

Thanks to You (O.14.20):
Ambiguity of Addressee in Pindaric Epinician

In the interpretation of Pindaric epinician, the elusive *persona loquens* looms ever large. Critics ancient and modern alike have frequently confronted the question of voice: in the victory odes, just who is speaking? Some scholars have equated the Pindaric *ego* exclusively with the poet, others with the performing chorus. Increasingly, though, commentators now recognize the “polyphonic aspiration” (Schmid 1998, 160) of Pindar’s epinician *ego*. The “I” of the odes elides the voices of poet, performers, and victor alike—sometimes simultaneously. Such vertiginous vocal modulation reflects the “complexity of the enunciative apparatus” (Culler 2015, 16) that is proper to lyric poetry more broadly.

I propose to explore lyric voicing here from the receiving end of this apparatus. The epinician addressee has received far less attention in Pindaric scholarship. Yet, the “you” of the odes can also elude easy handling. I will make this case through a close reading of *Olympian* 14, a monostrophic composition in honor of Asopichos, a boy-victor from Orchomenos (Verdenius 1979). Comprised of just two stanzas, the ode evinces conspicuous generic evolution (Ford 2011). An opening hymn to the Graces (1) slowly takes on recognizable epinician form (16) before suddenly morphing into a concluding *katabasis* (20-24). The antistrophe (13-24) nicely illustrates these striking formal modulations:

<ᾠ> πότνι' Ἀγλαΐα

φιλησίμολπέ τ' Εὐφροσύνα, θεῶν κρατίστου

παῖδες, ἐπακοῦτε νῦν, Θαλία τε

15

ἐρασίμολπε, ἰδοῖσα τόνδε κῶμον ἐπ' εὐμενεῖ τύχα

κοῦφα βιβῶντα· Λυδᾶ γὰρ Ἀσώπιχον ἐν τρόπῳ

ἐν μελέταις τ' αἰείδων ἔμολον,
οὔνεκ' Ὀλυμπιόνικος ἅ Μινύεια
σεῦ ἕκατι. μελαντειχέα νῦν δόμον 20
Φερσεφόνας ἔλθ', Ἄχοϊ, πατρὶ κλυτὰν φέροισ' ἀγγελίαν,
Κλεόδαμον ὄφρ' ἰδοῖς', υἱὸν εἵπης ὅτι οἱ νέαν
κόλποις παρ' εὐδόξοις Πίσας
ἔστεφάνωσε κυδίμων ἀέθλων πτεροῖσι χαίταν.

O queen Aglaia,
and dance-loving Euphrosyne, children of the strongest
of gods, listen now—and Thalia, 15
lover of dance, looking with favorable fortune at this *komos*
dancing lightly. For I have come, celebrating Asopichos
in Lydian mode and in practiced verse,
since the Minyan city is victorious at Olympia
thanks to you. Now to the black-walled house 20
of Persephone—go, Echo, bearing to the father the famous message
so that, when you see Kleodamos, you can say that his son
beside the glorious glens of Pisa
has crowned his youthful hair with wings of renowned contests.

These lines raise a host of interpretative difficulties. Why, for example, does the address shift unexpectedly from the plural (ἐπακοοῖτε, 15) to the singular (ἰδοῖσα, 16)? Does the first-person

form (ἔμολον, 18) belong to the poet or the chorus—or perhaps both voices? Is the abrupt apostrophe to Echo a mere literary motif, or does it have ritual significance in performance context (Hardie 2020)?

Recent readings have largely focused on such problems of the speaking voice. For my part, I will zoom in on a different *crux*, one that presses the identity not of the speaker but of the addressee. In the prepositional phrase σεῦ ἕκατι (20), to whom does the second-person singular pronoun refer? This question goes back to the ancient scholia (sch. *O.*14.27c-h Drachmann), who name three possible referents: the Graces, understood collectively; one of them (viz., Thalia), specially singled out; and the victor himself, addressed directly (Groningen 1942, 221). In weighing these possibilities, I will go on to suggest a fourth alternative: this particular “you” resists strict identification and instead echoes in multiple directions. The epinician addressee, then, can remain “in flux,” not unlike the *persona loquens* itself (Currie 2013). To support this hypothesis, I will show how an ambiguity of addressee serves the needs of the poem, occasional and literary alike. Both in performance and on the page, such enunciative uncertainty momentarily obscures focalization. Deictic disorientation at this point in the ode sets up what immediately follows: an asyndetic “turn away” (apostrophe) to Echo. A supple addressee also scripts the ode’s literary afterlife by making the text mobile, fit for subsequent occasion (Phillips 2016). The singular “you” addressed *here* can also resound *there*—in other contexts, especially sympotic. The paper will hopefully contribute to work on Pindaric voicing and (re)performance.

Works Cited

- Culler, J.D. 2015. *Theory of the Lyric*. Cambridge, Mass.
- Currie, B. 2013. "The Pindaric First Person in Flux." *CA* 32 (2): 243-82.
- Drachmann, A.B., ed. 1966-69. *Scholia Vetera in Pindari Carmina*. 3 Vols. Leipzig.
- Ford, A. 2011. *Aristotle as Poet: The Song for Hermias and Its Contexts*. Oxford.
- Groningen, B.A. van. 1942. "Pindari Olymp. XIV 17." *Mnemosyne* 10 (3): 221-24.
- Hardie, A. 2020. "Pindar, Hesiod, and the Charites of Orchomenos (*Olympian* 14)." *ICS* 45 (2): 447-75.
- Phillips, T. 2016. *Pindar's Library: Performance Poetry and Material Texts*. Oxford.
- Schmid, M.J. 1998. "Speaking Personae in Pindar's Epinikia." *CFC(G)* 8: 147-84.
- Verdenius, W.J. 1979. "Pindar's Fourteenth Olympian Ode: A Commentary." *Mnemosyne* 32 (1/2): 12-38.