

Pindar Here and Now: Deixis, Reference, and Interpretive Community in the Odes

Epinician, like all lyric, brings to the fore the issue of referentiality: the poet's identity or persona, the composition of the audience, and, most importantly, the occasion of the poem's performance are elements necessary for interpretation. Yet while being the most occasional of works--written for a specific patron, for performance at a specific time--epinician's stated aim is the creation of *kleos* that will spread far and wide, and endure into the future. (The opening of *Nemean 5* is the most striking example of this.) It is a genre that implicitly accepts not only its first performance, but also the repetition thereof.

Pindar's use of deixis serves to place particular emphasis on the immediacy and particularity of a given ode. It points--unequivocally if not unambiguously--to the here and now of poetic performance, the occasion for which the ode was written. As such, it helps us break free from the impulse toward pure Bundian formalism (Bundy 1986). The text is not a *Ding an sich* with no reference to the outside world: every pronoun, every temporal marker reminds us that the text refers, consciously and deliberately, to the world outside itself. This applies, of course, not just to the poet and patron, but to the historical and political circumstances of their lives. Deixis serves as a constant reminder of the need to temper formalism with historicism, a project which has been central to the last two decades of Pindaric criticism (Agócs, Carey, and Rawls 2012; Fearn 2011).

Yet deixis ultimately shows the limitations of such a project. Given the extreme paucity of extra-textual information, even such basics as the identity of the first-person speaker (poet? Chorus?) and the site of performance (at Olympia? on Aigina?) remain in doubt. The scholarly illusion that we can fully reconstruct the ancient audience's horizon of expectations is dashed when we realize that we cannot certainly identify the first-person speaking voice of the ode, much less

the audience whose understanding we hope to emulate. We remain, despite our best efforts, irremediably outside the ode's original interpretive community.

Deictics nonetheless retain their usual function of drawing the audience in and creating the illusion of immediacy: since the odes were written with the prospect of subsequent performance in mind, this ability to point to the here and now of the original performance is a vital component of Pindar's ideological strategy of revealing and concealment. This paper will examine, with particular reference to Nemeans 5 and 8, the dynamics of this strategy, including the ways in which deixis has gone beyond its original limits to provide a set of markers for an ever-widening circle of interpretive communities, including the one of which we ourselves are a part.

Bibliography

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