

Introduction

1. Generally reckoned the greatest lyric poet of ancient Greece, Pindar was born in a village near Thebes, the chief city of Boeotia, in 518 B.C. According to ancient accounts of his life, he studied music and choral poetry in Athens as a youth; the training was evidently effective, since his earliest datable poem, *Pythian* 10, was composed in 498, when he was only twenty. In the collected edition produced by the Hellenistic scholar Aristophanes of Byzantium (ca. 257–180 B.C.) his large and varied poetic output filled seventeen volumes (i.e., papyrus rolls), their contents organized according to genre; among the different types of composition were hymns, paeans, dithyramps, maiden-songs (*partheneia*), dirges, and odes for victorious athletes (*epinikia* or epinicians). Pindar received poetic commissions from individuals, families, and whole communities throughout the Greek world, including the rulers of some of its wealthiest and most powerful cities; the distribution of dedicatees among his epinicians suggests that he found a particularly eager market for his services in Sicily and on the island of Aegina, which together account for more than half the corpus. His latest datable epinician, *Pythian* 8, was composed in 446. If one ancient source is correct in asserting that he lived to his eightieth year, he died in 438.

2. Out of Pindar's extensive oeuvre only the four books of victory odes have come down to us through a continuous manuscript tradition, accompanied by numerous marginal notes ("scholia") extracted from earlier commentaries, most notably those written by Aristarchus (ca. 217–145 B.C.) and Didymus (ca. 80–10 B.C.). Each of the books

contains odes written for victories gained at one of the four major game-sites of ancient Greece (Olympia, Pytho, Nemea, and the Isthmus of Corinth), while *within* each book odes are arranged according to the types of contest that they celebrate (first equestrian events, then combat sports, then footraces). In the original edition of Pindar's works the Isthmian odes were placed ahead of the Nemeans to reflect the relative prestige of the two festivals (see below, §4), and for that reason it was to the Nemeans as the final volume that three otherwise unclassifiable poems (*N.* 9, *N.* 10, *N.* 11) were attached as a kind of appendix; at a later point the order was reversed and the volume of Isthmians lost its final pages. As extant, the corpus comprises forty-five complete odes: fourteen Olympians, twelve Pythians, eleven Nemeans (three of them Nemean in name only), and eight Isthmians (plus the first eight lines of a ninth). Individual odes are conventionally identified by book and numerical position, e.g., *Olympian* 2 (*O.* 2), *Pythian* 4 (*P.* 4), *Nemean* 6 (*N.* 6), *Isthmian* 8 (*I.* 8).

GREEK ATHLETICS

3. The fact that out of all Pindar's many works it was the victory odes that survived essentially intact—like, indeed, the fact that there was such a genre as the victory ode in the first place—reflects the central role played by athletics in the life of the ancient Greeks. That centrality is itself reflective of a culture-wide competitiveness that finds archetypal expression in the injunction issued by Peleus to his son Achilles when he went off to fight at Troy (*Iliad* 11.783): “Always to be the best and preeminent over others.” From the realm of myth, with its Judgment of Paris (which of three goddesses deserved a golden apple inscribed “to the fairest”?) and its Contest of Arms (should Ajax or Odysseus be the one to inherit Achilles' armor and, with it, his status as “best of the Achaeans”?), to the dramatic festivals of Athens, where every year both tragic and comic poets vied for first, second, and third place, to the military custom of awarding “prizes of valor” (*aristeia*) to individual warriors or entire contingents in the aftermath of victory, to female beauty-contests on the island of Lesbos and even a boys' kissing-contest at Megara—everywhere the drive to excel and to outdo others is apparent. Among its various institutional manifestations none were as ubiquitous and long-enduring as the games, the *athloi* or

agōnes that have given us the words “athlete” and “athletics” and provided a somewhat abstruse synonym for “competitive” in “agonistic.” The representation of athletics in Greek literature is as old as Greek literature itself, since Book 23 of the *Iliad* contains a lengthy and detailed account of the funeral games put on by Achilles for his beloved friend Patroclus, while Book 8 of the *Odyssey* offers a briefer description of contests staged by the Phaeacians for the entertainment of Odysseus. In historical times, however, the usual context for competition was provided by regularly recurring religious festivals in dozens of different cities and locales, each one held in honor of some patron deity or hero and accompanied by a full array of animal sacrifices and other ritual activities.

4. Among these athletic festivals—called *panēgyreis* as well as *agōnes*, both terms in origin meaning “gathering” or “assembly”—four enjoyed special status as being Panhellenic (“all Greek”) in character, drawing competitors and spectators from throughout the Greek-speaking world. By far the oldest and most celebrated of the four were the games at Olympia, a sanctuary of Olympian Zeus in the western Peloponnesus, which were founded in 776 B.C. and held thereafter at four-year intervals (known as Olympiads) for well over a millennium. Next in order of prestige were the Pythian games at Delphi in central Greece, a site known also as Pytho; likewise quadrennial but dedicated to the god Apollo, they were established in 582 and took place in the third year of each Olympiad. Very shortly thereafter (ca. 581 and ca. 573) biennial games were instituted at the Isthmus of Corinth and at Nemea in the northeastern Peloponnesus, dedicated respectively to Poseidon and to Zeus. Since these festivals were held in the second and fourth year of each Olympiad (the Isthmian in the spring, the Nemean in the summer), athletes were able to compete in at least one Panhellenic contest every year. The four festivals taken together constituted a well-defined circuit or cycle (*periodos*) of competition, with Nemea as the lowest rung on the ladder, the Isthmus next, then Pytho, and Olympia at the very top. Ambitious athletes would aspire to win victories at all four venues and thereby earn the coveted status of “circuit-victor” (*periodonikēs*). Lying outside of the Panhellenic circuit, but still playing an important role in the careers of athletes, were numerous local festivals hosted by communities large and small throughout the Greek-speaking world, including venues in Attica and its environs (Eleusis,

Marathon, Megara), Boeotia (Thebes, Orchomenus), the Peloponnesus (Argos, Epidaurus, Sicyon, Pellene, Arcadia), the Aegean islands (Aegina, Euboea), North Africa (Cyrene), and Sicily. Several of these local contests, most notably the Athenian Panathenaea and the festival of Hera (Heraea) in Argos, enjoyed a position of prestige not far below that of the Isthmian and Nemean games; others, however, were very minor indeed and unlikely to attract many non-regional competitors.

5. At athletic festivals generally, of whatever rank or stature, the chief categories of competition were equestrian events, footraces of different kinds, and combat sports. Particularly popular with spectators were the equestrian events, which comprised races for horse and rider (*kelēs*), the four-horse chariot (*tethrippon*), and the mule-cart (*apēnē*), although this last formed part of the Olympic program only during the first half of the fifth century B.C. The considerable expense involved in breeding, maintaining, and transporting horses effectively limited participation in the equestrian events to the well-to-do, and credit for victory went to the owner of the horse or chariot team in question rather than to its rider or driver. Since the layout of the hippodrome required chariots to negotiate 180-degree turns at either end throughout a twelve-lap race, there was a constant risk of serious accidents. The track events were four in number: the stade-race or *stadion* (ca. 200 meters), the double stade-race or *diaulos* (ca. 400 meters), the long race or *dolichos* (ca. 4,800 meters), and the race-in-armor or *hoplitēs dromos*, for which contestants wore and carried the equipment (including breastplate, greaves, and shield) of a heavy-armed foot soldier or hoplite. The combat sports were wrestling (in which three throws were required for victory), boxing (for which contestants wore leather straps around their knuckles instead of gloves), and the pancratium, an “all-in” contest that combined elements of wrestling and boxing (the only prohibited tactics were biting and eye-gouging). Straddling several categories, finally, was the pentathlon, composed of stade-race, long jump, discus, javelin-toss, and wrestling. In certain events (stade-race, pentathlon, the combat sports) separate competitions were held for boys, while at the Isthmus, Nemea, and various local games there was also an intermediate division for “beardless” youths or *ageneioi*, most likely defined as between the ages of sixteen and eighteen.

6. The types of prizes awarded to victorious athletes varied according to venue. At the funeral games of Patroclus in *Iliad* 23, Achilles sets

out as many prizes as there are contestants in any one event, with a correlation between their material value and the range of outcomes; in a three-man footrace, for example, he offers a large silver mixing bowl as first prize, an ox as second, and half a talent of gold as third. At the regular athletic festivals of historical times, however, only first place was recognized, and hence a single prize was awarded in each event. The prizes offered at the four major festivals were simple wreaths or crowns (*stephanoi*) plaited from a particular foliage: wild olive at Olympia, laurel at Pytho, and wild celery both at the Isthmus and at Nemea (some ancient sources identify the Isthmian wreath as being of pine, but in Pindar's epinicians only celery is mentioned). Though purely symbolic in value, such wreaths were greatly coveted and conferred on the Panhellenic festivals the alternative designation of "crown games"; moreover, the home-cities of victorious athletes made a practice of supplementing symbolism with cash awards and various types of subsidy, including free meals at public expense for the rest of their lives. The prizes awarded at local contests, by contrast, were likely to be durable objects of material value, such as decorated jars (*amphorae*) of olive oil at the Panathenaea, bronze shields at the Argive Heraea, silver drinking-cups at the games of Apollo in Sicyon, and thick woolen cloaks at Pellene.

THE EPINICIAN AS PERFORMANCE

7. In the end, however, the most important reward of athletic success was not the symbolic or material prize itself but the mere fact that the victor was publicly known to have won, that his "preeminence over others" had received recognition in the world at large. The ultimate objects of aspiration, in other words, were *reputational* in nature, bearing such names as "honor" (*timē*), "glory" (*doxa*), "renown" (*kudos*), and "fame" (*kleos*). The first step in securing such public recognition was taken at the time of the festival itself, when a herald would proclaim that so-and-so, son of so-and-so, from such-and-such a city, was the victor in such-and-such an event; but of course this kind of proclamation (*kērygma*) was a fleeting event, confined in its efficacy to a single place and time. Inscribed on a statue-base or stele and set up for view at the game-site or in some other public location, the essential facts of an athlete's achievement—supplemented, as was often the case,

by the record of other achievements at other venues—could (with luck) be preserved for future generations, but the information was still *spatially* restricted; only people who happened to visit the site in question could be expected to observe and absorb, as the Greek travel-writer Pausanias (ca. A.D. 150) so assiduously did, the names and deeds of the long-departed. To propagate agonistic *kleos* with maximum effectiveness, therefore, required combining the functions of the herald's cry and the lapidary (or bronze) inscription while simultaneously transcending their temporal and/or spatial limitations—and it was precisely with such an end in view that an athlete (or his family) would hire a professional poet to commemorate his success in a victory ode. Considered as a *performance*, executed by a trained chorus within a context of communal celebration, an epinician was—among other things—a highly expanded and elaborated recreation of the original heraldic proclamation at the game-site, but one that allowed for (literal or imaginative) *re-performance* at other times and in other circumstances. Considered as a *text*, on the other hand, it was endowed with the permanence, the fixity, and the documentary utility of a “reckoning carved on stone” (O. 7.86), effectively preserving information for posterity while adding the capacity for active circulation through space that epigraphic records so signally lack.

8. That epinicians were indeed composed to be performed—that is, sung and danced—to musical accompaniment by a male chorus is a point assumed in the ancient scholia, generally (though not universally) agreed upon by modern scholars, and borne out by various passages in the poems themselves. The instruments used (and frequently mentioned in the odes) were the lyre (*lyra*, *phorminx*) and/or the *aulos*, the latter (translated as “pipe” in this volume) being a wind instrument with a reed-and-metal mouthpiece that made it akin to the modern clarinet or oboe. Both types of instrument were capable of being played in distinctively different styles or “modes” of tuning, among them the Aeolian (e.g., O. 1.102, P. 2.69) and the Lydian (e.g., O. 14.17, N. 4.45). In the absence of any musical or choreographic notation, however, the only hints at the odes' performative aspects available to us are those offered by the metrical patterns of the verse itself. The two chief categories of meter employed in Pindar's epinicians—based, like all Greek meters, on the alternation of long (-) and short (˘) syllables in various combinations—are the *dactylo-epitritic* and the

aeolic. The former, found in just over half the odes, strings together double-short (e.g. - - - - -) and single-short (e.g. - - - x - - -) segments in different lengths and sequences (“x” indicates a syllable that may be either long or short); its partial overlap with the dactylic hexameter of Homeric epic can be felt to endow this rhythm with a certain amplitude and stateliness. More multifarious and less easily described than dactylo-epitritic as a metrical category, aeolic verse draws extensively on metrical segments built around a “choriambic nucleus” (- - - -) and was much used by composers of monody (“solo song”) like Alcaeus and Sappho, who wrote in the Aeolic dialect.

9. Regardless of metrical type, the great majority of Pindar’s odes are composed of three-part units called *triads*, each triad comprising two metrically identical stanzas (the *strophe* and *antistrophe*) followed by another of a different shape (the *epode*). Some sources from late antiquity associate the literal meaning of these terms (“turn,” “counter-turn,” “after-song”) with hypothetical movements by the chorus (dancing in one direction during the strophe, reversing that direction during the antistrophe, standing still during the epode), but there is no evidence to confirm that hypothesis. Although most triadic odes range in length between three and five triads, a few (*O.* 4, *O.* 11, *O.* 12, *P.* 7, *I.* 3) consist of a single triad only, while the entirely anomalous *Pythian* 4 runs to a remarkable thirteen. Seven odes (*O.* 14, *P.* 6, *P.* 12, *N.* 2, *N.* 4, *N.* 9, *I.* 8) are *monostrophic* rather than triadic in form, comprising a series of strophes of metrically identical shape that range in number from two (*O.* 14) to twelve (*N.* 4). It has been suggested that monostrophic odes were intended to be sung while the chorus was in procession from one place to another, but once again there can be no certainty on the point. It is important to note that in Pindar’s practice stanzas and triads as *metrical entities* bear no consistent relationship either with content or with syntax, which means that not only general topics but even individual clauses are frequently carried over from one unit to another. This fluidity can at times achieve striking effects, as when a phrase or word is placed at the end of a sentence and the beginning of a strophe simultaneously for rhetorical emphasis (e.g., “most among men” at *O.* 8.23, “Time itself” at *O.* 10.55, “late though it be” at *N.* 3.80) or to underscore its emotional impact (e.g., “his own destruction” at *P.* 2.41, referring to Ixion’s self-wrought doom; “pitiless woman” at *P.* 11.22, characterizing Clytemnestra’s murder of Agamemnon and Cassandra).

COMPONENT MATERIALS OF
THE EPINICIAN

10. Although the extant fragments of Simonides (ca. 556–468) suggest that the epinician as a literary “kind” had already assumed recognizable form at the time he was writing, its full flowering took place in the succeeding generation, when not only Pindar but also Simonides’ nephew Bacchylides—not to mention, we must assume, a number of other poets now unknown—composed victory odes for pay on a regular basis. Like Pindar, Bacchylides was both prolific and versatile, and in the collected edition of later Alexandrian scholars his poetic output filled nine volumes, one of which was devoted to epinicians. By a stroke of good fortune fifteen of these odes were discovered, in varying states of completeness or disrepair, on an Egyptian papyrus scroll at the end of the nineteenth century. Taking Bacchylides and Pindar together, then, we have some sixty specimens of the epinician genre, a body of material extensive enough to establish (a) that when the two poets fulfilled their commissions they were drawing on the same elaborate repertoire of poetic and rhetorical conventions, and (b) that the audiences for whom they were composing had been schooled by experience to expect, appreciate, and respond to those conventions with appropriate acuity. Considered at the highest level of generality, the corpus demonstrates that three main types of material go into the fashioning of a typical epinician. Occupying a position of primacy among the three is the *factual information*—in its minimal form, “X son of Y from city Z has won event A at the B games”—which the ode is meant to preserve and disseminate, thereby propagating the victor’s *kleos* both “horizontally” throughout the Greek world and “vertically” through ensuing centuries. An ode’s kernel of personal fact—one that in practice is often expanded to include other victories won by the athlete, his close relatives, and/or his clan as a whole—may well have been the element of liveliest interest to the principals, and the one that they viewed as most concretely and legitimately earning the poet his fee. And yet in order to appeal to audiences beyond the victor’s immediate circle, and certainly in order to appeal to the future generations in whose hands any “immortality of fame” will rest, an ode must not merely *record* such information but also *interpret* and *evaluate* it through reference to some larger context—be it the home-city and its

traditions, or Hellenic culture in general, or human life considered *sub specie aeternitatis*—that will allow it to transcend its bare particularity.

11. It is precisely in order to create this larger context that the irreducible factual component of the epinician is regularly supplemented by two other types of material. One is *myth*, applying that term broadly to the vast corpus of stories about gods and heroes—an aggregate both wildly ramifying and densely interwoven—that formed the core of the Greeks' cultural patrimony. Above all, myth served the Greeks for centuries as an inexhaustible treasure-house of examples (*paradeigmata*) for educational, exhortatory, and literary use—exemplary exploits (e.g., the labors of Heracles), exemplary virtues (e.g., the consummate valor of Achilles, the piety and self-control of Peleus), even exemplary transgressors (e.g., Tantalus and Ixion). Already in the *Iliad* characters are depicted as telling stories to one another for purposes of persuasion, as when Phoenix recites the tale of Meleager's anger (9.527–99) as an admonishment to Achilles, or when Achilles himself holds up the example of Niobe to the grieving Priam (24.602–18). In Pindar's odes the scale on which mythical material is treated varies widely according to rhetorical circumstances. At one end of the range are cursory typological allusions, as when youthful beauty is fleetingly instantiated in Ganymede (*O.* 10.104–5), god-given prosperity in Cinyras (*N.* 8.18), or martial heroism in Hector (*N.* 9.39–40), or such one-sentence distillations of a story or episode as “Cycnus routed in battle even the huge might of Heracles” (*O.* 10.15–16) or “at Troy Hector heard Ajax” (*N.* 2.14). At the opposite end of the scale are the fully developed narratives, often extending a triad or more in length, that so frequently form an ode's centerpiece (see §18 below). In the middle range, finally, more developed than a passing allusion but still lacking the expansiveness (and internal articulation) of major narratives, we find short mythical anecdotes cited in explicit illustration of a general statement (e.g., *O.* 4.19–27, *N.* 7.24–30, *I.* 7.44–48), perhaps, or to elaborate on some point of praise relating to the victor (e.g., *O.* 6.12–17, *P.* 1.52–55, *I.* 4.52–54b). Whether traditional stories of this sort were told at length and in detail, succinctly summarized, or merely touched on in passing with a name and an epithet, they would have been sufficiently familiar to audiences that any blanks could be filled in as necessary and paradigmatic significance could be apprehended even when (as often happens) it is not explicitly signaled on the level of the text.

12. The other type of material used in creating a larger context for agonistic particulars takes the form of general reflections, often pithily phrased, on the conditions and issues of human existence, and as such it may conveniently be labeled *gnomic*, after the Greek word for “maxim” or “adage” (*gnōmē*). Not surprisingly, such *gnomai* are abundant in the tradition of didactic poetry represented by Hesiod’s *Works and Days* and the elegiacs of Theognis, and like mythical exempla (though less frequently) they are also used for purposes of persuasion in Homeric speeches. In Pindar’s odes they are ubiquitous, serving a number of different purposes. One prime function is to enhance the significance of a victor’s accomplishments by implicitly subsuming them under general truths through a process of syllogistic deduction (e.g., if it is a generally accepted principle that effort crowned with success deserves unstinting recognition, then unstinting recognition must be given to X, whose efforts have been crowned by success). Such, implicitly, is the logical force of propositions like “Fortunate is the one whom fair reports encompass” (*O.* 7.10), “Within success is found the peak of perfect glory” (*N.* 1.10–11), and “Men’s prowess comes to judgment through the gods” (*I.* 5.11). Maxims are also freely deployed in mythical narratives, where they may articulate a moral (e.g., *O.* 1.64, *O.* 7.30–31, *P.* 2.34–36, *P.* 3.21–23) and/or demarcate “chapters” in the unfolding story (e.g., *O.* 10.39–40, *N.* 1.53–54, *N.* 10.72); they can serve as links or bridges between different sections of an ode (e.g., *O.* 1.99–100, *O.* 8.53, *P.* 5.54, *I.* 1.40); and they can bring whole odes to a contemplative conclusion (e.g., *O.* 7.94–95, *P.* 1.99–100, *P.* 7.19–21, *I.* 1.67–68). Recurrent subjects of generalizing reflection include the nature and limitations of human happiness (e.g., *O.* 2.18–22, *P.* 8.92–97, *P.* 12.28–32), the powers and proper uses of wealth (e.g., *O.* 2.53–56, *P.* 5.1–4, *N.* 1.31–33), the relative importance of natural ability and systematic instruction (e.g., *O.* 2.86–88, *O.* 9.100–104, *N.* 3.40–42), verbal skill and its relation to truth and falsehood (e.g., *O.* 1.28–34, *N.* 7.20–23, *N.* 8.32–34), and the functions and capacities of song or poetry itself (e.g., *P.* 3.111–15, *N.* 7.11–16, *I.* 7.16–19). The last three of these topics are discussed at greater length in §§25–27 below.

THE EPINICIAN PERSONA

13. Such, then, are the chief types of material out of which, in different proportions and in different sequences, the typical epinician is con-

structed: first the factual information that the ode is intended to preserve and disseminate, then the mythical paradigms and general propositions that endow such information with meaning and value—or more accurately, perhaps, that give explicit expression to the meaning and value with which such information was already implicitly laden in the Greek cultural context. Heterogeneity of constituent elements is thus an inherent feature of the genre; in Pindar’s own words, “the choicest kind of victory-hymn darts like a bee from one theme to another” (*P.* 10.53–54). Faced with the challenge of forging such disparate materials into a coherent (and performable) composition, the poet’s chief resource is the creation of an *encomiastic persona*, an “I” whose act of speaking the ode can purport to be. That a multiplicity of singer-dancers performing in unison should speak of themselves using first-person singular pronouns and verb-forms is far from unusual in Greek choral poetry, as can be readily seen from surviving examples of paeans and maiden-songs and the scene-separating odes of Attic drama. In the case of paeans and tragic choruses, the “I” typically embodies some collectivity: the inhabitants of Abdera in Pindar’s *Paeon* 2 and those of Ceos in *Paeon* 4, the elders of Argos in Aeschylus’s *Agamemnon*, a crew of Salaminian sailors in Sophocles’ *Ajax*, Troezenian housewives in Euripides’ *Hippolytus*. When it came to Pindar’s epinicians, however, the ancient commentators whose views are recorded in the scholia were strongly (though not invariably; see §14) inclined to view the “I” as a direct representation of the poet himself in all his historical specificity, and indeed proceeded on that basis to spin various “biographical” hypotheses about such things as his professional rivalries, his supposed political allegiances and aversions, and his personal relations with particular patrons. That general assumption of unmediated identity, along with those (and other) historicizing hypotheses, continued to dominate approaches to Pindar until well into the twentieth century, and did so despite the perennial difficulty that scholars experienced in reconciling the supposed “personal” elements in the odes with their ostensibly public and occasional nature.

14. Now to be sure, there are indeed quite a few passages in the odes that to all appearances point unambiguously in Pindar’s direction. Some do so by identifying the speaker as Theban, whether directly (e.g., *I.* 8.16), by means of genealogical metaphor (e.g., *O.* 6.84–86), or

as an implication of the ode's own Theban provenance (e.g., *O.* 10.84–85, *P.* 4.298–99). Others do so by representing the “I” as enjoying a Panhellenic reputation for “poetic skill” (*sophia*) (*O.* 1.115–16) and artistic preeminence in that same quality among contemporary practitioners (*P.* 4.247–48), or as a hard-working professional who enters into contracts for money (*P.* 11.41–44), who is forced to juggle the competing claims of simultaneous commissions (*I.* 1.1–10), and who, on consulting his ledger, discovers that he is in arrears with an obligation of long standing (*O.* 10.1–12). By the same token, however, there are also a few passages where an identification with Pindar appears to be excluded because the “I” represents himself—if only momentarily—as belonging to the community of the victor and the chorus. Such is the case, for example, when in an ode for an Aeginetan he addresses the eponymous nymph of Aegina as “cherished mother” (*P.* 8.98) or when in another ode for an Aeginetan he refers to Aeacus, the island's first (legendary) king, as “the city-ruler of my fair-famed homeland” (*N.* 7.85), or when in an ode for the king of Cyrene he asserts that his own Aegid forefathers, setting out from their birthplace in Sparta, migrated first to Thera and then on to Cyrene itself, where “we,” the people of that city, celebrate the festival of Carnean Apollo (*P.* 5.72–81). That the “I” can occasionally speak “in the person of the chorus” (*apo tou chorou*) is indeed an idea propounded by ancient commentators with reference to these and others passages, though a number of modern scholars have strenuously denied it on a priori grounds and sought to evade consequent difficulties by means of emendation or convoluted exegesis.

15. The most reasonable way to accommodate both sorts of evidence, surely, is to think of the epinician persona not as having a fixed identity but as ranging along a spectrum between two poles, one pole representing the industrious verbal craftsman who in literal fact composed the odes and the other representing the chorus of trained singers, fellow townsmen of the victor, who in literal fact performed them. Now and then, in response to particular poetic or rhetorical circumstances, the “I” may temporarily take up a position at one pole or the other—in order to imbue the encomiastic occasion with an atmosphere of ethnic and cultic solidarity (*P.* 5), perhaps, or to enhance an ode's value by glancing at actually existent circumstances in its creator's professional life (*O.* 10, *I.* 1), or to claim a relationship of special closeness with the victor and his family, whether through a shared

civic identity (as in *I.* 1 and *I.* 4, both composed for Thebans) or some mythological nexus (e.g., between Thebes and Stymphalus in *O.* 6, or between Thebes and Aegina in *I.* 6 and *I.* 8). Far more often, though—indeed, often enough to constitute (as it were) the default setting—the “I” situates himself somewhere in the indefinite middle where distinctions between composing and performing disappear in an imitation of spontaneous utterance. While on occasion—notable instances are to be found at *Olympian* 3.4–9 and *Nemean* 3.1–12—he may *refer* to himself as a premeditating craftsman of song, one who shapes words into verse with the Muse’s aid and inspiration and then presents them, through singers’ voices and with musical accompaniment, to the public, he habitually *represents* himself as an extemporizing speaker who exhibits the impulsiveness, the digressiveness, the false starts and self-corrections of ordinary spoken discourse. By “imitating” a person who is intently engaged in the generation and formulation of his thoughts at the very moment of public utterance, Pindar gains great freedom in the disposition of his heterogeneous materials; not only does the carefully sustained illusion of spontaneity permit all manner of stops and starts and changes of direction, but persuasively verisimilar motivation for those maneuvers can be supplied by the speaker’s supposed character and feelings. However much the finished ode may appear to reflect the momentary impulses and ratiocinations of the fictitious persona that speaks it, we can safely assume that it has in fact been carefully plotted to include everything that Pindar himself wants and needs to have said in order to fulfill his encomiastic obligations. Because the persona is called into being by the contractual bond (*chreos*) between poet and patron and is largely (if not entirely) defined by the inherently encomiastic intention of the epinician qua genre, it was dubbed the *laudator* (“praiser”) in E. L. Bundy’s influential *Studia Pindarica* (1962), which also supplied the useful correlative designation *laudandus* (“he who must be praised”) for the ode’s recipient and honoree. In this volume “speaker” and “laudator” will be used on an interchangeable basis, with occasional references to “the poet” in situations where the speaker explicitly casts himself in the role of premeditating verbal craftsman.

16. In order to motivate the step-by-step unfolding of an ode’s train of thought, representing as it does the “spontaneously” generated discourse of an extemporizing speaker, Pindar as composer uses several

distinct modes of connection or progression. The most straightforward of these, and by far the most frequently employed, we may term the explicitly *logical*, whereby sentence follows sentence and clause follows clause in accordance with such mental operations as inference, explication, exemplification, and generalization. The train of thought in entire odes, long (e.g., *O.* 6, *O.* 7, *O.* 10) as well as short (e.g., *O.* 11, *N.* 2, *I.* 3), can be constructed on this basis, and even in less linear odes logical progression still predominates; indeed, it may be justly regarded as the prevailing norm from which the other modes represent marked departures. Those other modes—we shall call them the *associative*, the *ethical/emotional*, and the *situational*—are all overtly mimetic or dramatic in nature, and it is precisely that quality that makes them a key source of flexibility in the compositional process. Briefly stated (more detailed discussion can be found in app. §§6–8), associative transitions imitate the commonplace psychological phenomenon whereby people engaged in extemporaneous speech are likely to say Y after X not because Y bears some clearly definable relation to X but simply because X has made Y “pop into their heads.” Transitions of the “ethical/emotional” type hinge on the supposed moral character (*ēthos*) and/or emotional state of the speaker as a fictional personage, one whose moods, scruples, apprehensions, enthusiasms, and antipathies can prompt him to abandon one topic or introduce another. Situational transitions, finally, are grounded in the conditions of performance and the nature of the rhetorical occasion—grounded, that is to say, in the situation of a person with encomiastic responsibilities to discharge, a finite amount of time at his disposal, and an audience whose attention and goodwill cannot be taken for granted. However much Pindar himself would have had to take such considerations into account during the process of composition, the extent to which they make an explicit appearance *within the text* is determined by their usefulness in steering or shaping an ode’s unfolding train of thought.

EPINICIAN STRUCTURE

17. Along with the fiction of spontaneous utterance itself, these four modes of progression and connection—logical, associative, ethical/emotional, situational—are the chief means by which an ode’s constituent materials (factual, mythic, gnomic) are woven into sequentially

unified discourse, in which each statement seems to emerge naturally and persuasively from what precedes and to lead naturally and persuasively into what follows until a point is reached at which, as regards both the poet's encomiastic responsibilities and the expectations of the audience, nothing further needs to be said. Except in the case of very short odes, the resultant whole is typically tripartite (ABA') in structure, with two sections chiefly focused on the celebratory occasion and its principal figures (victor, family, clan) flanking a central section of contrasting material, usually (though not invariably) mythic in nature. An essential element in the first A section—as indeed in any epinician of whatever length and internal articulation—is a statement of the ode's encomiastic occasion as defined by certain *facts of identity* (typically the victor's name, his father's name, and his hometown) and *facts of achievement* (the event and venue of the victory being celebrated). Reduced to propositional form ("X, son of Y, from city Z, has won event A at the B games"), this declaration is all but identical to the herald's announcement at the game-site (see above, §7), where venue was of course a situational given and thus did not need to be specified. Although not all five items of information make an appearance in every ode (the father's name in particular is not uncommonly omitted), the cluster or constellation as a whole still remains the one indispensable ingredient of an epinician, and perhaps for that reason its most basic elements are likely to make their appearance early on, sometimes in overtly proclamatory form (e.g., *O.* 3.1–4, *P.* 9.1–4, *N.* 5.3–5) but more often dispersed over a stretch of sentences within the opening triad or two. In tripartite odes, however, certain items of information—most frequently the father's name and the event—are likely to be held back until the second A section (see §20 below). It seems reasonable to suppose that for the principals and their close friends and associates, if not indeed for the community at large, the distribution of "defining facts" throughout an ode would have been a matter of considerable interest and (when postponed) of expectancy.

18. If "myth" can designate a general type or category of material used in the fashioning of epinicians (§11 above), "the myth," in the parlance of Pindaric scholarship, refers to one specific form that such material can take, namely a (relatively) extended and self-contained narration of one or more episodes from the ample corpus of Hellenic legend. If we set aside poems that are too short to accommodate it,