

## Epinician in Tragic Lyric: The Third Stasimon of Euripides' *Andromache*

Despite the demise of the developmental view of archaic and classical Greek poetry, and the softening of boundaries between conventional genres, the interface between tragedy and lyric poetry has received relatively little scholarly attention. One notable exception is Swift's recent work on the close relationship between the tragic choral song and epinician in Sophocles' *Trachiniae* (2011). In a similar vein, this paper explores Euripides' emphatic use of epinician form and *topoi* in the third stasimon of the *Andromache* (766-801). While scholars have noted the epinician tone of the third stasimon (Allan 2000, 217-21; Stevens 1971, 186-91), the extent of its epinician coloring and its effect within the play as a whole has not been fully appreciated.

Proceeding in two principal parts, this paper begins by indicating the formal and linguistic features of epinician that characterize the ode. The stasimon takes a triadic structure, and is composed in dactylo-epitrites, though these features alone are certainly not uncommon in the tragedies of Euripides and others. However, I note the marked Pindaric language of the ode, referencing Isthmian 1 and Nemean 8 in particular. Such language highlights the themes of genealogy and nobility that dominate the play from its outset.

In the second section, I consider the stasimon's placement in the play in light of epinician's social and ritual of endowing a victor with kudos (cf. Kurke 1991). Just when Menelaus and his daughter Hermione are about to succeed in their plot to kill Andromache and her bastard son, old Peleus returns home to Phthia and initiates an extensive contest of words with Spartan Menelaus. Upon Peleus' victory, the chorus of Phthian women perform the third stasimon as a victory ode to Peleus, fulfilling his much anticipated arrival, and foreshadowing his apotheosis. The song celebrates Peleus' victory and aggrandizes him through a mythic narrative of his past heroic exploits. The ode's emphatic Pindaric *topos* in which the victory of the weaker turns out to be

rotten is immediately fulfilled: Menelaus' abandons his daughter, who desperately (and unsuccessfully) attempts various acts of suicide, ironizing her former boasts.

In conclusion, I show that Euripides' use of epinician in the third stasimon is a crucial diegetic and thematic element of the *Andromache*, given what we understand the genre would have meant to an ancient audience. This reading of the ode offers a new explanation for the often criticized *Andromache*, rehabilitating the poetics of a play that has been characterized as devoid of poetic color.

#### References:

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