

Genre as Social Power: Pindar's *Nemean* 11 and the *Skolion* Tradition

The genre of *Nemean* 11, erroneously classified as *epinikian* by Aristophanes of Byzantium, has been contested since antiquity. Didymos and Dionysios of Phaselis included it among Pindar's παροίγια—a Hellenistic term that had become synonymous with the defunct σκόλια (schol. Pind. *Nem.* 11; schol. Ar. *Vesp.* 1238c)—and despite the limitations of Alexandrian scholarship (not to mention modern protestations that the ode is unlike Pindar's other drinking-songs) this classification leads in a promising direction. Focusing on the intertextual approach to genre advanced by anthropologists and folklorists (e.g. Briggs and Bauman 1992), this paper demonstrates how the composite structure of *Nem.* 11 mirrors the themes, language, and social function of various Attic *skolia*, arguing that both derive from the same generic phenomenon. The poetic identity of *Nem.* 11 is tied to the same type of sympotic/civic occasion that defined the *skolion*: the Attic *skolia* were sung over wine in the *prytaneion* and other civic spaces (schol. Pl. *Gorg.* 451e; Jones 2014), while Pindar's song was likely composed for a banquet/symposion in the *prytaneion* at Tenedos on the occasion of Aristagoras's inauguration (1, 6-7, 10; cf. D'Alessio 1997). The content and form of the songs sung in both contexts reflect the respective political structures of the drinking group/civic community.

Taken individually, the Attic *skolia* may be described in Bakhtian terms as primary/simple genres that coalesce through performance into a complex genre that lends its name to the larger concept. Accordingly, *Nem.* 11 contains the same types of prayers, gnomes, encomia, and genealogies we find in the Attic *skolia* similarly combined to form a cohesive song. Like the first four Attic *skolia* (PMG 884-887), Pindar's opening prayer to Hestia (1-9) invokes a number of gods by highlighting their familial connections. *Nem.* 11 asks the goddess

to receive Aristagoras and his *hetairoi* well (εὖ μὲν Ἀρισταγόραν δέξα.../...εὖ δ' ἑταίρους, 3-4) as they protect the upright city through her worship (οἷ σε γεραίροντες ὀρθὰν φυλάσσοισιν Τένεδον, 5), while singers of the Attic *skolia* use similar language to ask Athena, Demeter, and Persephone to uphold and protect the city and its citizens (ὄρθου τήνδε πόλιν τε καὶ πολίτας, 884; χαίρετον, εὖ δὲ τάνδ' ἀμφέπετον πόλιν, 885); whether Tenedos was an oligarchy or “aristocratic democracy” (cf. Arist. *Pol.* 4.4-5.1290a-92a) the contrast between *hetairoi* and *politai* here is telling. Though their attitudes differ, Pindar’s gnomic passages on the blessings of mortal life, fitness, foresight, and moderation (11-16, 42-8) also have parallels among the Attic *skolia* (890, 891, 902). Both agree that it is fitting to praise men of honor with pleasing tribute: in remembering Kedon, an Attic *skolion* reminds its audience that one should toast good men (χρὴ τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς ἀνδράσιν οἰνοχοεῖν, 906), while Pindar proclaims that it is right to praise Aristagoras with the good words of citizens and honeyed song (ἐν λόγοις δ' ἀστῶν ἀγαθοῖσιν νιν αἰνεῖσθαι χρεῶν,/ καὶ μελιγδοῦποισι ...μελιζέμεν αἰδοῦσιν, 17-18). Whereas Tenedos praises the athletic victories and pedigree of a living aristocrat (14, 19-21; Fearn 2009), Athens exalts the blood and exploits of democratic martyrs (894, 896, 907). The authorities of both sympotic groups also identify with the founding heroes of the civic communities they represent: Aristagoras’s link to Peisander reinforces his city’s hereditary aristocracy (33-5), while singers of the Attic *skolia* model themselves on the democratic Tyrannicides (893, 895). Finally, Pindar’s unusual pronouncement on the alternating excellence of ancient bloodlines (37-42) echoes the underlying discourse of *PMG* 899, which rates Telamon higher than his son Ajax.

Indigenous pre-modern genre concepts are highly unstable, varying across time and space, and external analysis can yield results even when emic labels are lacking. While individual texts/songs can point to a genre by deviating from it (e.g. Pind. fr. 122.13-14), degrees

of conformity and difference construct and reflect the social power behind a particular performance and the ideologies embedded within a genre (Briggs and Bauman 1992; Cashman 2007). Using parallel systems of discourse, *Nem. 11* and the Attic *skolia* reinforce the identity of the civic community as embodied in the sympotic administrators of the polis, while differences of content highlight the respective aristocratic and democratic ideologies at work. We do not know what Pindar called *Nem. 11*, forcing us into an analytic position from which we may usefully relate it to the *skolion*.

Bibliography

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