment’, a derivative from Indo-European **peiH-*.³¹ Significantly, the idea of ‘nourishing’ is recalled in the same hymn in a circular way, cf.

RV 1.101.10

mādāyasva háribhir yé ta indra , ví ṣyasva śipre ví ṣjasva dhéne

ā tvā susīpra hárayo vahant_u ṣśán havyāni prāti no jusasva

Reach exhilaration along with the fallow bays that are yours, Indra. **Unfasten your two lips; unloose the two nourishing streams.** Let your fallow bays convey you here, lovely-lipped one. Eagerly take pleasure in our oblations.

We recover a consistent metaphoric system: the two lips (Vedic *śipre*, 10b) of the poet are ‘two nourishing streams’ (Vedic *dhéne*, 10b), therefore, the spoken word (Vedic *vacaḥ*, 1a) is ‘nourishing’ (Vedic *pitumát*, 1a). Elsewhere, the poets’ hymn is ‘a refreshment (in metres)’ which is made flow (Vedic *kṣar*) to the gods, see, e.g.

RV 8.7.1ab

prá yád vas triṣṭúbham iṣam , māruto vípro ákṣarat

²⁹ For agriculture metaphors, though not involving the Pierides cf. Nünlist 1998: 135-141, n. 27; Pasetto 2021: 100-112.

³⁰ Vedic *páyasvant-* ‘full of milk’, a *vant-*derivative to Vedic *páyas-* ‘milk’, an *s-*stem reflecting **peiH-es-*, existing beside Vedic *pīvas-* ‘fat’, applies to the poetic word in RV 10.17.14 *śadhayaḥ , páyasvan māmakāṃ vácaḥ / apām páyasvad ít páyas , téna mā sahá śundhata* “Full of milk are the plants, full of milk my little speech. Full of milk indeed is the milk of waters. With it cleanse me altogether.” Since *páyasvant-* is repeated three times, it is possible that *páyasvat ... vácaḥ* is an extemporary creation of the poet.

³¹ Vedic *pitú-* with a short *-i-* is an example of laryngeal loss by *Wetter-*rule, cf. Widmer 2004: 17-18: a laryngeal (**piH-*) is lost when followed by a consonant and a semivowel, as it happens in Germanic **wedra-* from **h₂weh₁-tró-*, with loss of *-h₁-*. For a different explanation of the short *i*-vowel see Pinault 2017: accordingly, *pitú-* is a hysterokinetic *u*-stem derived from a *t*-stem displaying a ‘remade ablaut’ **poiH-t-/*piH-t-* (o-grade/zero-grade of the root).

In that the inspired poet **has let flow the triṣṭubh refreshment** to you, O Maruts.³²

The pronunciation of poetic words in concomitance with libation gestures may lie at the basis of the metaphor ‘pouring prayers/voice’ (see above, §4), likewise the pronunciation of words in concomitance with the ritual offer of foods may be the basis for the phraseme ‘nourishing speech’.³³ In the Vedic world food-offers/libations are joined to laud, e.g.

RV 5.7.1ab

sákhāyah sám vah samyāñcam iṣam stóman cāgnāye

O companions, (unite) together your **united refreshment and praise to Agni**.

As a consequence, poetic words/chants are also imagined to be loaded with fats which anoint the gods, e.g.

RV 8.51.10ab

turaṇyáno mádhumantaṃ ghrtaścútaṃ , víprāso arkám āṇicuḥ

The eager inspired poets have **chanted** a honeyed, **ghee-dripping chant**.³⁴

RV 1.188.11ab

purogá agnir devānām , gāyatrēna sám ajyate

Agni, the leader of the gods, **is anointed by the gāyatrī-chant**.

In both Greece and Old Indic, the nourishing power of praise speech makes the dedicatee or his fame grow. Remarkably, in a passage from Pindar’s *Olympian Ten*, attesting all the praise-elements touched upon in §2, §4 (i.e., χάρις, sweetness, and the sprinkled praise-song), the growth of κλέος is entrusted to the poetic goddesses from the ‘fat land’, cf.

Pi. O. 10.93-99

τὴν δ’ ἄδυεπῆς τε λύρα

γλυκύς τ’ αὐλὸς ἀναπάσσει χάριν· τρέφοντι δ’ εὐρὸν κλέος

κόραι Πιερίδες Διός.

ἐγὼ δὲ συνεφαπτόμενος σπουδᾶ, κλυτὸν ἔθνος Λοκρῶν ἀμφέπεσον μέλιτι

εὐάνορα πόλιν καταβρέχων

Upon you, however, the **sweetly speaking** lyre and **melodious** pipe are shedding **kharis**, and the **Pierian** daughters of Zeus **are fostering your** widespread **fame**. And I have earnestly joined in and embraced the famous race of the Locrians, **drenching with honey** their city of brave men.³⁵

In Vedic hymns too, glory is something which may be increased, e.g. RV 6.2.1 *tvám ... śrávāḥ ... puṣṭim ná puṣyasi* “you prosper fame like prosperity.” Even more relevant here are passages in which the laudandus *is invigorated* by the poets’ song.

RV 1.5.8

³² Cf. also *iṣastút-* ‘praise song as refreshment’ (RV 5.50.5c etc.).

³³ The tie ‘food offering’–‘verbal utterance’ may lie at the basis of some lexicalised forms, cf. Serangeli (*Luwic words beginning with ml-*. Presentation at the 7th Workshop of the Luwic Dialects Project “The Luwic Dialects of the Anatolian Group: Writing Systems, Grammar, Lexicon and Onomastics”, Santiago de Compostela, February 24-25, 2022) on Hittite *maltalli-* and *meltešsar/meltešn-* ‘ritual offering’, Polish *modla* ‘sacrificial offer, idol, prayer, tribute’ etc., etymologically connected to the enlarged root **mel-d^hh₁-* ‘to make (something) object of thought’, whose primary root **mel(h₁-* underlies terms belonging to the semantic field of ‘thinking’ and ‘verbal utterance’, e.g. Greek μέλος ‘song’.

³⁴ Cf. RV 1.2.7c, 2.27.1ab, 7.5.5b, 8.102.16ab in which different compounds with a first member *ghrta-* occur (on these compounds cf. Olsen [Rasmussen] 2011, who identifies the partial match μελιχρός [Alc. 34 V+, of words and music in Call. *Epigr.* 29, D.H. *Comp.* 1] : *mádhu ghrtám* [RV 5.42.3b+]).

³⁵ Cf. also Pi. *N.* 8.38-42, Ba. 3.90-92 on which cf. Massetti 2019: 153-155.

tvām stómā avīrydhan tvām ukthā śatakrato tvām / vardhantu no girah

The praises have strengthened you, you the recitations, O you of a hundred resolves. Let our songs strengthen you.³⁶

As expected, Vedic *payi*ⁱ (cf. Περίδες) is a part of the same metaphoric system, cf.

RV 8.12.4-5, 13

imām stómam abhīṣṭaye , ghr̥tām ná pūtām adriṇaḥ

yénā nú sadyá ójasā , vavákṣitha

imām juṣasva girvanah , samudrá iva pinvate

indra víśvābhir ūtibhir , vavákṣitha

yām viprā ukthāvāhaso , a'bhīpramandúr āyávaḥ

ghr̥tām ná pipya āsāny , ṛtāsya yát

4. This praise song for dominance, purified like ghee, O master of the stones, by which now in a single day with might you have waxed strong— 5. This one enjoy, O you who yearn for songs—it swells like the sea. O Indra, with all your forms of help you have waxed strong [...] 13. Whom [= Indra] the inspired Āyus, whose conveyance is solemn speech, have brought to exhilaration—like ghee, it swells in his mouth—(the speech) that belongs to truth.

The passages may be paraphrased as follows: the poet's praise song (*stóma-*, 4a), which is truthful and correctly formulated (*ṛtāsya yát*, 13d), is purified like ghee (*ghr̥tām ná pūtām*, 4b), which abundantly swells in the mouth of the god (*samudrá iva pinvate*, 5b, *ghr̥tām ná pipya āsāni*, 13c). By being offered to Indra, the ghee-poem makes him wax stronger (*vavákṣitha*, 4d, 5d).³⁷

The provided Old Indic phraseological parallels show that the praise song is often imagined as a substance which *fattens* its dedicatee: the same state of affairs may lie at the basis of the epithet Περίς, which may have come to apply to the Muses as the goddesses of the 'good poetic fats'.

8. Conclusion

To sum up:

Pi. *P.* 2.53 and 55 have phraseological parallels within Greek and other Indo-European traditions, which portray evil words as *biting* and negative feelings or things as *heavy*.

A passage of Plato (*Laws* 9.934d-935e), which is a diluted paraphrase of *P.* 2.52-56 reveals that a food-metaphor underlies

the use of πείνωμαι at 56: the verb hints at Archilochus' wealth, but is also linked to the binomial blame(-poetry) – gluttony/drunkenness, an inherited Indo-European motif.

Both blame- and praise-poetry are likened to foods and drinks: envy, in particular, is the main ingredient of blame poetic drinks/meals. Metaphors for praise and blame are the same or complementary: in the *Lokasenna*, Loki's insults are depicted through metaphors applying to praise-poetry in Old Norse and Greek.

The use of πείνω/ομαι at *P.* 2.56 may reflect an analogous phenomenon: Indo-European **peiH-* 'swell' applies to positive poetic contexts in Greek and Old Indic: it underlies Περίδες, an epithet of the Muses as the goddesses of the rich land par excellence, Pieria. Specifically, the Muses are the goddesses (i) from the land where the best cattle thrive, i.e., the goddesses of poetic prosperity or (ii) the goddesses of the 'swelling'/'fat' poetic word: indeed, the *Rigveda* and Pindar (a) the poetic utterance/vision is 'swelling', 'nourishing' (**peiH-*) and a 'ghee-dripping' 'refreshment in meters';

³⁶ The circular structure (stanzas 1 and 7) of RV 4.43 reveals that praise nurtures the god, cf. *ká u śravat katamó yajñīyānām , vandāru devāḥ katamó juṣāte / kásyemām devīm amṛteṣu prēṣṭhām , hṛdī śreṣāma suṣtutīm suhavyām* "Who will listen? Which one of those worthy of the sacrifice? Which god will take pleasure in our extolling? In whose heart among the immortals shall we fix this dearest divine good praise accompanied by good oblations?" (1, strongly reminiscent of Pi. *O.* 2.1-2), and *ihéha yád vām ... papṛkṣé* "Since I have nourished you two" (7).

³⁷ The occurrence of *ṛtā-* in RV 8.12.13d in connection with the 'nourishment'-metaphor is significant. Its Greek cognate term ἀρετά (as per Massetti 2013-2014: 123-148) occurs within choral lyric metaphors featuring the same elements (praise, growth, excellence), though differently arranged: in Pi. *N.* 8.38-42 and Ba. 3.90-92 the ἀρετά is said to be nourished by praise.

(b) the metaphor of the ‘swelling/nourishing hymn’ may have originated from a ritual praxis in which food offerings were accompanied by songs; (c) praise-poetry is sketched as an edible or drinkable substance which makes the laudandus stronger, wealthier and more glorious. In the *Rigveda*, gods taste the fat-dripping words of the poets and thrive; in Pindar, the Pierides nourish the wide glory for the laudandus by sprinkling it with sweet songs.

The metaphor at *P.* 2.55-56, in which Archilochus fattens himself by means of poetic junk foods, preserves an instance of a **peiH*-derivative (παινώμενον) in a blame-poetry context, which is complementary to the use of **peiH*-derivatives in praise-contexts. The comparative examination thus allows us to frame *P.* 2.52-56 within its inherited phraseological background, which ultimately harks back to the complementary interaction of blame- and praise-poetry within the Indo-European poetic tradition.

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