2 *The Muse*
"FORMER POETS," AND THE PROBLEM OF THE PAST

Past and Present in Archaic Greek Poetry

"OLD" AND "NEW" IN PINDAR

In this chapter, I consider the ways in which epinician poetry regards and represents the past. The past plays a complicated role in this genre. It is of great significance for the epinician project: contemporary athletic victories recall and invite comparison with the deeds of heroes from the distant past. But the primary and immediate function of epinician poetry is to praise contemporaries—men of the present. Because of this, a tension is set up between past and present as epinician themes. In epinician poetry, a besetting concern is that the past should not eclipse the present.

Epinician poetry repeatedly emphasizes a focus on the present as part of its formal program. In *Nemean* 4, the poet says that typically, victors are praised in their own day, and by their peers. The poet declines to celebrate the victor's dead uncle, a former victor at the Isthmus, because, he says, the victor's grandfather is better qualified to do so. "For some belong to one generation, others to another; but each person hopes to speak best of what he himself has encountered" (91–92).

Pindar's odes also contain many internal references to the here-and-now aspect of epinician performance. The poet urges that it is necessary to celebrate "today" [σάμερον, *O.* 6.28; *P.* 4.1–2], and promises a song "right now" [νῦν, *O.* 11.11]. He exhorts the Muses to shed splendor, or shoot shafts of song "now" (*N.* 1.13; *O.* 9.5). At *Olympian* 8.65 and *Nemean* 6.8–9, the victory itself is described as something that

happens "now." A gnomic theme found repeatedly in the odes also stresses the importance of the present by talking of a need to attend to what is "before one's feet" [πὰρ ποδί, *N.* 6.55; ἐν ποσί μοι, *P.* 8.32].

But in spite of this apparent emphasis on the present and its importance, most epinician odes set out to understand the significance of the present victory by setting it against the backdrop of the heroic past.[1] The achievements of present-day athletic victors are juxtaposed and compared not only to those of the victor's relatives, but also to those of heroes from myth. Typically, these are the heroes associated with the victor's hometown, or others whom the victor's family claim as their ancestors.[2] In this way, the trials, or ἄεθλοι, of the athlete are, by implication, elevated to the stature of the ἄεθλοι or κάματα, "labors," of Ajax, Pelops, Antilokhos, and other heroes from myth.[3] In *Pythian* 1, the poet says that Hieron went into battle "like Philoktetes" (50). In *Pythian* 6, he praises Thrasyboulos, the victor's son, for "upholding the precept" that Cherion once instilled in Achilles (19–20). In *Pythian* 8, the victor is said to have earned words of praise like those once (ποτε, 39) bestowed on the Epigonoi by the Theban seer Amphiaraos (38–40).[4] Gregory Nagy writes that "the *kleos* of Pindar extends into the here and now, linking the heroes of the past with the men of the present,"[5] and Crotty notes Pindar's interest in "showing . . . the persistence through time of patterns in mortal life, the better to connect his athletes to the heroic past."[6]

The phrase καί νυν, "and now," "even now," "now too," is regularly

1. Nagy (1986, 92) observes that a basic difference between epic and epinician poetry is that *kleos,* "praise," in epinician poetry "applies equally to the athlete of the present and the hero of the past."

2. Nagy 1986, 98.

3. Cf. Nagy 1990, 192 and 136–45: the same diction is used in epinician poetry to refer both to athletic contests and to the trials of mythic heroes. Nagy suggests that athletic ritual is a re-enactment of, and compensation for, the trials of mythic heroes, and that "the *kleos* of victorious athletes . . . is pointedly equated with the *kleos* of heroes as they are known from epic" (192).

4. Cf. also *Olympian* 4, where the victor is compared to the Argonaut Erginos (*O.* 4.19–27), and *Olympian* 6, where Hagesias is worthy of the praise Adrastos once gave Amphiaraos (*O.* 6.12).

5. Nagy 1990, 192; cf. Kyriakou 1996, 29 n. 40.

6. Crotty 1982, 98.

used to bring out this idea of persistence or continuity in contexts where the athletic victor is said to have replicated the achievements of his ancestors or other heroes. In *Pythian* 4, a likeness and genealogical connection between the present-day victor Arkesilas and the ancient hero Battos is traced in the words, "Truly even now, at a later time, as at the peak of purple-flowered spring, Arkesilas flourishes as the eighth generation to these sons" (64–65). The expression καί νυν and others like it are also regularly used in epinician poetry to bring out a variety of other continuous patterns in human behavior from past to present. In *Olympian* 10, the poet says that he and his companions are "following even now [καί νυν]" (78) the ancient traditions established by Herakles when he founded the Olympian games.[7] In *Nemean* 8, less positively, we learn that "there was hostile deception even long ago [καὶ πάλαι]" (32), as well as that "the victory hymn existed even long ago [δὴ πάλαι]" (51).

One of the functions of the epinician ode is to do verbally what the athletic victor does physically: make the past continuous with the present by reviving or renewing it. Kurke brings out the way in which the athletic victory itself is regularly represented in Pindar's poetry as a rebirth that "brings back to life" the κλέος, "fame," of a household by "reviving" the κλέος of the victor's ancestors.[8] Crotty traces initiation—a ritual that also involves the idea of rebirth—as a metaphor for athletic achievement in Pindar.[9] David Carne-Ross identifies the same theme on the level of the city: the frequently found image of the tree represents the continuing life of the victor's city, sustained from generation to generation by heroes and their descendants; as descendants of the city's heroes, victors are "blossoms on the city tree."[10] And Nagy suggests that athletic ritual is analogous to initiation because it involves

7. Identifying a continuity between past and present time is one way in which the poet demonstrates his authority. It indicates his ability, like that of a prophet, to comprehend events over a temporal range that far exceeds the normal human perspective. One of his tasks is to locate the victory in time, interpreting it in terms of the past as well as of the present and the future. I shall explore this aspect of the epinician poetic persona in detail in chapter 3.

8. Kurke 1991, 70–82.

9. Crotty 1982, 112–14.

10. Carne-Ross 1976, 42–44.

symbolic death and new life in connection with the idea of reintegration into the community.[11]

All of these ideas and systems of imagery mean that epinician poetry is engaged in a constant comparison between the present and the past. In this comparison, the present is systematically encoded as "new," and the past as "old." Thus the athletic victory and anything that pertains to it is tagged as "new." In *Pythian* 8, the victory is referred to as the νεώτατον καλῶν, "newest of glories" (33); in *Pythian* 7, it is a νέα εὐπραγία, "new success" (18). In *Nemean* 9, victory is said to "grow, newly blooming [νεοθαλὴς, 48] with the help of gentle song" (48–49). As such, a victory deserves a "new winged hymn" [πτερόεντα νέον . . . ὕμνον, *I.* 5.63).[12]

Furthermore, athletic achievement is characterized chiefly as the province of the "young," the νέοι.[13] More than once, the motif is found of the father who rejoices in the success of a "youthful" son.[14] Athletic contests are also viewed as ritual reenactments of war, and the theme of youth is equally prominent in epinician contexts that deal with war. In *Pythian* 2, the poet declares that courage aids "youth" [νεότατι, 63], specifically, in war. In *Nemean* 9, he refers to recent labors in battle, undertaken with "youth [συν νεότατι, 44] and justice." In *Olympian* 13, Ares "flowers" on the "baneful spears of young men [νέων]" (23), and in *Nemean* 9, funeral pyres "feast" on "young-limbed" [νεογυίους, 24] men. There are also references to the "youthful valor" [νεαρὰν . . . ἀρετάν, *I.* 8.47–48, of Achilles] and the "flower of youth" [ἄνθος ἥβας, *P.* 4.158, of Jason] of the heroes to whom athletic victors are compared.

If the ideal athletic victor is a νέος, "young man," programmatic references also describe the chorus that performs the ode as a group of

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11. Nagy 1990, 139–42.

12. In *Nemean* 8 the poet speaks of an inherent risk in talking of *neara,* "new things." Bundy (1962, 40) and Miller (1982) argue plausibly that, here too, these "new things" are recent events—the victory in honor of which the ode has been composed.

13. Crotty (1982, 84) writes that certain passages in Pindar's epinician odes sound like the praise of youth that is typical in symposiastic poetry.

14. In *Pythian* 10, the poet says that that man is happy who, still living, sees his youthful (νεαρόν, 25) son win Pythian crowns (25–26). In *Olympian* 14, Echo is to tell the deceased father that his son has crowned his "young locks" [νέαν/. . . /χαίταν, 22–24].

νέοι, "youths." In *Nemean* 3, the song celebrates the victory "with the voice of youths [ὀπὶ νέων]" (66); in *Pythian* 5, the victor is celebrated "in the song of young men [νέων]" (103). At the end of *Isthmian* 8, a previous victory won by the same athlete is recalled with the observation that "in Epidauros, the youth [νεότας, 68] received him formerly." This ode also opens by addressing the chorus as "youths" [ὦ νέοι, 2] and by exhorting them, "let someone awaken the κῶμος [revel] for Kleandros and his peers [ἁλικίᾳ τε]" (1). The exhortation is echoed at the end of the poem, where "some one of Kleandros's peers [ἁλίκων . . . τις]" (65b) is urged to weave him a crown of myrtle.

Mythic material, on the other hand, when it appears in epinician poetry is regularly tagged with the epithets παλαιός, "ancient," πρότερος, "former," and their related adverbs, πάλαι, "of old," and πρότερον, "in former times." In *Olympian* 7, the poet identifies the "ancient tales [παλαιαί / ῥήσιες, 54–55] of men" as the source of the myth about the birth of Rhodes. In the same ode, the people who lived at the time of the island's birth are described as "former men" [προτέρων ἀνδρῶν, 72]. In *Pythian* 6, the myth of Nestor's son Antilokhos is described as something that happened "formerly" [πρότερον, 29], and Antilokhos himself is described as supreme "amongst men of old" [τῶν πάλαι, 40]. In *Nemean* 3, Aigina is said to have been inhabited by the "Myrmidons in former times" [Μυρμιδόνες . . . πρότεροι, 13]. In *Olympians* 3 and 10, the adjective πρότερος is used to describe the customs associated with the Olympian games (*O.* 3.11; *O.* 10.78).[15] In *Olympian* 14, the Minyans, mythic inhabitants of the victor's hometown, Orchomenos, are referred to as the "Minyans born long ago" [παλαιγόνων Μινυᾶν, 4], and in *Nemean* 3, Peleus's example is said to belong "among ancient virtues" [παλαιαῖσι δ' ἐν ἀρεταῖς, 32]. In *Nemean* 8, the strife between Aias and Odysseus is said to have occurred "of old" [πάλαι, 32], and in *Isthmian* 5 we learn that Aigina was "built of old [πάλαι, 44] as a tower for mighty deeds" (such as those of Aiakos and his sons).[16]

Clearly, "old" and "new" poetic themes both contribute in important ways to the epinician celebration. Even so, the poet often talks in ways that suggest that the two are in tension with one another. In

15. Cf. also *O.* 1.36; *O.* 7.72; *O.* 10.78; *P.* 3.80; *P.* 6.28; *N.* 3.13.

16. Cf. also *O.* 2.40; *O.* 7.54; *O.* 13.50; *O.* 14.4; *P.* 5.55; *P.* 6.40; *P.* 9.105; *N.* 2.16; *N.* 3.14, 32; *N.* 8.32, 51; *N.* 10.10; *I.* 4.25.

Andrew Miller's words, the epinician poet regularly sets up a "rhetorical opposition between *neara* 'new things' and *palaia* 'ancient things' as possible subjects of discourse."[17] He typically brings mythic narratives to a close with an apology for having spent too long on an alleged digression about the past, when he really ought to be praising the victor. At these moments, he typically says that duty, obligation, and debt require him to return to present-day concerns. For example, in *Pythian* 8 he says: "I am not at leisure to dedicate the whole long tale [of the Aiakidai, legendary inhabitants and heroes of Aigina] to the lyre and gentle speech, lest excess come and grate on us. But let my debt to you, boy, which runs at my feet, the most recent of glories, take wing through my art" (29–34).[18]

Some read these passages as if they reflected a genuine dilemma on the epinician poet's part as to whether "old" or "new" themes are more likely to please his audience.[19] However, others point out that we cannot take these passages at face value. We should not conclude from them that the theme of the present is in the end really privileged in epinician poetry over the theme of the past. A better way of understanding the relationship between the two themes is to say that the epinician ode "mediates the tension between the need to be satisfied with what is 'near,' and the desire to strive for what is 'far,'" and involves "an interplay between the *makros* and the *brachus*—continued elaboration of a tangential theme (= paradigmatic digression) and self-limitation to the present theme at hand (= return to praise of the victor)."[20] In other words, the apologetic passages are rhetorical formalities, and they reflect the fact that at some times it is appropriate for the epinician poet to speak of present events, while at others it is appropriate for him to expatiate upon the past. The passages present

17. Miller 1982, 113.

18. Cf. *P.* 11.38–45.

19. Miller (1982, 113) suggests that when the poet tells us his task is to "discover new things" [νεαρὰ δ' ἐξευρόντα, *N.* 8.20], he is acknowledging a "general human preference" for contemporary themes.

20. Hubbard 1985, 12. Miller acknowledges this elsewhere (1983, 219): "The fact that the laudator's primary duty is to the victor and his family . . . can be exploited whenever he wishes to abbreviate or terminate paradigmatic material; at other times, however, it is conveniently forgotten and the laudator's impulse to 'stray' is given free rein."

a formal justification for the poet's making a transition from subject matter that is "old" to subject matter that is "new."

Recasting this analysis with the actual performance in mind, I suggest that the poet sets up this rhetorical opposition between past and present themes because pleasing, or appeasing, certain members of his audience depends on it. The epinician poet has a delicate balance to strike. On the one hand, he flatters his victors when he likens them to heroes from the past. But too much focus on these heroes, as I noted in chapter 1, might anger the victor if it seems to distract attention from his own "new" victory. When the poet apologizes, and says that his talk about the past has been a digression, this is intended to cater to this danger. And this aspect of the performance also invites us to consider the possibility that present and past, or "new" and "old" themes, may be equally necessary to the epinician celebration without being given the same rhetorical status. Because of the poetry's occasion and immediate function, an epinician ode almost always ends with thoughts of the present. Talk about the past is essential to the epinician project, but will as a rule be framed by talk of the present.

THE PAST IN EPIC AND EPINICIAN

In fact, the performance context of epinician makes for a somewhat contradictory treatment of the past. This is most easily seen when we compare epinician poetry with Homeric epic. In Homeric poetry, it is a virtually unquestioned assumption that the mythic past was a superior time, an age in which people and their behavior were more heroic. Sometimes, the poet simply says as much: "Tydeus' son in his hand caught / up a stone, a huge thing which no two men could carry / such as men are now, but by himself he lightly hefted it" (5.302–4).[21] Elsewhere, the distinction between "the way things were then" and "the way things are now" is voiced by the characters. In book 1, Nestor appeals to Achilles and Agamemnon to model their behavior on men of previous generations. Reminding them that they are younger (νεωτέρω, 259) than he is, Nestor says that the men who lived three generations ago were "better even" [καὶ ἀρείοσιν] than Achilles and Agamemnon

21. Translations from the *Iliad* in this chapter are taken from Lattimore 1951.

(260–61). In *Iliad* 9, in the same way, Phoinix tries to influence Achilles with a song from the κλέα of former men (τῶν πρόσθεν . . . κλέα ἀνδρῶν, 524). Phoinix dwells on the fact that this song is "old, not new" [πάλαι, οὔ τι νέον γε, 527]. Both Nestor and Phoinix appeal to a traditional epic notion: in the past, people were more heroic; hence, the past is a good source of behavioral paradigms.

Is this perspective found in epinician poetry? On the one hand, it seems to be assumed, since the epinician poet praises men of the present, his athletic victors, by likening them to heroes from the past. On the other hand, the epinician poet must not assert the past's superiority directly or openly. For in order to praise his victor adequately, he must create the opposite impression, even if it is no more than an impression. He must suggest that the victor "has attained what no mortal man ever did previously [οὔπω τις πρότερον]" (*O.* 13.30–31). Similarly, in *Pythian* 2 the poet boasts that no king of old was greater than Hieron in the present (60).[22] Nor would the Homeric notion of human degeneration over time sit easily with the epinician view, noted above, that the present continues the patterns of the past. In short, the epinician attitude toward the past appears incoherent or inconsistent when analyzed closely. But this is not so surprising if we remember that we are talking about a rhetorical representation of the past, rather than a historical, metaphysical, or scientific theory about the way in which the past actually relates to the present.

In the sections that follow, I shall bring out some of the ways in which the rhetorical priority of present to past in epinician poetry is reflected in this genre's treatment of two conventions that are traditionally used in archaic Greek poetry to introduce the past as a topic. The first is the invocation of the Muse, and second is the appeal to tradition, or "what people say." Sometimes these "people" are left anonymous; at others, the poet identifies them as πρότεροι, "former men." This may or may not suggest a reference to former poets specifically.[23] Thanks to

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22. Cf. also *O.* 2.92–95: "I will speak out . . . that no city within a hundred years has produced a man more helpful to his friends in his heart or more open of hand than Theron." In *Nemean* 6, Praxidamas is likewise praised for "being the first" (17–18).

23. Bowra (1964, 283) comments that we are given "no hint who they were." Nagy (1990, 200–201 and 200 n. 8) identifies an ambiguity in Greek poetic tradition between πρότεροι as the tellers and πρότεροι as the subject matter of myths.

the complex role played by the past in epinician poetry, these two conventions are treated differently, and function differently, in Pindar's epinician odes and Homeric epic respectively.

The Muses in Pindar

Scholars have often noticed that the epinician poet seems to have more autonomy in relation to the Muse than does his epic colleague. C. M. Bowra writes that, unlike Homer, "Pindar distinguishes between what the Muse gives him and what he has to do with it."[24] This difference has been interpreted, wrongly, in my view, as an indication that the poet in Pindar is more sophisticated, individualized, and even more "literate" than the Homeric poet.[25] Instead, I explain the difference as a reflex of genre. The genres of epic and epinician have different social functions. Fulfilling their different functions requires a different treatment of the past in either case. The variations in the representation of the relationship between poet and Muse reflects this different treatment of the past.

Viewed in the simplest possible terms, the essential function of epinician poetry is to praise men of the present, while the essential function of epic is to praise men of the past. This feature of epic is echoed in the very words of characters in the *Iliad,* who sometimes anticipate being subjects of (epic) song for generations yet unborn. Helen (6.357–58) disparages herself and Paris as people on whom "Zeus set a vile destiny, so that hereafter we shall be made into things of song for men of the future." Hektor hopes, when facing Achilles, that he will "do some big thing first that men to come may know of it" (22.304–5).

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24. Bowra 1964, 4. Cf. Grube 1965, 9: "Pindar claims inspiration from the Muses . . . but he was not the man to think of himself as a passive instrument." Lanata (1963, 68, 75–77) suggests that Pindar has simply "clarified" the concept of Musean inspiration; the poet—"prophet of the Muses"—gives form to the content of the song, which the Muses provide; σοφία, "wisdom," is revealed through the poet's τέχνη, "craft."

25. Calame (1995, 51) suggests that the Muse in epinician poetry "plays a subordinate role, as a mere assistant to the *I,*" and (67) that "the invocation to the Muses, basic to Homeric poetry, tends to become a *literary convention* [emphasis added] in Bacchylides and Pindar."

Epic, in other words, purports, at least on the face of it,[26] to recall the past for its own sake. This means that value is assigned to the poet's ability to give a "true" account of the past, where "truth" is a matter of reconstructing "what really happened." Consequently, the epic poet's authority to speak of the past is established by his alleged access to a divine, omniscient source: the Muses, daughters of Mnemosynē, or "Memory." Thanks to his communication with the Muses, the epic poet can claim to reproduce an accurate account of the past, based on the eyewitness testimony of the Muses.

This conceit is nowhere to be found in epinician poetry. In epinician poetry, the past is introduced not for its own sake but for the sake of the present occasion. Ultimately, the past is subordinate to the present as a poetic theme. This has various consequences. For one thing, the epinician poet does not boast that he is able to tell the "truth" about the past. Instead, he boasts of being able to give an account of the past that "befits" the present. The epinician poet openly acknowledges that the myths he introduces into the ode have been adapted where necessary to suit the needs of the occasion. And the sources through which the epinician poet claims to have access to the past are more varied in character than those of his epic colleague. Sometimes the Muses or other divinities are represented as the poet's source of information. More often, however, poetic tradition, stories told by other human beings, are the poet's starting point. Moreover, the epinician poet's attitude toward tradition itself is interestingly complex. In the sections that follow, I shall look first at the way poet and Muse are represented in epinician poetry. I shall then investigate the epinician poet's attitude toward tradition and truth.

HOMERIC AND PINDARIC INVOCATIONS

I shall begin by comparing invocations of the Muse in Homer (and Hesiod) with those in Pindar.[27] In the opening lines of the *Iliad* and

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26. Of course, the past in an epic poem will always be recalled in such a way as to have significance for its present-day hearers and their circumstances (cf. Morris 1986, 120–27). But in Homeric poetry this is not made explicit at the level of the text, as it is in Pindar's epinician odes.

27. In Homer, invoking the Muse "calls attention to the process by which the story reaches us through the act of narration" (Richardson 1990, 187). I suggest that the

the *Odyssey,* the poet addresses the Muse directly and asks her to "narrate" or "sing" the events of the poem to him (ἄειδε, *Iliad* 1.1; ἔννεπε, *Odyssey* 1.1). In the *Iliad,* the Muse is also invoked at other narrative junctures. The Homeric invocation of the Muse underwrites the poet's claim to have reliable knowledge of matters that are remote from him and his audience in time and space.[28] In Homer, and also in Hesiod, the Muses know "the things that are, the things that will be, and the things that were before" [τά τ' ἐόντα, τά τ' ἐσσόμενα πρό τ' ἐόντα, *Theogony* 38]. They "were present at" and "know" the events of the *Iliad* (πάρεστέ τε, ἴστε τε πάντα, 2.485),[29] and, thanks to his communication with them, the poet too has access to these events. Invoking the Muse, the poet "lays claim to immediate (visual) access to events that both precede and postdate his own temporal horizon."[30]

The poet invokes the Muse to ask her for information about the past. The request is typically in the form of what I shall call a "τίς-question"[31]—the poet asks the Muse who or what people were involved in, or responsible for, a particular event or sequence of events.[32] The *Iliad* opens with the question, "What god was it then [τίς . . . θεῶν, 8] set them [Achilles and Agamemnon] together in bitter collision?" (1.8–9).[33] Compare, in *Iliad* 11, "Tell me now, you Muses who have your homes on Olympos, who was the first [ὅς τις . . . πρῶτος, 219] to come forth and stand against Agamemnon of

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Pindaric representation of poet and Muse expresses the peculiarly epinician way in which epinician narrative purports to reach us.

28. See Meuli 1938, 164–76, for the idea that the origins of Greek epic lie in shamanism. On the Muses' power to put the poet in touch with places and times other than his own, see Detienne 1990, 9–15. Poetic inspiration is controversial even in Homer: how much "autonomy" does the poet retain? See Russo and Simon 1978, 494; Murray 1981; Finkelberg 1990, 295–96; and Bowie 1993, 12–14. My interest here is less in the experience of inspiration than in the way inspiration is formally represented in the various archaic Greek genres, and the reasons for its representation.

29. On the Muses as "eyewitnesses," see Nagy 1979, 271–72.

30. Dickson 1990a, 44.

31. Not to be confused with the τις-speeches discussed by de Jong (1987b).

32. In one passage, the Muses are asked *how* something happened: "Tell me now, you Muses who have your homes on Olympos, how fire was first thrown on the ships of the Achaeans" (6.112–13).

33. For other examples in the *Iliad* of this type of τίς-question, cf. 2.484–87; 5.703–4; 8.273; 11.218–20, 299–300; 14.508–10; 16.112–13, 692–93.

the very Trojans, or their renowned companions in battle?" (218–20).[34] Sometimes the Muse is not explicitly named. In *Iliad* 5, the poet simply asks, "Who then was the first and who the last [τίνα πρῶτον, τίνα δ'ὕστατον, 703] that they slaughtered, Hektor, Priam's son and Ares the brazen?" (5.703–4). But the questions are so similar in form that these anonymous invocations are surely also addressed to the Muse.[35]

The information requested in the τίς-question is typically provided in the form of an answering catalog. The catalog of ships in *Iliad* 2—which answers the question, "Tell me now . . . who then [οἵ τινες, 487] of those were the chief men and the lords of the Danaans?" (2.484–87)—is just one example. In *Iliad* 5, a catalog of Hektor's victims answers the question about the "first and last" men slain by Hektor and Ares: "godlike Teuthros first and next Orestes, driver of horses / Trechos the spearman of Aitolia and Oinomaos, Helenos son of Oinops and Oresbios of the shining guard" (5.705–10). Similar catalogs follow the other Iliadic invocations.[36]

These Homeric invocations also involve the theme of "too much for a mortal to tell." In *Iliad* 2, this idea is expressed in the *recusatio,* "I could not tell over the multitude [πληθύν, 488] of them nor name them, not if I had a voice never to be broken and a heart of bronze within me, not unless the Muses of Olympia, daughters of Zeus of the aegis, remembered all those who came beneath Ilion" (488–92). The series of similes that precedes the invocation (459–83) has already evoked the vast numbers of the Achaean warriors, comparing them to the ἔθνεα πολλά, "multitudinous nations," of large birds or flies, and saying that they are "thousands [μυρίοι], as many as leaves and flowers appear in spring" (468). In the invocation in the proem of the *Iliad,* the Muse is asked to sing of the μυρί' ἄλγεα, "countless griefs" Achilles' wrath brought upon the Achaeans and of the "many

34. Other examples of the "Who was the first . . . ?" type occur at 8.273, 11.299–300, 14.508–10, and 16.112–13. At 16.692–93, a question of this form is addressed to Patroklos.

35. Cf. Minton 1960, 304.

36. Cf. also 8.274–76; 11.221–30, 301–3; 14.511–19; and 16.694–97. Minton (1960, 292–93) notes that both features, the question and the enumeration, or catalog, are typical of invocations both in Homer and in Hesiod.

staunch souls" [πολλὰς . . . ἰφθίμους ψυχάς, 1.3] that in this way were sent to Hades. Other examples abound.[37]

In short, the Homeric invocation of the Muse involves two ideas: the temporal remoteness of the subject matter, and the notion that there is too much for a mere mortal to recount. The Muses' identity as daughters of Mnemosynē, or "Memory," is relevant to both ideas. In the first place, the Muses help the poet to remember the remote past. In the second place, they help to perform the specific feat of memory required to produce the detailed catalog of information that typically follows and answers an invocation.[38] As Egbert Bakker writes, in Homeric epic performance, "The past . . . becomes 'present,' both in a temporal and in a spatial sense: it is turned from 'then' and 'there' into 'now' and 'here' within the context of a special social event and through the actions of a special, authoritative speaker"; the poet "stages the participants in the performance event as *spectators* of the epic events from the past . . . producing a sustained attempt at *enargeia* 'vividness'."[39] The invocation of the Muse is an important feature of this staging.

The epinician poet also often describes his task as one of making the past present, or "awakening" it.[40] In *Nemean* 1, he says that he will

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37. In book 8, the poet observes, "All these [πάντας] he [Teukros] felled to the bountiful earth in close succession" (8.277). In book 11, the catalog proper is followed up with the remark, "He [Hektor] killed these, who were lords of the Danaans, and thereafter the multitude [πληθύν]" (11.304–5). And in book 14, the catalog of Achaean warriors, following the invocation, who "won the bloody despoilment of men" reaches a climax with the description of "Aias the fast footed son of Oïleus, who caught and killed most [πλείστους]" (14.520). The "too much for a mere mortal to tell" theme is not, of course, confined to invocations (cf., for example, 12.176–80 and 17.260–61).

38. See Minchin 1996 on the way in which catalogs in oral epic and other kinds of songs are presented as feats of memory designed to impress an audience.

39. Bakker 1997, 15. On the epic technique of "making the past present," see also Bakker 1993, 15–18, and Ford 1992, 54–55, 75–76, and 125–30.

40. Cf. Kurke 1991, 67: in Pindar, the athlete's victory "revives" the κλέος, "fame," of his dead ancestors. In *Isthmian* 3/4, the poet says that Poseidon has "roused from its bed" [ἐκ λεχέων ἀνάγει, 40] the "ancient report" [φάμαν παλαιάν, 27] of the victor's house. The poet's own activity is analogous; the victory gives him the opportunity to bring mythic heroes back to life by telling their stories. In *Pythian* 9, he also says that it is his duty to "awaken" [ἐγεῖραι, 104] the "ancient fame" [παλαιὰν δόξαν, 105] of the victor's ancestors.

"rouse up [ὀτρύνων] the ancient tale" of Herakles (34). In *Olympian* 9, he talks of the need to "awaken [ἔγειρε] a clear-toned path of words" for Pyrrha and Deukalion (47). And in epinician poetry, as in epic, the Muse is invoked at junctures where the poet wants to suggest that he is reviving a world that is remote in time. Invocations of the Muse in Pindar resemble Homeric invocations in diction, style, and content. In the myth of *Olympian* 10, which describes Herakles' foundation of the Olympic games, the poet poses a τίς-question, asking who the very first Olympic victors were: "Who then [τίς δή] gained a new wreath with hands or feet or chariot after fixing athletic triumph in his thought and accomplishing it in deed?"(60–64). As in equivalent passages in the *Iliad,* the τίς-question is answered by a catalog in which the names of these early Olympic victors are listed (Oionos, Echemos, Doryklos, Samos, Phrastor, and Nikeus, 63–74). The details furnished regarding each victor in *Olympian* 10 also resemble in style the kind of elaboration found in Homeric catalogs: "Oionos, who came driving his army from Midea" (66); "Doryklos . . . who dwelt in the city of Tiryns" (67–68).[41]

A similar passage occurs in *Isthmian* 5. Recalling the ancient history of Aigina, the poet poses a τίς-question about the role the Aiakidai played in the Trojan War: "Tell who slew Kyknos, and who Hektor [τίνες Κύκνον, τίνες Ἕκτορα πέφνον, 39] and the fearless general of the Ethiopians, Memnon of the bronze armor? Who then wounded [τίς . . . / τρῶσεν, 41–42] noble Telephos with his spear by the banks of the Kaïkos?" (39–42). The Muse is not named explicitly here, but the command, "Drive me now up from the plain" (38), which closely precedes the τίς-questions, seems to be addressed to her. Here as elsewhere in the odes, the poet represents himself riding in the Muse's chariot.[42]

Questions in this style regarding events from the mythic past are also found in *Pythian* 11. Speaking of Clytemnestra, the poet asks (and his question is presumably addressed to the Muse), "Was it then

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41. Minchin (1996, 4) notes that "enlivening description or comment" distinguishes catalogs from lists.

42. The epinician poet regularly describes himself riding in the chariot of the Muse—cf., for example, *O.* 9.80–81; *I.* 8.61. On the broader significance of this motif in Pindar, see Simpson 1969; Steiner 1986, 58–59; and Henderson 1992.

Iphigeneia, slaughtered at Euripos, far from her homeland, that vexed her to rouse up heavy-handed anger? Or did lying down at night lead her astray, enthralled to another's bed?" (22–25). In *Olympian* 13, an ode for a victor from Corinth, the poet praises the victor's homeland by recalling the ancient inventions accredited to the Corinthians in myth. Again, the mention of these ἀρχαῖα σοφίσματα, "inventions of long ago," gives rise to a series of questions of the familiar type: "From where did the delights of Dionysos shine forth with the ox-driving dithyramb? Who added curbs to the horse's gear or the twin kings of birds to the temples of the gods?" (18–22).[43]

The invocation of the Muse in *Pythian* 4, the most "epic" of Pindar's epinician odes in length and style, resembles the invocation in the *Iliad* proem particularly closely. Saying that he will "entrust" the golden fleece (along with his current victor, Arkesilas) to the Muses (67–68), the poet poses the questions, "What was the beginning of their voyage? [τίς γὰρ ἀρχὰ δέξατο ναυτιλίας;] What danger bound them with strong nails of adamant? [τίς δὲ κίνδυνος κρατεροῖς ἀδάμαντος / δῆσεν ἅλοις;]" (71–72). Compare the *Iliad* proem, where the Homeric poet, speaking of the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon, asks the Muse, "What god was it then set them together in bitter collision?" [τίς τ' ἄρ σφωε θεῶν ἔριδι ξυνέηκε μάχεσθαι; 1.8]. In both cases, the poet asks the Muse to explain how the mythic action began.

In some Pindaric invocations, divinities other than the Muse are called upon. In *Isthmian* 7, the poet addresses the city of Thebes, the victor's homeland, with the question, "In which of your former native glories [τίνι τῶν πάρος . . . /καλῶν ἐπιχωρίων, 1–2], O blessed Thebe, did you rejoice most in your heart?" (1–3). In this case, the usual answering catalog is elegantly and indirectly presented in the form of an ordered series of further rhetorical questions: "Was it when you raised up Dionysos of the wide-streaming hair to be seated by Demeter of the ringing bronze?" and so forth (3–15).

There are also two other places in which the epinician poet calls upon divinities to help him with his song, though in these the usual

43. A τίς-question is also found at *O.* 2.1–2, although in this case the question is not a request for information about the mythic past. Bundy (1972, 66) notes that in this passage the Hymnoi, or "Hymns," "substitute" for the Muse.

τίς-questions are not found. In *Nemean* 3, the poet asks the Muse, "Grant an abundance of such song from my skill, but begin a fitting hymn for the ruler of the cloudy sky, daughter, and I shall impart it to their voices and the lyre" (9–12). In *Nemean* 10, he asks the Graces to hymn Argos (1–2).

In general, invocations of the Muse in epinician poetry, like those found in Homer, are associated with two traditional themes: that the poet's material is remote in time, and that it is vast in quantity. In the passage from *Olympian* 10, the information the poet seeks involves the mythic past, the "founding ceremony" [πρωτογόνῳ τελετᾷ, 51] of the Olympics, the "first Olympiad" [Ὀλυμπίαδι πρώτᾳ, 58]. In *Isthmian* 7, after the poet's request that Thebes herself reveal which national achievements she most delights in, he remarks, "But the grace from ancient times [παλαιά . . . /. . . χάρις, 16–17] sleeps, and mortals are forgetful of what does not reach the choice pinnacle of poetic wisdom, linked to bright streams of words" (16–19). In *Nemean* 3, the poet announces, "The glorification of this land will be a joyful labor, where the Myrmidons lived of old [Μυρμιδόνες . . . πρότεροι, 13], whose assembly place of ancient fame [παλαίφατον ἀγοράν, 14] Aristokleidas did not stain with reproach." In the middle of his catalog of Argos's achievements in *Nemean* 10, the poet remarks, "The city excels in lovely-haired women from of old [πάλαι]" (10).

Sometimes the idea that the poet has a vast amount of material to narrate is conveyed by a catalog alone. At others, additional commentary underscores the point. In the passages from *Nemean* 10, the poet describes Perseus's dealings with the Gorgon as "lengthy" [μακρά, 4], and mentions the "many" [πολλά, 5] cities founded from Argos in Egypt. As noted previously, he describes his own mouth as "too small" [βραχύ, 19] to say all that there is to be said about Argos. Also in *Pythian* 4 we find the idea that the mythic part of the ode involves more material than the poet can narrate without the help of the Muse. The central mythic narrative, about Jason and Medea, is introduced by an invocation of the Muse (70–71). But when the poet concludes the mythic section of the ode, he describes this as abandoning the "highway" [ἀμαξιτόν], on which it is "too far" [μακρά] for him to continue traveling, in favor of a "short path" [οἶμον . . . βραχύν] (247). It may also be significant, in this respect, that when the poet invokes the Muse in *Nemean* 3, he asks her for an "abundance" [ἀφθονίαν, 9] of song.

RETURNING TO THE PRESENT

However, while there are basic parallels between Homeric invocations of the Muse and the ones we find in Pindar's epinician odes, there are also significant differences. One basic, but important, point is that the Pindaric ode does not typically open with an invocation of the Muse, as the Homeric poems do. This in itself reflects the different role that the past plays in epinician poetry. The past is not the primary concern here, as it is in epic. The past is just one of a number of themes the poet must coordinate, all to the end of praising the present. The typical placement for the Pindaric invocation of the Muse is in the middle of the ode. It marks a special departure, a change in theme and style, as the poet makes a transition from present-day concerns to narratives about the distant past.[44]

An epinician excursus into the past typically ends with the theme of "too much for a mortal to say." But the theme is employed differently in these epinician contexts from the way it is used in Homeric epic. In the *Iliad,* the poet's having "too much to say" is a reason for him to invoke divine assistance before he embarks on a lengthy exposition of mythic material. In Pindar, the "too much to say" *recusatio* is typically given by the poet as his excuse for ending a mythic section, or returning from an excursus into myth. The different treatment of this *recusatio* in either genre reflects the aesthetic program peculiar to each one, as well as the different role of the past. In Homeric epic, bigger is better. The feature Richard Martin calls the "expansion aesthetic"[45] means that having "too much to tell" is actually a justification for beginning a narrative. But in epinician poetry, the need to alternate "old" with "new" themes means that there must also be a corresponding alternation between "brevity" (when talking of the "new") and "length" (when talking of the "old").

The way in which the "too much to tell" theme is employed in

44. O'Higgins 1997, 126, notes that, in *Pythian* 4, the Muse has been "moved" from her Homeric position "outside the frame" to "within the song." While she interprets the difference from Homer in terms of a difference in gender roles, I suggest that it has more to do with the circumscribed role the past (identified with the Muse's memory) plays in epinician poetry.

45. On this as a feature of Homeric epic, see Martin 1989, 166–205.

epinician also underscores the fact that, in this genre, the poet must always in the end return to the present. Kurke suggests that, in its geographical themes, the narrative of an epinician ode traces a "loop-like" pattern. The idea of travel away from home (mimicking the athlete's journey from home to the athletic contests) is later followed up by the idea of νόστος, or "return" home (imitating the athlete's return home from the games).[46] This same pattern, of an outward journey followed by a return, is also to be found in the ode's temporal themes and transitions. A mythic excursus—which is itself often described as a metaphorical journey to the past[47]—is typically concluded, in Pindar, with a passage in which the poet emphatically returns to the present, usually with a great deal of metanarrative commentary that emphasizes the transition back to present time (cf. *O.* 2.83; *O.* 3.38; *P.* 11.41–44; *N.* 4.73–75, and *I.* 6.56).

At a juncture of this kind, the poet often describes himself in a way that suggests that he is emerging from an inspired state. In the inspired state, the Muse had been speaking through him, but as he emerges from this in order to speak of the present once more, there is a renewed emphasis on his own voice and his agency in producing the song. Note that in the *recusatio* passage from *Nemean* 10, discussed earlier, it is his own "mouth" that the poet describes as "too small" when he leaves mythic matters aside.[48] He also speaks, at that moment, of his own "well-strung lyre" and seems newly conscious of his audience (cf. ἀνθρώπων, 20). In the comparable passage from *Pythian* 4, also discussed earlier, the poet dwells on his identity and authority as narrator, saying that he "leads the way in poetic wisdom [σοφία] for others" (248). In *Olympian* 10, as the poet leaves aside talk of the

46. Kurke 1991, 15–34.

47. Cf. *O.* 6.22–28 and Segal 1985, 199: the poet uses "spatial metaphors" to express the act of communication, or "mediation," between present and past.

48. The poet also often addresses his own speech organs when rejecting one myth in favor of another. In *Olympian* 9—rejecting the myth about Herakles' battles with the gods in favor of the myth of the foundation of Opos—he says, "Cast that story from me, my mouth!" (35–36). In *Nemean* 3, he addresses his own *thumos,* "heart," saying, "Bring the Muse to Aiakos and his race" (26–28). In *Nemean* 4, he addresses his lyre: "Quickly, now, sweet lyre, weave out this one too" (44–45). Once again, these passages serve to suggest that the epinician poet controls the way the past is used as a theme, and coordinates it with other themes.

foundation myth of the Olympic games in favor of the current celebrations, he identifies himself and his companions as performers of the song: "and following those ancient beginnings, now too [καί νυν] we shall sing" (78–79).[49] In *Isthmian* 6, when the poet makes the transition from mythic time to the present, he announces that he is "steward of the revel songs" [ταμίας / . . . κώμων, 57–58].

In short, when the epinician poet embarks on a narrative about the past, he typically invokes the Muse or some other divinity, as if the narrative he is about to present were divinely inspired. When he returns to the present, he seems to relinquish divine aid, speak in his own voice, and emphasize his autonomy in regulating what he has to say.[50] Other stylistic differences enhance the contrast between the past-oriented and the present-based narrative. For instance, the victor's achievements are never, in Pindar, described with the leisurely kind of detail that is seen in epinician myth.[51] Instead, the victor's and his family's achievements are presented in the form of condensed catalogs.[52] We might say that the epinician poet employs an epic style of narration for the myth, which is abandoned when he returns to praise of the present-day victor.

All of this means that neither brevity nor length has absolute value in epinician poetry. As we have seen, passages introduced by an invocation

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49. *Isthmian* 5 presents an interesting variation on the pattern. The poet answers for himself the question he had originally put to the Muse ("Tell who slew Kyknos"), saying, "My mouth proclaims Aigina as their homeland, that illustrious island" (43–44). He also says that his own "fluent tongue [γλῶσσά μοι] has many arrows to ring out their praise [praise of the Aiakidai]" (47; cf. στόμα, "mouth," 43). But here too, the apparent shift to the poet's own voice coincides with a shift in focus from past to present, or from Aigina's mythical glories in war to her more recent martial glories, such as the battle of Salamis (48).

50. The same pattern is found in *Olympian* 2, with a variation. The myth in this ode concerns not the past but the future: it is a myth about life after death. But just as in other odes, the poet enters into a quasi-inspired account of the future (in this case, the inspiration takes the form of an initiate's mysterious vision [56ff.]), and when he emerges from it and returns to present-day reality, he seems to resume his own voice (83ff.). On this and other Pindaric passages that suggest the influence of mystery cult, see Garner 1992, 49.

51. Rosenmeyer (1969, 239) also notes that often in Pindar "the portraits of the victors are less fully alive than the portraits of the heroes celebrated in the myths."

52. Cf. *P.* 8.35–37; *O.* 13.101–15; *N.* 6.34–44; *I.* 6.60–62.

of the Muse are represented as inspired digressions in which the poet seems to let the Muse's influence (or that of another divinity) take its course. These are associated with a lengthier, more expansive style of narration. But when the poet reins himself in again at the end of such passages, he endorses a "brevity" that is consistent with his newly regained autonomy and self-control. At the relevant juncture in *Pythian* 4, the poet suddenly summarizes the end of the myth of Jason and Medea (249–57), which had been given expansive treatment up to that point. In *Isthmian* 6, the transition is associated with the promise to speak in "the Argive fashion, in the briefest of terms [κἀν βραχίστοις]" (59).[53] There is also often a sense, in these transitional passages, of the need to bring the narrative back down to earth, to scale it down to a more mundane (or mortal) level. Thus the transition from myth to present in *Olympian* 3 involves gnomic reflection on the need for restraint and recognition of mortal limitations (44–45).[54]

Perhaps the most significant point that is made in these passages is the poet's implicit claim to regain control of the narrative when he resumes the theme of the present. In this way, the epinician poet emphasizes his ability to fulfill his obligation to the victor, and his awareness of that obligation. He remembers the need to speak about the present and celebrate it; he has not allowed himself to be carried away by thoughts of the past for too long. The detailed metanarrative commentary at these junctures functions to reassure the victor and his family by emphasizing the poet's intention and ability to put the past in its place.

PERSPECTIVES ON THE PAST

In epinician poetry, then, we find a constant alternation between an involved perspective on the past and a more distant one. In his narrative forays into the past, the epinician poet employs the same techniques as the epic poet uses to make the past seem vivid and immediate. Direct speech is one (*O.* 1.75–85; *O.* 8.42–46; *P.* 3.40–42; *P.* 8.44–55; *P.* 9.30–65; *I.* 6.42–49; and *I.* 8.35a–45). Apostrophe—direct address of

53. Cf. *N.* 10.19–20.
54. Cf. also *P.* 2.34 and *P.* 3.59.

the hero whose myth the poet is narrating—is another (*O* 1.36, 46, 51; *P.* 4.59; *I.* 6.19).[55] Sometimes the epinician poet will speak as though he had firsthand experience—eyewitness knowledge—of the items and events he describes. When, in *Pythian* 10, he describes the commotion to be heard in the land of the Hyperboreans—"choruses of maidens, clanging of lyres, and the shrill sound of flutes" (38–39)—he speaks as though he had been there and heard it himself. Elsewhere, like the epic poet, he "focalizes" events through the experience of his mythic characters—presents them from the relevant character's point of view.[56] The myth in *Olympian* 3, for example, describes Herakles' journey to the Hyperboreans, from which the hero brought back the olive tree as an adornment for the Olympic stadium. The poet describes the way the Olympian precinct had previously "seemed" to Herakles (ἔδοξεν . . . αὐτῷ, 24): "naked and a victim of the sun's piercing rays." Herakles' heart (θυμός, 25) then "drove him to go to the Istrian land," where he had seen "that land beyond the blasts of the chill North Wind," and "stood in wonder at [θάμβαινε, 32] the trees" while "sweet longing [γλυκὺς ἵμερος, 33] seized him" to plant them in the stadium. In *Olympian* 13, more briefly, we are told how Athena "seemed to speak [εἰπεῖν / ἔδοξεν 71–72] to Bellerophon in the darkness."

In passages like this, the epinician poet presents the past from a perspective that suggests that he himself is involved in the places and events he describes. But when he returns to the topic of the present (as he, unlike the epic poet, invariably does in the end), his perspective on the past also changes. In *Pythian* 4, for example, the shift in perspective is marked by a change of addressee. At the same moment as he invokes the Muse, embarking on the ode's mythic narrative, the poet also addresses the ancient hero Battos (ancestor of the victor, Arkesilas, for whom the ode is composed) directly: ὦ μάκαρ υἱὲ Πολυμνάστου (59).

55. Bakker (1997, 25) points out that, in Homeric apostrophes, the poet does not address the hero as he was when the past events were actually occurring. Instead, it is as though poet and hero are both spectators of those earlier events. This is also true of apostrophe in Pindar. The kind of involvement apostrophe suggests may not represent the poet actually intervening in past events; but it does nevertheless suggest that he is in touch with a realm other than that of everyday reality.

56. On "focalization" in narrative in general, see Bal 1985, 102–14. On focalization in Homer, see de Jong 1987a.

But as the poet concludes the myth and returns to present-day affairs, it is, naturally enough, the victor Arkesilas whom he addresses: ὦ Ἀρκεσίλα (250); ὑμετέρας ἀκτῖνος ὄλβου (255); ὔμμι (259).

In other places, the epinician poet creates a sense of detachment from the past by referring to it as a topic treated previously by other poets. In *Olympian* 1, he begins to narrate the myth of Pelops, but pauses to reflect critically on other poets' versions of the same story (28–34 and 52). In *Nemean* 3, the poet first relates the exploits of the young Achilles (hunting lions and wild boars at the age of six) through the admiring eyes of Artemis and Athena (ἐθάμβεον, 50) but then seems to step back from the story with the comment, "This tale I have to tell was told by former poets" [λεγόμενον δὲ τοῦτο προτέρων ἔπος ἔχω, 52–53].[57] And in many places, as we have already seen, the poet explicitly acknowledges that the events he is describing took place long ago. This too suggests a certain detachment from the mythic material. In *Isthmian* 5, for instance, the transition from myth to present includes the poet's observation that Aigina was built "of old" [πάλαι, 44]. The comment is distancing; it emphasizes the past's remoteness; the poet is looking at past events here from a vantage point that is firmly anchored in the present.

In epic, this present-based perspective is only rarely found,[58] because the epic agenda involves direct acquaintance with the past. But in epinician poetry, the present-based perspective is the one more often found. Moreover, even within the context of a mythic narrative, the epinician poet's way of presenting the past may fluctuate between an involved perspective and a distant one. In *Nemean* 3, in the middle of the myth, the poet stands back from his material and comments, "Lord Peleus rejoiced in ancient valor [παλαιαῖσι . . . ἀρεταῖς]" (32). In *Olympian* 9, no sooner is the myth of Pyrrha, Deukalion, and the flood begun than the poet shifts his attention and comments—in an address to the present-day victor, as opposed to an apostrophe to the

57. I shall address this epinician convention in more detail in the next section of this chapter.

58. The exceptions are those passages of the *Iliad,* mentioned earlier, in which the poet compares the present, disparagingly, with the past (for example, "But Tydeus's son in his hand caught up a stone, a huge thing which no two men could carry such as men are now, but by himself he lightly hefted it," 5.302–4).

myth's ancient heroes, "From the beginning your bronze-shielded ancestors came from them" (53–55). In other words, and as we might expect, even in the mythic section of the ode the epinician poet often keeps one eye on the present and the victor to whom his praise is addressed.

There are also epinician myths in which the poet never really enters the topic of the past, but views it from a distance throughout the telling. The mythic material is only introduced briefly, and for the sake of explaining some present-day phenomenon. In *Pythian* 1, for example, we find an aetiological mythic allusion of this kind. There is a brief account of "hundred-headed Typhos, whom the famous Cilician cave once [ποτε, 16] nurtured; now however [νῦν γε, 17], Sicily and the sea-enclosing cliffs above Kyme press down upon his shaggy chest." In the same way, later in this ode, the myth of Philoktetes is alluded to, but only briefly, for the sake of likening Hieron's situation (endurance and success in the face of illness) to his (50–57).

NARRATIVE TELESCOPING

The epinician imperative that the poet return to the present after a mythic "digression," and the idea that when he does so he regains control of the narrative, are also often suggested by a telescoping of the narrative as the poet returns to the present. The pace accelerates, as if the poet were in a hurry to bring his account forward in time to meet the present.

In *Olympians* 1 and 7, genealogy—a style of narration that automatically brings an account quickly forward (or backward) in time—is employed to this end. At the end of the myth of Rhodes in *Olympian* 7, the sons of Helios are said to have begotten in their turn (τέκεν . . . ἔτεκεν, 71–74) Kamiros, Ialysos, and Lindos, who, "dividing their ancestral land in three each held their share of cities, places still called after them [κέκληνται δέ σφίν ἕδραι, 76]."[59] Of Pelops in *Olympian* 1, the poet says: "He overcame the strength of Oinomaos and married

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59. An inclination to summarize begins to emerge even earlier, in the poet's commentary on Lachesis's oath (that Rhodes would be a prize for Helios): "The chief points of these words were fulfilled, falling with truth" [τελεύταθεν δὲ λόγων κορυφαί / ἐν ἀλαθείᾳ πετοῖσαι, *O.* 7.68–69].

the maiden. He fathered six sons, leaders of the people, eager for valor. And now [νῦν δέ, 90] he shares in glorious blood sacrifices, reclining by the course of the Alpheos" (88–92).

In other epinician odes, the myth is concluded speedily with a catalog of the hero's achievements. This technique is found at the end of the myth of Bellerophon in *Olympian* 13: "He [Bellerophon] slew the female army of archers, the Amazons; he slew the Chimaera breathing fire, and the Solymoi" (89–90).[60] Right away after that, the poet shifts the focus from past to present when he tells us that even now Zeus's "ancient mangers" [φάτναι . . . ἀρχαῖαι, 92] on Olympos accommodate Bellerophon's winged horse Pegasos (92). In *Pythian* 9, the poet concludes the myth (the marriage of Apollo and Kyrene) concisely; his own brevity matches the claim that the actions he is describing were also completed quickly: "Action is swift when gods are in haste, and roads are short [ὁδοί τε βραχεῖαι, 68]" (67–68); "That day settled it. They mingled in love in the chamber of Libya, rich in gold, where she rules a city most beautiful and distinguished in contests" (68–70).

The myth in *Nemean* 1 also fast-forwards to the present at the end, but in a slightly different way: by means of Teiresias's prophecy about Herakles' future exploits. The infant Herakles has just strangled the two serpents sent by Hera to kill him. Teiresias predicts from this "what kind of fortunes" [ποίαις τύχαις, 61] Herakles will meet with, and how many (ὅσσους . . . / ὅσσους, 62–63) "wild beasts ignorant of right and wrong" he will kill on land and on sea.[61] From the point of view of the characters in the myth, these events lie in the future. For the epinician poet and his audience, however, Teiresias's prophecy

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60. The diction employed here, especially the use of the word ἔπεφνεν, resembles that of passages in Homer that narrate catalogs of killings. Cf. *Iliad* 6.12, 29, and 183–186, 5.69, 15.329; and *Odyssey* 11.516–18. In fact, the list of Bellerophon's killings in *Olympian* 13 seems to be based on the Iliadic account of the same, which occurs in Glaukos's speech to Diomedes in book 6 (183–90). Similar diction is also found in the lists of Herakles' victims in the myths of *Olympian* 10 (27–28) and *Isthmian* 6 (31).

61. This quantifying language is also used in connection with prophetic knowledge in *Pythian* 9. Cheiron reminds Apollo that, as god of prophecy, he knows "the appointed end of everything and the routes by which all are brought to pass; and how many [ὅσσα] leaves the earth puts forth in spring, and how many [χὡπόσαι] grains of sand in the sea and rivers are beaten by the waves and blasts of wind, and what is to be and whence it will come" (46–49).

effectively brings the subject matter of the myth into the context of present time, insofar as it describes the way things are "now." From the point of view of the poet and his audience, Herakles has already received the rewards Teiresias predicts; he already enjoys ἡσυχία, "tranquillity," "in unbroken peace for the whole of time" (69–70).

THE PAST EXPLAINING THE PRESENT

The passages that conclude epinician myths also often reflect the thought that in epinician poetry, the present has priority over the past. Often, they contain a suggestion that the whole point of mentioning the past is to explain the present, to explain the way things "are now." The phrase καί νυν, "and now," "even now," "now too," often effects a transition from past to present, suggesting that earlier events are a source, cause, or explanation for present-day ones. Thus, at the end of the myth in *Olympian* 10, the poet says that he and his companions are "following even now" [ἑπόμενοι καί νυν] the "ancient beginnings" [ἀρχαῖς δὲ προτέραις] laid out by Herakles, founder of the Olympic games (78).

I noted above that the expression καί νυν, "and now," "even now," "now too," is often used in connection with the thought that the athletic victor has renewed the κλέος, "fame," of his family by replicating the achievements of his ancestors. In other places, the poet uses καί νυν and similar phrases when he wants to suggest other kinds of continuity between the past and the present. One of these is the present-day ritual of honoring a hero through cult, as a reward or compensation for his exploits in the mythic past. The myth of Herakles in *Olympian* 3 ends with the observation that "and now [καί νυν, 34] he gladly attends that festival with the godlike twins, the sons of deep-girdled Leda."[62] The myth of Pelops in *Olympian* 1 ends in a

62. It is also worth noting that, even though this observation links the past and the present through the theme of Herakles' continued beneficent interest in the Olympic games, the transition at the same time exhibits a shift of focus: the poet's perspective on the past has changed. In the myth itself, Herakles' exploits were described actively and vividly. But the present description of Herakles and how he is "now" worshipped as a hero, along with the Tyndaridai, has a static quality. The theme of the past, which was previously "awakened," is now once more being laid to rest.

similar way, with a reference to the way in which the hero is, even today, worshipped in cult: "and now [νῦν δέ, 90] he [Pelops] partakes of splendid blood sacrifices as he reclines by the course of the Alpheos, having his much-attended tomb beside the altar thronged by visiting strangers" (90–93). The myth of *Olympian* 7 ends similarly, with a description of the cult of the hero Tlapolemos: "There, as compensation for the wretched accident, is established for Tlapolemos, the colony-founder of the Tirynthians, as if for a god, a rich procession of sacrificial flocks and the judging of athletic contests, with the flowers of which Diagoras twice crowned himself" (77–81).

Similar to these passages in substance and function is the concluding section of the myth in *Nemean* 5 (34), which describes Poseidon and his cult at the Isthmos. The poet says that, even now, Poseidon "often goes from Aigai to the famous Dorian Isthmos; there joyful throngs receive the god" (34–38). In *Olympian* 8, the myth once again ends with a description of Poseidon: "But the Wielder of the Trident drove his swift chariot to the Isthmos on the sea, bringing Aiakos here with his golden horses on his way to visit the ridge of Corinth with its famous feasts" (46–52). This account of Poseidon's journey conveys us through space and time simultaneously. In effect, it takes us to the place where, from the point of view of the poet and his audience, Poseidon, like the heroes mentioned in *Olympians* 3, 1, and 7, is "even now" worshipped with athletic contests.

POET AND MUSE IN PINDAR

I will now turn to the way in which the relationship between past and present in epinician poetry is reflected in the configuration of poet and Muse. Poet and Muse in Pindar are often represented like a pair of Homeric warriors (ἑταῖροι, "companions") who work together as a team. Sometimes, the epinician poet represents himself riding in the chariot of the Muse or Muses (*O.* 9.81; *I.* 5.38; *I.* 8.61). At other times, the Muse is represented "standing beside" the poet, as a warrior in the *Iliad* will stand beside his ἑταῖρος, "companion," to encourage or assist him. At the beginning of *Olympian* 3, the poet says that the Muse "stood beside him" [παρέστα μοι] as he "found a newly shining way to join to Dorian measure a voice of splendid celebration" (4). At the beginning of *Olympian* 10, the poet asks the Muse and Alatheia, "Truth," to "ward

off" [ἐρύκετον, 5] from him "with a correcting / straightening hand the rebuke for falsehood, for wronging a friend" (3–6).[63] The last passage is reminiscent of the description of Athena in *Iliad* 4, when she "stands beside" [πρόσθε στᾶσα, 129] Menelaos to "ward off" [ἄμυνεν, 129] the arrow shot at him by the Lycian hero Pandaros.[64]

Poet and Muse, then, are represented in epinician poetry as collaborators. The Muse helps the poet to "find," "invent," or "discover" (εὑρίσκειν) the song. In *Pythian* 1, poet and Muse work together on "discovering" a hymn—the poet exhorts the Muse, "Come, let us discover [ἐξεύρωμεν] a friendly hymn for the king of Aitna" (60). In the passage quoted above from *Olympian* 3, he says that the Muse stood beside him as he "was inventing [εὑρόντι] a newly shining way to join to Doric measure a sound of glorious revelry" (4–6). In *Olympian* 1, we find the following account of their joint activity: "I hope to celebrate an even sweeter success with a speeding chariot [a simultaneous reference to Hieron's chariot and the chariot of the Muse], having found [εὑρών] a helpful road of words when approaching Kronos's sunny hill" (110). The situation here seems to be the same as that described in *Olympian* 9, where the poet says, "May I be able to discover the right words [εἴην εὑρησιεπής, 80] to drive forward fittingly in the Muses' chariot" (80–81).[65]

What does this configuration suggest about the status of the past in epinician poetry? The Muse is the daughter of Memory, and in an epinician context memory works in a variety of ways. The essential promise the epinician ode makes is that the victor's memory will persist in the future. But the ode must also build a bridge between the present and the past, relating present events to the memory of the past in a meaningful way. I suggest that when epinician poetry represents

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63. Sometimes the poet asks the Muse to "stand beside" the victor. *Pythian* 4 opens with the poet's request that the Muse "stand beside a man who is a friend" [παρ' ἀνδρὶ φίλῳ / στᾶμεν, 1–2]. In *Pythian* 1, he asks the Muse to "sound out the reward for the four-horse chariot at the side of Deinomenes [πὰρ Δεινομένει]" (58).

64. With ἴθυνεν (*Iliad* 4.132), compare ὀρθᾷ χερί at *O.* 10.4.

65. For this vocabulary of "finding," see also *N.* 8.20–21: "For many things have been said in many ways, but to discover new ones [νεαρὰ δ' ἐξευρόντα, 20] and give them to the touchstone for testing is sheer danger." In *Nemean* 6, too, "former poets" are said to have "found [εὗρον, 53] a highway of song." The language is also used of poetic activity in Alkman (cf. εὗρε, frag. 39 Page).

poet and Muse as collaborators, or like a pair of Homeric ἑταῖροι, "companions," this symbolizes the need, in epinician poetry, to combine past and present themes appropriately.

As noted above, some think that the Muse is represented as the epinician poet's subordinate.[66] Yet the Muse, in these passages, is represented in much the same way as Athena in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey.* Athena is a goddess who, like the Muse in Pindar, "stands near" her favorites to help them.[67] In book 3 of the *Odyssey,* Nestor says that, in the days of the Trojan War, Athena used to "stand beside" [παρίστατο] Odysseus "openly" (222). In the first book of the *Iliad,* Athena "stands behind" [στῆ δ' ὄπιθεν, 197] Achilles and tugs at his hair, telling him not to fight Agamemnon with his sword. At 4.129, "standing in front of" [πρόσθε στᾶσα] Menelaos, she wards off the arrow shot at him by the Lycian ally Pandaros. As for the epinician image of the poet riding in the Muse's chariot, this is reminiscent above all of the scene in *Iliad* 5 in which Athena pushes Diomedes' charioteer, Sthenelos, out of his chariot and gets in "beside brilliant Diomedes" [παραὶ Διομήδεα δῖον, 837]. Athena then takes up the reins and steers the chariot against Ares (840–41). But in none of these passages is it suggested that Athena's behavior makes her out to be a "mere assistant." On the contrary, she is superior to the heroes she condescends to stand beside and help.

Moreover, in an epinician context the very question of whether the Muse is superior to the poet or vice versa may be wrongly conceived. The relevant question is not who is subordinate to whom in any absolute sense. It is more a question of who fulfills what function in the context of a particular moment in a particular performance. Provided we consider the issue from this perspective, we may note that it is the poet who issues the commands to the Muse, and not vice versa (*I.*

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66. Cf. also O'Higgins 1997, 108 and 125, who contrasts the representation of poet and Muse in *Pythian* 4 with the Homeric situation and suggests that, if the "typical epic paradigm" consists of "a male and a female, the female element being immortal and otherworldly, the male a mortal, his limitations and weaknesses sharply defined," then the representation of the Muse in *Pythian* 4 defines "a poetic stance unlike that of the epic poet," in which the poet "assumes power for himself." I suggest that the epinician portrayal of the Muse's role has less to do with gender as such than with the relevance of the past to this genre.

67. *Pythian* 8 contains another Pindaric example of a deity, Dika, "Justice," "standing beside" [Δίκα παρέστακε, 71] the performance.

6.57–58; *P.* 11.41–42). This, I suggest, once again reflects the rhetorical priority of present to past in this genre. The poet must control and coordinate memory of the past in the context of the present performance. I do not mean to imply that, conversely, the Homeric poet-narrator is a passive recipient of the Muses' song.[68] It is just that in epinician poetry there is a special reason to emphasize the poet's self-direction, making it clear that it is the poet who determines where the Muse's chariot—memory of the past—will go.[69]

Tradition in Pindar's Epinicians

MYTH AND RUMOR: "WHAT PEOPLE SAY"

But the invocation of the Muse is not the only convention employed in epinician poetry to establish the poet's authority to talk about the past. Frequently, the epinician poet's claim to have knowledge about the past is justified by his acquaintance with the relevant traditions. I refer to those passages in the odes in which mythic material is introduced with expressions such as "They say that." On many occasions, the epinician poet suggests that his knowledge of the past is based on nothing more immediate, concrete, or tangible than verbal narratives—stories.

Mythic material in Pindar is often tagged with phrases such as φαντί and λέγοντι, "they say," or λέγεται, "it is said." φαντί, "they say," introduces the passages in which the poet recounts Zeus's agreement to the marriage of Peleus and Thetis (*I.* 8.46a), Cheiron's apophthegms on conduct, delivered to Achilles (*P.* 6.21), the events surrounding the

68. On the poet's agency in Homer, see Richardson 1990, 178, 181–82; de Jong 1987a, 52; and Edwards 1987, 18–19.

69. Cf. Steiner 1986, 58, on the chariot motif: Pindar, "like the navigator and the charioteer . . . adapts to the changing conditions, respecting the demands his genre makes." Cf. also Kurke 1988, 113, on the poet in *Isthmian* 1 as an "adept charioteer": he maneuvers from genre to genre, constantly veering from the expected topic. Simpson (1969, 440) also emphasizes the relevance of the "skill and control" of a charioteer to this motif, and identifies (445) the poet as the driver of the chariot. The poet's control over memory—the Muses—is also expressed when he represents himself in the role of Apollo, "leading" a chorus of Muses (*N.* 9.1; *O.* 11.16–19). In a similar way, the Graces are sometimes represented accompanying the poet on his journey to the victor's homeland (*P.* 9.1–4; *N.* 9.53–54; *I.* 5.21). Cf. Nagy 1990, 364 and 377.

birth of Rhodes (*O.* 7.54), the Achaeans' expedition to retrieve Philoktētēs from Lemnos (*P.* 1.52), and Ixion's warning to all mortals (*P.* 2.21).[70] λέγοντι, "they say," introduces the reference to Ino's βίοτον ἄφθιτον, "unwithering life," among the Nereids in *Olympian* 2 (28), the story of Pyrrha, Deukalion, and the flood in *Olympian* 9 (49), and Zeus's begetting of Aiakos in *Nemean* 7 (84). λέγεται, "it is said that," introduces the description of Evadne's birth at the ford of Eurotas (*O.* 6.29) and of Hektor's κλέος, "fame," which "flowered" at the streams of Skamander (*N.* 9.39). λέγονται, "they are said," is used of Peleus and Kadmos, said to have attained the highest bliss for mortals (*P.* 3.88).

Sometimes other poets are identified as the authors of these accounts. In *Pythian* 3, the epinician poet says that "we know" [γινώσκομεν, 114] about Nestor and Sarpedon thanks to what earlier poets have said: "from resounding words such as wise craftsmen put together" (113–14). In *Nemean* 3, as he recalls Achilles' childhood exploits, the epinician poet states that he is repeating a tale "told" [λεγόμενον] by "former poets" [προτέρων, 52]. In *Isthmian* 5, announcing his intention to include the Aiakidai in his hymn, the poet says that these heroes have provided subject matter for poets from older times as well (28). But sometimes a vaguer reference to "what people say," with no specific mention of poets, suggests that the myth in question amounts to no more than rumor.

This mode of legitimating talk about the past is in fact more frequently found in epinician poetry than the invocation of the Muse. And this epinician convention is significant because it evokes a different attitude toward the past and implies an account of poetic authority markedly different from the one we find in Homer. Characters in Homer—secondary narrators—frequently exhort one another to abide by mythic exempla, and, as they present the relevant stories, describe them as "things that people say." For example, in *Iliad* 9 Phoinix tries to persuade Achilles to follow the example of Meleager. He begins the myth by saying, "Thus it was in the old days also, the

70. φαντί, "they say," may also be used of gnomic or proverbial material that is not mythic, as it is at *Pythian* 7.20 and at *Pythian* 4.287. λέγεται is so used at *Nemean* 6.56, where "It is said" that the wave rolling closest to the ship is the most provoking. *Pythian* 2.21 combines the gnomic and the mythic use of φαντί: "They say" that Ixion's example teaches us to repay the εὐεργέτης, "benefactor."

deeds that we hear of from the great men, when the swelling anger descended upon them" (524–25). In other words, the stories to which Phoinix refers are regarded as authoritative precisely because they have traditionally been told and retold. However, even though Phoinix can ground the validity of his tale in its traditional character, the primary narrator, the Homeric poet himself, never does, and never would, legitimate his own narrative in this way. It would contradict or undermine the authority he takes pains to establish when he identifies the Muse as the source of his song. The fiction is, as Andrew Ford points out, that the poet's version of myth comes to him directly from a divine, omniscient source. It is allegedly unmediated by the versions of other mortals, with their potential for fallibility and falsification.[71] In the Homeric account, poetic authority is constructed in such a way as to assume a privileging of visual evidence over heard evidence. The poet "merely" reports what the Muses have seen, firsthand,[72] but his account is based on the Muses' eyewitness knowledge. The κλέος, or "heard material," of Homeric poetry is superior to other types of κλέος.[73]

The epinician poet's habit of introducing myths as a matter of "what people say" suggests that the past is viewed as more remote and less knowable in this genre than it is in epic. As the poet remarks in *Pythian* 6, τὰ μὲν παρίκει, "these things are past" (43). Further comparison with the speech of Homeric characters confirms this. φασί, "they say," is commonly found in Homeric warriors' taunts to one another. Tlêpolemos, for example, mocks Sarpedon in *Iliad* 5 by asserting that "they lie who say [φασι] you are the son of Zeus" (635). Compare Helenos's words to Achilles, who "They say [φασι] is the son of a goddess" (6.100); Apollo's to Aeneas—"They say [φασι] that you are the child of Aphrodite" (20.105–6); Aeneas's to Achilles—"They say [φασὶ] that you are

71. Ford 1992, 91–92; cf. Scodel 1996, 66: "The proem to the Catalogue of Ships opposes the full knowledge of the Muses with the mere kleos available to us. . . . If each act of poetic memory is new and inspired, we need not worry that fallible poets have interfered with the tradition."

72. Cf. ἡμεῖς δὲ κλέος ἀκούομεν οὐδέ τι ἴδμεν, "we have heard only the rumour of it and know nothing" (2.486).

73. κλέος, of which the translation "fame" is generally appropriate, literally means "that which is heard." On the use of the word κλέος to refer to poetry specifically (what the poet hears from the Muses, and what the poet's audience hears from him), see Nagy 1979, 16; Nagy 1974, 231–55; and Schmitt 1967, 61–102.

the offspring of blameless Peleus" (20.206–7); and Lykaon's to Achilles: "They say [φασι] that I am the son of Pelegôn" (21.159–60).

When used in taunts, the effectiveness of the φασί language derives in large measure from the fact that no hero can ever know for sure who his own father is. Telemakhos, in fact, uses the φασί diction in *Odyssey* 1 to make precisely this point (1.215; cf. 220), and so does Eidothea when she tells Menelaos that she is the daughter of Proteus (4.387). Toward the end of the poem, Odysseus reproaches Amphinoos, saying, "They say [φασι] you are the son of Nisos" (18.128). φασί is used in this kind of context to acknowledge the insuperable gap between mortal rumor—what people say—and certain knowledge.

Mortal knowledge is similarly limited when it comes to the supposed haunts and habits of supernatural beings—the other context in which φασί is regularly used in Homer. In *Iliad* 24, Achilles talks of Niobe, now a rock "in Sipylos, which they say [φασί] is the seat of the nymphs who dance about Acheloös" (615–16). In *Iliad* 2, the poet mentions the groaning of the earth when Zeus flogs the place where, "they say" [φασί], Typhoeus resides (783). These supernatural entities—Typhoeus and the nymphs who dance about Acheloös—inhabit a metaphysical realm apart from the realm of the mortals who talk about them. Compare also the passage in *Odyssey* 6 where Athena departs "to Olympos, where they say [φασί] is the sturdy seat of the gods" (42). In such contexts, φασί functions as a qualification. Mortals may tell stories about the nymphs or about Typhoeus, but they are not in a position to enjoy wholly certain knowledge about them.

Turning back, in the light of the Homeric usage, to those Pindaric passages in which the poet introduces myths with φαντί, λέγοντι, "they say," and like expressions, we might conclude that the mythic past is represented in epinician poetry as an area concerning which mortals do not by nature have certain knowledge.

In other words, the epinician poet does not boast that his actual account transcends the κλέος of other mortals. Instead, he represents himself as one who exercises a superior judgment regarding the existing mortal traditions. As such, the epinician poet's task, as it pertains to κλέος about the past, is the same as his task regarding κλέος about the present. As I suggested in chapter 1, the poet's essential social function, as he himself describes it, is to ensure that the right kind of κλέος gets circulated concerning the victor. It is an epinician conceit

that the poet is a more discriminating judge than other mortals of all that is said, or "heard," about the victor. While μῶμος, "blame," is the inevitable lot of the successful (*O.* 6.74), the function of the poet is to distinguish the "true coin of praise,"[74] which the victor really deserves, from the backbiting rumors envy engenders. Thus the poet boasts an ability to distinguish good κλέος from bad κλέος, or false rumors about the victor from true ones.

The epinician poet claims the same ability and authority in relation to the κλέος that is myth—κλέος concerning heroes past and the gods. In *Olympian* 1, distinguishing between truth and falsehood—getting the "right" version of the myth—is represented as a matter of distinguishing between different μῦθοι, "stories," "accounts," and telling the ἀλαθῆ λόγον, or "true story," as opposed to the βροτῶν φατις, or "rumor of mortals" (28–29). What the poet will "say" [φθέγξομαι, 36] about Pelops contradicts what one of the "envious neighbors" said (ἔννεπε, 47). Whether he speaks about the present or the past, the epinician poet represents himself as an adjudicator of κλέος, one who has a special ability to discriminate between the true and false κλέος of existing traditions.

The more distanced attitude to the past we find in epinician poetry is perhaps not surprising given the genre's primary emphasis on the present. Moreover, in referring to myths as the tales of πρότεροι—"former men," or "former poets," the epinician poet may also imply that, even though his poetry regularly includes mythic narratives, myths are really more the province of πρότεροι than they are his own. This would be to suggest that mythic narrative is not the official or the primary province of an epinician poet.

RENEWING TRADITION

As a result of his ability to discriminate between accounts of the past, the epinician poet sometimes alters the existing mortal traditions. Sometimes he simply refuses, on the grounds of piety, to tell certain parts of the story, as when he refuses, when talking about the Aiakidai in *Nemean* 5, to speak directly of Peleus's and Telamon's murder of

74. For this terminology, see Bundy 1962, 57–58.

their half brother Phokos (14–15), or when he says, of Bellerophon's doom in *Olympian* 13, διασωπάσομαι, "I will keep silent" (91). On other occasions, he revises the traditional account in whatever way he deems necessary, as when, in *Olympian* 1, he tells Pelops's story in a manner "opposite to his predecessors" [ἀντία προτέρων, 36], so as to avoid representing the gods behaving inappropriately.

When he adapts traditional material to a new context, the epinician poet is of course doing what storytellers, and particularly storytellers working in mainly oral cultures, typically do. William Hansen shows how narrators often alter the emphasis of a traditional tale to suit the needs of a particular situation. They typically give the tale an "applied message" pertinent to the demands of the occasion, even though this may mean distorting or ignoring the inherent significance of the tale, the "structural message."[75] Nagy writes that the treatment of myth in Pindar exemplifies the way in which "Oral tradition comes to life in performance, and the here-and-now of each new performance is an opportunity for innovation, whether or not any such innovation is explicitly acknowledged in the tradition."[76]

But I think it significant that the epinician poet does explicitly acknowledge innovation. In addition to the aforementioned example from *Olympian* 1, in *Olympian* 7 the poet says that he will "straighten the [existing] account" [διορθῶσαι λόγον, 21] of the origins of Rhodes in order to tell a story that will be appropriate to all of Herakles' descendants. In *Olympian* 9, he also seems to refer openly to his practice of telling myths in novel ways when he speaks of "flowers of new songs" [ἄνθεα . . . ὕμνων / νεωτέρων, 48–49].

This kind of acknowledgment seems unusual—indeed, critically different from the usual pattern. Achilles, by contrast, does not do this when in *Iliad* 24 he alters the focus of the Niobe myth, advising Priam to eat (602–20). Were Achilles to admit that his exemplum retells the Niobe myth in an unorthodox way, he would undermine his own purpose, for the force of his paradigm depends upon the supposition that his version is traditional, and not innovative. Moreover, even when storytellers claim, as is conventional, to have the only "true"

75. Hansen 1982.
76. Nagy 1990, 27.

account of a traditional tale that exists in many possible versions, they do not generally say that this is because they have changed or "fixed" the story. But the epinician poet does. What is the reason for this difference? Once again, I suggest that this epinician convention reflects the fact that in epinician poetry it is the present, and not the past, that is of paramount significance. In epinician poetry, the past is not recalled for its own sake, as it is in epic. Hence it is legitimate and appropriate for the poet to alter an "old" tale, and make it "new."[77]

This aspect of the epinician "program" seems to coincide with other ideas expressed in epinician poetry about the relationship between present and past. The present, as I noted at the beginning of the chapter, is said not only to continue the patterns of the past, but actually to "renew" them. These metaphors of renewal suggest not exact repetition but rather reenactment of a general paradigm. Perhaps the epinician poet's own activity is supposed to participate in this same pattern. In *Olympian* 3, as I also noted above, the poet speaks of crafting his song in a "newly shining [νεοσίγαλον] way" (4), just as he praises "flowers of new songs" [ἄνθεα . . . ὕμνων / νεωτέρων] in *Olympian* 9 (48–49).[78] The athlete "revives" or "renews" the heroic deeds of his ancestors without repeating them exactly; the poet, in turn, does the same with the traditional stories.

TRADITION AND TRUTH IN EPINICIAN

The concept of poetic truth we find in epinician poetry is correspondingly different from the Homeric one. The epinician poet, unlike his epic colleague, does not boast of describing the past "as it really happened." Distinguishing "true" from "false" κλέος about the past is not

77. Griffith 1990, 200 suggests that "a praise poet is licensed and expected to tell tall stories, and thereby to untell well-founded traditions." This could conversely account for the way epinician poetry describes myth: as κλέος and tradition, rather than as the substance of a divine source. It is within the bounds of propriety for a poet to contradict the narratives of other mortal storytellers. But it would be improper for him to contradict a divine account.

78. Shelmerdine 1987, 72 n. 25 compares Alkman frag. 14: νεοχμὸν . . . ἀείδην (a song requested of the Muse). Crotty (1982, 82–83 and n. 26) suggests that an emphasis on the "newness" of the song is a defining feature of epinician and other lyric poetry.

a matter of reporting "what really happened."[79] Rather, myths or versions of myths are accepted or rejected by the poet on the grounds that they are "fitting" or not "fitting." Or, as George Walsh puts it, "suitability, not accuracy" is the criterion employed when the epinician poet determines what to say and what not to say.[80] This is not to say that the epinician poet eschews the language of "truth" and "falsehood" when he justifies the versions of traditional stories he presents. Instead, he defines "truth" in terms of what is "fitting." The ἀλαθῆ λόγον about Pelops in *Olympian* 1, for example (28b), is said to be "true" because, unlike other poets' versions of the Pelops myth, it represents the gods behaving appropriately.

The process of making the myth "fitting," however, once more indicates the priority of present to past in epinician poetry. To make a myth "fitting" in Pindar is to make it befit the present—in one way or another. This epinician "remaking" of myth, or the process of making the past "befit" the present, involves different considerations in different contexts. Nationalistic and cultic agendas may be at stake,[81] in addition to more general political and moral issues or particular contemporary political issues.[82]

One important motive for revising a myth in Pindar is the need to make it a more appropriate source of honor to the particular victor being celebrated. In *Olympian* 7, the poet undertakes to "straighten" [διορθῶσαι, 21] the myths about the victor's ancestors. Each of the three myths about the early history of Rhodes shows how an event that originally appeared to be a terrible error led to a happy conclusion.

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79. Bakker (1997) suggests that, even in the Homeric epic context, the standard of truth does not "correspond to some objective state of affairs"—or "what really happened" at some time in the past. Rather, truth in epic is a matter of what the tradition dictates. Still, epic and epinician attitudes toward speaking about the past remain essentially different. Epic appeals to a "truth" that is external and independent of the present moment. The epinician poet, on the other hand, always feels free openly to reinterpret myth in whatever way is appropriate for the present occasion.

80. Walsh 1984, 40. Cf. Pratt 1993, 123: "Pindar stresses appropriateness in mythical narrative, not the kind of truthfulness associated with oaths or witnesses."

81. Hubbard 1992.

82. Pfeijffer 1995. Vivante (1971, 123) emphasizes simple piety in Pindar's rejection of certain versions. Hubbard (1987, 3) cautions against reading every mythic innovation in Pindar in terms of "praise of the victor."

"Straightening" the myths in question by retelling them with this emphasis, the poet honors the victorious family by showing how, in the final analysis, these tales exemplify the family's ὀρθαὶ φρένες, "straight counsels" (91). In other words, the Pindaric version of these tales is "correct," in that it befits the honor deserved by the family on this particular occasion.

It is worth noting that often what is "fitting" is determined with reference not to ethical appropriateness in any abstract, objective, or permanent sense, but to the more immediate needs of the epinician performance—by whatever the present occasion demands. For example, an important function of the epinician celebration is to appease the gods, thus averting divine φθόνος, "resentment," in the face of the victory. Hence the critical importance, in epinician myth, of representing the gods interacting with mortals in appropriate ways. Thus in *Olympian* 1, and also in *Olympian* 9, the poet rejects myths that describe antagonism between gods and mortals.[83]

The epinician attitude to tradition and truth may seem confused and paradoxical if we try to define it abstractly, or to make sense of it as a set of beliefs. If the "true" or "fitting" version of a myth is the one that befits the specific needs of a particular performance in present time, how can we say either that the past, or that tradition as such is valued in this genre? But then again, if tradition and the past are not valued, why does the poet regularly make the gesture of referring to "former poets" or "what people say"? That gesture implies that there is an inherent value in tradition. Once again, however, we are dealing with rhetoric, and to recognize this may make such inconsistencies seem less surprising. Apparently, the rhetorical needs of the epinician celebration and the performance context of the poetry demand that the poet express a complex set of perspectives on tradition, truth, and the past—a set of perspectives that may contradict one another even within the context of a single ode.

Conclusion

Epinician poetry employs the same conventions that other archaic Greek genres do to encode the poet's authority to talk about the past:

83. Of these passages, Griffith (1990, 199) writes, "The distinction is not explicitly between true and false, but between what the gods do and do not like to hear."

the invocation of the Muse and allusions to previous poets and tradition. But the epinician poet's relationship to these conventions is far more complicated than that of his epic colleague. The epinician poet returns to the present after being inspired by the Muse, issues directives to the Muse, and much of the time creates a sense of distance from the past by describing knowledge of the past as nothing more than knowing the stories other mortals have told about the past—stories, moreover, that may be freely and openly "renewed" in order that they may better befit the more significant concerns of the present. I have suggested that this complexity has generic significance. It foregrounds an important aspect of the epinician poet's task: his need to make the expected gesture of recalling the past while simultaneously assuring his audience—sometimes directly, sometimes indirectly—that he will not allow the memory of the past to eclipse the present and the glorious achievement of the "newest" victor.

Ever since Elroy Bundy defined epinician poetry in terms of its "occasional" function,[84] scholars have sought to explicate, extend, and elaborate upon the concept of "occasionality" in the epinician context. As I see it, epinician "occasionality" makes for a perspective on the past that differs markedly from the perspective we find in Homeric epic. In epic, the poet must make the past "present," because the past is assigned value for its own sake and, indeed, is valued unequivocally over the present. The rhetorical situation of epinician poetry, as we have seen, makes the picture far more complicated. The poet must tacitly acknowledge the superiority of the past when comparing his victor to heroes from myth and yet, paradoxically, seem at the same time to be saying the reverse: that his victor's achievement is more significant than anything that has happened previously.[85] Such is the rhetoric of praise.

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84. Cf. Bundy 1962, 77, 91, and passim.

85. Burnett (1985, 38) identifies a parallel paradox she calls the "epinician burden": "The composer of such an ode was conscious of great power, but also of a strong tension between the matter and the manner of his song. He had to stretch a single web of praise between earth and heaven . . . between a mortal who is nothing and the gods who live forever in the bronze houses of the sky (*N.* 6.3)—and the tissue sometimes showed the marks of strain."