Preface to Pindar: Early Greek Choral Song and the Language of Genre
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tην μὲν ἀρ’ ὡς φαμένην ἱππον λάβε, τὴν δ’ ἄιουσαν,καθ’ ἄρα ἰόν του πολλῶν ἐπί χρόνον], ἀγν’ ἀγαρ ἡδὲν
στιβήσεις ἔχαμυρος, δέ’ ύφικετε χεῖρες ἔπαγροι
φιλήσεων· ἤδη γὰρ ἑωθινά λόγχνα φαινέιν·
ἀείδει καὶ ποὺ τις ἀνήρ ὑδατηγὸς ἦμαν·
ἐγεῖρε καὶ τιν’ ἱζοντα παρὰ πλῦον ὦκιόν ἀξίον
tεπηργάς ύπ’ ἀμαζον, ἀνάχωσι δὲ πυκνοι
. . . . φοι ταλῆς ἐναυώμενοι. . . . . .
'So she [the crow] spoke, and sleep then seized both her and the one [female, probably the owl] who
was listening, but they slept, those two, for no long while, for soon came the frosty pre-dawn when the
hands of burglars are no longer at their work, for already the dawn's lamps are showing, and
somewhere the water-drawer sings the well-song (himaios), and the man who has a house by the
roadway is wakened by the axle creaking under the wagon, and many people annoy the smiths by
asking for a light'.

2. The 'Ambrosian Life' (Vit. A) of Pindar, from vol. i of Drachmann's Scholia
Veterea in Pindari Carmina (Teubner: 1903), p. 3 (II. 6-9):
geγραφε δὲ βιβλία ἐπισκαλείδα· ὢνοις, παιάνως, διθυράμβων β’, προσοδίων β’· παρθένων β’, φέρεται
de καὶ γ’ ἐπετίθεται κεφαροιμένων παρθένων· ὑπορχήματος άνθρωπος, ἐγκώμης, τρήμους, ἑπινικίων δ’.
'He wrote 17 books: Hymns, Paeans, Dithyrambs 1-2, Prosodia 1-2, Partheneia 1-2, and also the book
that is entitled The Pieces Separated From the Partheneia is included; Hymn 1-2, Threnodies,
and Epinicians 1-4'.
cf. Proclus' Chrestomathia (2nd c. CE?) paraphrased by Patriarch Photius I of
Constantinople (c. 810-c. 893 CE), Bibliotheca 319b (fin.) -320a.
Περὶ δὲ μελέτης ποιησιῶν φήσαν ὡς πολυμερεστάτη τε καὶ διαφόρος ἔχει τομάς. Ἀ μὲν γάρ
αὐτῆς μεμέρισται θεοὶ, ἅ δὲ σανθρώποις, ἅ δὲ θεοί καὶ ἄνθρωποι, ἅ δὲ εἰς τὰς
προσπαθητικὰς περιτάσεις. Καὶ εἰς τὸν θεοὺς μὲν ἀναφέρεσθαι ὢνοις, προσοδίων, παιάνως,
διθυράμβων, νόμον. (320a) ἀδαυνία, ἱδαπαθίαν, ὑπορχήματα.
'About melic poetry they say that it consists of many sub-genres and different kinds. For some of
these are allotted to the gods, some to men, and yet others to men and gods, and some to in
response to particular things that occur. And the ones 'for the gods' are the hymns, prosodion,
paeon, dithyramb, nomos, adonidion, iobacchos, and the hyporchemes'.

3. The obiter dictum in Aristotle's Poetics (6, 1450b) on the poetic text as
autonomous object ('work', cf. Lydia Goehr, The Imaginary Museum of Musical
On the last two of the six 'parts of tragedy': 'Of the remainder, lyric poetry (μελοποιία) is the greatest
embellishment (μέγεστον τῶν ἑδυνάμιτον), while spectacle (ἡ ὅψεις) is emotionally potent
(ψυχαγωγικὸν μέν), but falls quite outside the Art and is not integral to poetry, since tragedy's
capacity is independent of performance and actors, and besides, the costumier's (σκευοποιοῦ) art
has more scope than the poet's for rendering effects of spectacle'.

4. Pindar, Ol. 9, 1-8: epinician and 'folk-song'
(Pindar translations are drawn from W. Race's Loeb, modified where necessary).
'The song of Archilochus vocal at Olympia: that thrice-swelling kallinikos sufficed for Epharmostus to lead the way [or alternatively, 'to lead E.'] in komos with his close companions by Cronus' hill: but now, from the Muses' far-shooting bow encroach on Zeus, the god who flashes purple lightning, and the august temple-pillar of Elis with missiles such as these here [=this ongoing song].'

(On the metaphor ἐπίνειαι in vv. 5-9, see now Timothy Smith's excellent article, 'Φοινικοστερόπας and ἐπίνειαι in Olympian 9 SM,' Mnemosyne (2015): 815-24.)

5. Ritual time as a model for traditionalizing the 'new song':

a) Pindar, Ol. 10, 73-85.

(The epinician speaker is describing the first, foundational Games held by Heracles and the other heroes at the future site of Olympia. He has just completed a catalogue of victors, and now moves to connect that 'first performance' of epinician song with the present one.)

... ἐν δ' ἔσπερον

τὸν ἐγκόμιον ἁμφί τρόπον.
ἀρχας δὲ προτέραις ἐπόμενοι
καὶ νῦν ἐπωνυμίαν χάριν

κάθε κάθε θύρας μελόσημεθα βροντάν
καὶ πυρπάλαιον βέλος

ὁρακτύπου Διός,
ἐν ἄπαντι κράτει
αἰθονα κεραυνον ἁραρότα·
χλιόσα δὲ μολότα πρὸς κάλαμον

ἀντίαξει μελέζων,

Ἐ’ τά παρ’ εὐκλεῖ Δήρκα χρόνῳ μὲν φάνεν·

'And then the lovely fair-faced moon lit up the dusk, and all the sanctuary rang with sweet celebrations [epode 4] in the komastic mode. And we now, faithful to these ancient origins, are going to sing a song of glory named for proud victory, to celebrate the thunder and fire-flung missile of noisy Zeus: the blazing lightning that fits well to every triumph. And the swelling strains of song shall answer [= i.e. are now answering!] to the pipe's reed; [trium 5] songs which have at last appeared by famous Dirkē.

b) Pindar's ode 'For the Aeginetans to Aeacus' ('paean' no. 15, fr. 52p Snell-Maehler = S4 Rutherford)

Ἁ[Ι]ΓΙΝΗΤΑΙΣ Ε[ΙΣ] ΑΙΑΚΟΝ

Α’ Τίδ’ ἐν ἄματι τερπνῷ
ίπποι μὲν ἀθάναται
Ποσειδάνος ἁγιον Αιακὶ ,
Νηρεὺς δ’ ὅ γέρων ἔπεται[τ]

πατὴρ δὲ Κρονίων μολῇ

πρὸς δμμα βαλόν χερὶ [ τράπεζαν θεόν ἐπ’ ἀμβ’][φὸ

ἐνα οἱ κέραται πυῶν νε?ι[κταρ ...
Already long ago, before the strife of Adrastus and the Cadmeians began.

6. Traditionalising a 'new' form of dithyramb (Pindar fr. 70b, 1-29 = dithyramb 2 SM), 'The Katabasis of Heracles or Cerberus for the Thebans'.

Κ]ΑΤΑ[ΒΑΣΙΣ ΗΡΑΚΛΕΩΥ[Σ] Η ΚΕΡΒΕΡΟΣ
ΘΗΒΑΙΟΙΣ

And there comes in a year... the highest.'

7. The relation between epinician and heroic song: Pindar, Nem. 8, 50-51:

'Yes, there really was komastic song already long ago, before the strife of Adrastus and the Cadmeians began.'