Notice of the Final Oral Examination for the Degree of Master of Arts of

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BSc (Simon Fraser University, 1987) BA (University of Victoria, 2013)

“The Tao of Pindar: Charis and Hybris in Pindaric Cosmology”

Department of Greek and Roman Studies

Thursday, August 20, 2015
10:00 A.M.
Clearihue Building Room B415

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Ingrid Holmberg, Department of Greek and Roman Studies, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Prof. Lauren Bowman, Department of Greek and Roman Studies, UVic (Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Margaret Cameron, Department of Philosophy, UVic

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Alexandra D’Arcy, Department of Linguistics, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
Abstract

Although Pindar’s victory songs, or *epinikia*, were commissioned and performed to celebrate athletic victories, they present persistent reflections on the narrow limits of human prosperity, the inexorable cycle of success and failure, and the impossibility of appropriating any aspect of a godly nature. The present work provides a close reading of the *Pythian* series to illustrate how Pindar uses prayer, myth and *gnomai* to secure the moral and psychological reintegration of the athletic victor back into his close-knit community upon his homecoming (νόστος). As a re-integration rite, the challenging and dark elements of mortal limitation and failure are read as prophylactic statements against the destructive effects of *hybris* (ὕβρις). The Odes rest upon an archaic cosmology of reciprocal and harmonious exchange between humans themselves and between humans and the gods which is captured by the principle of *charis* or grace (χάρις). Ὕβρις is a breach of this reciprocity and the antithesis of χάρις since it is the unilateral claim of property, prestige, or privilege as well as the transgression against the divine dispensation which governs the cosmos (κόσμος). Modern psychological research shows how such concern for, and such precaution against, ὕβρις may be prudent given that victory fosters a drive for dominance. Pindar’s promotion of a customary way which supports general well-being and prosperity, as in the dynamic of χάρις and ὕβρις, expresses a notion common across a great number of traditional or vernacular societies. One such example is the *tao* of ancient China.