

The victory ode in the theatre*

By the middle of the fifth century the victory ode had reached the end of its life as a major commissioned song form. After Pindar and Bacchylides, the sung epinician attracts no major poetic talent, with the unique exception of the victory ode for Alcibiades attributed to Euripides. Paradoxically, at a time when the Panhellenic elite had ceased to pay for celebratory songs for public performance, the epinician found a new lease of life in – of all places – democratic Athens, a state where it had never had a pronounced presence in its original form.¹ The surviving epinician corpus contains two victory odes for Athenians, one performed outside Athens for an exile (*P.7*), the other very brief (*N.2*). Athens is not alone in showing little collective interest in the large scale compositions which were so welcome in Aigina, for instance, and there are many cities which unlike Athens are unrepresented in our epinician corpus.² But there was evidently no market in Athens for lavish performances in celebration of individual athletic victories.

This did not prevent the diffusion (in some form) of (at least some) high profile odes for non-Athenian victors among a large enough portion of the population to allow fifth century comic poets to allude to them without fear of losing their audience.³ The genre also finds resonance in both historiography and in oratory.⁴ Probably there is no single explanation for this continued reverberation in the collective memory. The role of lyric song in education and relaxation is part of the answer. Another part is the distinctive position which epinician occupied in the archaic lyric generic repertoire as a form devoted to the direct public praise of living men and antecedent (together with the *threnos*) of some forms of epideictic oratory. Yet another is the central role which athletics played in Greek civic and cultural life.⁵ But whatever the reasons, it is a

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¹ A good parallel is offered by the partheneion, which had a limited presence if any in classical Athens but again a pronounced role in tragedy; see Swift 2010, pp. 106-8.

² For the social-ideological question of the reception of the victory ode in Athens see the thoughtful discussion in Swift 2010 ch.4, especially pp.106-118.

³ See most recently Carey 2007.

⁴ For resonances of Pindar in Thucydides, see Hornblower 2004. For Isokrates as the successor to the Pindaric ruminative manner see Race 1978, p. 176, p. 177 n.8, p. 183; Race 1987 *passim*; Carey 2000, 177.

⁵ See also Rutherford in this volume.

fascinating fact that a genre which had never secured a foothold in democratic Athens in its original shapes generated such extensive and diverse echoes across a range of media. I focus here on the Athenian theatre. Two excellent discussions of the victory ode in tragedy have recently appeared, Swift 2010 and Steiner 2010. The focus of this chapter is both wider and narrower than their treatments. Narrower in that my focus is almost exclusively on epinician choral performance in Athenian drama. Wider in that I seek to survey the range of such performance in the Athenian theatre across authors and genres and to outline the larger trends in the theatrical deployment of the form.

Athenian tragedy and comedy are voracious and omnivorous art forms. Their unique formal range allows them to absorb, mimic and distort other literary forms at will. The presence of continuous discourse gave tragedy and comedy the ability – beyond any other poetic form – to mimic a range of speech modes. The simple fact of choral lyric performances as an embedded feature of drama, the fact that – at least in tragedy – the language of dramatic lyric was related at a superficial level to the language of Panhellenic choral song and the ubiquity of choral song in cult and civic contexts meant that almost any lyric genre could be replicated within the text without any sense of formal alienness or intrusion. At the same time that ubiquity ensures that the audience is always potentially aware of code switching between lyric forms during performance. And because the songs in drama are not usually tied to a particular cult moment, playwrights are able to move fluently between lyric forms within a given song. This in turn allows them to create complex effects by combining elements from different genres and playing with the boundaries between forms. In tragedy in particular the presence of a larger fictive performative context and a structure which included multiple choral stasima allow the playwright to create patterns of repetition, irony and subversion based on the interaction between songs and between song, situation and speech. It also allows them to engage in a sophisticated intergeneric play, often overt, sometimes flamboyant, with the conventions of the victory ode, which are usually rewritten in one way or another.

In the case of tragedy one critical factor in the redeployment of the victory ode is the overlap between the ‘plots’ of epinician and tragedy. The natural moment for the

performance of the victory ode (apart from the initial celebration at the scene of victory) was on the victor's return and the victory ode sometimes locates itself in metaphor or literal form in the context of the homecoming. This return is a focus for a complex combination of emotions – collective pride coexists with hostility, resentment, occasionally anxiety about his political ambitions.⁶ Return (actual or anticipated, successful or abortive, alone or coupled with other motifs such as revenge) is also one of the staple plot elements in the tragic theatre and many of the examples of epinician in tragedy are in one way or another associated with returning heroes. In such cases the victor's return was model which lay ready to hand. The earliest example is in the *Agamemnon* of Aeschylus.⁷ After a long and agonising wait which stretches through half the play Agamemnon finally enters victorious. The potential epinician dimension has been prepared by the herald from the Greek army, with his congratulatory reference to Agamemnon's imminent entry (529-32):⁸

τοιόνδε Τροία περιβαλὼν ζευκτήριον
 ἄναξ' Ἀτρείδης πρέσβυς, εὐδαίμων ἀνὴρ,
 ἦκει· τίεσθαι δ' ἀξιότατος βροτῶν
 τῶν νῦν·
 Such the yoke he fixed on Troy,
 my lord the older son of Atreus, blessed man.
 And he has come, worthiest of honour
 of all men living.

Equally, both the herald's account of the scale of the Greek suffering and losses at sea and the accounts of the scale of Greek losses at Troy in the first stasimon have emphasised the cost of Agamemnon's success, a cost so far paid by others. The sense of foreboding has increased in the second stasimon, with its comments on unjust wealth,

⁶ See in particular Kurke 1991 and for the return esp. *ibid.* Ch.1. The significance of *nostos* for both genres is noted with particular reference to *Agamemnon* by Steiner 2010, pp. 23-4 and *Heracles* by Swift 2010, pp 150-1.

⁷ See now the detailed and nuanced reading of this scene by Steiner 2010, who charts the epinician parallels.

⁸ Fraenkel in his commentary *ad loc.* notes the epinician connotation of τῶν νῦν (532).

culminating in the ominous statement that justice guides all to its goal immediately as Agamemnon enters. For the audience, against the background of what we have had so far, any congratulation of Agamemnon is rich in irony. The irony is richer still, since the choral anxiety has been focused on the wrong threat; immediately after his entrance Agamemnon will face his actual destroyer. The victory is a prelude to defeat. The encounter between Agamemnon and the chorus involves a play with form in several respects. The encounter between the chorus and Agamemnon deploys the motifs of the victory ode but articulates them through nontraditional forms, both metrical and performative. Though the chorus praises Agamemnon on his entry, it does so not through sung lyric but through chanted anapaestic dimeters. Agamemnon then picks up elements of the epinician in a response in spoken iambic trimeters. At one level this is a game with form; just as Callimachus will later (drawing on the epinician epigram) apply the elegiac couplet to the epinician,⁹ so Aeschylus engages here in formal play with the genre by presenting the victory ode in metres removed from those with which it was traditionally associated and replicating its themes and tropes through different modes of performance. The other nontraditional aspect is the dialogic structure superimposed on the generic motifs. The recipient of the victory ode is prominent within the ode's frame but in performance terms his role is passive. Here he responds to the choral praise by filling in epinician details. But this dialogic epinician is more than a play with form. Goldhill has stressed the failure of language in this trilogy.¹⁰ This failure is reflected in the use of the epinician in this exchange. Recent research has stressed that genre is not an objective set of rules but a discourse¹¹ shared by composers, performers and audience encoded in a flexible but recognisable set of markers of form and content. The king and his elders are here sharing not just a poetic form but a mode of communication. Yet communication between the speakers is effected only at the level of surface detail. Like all modes of communication, genre operates at a point of convergence between the general and the particular, working with a pre-existing set of conventional signs and values which are reshaped to meet the needs of contexts which are at base typical but which recur with individual variations. But this context is itself typical only at a superficial level, as the

⁹ See Barbantani in this volume for Callimachus and the epinician.

¹⁰ Goldhill 1984, ch.1.

¹¹ For genre as discourse see especially Day 2000, pp. 38-42, also Yatromanolakis 2003.

chorus knows but Agamemnon does not. Where the chorus warns, Agamemnon responds with what in this context are reduced to platitudes; the two halves of the generic dialogue signally fail to connect; and the motifs themselves are either distorted or rendered inappropriate in their immediate context.

The chorus begins with the search for the right terms of praise for Agamemnon's victory, neither excessive nor inadequate, all straight from the victory ode (782ff.):

ἄγε, δῆ, βασιλεῦ, Τροίας πτολίπορθ',
Ἄτρεώς γένεθλον,
πῶς σε προσεῖπω; πῶς σε σεβίζω
μήθ' ὑπεράρας μήθ' ὑποκάμψας
καιρὸν χάριτος;

Come, my king, sacker of Troy,
offspring of Atreus,
how shall I address you, how revere you
without exceeding or undershooting
the right mark of grace?

But the formal gesture to Pindaric rhetoric comes with a degree of anxiety specific to and sharpened by its new context. What in Pindar is (for all its seriousness) in part a rhetorical 'conceit'¹² becomes here a genuinely hesitant response complicated by an awareness of the moral ambiguity of his conduct, the enormous cost of his success in human lives, the dangers for him which the chorus perceive and their own ambiguous combination of loyalty and disapproval.¹³ The attempt in the lines which follow to establish the credibility of the speaker again both echoes and adapts the tropes of the victory ode. Their readiness to speak the truth in the past and to bestow blame where appropriate guarantees their authority as speakers (799-809):

¹² The term is Steiner's, 2010, p. 25. Although she speaks (2010, p. 26) of a 'sequence of virtual Pindaric clichés', it is only in Agamemnon's mouth that the tropes become clichéd; the chorus actually use the motifs with careful concern for their meaning in context.

¹³ The importance of this extra emotional dimension to the recasting of the epinician rhetoric of anxiety was impressed upon me by Gregory Hutchinson in discussion after the paper.

σὺ δέ μοι τότε μὲν στέλλων στρατιὰν
Ἑλένης ἕνεκ, οὐ γάρ σ' ἐπικεύσω, 800
κάρτ' ἀπομούσως ἦσθα γεγραμμένος,
οὐδ' εὖ πραπίδων οἶακα νέμων,
θάρσος ἔκούσιον
ἀνδράσι θνησκουσι κομίζων.
νῦν δ' οὐκ ἀπ' ἄκρας φρενὸς οὐδ' ἀφίλωσ 805
εὖφρων πόνον εὖ τελέσσασιν.
γνώση δὲ χρόνῳ διαπευθόμενος
τόν τε δικαίως καὶ τὸν ἀκαίρως
πόλιν οἴκουροῦντα πολιτῶν.

At that time past when you were marshalling the army
for Helen's sake – I shall not hide it from you –
you were for me a truly graceless picture
as one not steering well the rudder of your wits,
bringing back a reckless wanton¹⁴
with dying men.
But now not superficially nor without love
I favour those who ended labour well.
You will know in time from inquiry
which of the citizens justly and which improperly
stayed at home in the city.

But with the establishment of the laudator's authority again, as with the search for accuracy, there is an added urgency, here arising from the desire to convey a coded note of warning to the returning victor. Just as the hymn to Zeus in the parodos reshapes the hymn form by expanding the standard trope of the search for the appropriate name for the god into an exploration of the nature, power and operation of Zeus, so here the establishment of authority, in contrasting the speaker with those who cannot be trusted, hints at false friends, and specifically Clytemnestra and Aegisthus in line 809, where

¹⁴ I retain without confidence (but with no more confidence in proposed corrections) the MSS reading in this line. For the textual difficulties here see the notes of Fraenkel 1950 and Denniston-Page 1957. Fortunately the textual difficulties are not germane to my present theme.

οἰκουροῦντα, ‘staying at home’, though superficially a general reference, points in a literal sense to Clytemnestra and in a metaphorical sense (and through grammatical gender) to Aegisthus. Agamemnon graciously accepts the praise and notes the rarity of praise without envy (*phthonos*) – lines 830ff. Again all this is taken from the victory ode, where the recurrent motif of the envy which preys on success is used both as a means of enhancing the victor’s achievement (on the principle that envy is a measure of success) and stressing by contrast the veracity of the poet’s praise.¹⁵ But here Agamemnon’s clichéd response to the specific warning shows both that it has gone over his head¹⁶ and that despite his claims he will not in fact recognise the difference between true and false friendship, as the following scene, in which despite misgivings he gives in to the extravagant adulation of Clytemnestra,¹⁷ rapidly makes clear. The importance of the motif here resides in part in its visible status as a regular laudatory ploy and its inadequacy in context. Agamemnon shares the chorus’ knowledge of the epinician script but he is unable to get beyond the generalities to the reality of the situation in which he finds himself.

It is interesting at this point to look at the way in which the epinician itself is characterised in context. For this exchange what matters is not the fine granulation of the victory ode with its changes of mood and pace and its juxtaposition of achievement with vicissitude. For the passage to mark itself as epinician a few distinctive markers serve: achievement, need for accuracy, the authority of the praisegiver, the danger of envy attached to success. But the manner in which these features are articulated is very revealing for the perception of the victory ode by the 450s. The search for *kairos*, the quasi-ruminative manner of presentation, as the speaker thinks aloud and hesitates,

¹⁵ Pindar *O.* 6.7, 74, *O.* 8.55, *P.*1.85, *P.*2.90, *P.* 7.19, *P.*11.29, 54, *N.*4.39, *N.*8.21, *I.*1.44, *I.*2.43,*I.*2.24, *Bacch.*3.68, 5.188, 13.162. The same tendency for the laudandus to supply epinician elements omitted by the laudator is found at the end of Agamemnon’s speech, where as Richard Rawles points out to me, Agamemnon’s closing prayer in 854, *νίκη δ’ ἐπείπερ ἔσπετ’ ἐμπέδως μένοι* (“may victory, now that it has attended me, remain always!”), recalls the epinician prophylactic prayer which rounds off moments of confident praise (e.g. Pindar *O.* 8.28-9, *Bacch.* 5.36) or the wish for future prosperity which occur at or near the end of some odes (as Pindar *O.* 1.115-6, *O.* 6.101-105, *O.*7.89-94, *O.* 8.84-8, *O.* 13.115, *P.*5.117-125, *Bacch.* 5.197-200).

¹⁶ Harriott 1982, p. 10.

¹⁷ Steiner 2010, pp. 33-7 stresses the distortion of epinician images in Clytemnestra’s praise of Agamemnon, in contrast to the choral praise.

emphasising the difficulty of getting it right, and the metaphor of firing a missile to describe praise and to articulate issues of propriety,¹⁸ all these come not generically from the epinician but specifically from Pindar, who has his own highly stylised manner within the larger tropes of the genre. They are not to be found in Bacchylides and their absence from Simonides can be inferred from the difficulty experienced by the ancient commentators in making sense of Pindar’s rhetorical ploys. The passage indicates how successfully Pindar has by this time set his own seal on the victory ode. For a text seeking to advertise itself as epinician the self-reflexive manner of Pindar was the ideal model to imitate, a model which explicitly puts genre to the fore instead of leaving it embedded implicitly in the shared expectations of audience and poet in the manner of Bacchylides.¹⁹

In *Agamemnon* the text fragments the victory ode to enhance the irony inherent in the situation. A more straightforward – though equally ironic – treatment of the epinician occurs in the *Electra* of Euripides.²⁰ There as in *Agamemnon* the victory and imminent return of the absent warrior is announced by a messenger, here in more overtly epinician language than that used by the herald in *Agamemnon* (Eur. *Electra* 761ff):

ὦ καλλίνικοι παρθένοι Μυκηνίδες,
 νικῶντ’ Ὀρέστην πᾶσιν ἀγγέλλω φίλοις,
 Ἄγαμέμνωνος δὲ φονέα κείμενον πέδῳ
 Αἴγισθον· ἀλλὰ θεοῖσιν εὐχεσθαι χρεῶν.
 Maids of Mycenae, happy in victory,
 I announce Orestes’ victory to all his friends,
 and Agamemnon’s killer lying on the ground,
 Aegisthus. A prayer is due to the gods.

¹⁸ See especially *O*.13.93-5, *P*.1.42-5, *N*.6.26-8, *N*.9.54-5. For the anapaests as specifically Pindaric Harriott 1982, p. 12, Steiner 2010 *passim*.

¹⁹ Independent reinforcement of this conclusion comes from Douglas Cairns’ exploration of epinician echoes in the parodos of Sophocles’ *Ajax* (Cairns 2006, pp. 103-111), where he finds the same complex play with motifs and particularly Pindaric motifs. For the epinician link see also Hubbard 2000.

²⁰ The discussion here is deliberately brief. For a more detailed treatment of the use of epinician in *Electra* see Swift 2010, pp. 156-170, who links the motifs to the wider themes of the play.

The congratulation is followed by a detailed account of an act of revenge which, because of the morally suspect way in which the perpetrators make use of the victim's hospitality and cynically exploit the sacrificial context, and because of the distasteful manner of Aegisthus' death emphasises the grimy reality of violent retribution. The disturbing sense of incongruity is continued, as the chorus responds with a brief victory ode. Again the text displays its generic markers, though this time the markers are generically epinician rather than specifically Pindaric (859-865):

θὲς ἐς χορόν, ὦ φίλα, ἴχνος, ὡς νεβρὸς οὐράνιον
 πήδημα κουφίζουσα σὺν ἀγλαΐᾳ.
 νικᾷ στεφαναφόρα κρείσσω τῶν παρ' Ἀλφειοῦ
 ῥεέθροις τελέσας
 κασίγνητος σέθεν· ἀλλ' ὑπάειδε
 καλλίνικον ᾧδᾶν ἐμῷ χορῷ.

Set down in dance your foot, dear friend, like a fawn lightly leaping
 skyward with celebration.

Your brother has won a crown with achievements greater
 than those at the stream of Alpheus.

Now sing a song of victory joy
 to accompany my dance.

This song is marked thematically as epinician by the term *kallinikos* and the reference to athletic victory. One especially noteworthy detail is the term *aglaia* here. The word is entirely at home in tragedy. But it is a term much loved by Pindar,²¹ who uses the noun and its cognates over fifty times in the extant corpus and whose victory odes alone contain more than twice as many instances as the whole of extant tragedy; Bacchylides

²¹ Pindar has the noun at *O.*1.91, 9.99, 13.14, (proper noun 14.13), *P.*1.2, 6.46, 10.28, *N.*1.13, *I.*2.18. His fondness for the root is clear if we add instances of the cognate adjective(s) (simple or compound) *O.*2.71, 3.6, 8.11, 9.20, 13.5, 13.96, 14.7, *P.*4.82, 5.52, 12.1, *N.*3.56, 3.69, 4.20, 7.4, 9.31, 10.1, 11.4, 11.20, *I.*1.64, 6.62, 8.2, 8.27, and the verb *O.*1.14. The root is not confined to the victory odes; it is found 22 times in the fragments and is clearly a favourite term for Pindar; but with 33 instances it is a word much at home in his victory odes. Extant tragedy in contrast has 14 instances (*Aeschylus Ag.*1312, *Cho.*193, *Soph.O.T.*152, 274, *El.*211, 908 *Eur.El.*175, 192, 301, 861, *Ion* 23, 496, *Helen* 11, 282), of which two are the proper name *Aglauros* (*Ion* 23 and 496) demanded by the myth, and no fewer than 6 are the relatively unimaginative ἀγλαΐσμα. Bacchylides has 13 instances, giving him near parity with the tragic corpus, noun 3.6 (proper name), fr.8c.2 (a 'dithyramb') and fr.56 (a paean), adjective (simple or compound) 5.154, 12.35, 13.191, 17.2, 61, 103, 125, 18.60, fr.3.

with a smaller corpus again contains as many instances as all surviving tragedy. *Aglaia* and its cognates carried with them the aroma of panhellenic lyric and especially (with καλλίνικον ᾠδὸν) the large civic celebrations of athletic victory. The association with the victory ode is reinforced by the dactylo-epitrite metre.²² But the way in which Orestes' success is likened to and set above that of an Olympic victor gives the song at the same time a subversive aspect. This is a victory ode which relegates athletic victory to second place, an epinician which turns against its generic antecedents. It also displays a pointed generic hybridity which will have been visible to its audience. In contrast to the victory odes of Pindar and Bacchylides, which are notoriously unforthcoming about the nature of their performance,²³ this ode opens with an explicit description of lively dance. But the point here is not the fact that this epinician comments on its own performance, noteworthy as that is, but the foregrounding of rapid and energetic dance, which suggests that we may have elements of the more energetic *hyporchema* blended with the epinician.²⁴ The merging of the two creates a complex tonal effect, a far more excited epinician than any 'classic' model, reflecting the feverish emotions of chorus and characters.

The relegation of athletics to second place in the choral *hyporchema* becomes outright dismissal on Orestes' return, when he is explicitly compared to the returning athlete, as he comes home with his trophy, his victim's head (880-885):

ὦ καλλίνικε, πατρὸς ἐκ νικηφόρου
γεγώς, Ορέστα, τῆς ὑπὲρ Ἰλίου μάχης,
δέξαι κόμης σῆς βοστρύχων ἀνδήματα.
ἦκεις γὰρ οὐκ ἀχρεῖον ἔκπλεθρον δραμῶν
ἀγῶν' ἐς οἴκους ἀλλὰ πολέμιον κτανῶν
Ἀΐγισθον, ὃς σὸν πατέρα κάμδον ὄλεσεν.

²² The presence of dactylo-epitrite is not in itself a compelling argument for epinician presence, since this rhythm, though favoured by the panhellenic victory ode, was never confined to celebration of victory, nor was it the only metre used for this purpose. But combined with details of content the rhythm becomes highly suggestive. Cf. on this Swift 2010, p. 120

²³ Whence the debate between supporters of choral and monodic performance in the 1980s and 1990s; for this silence as strategic see Morgan 1993, Bremmer 1990.

²⁴ For the *hyporchema* as (probably) a recognizable category in the fifth century see Carey 2009.

Oh happy in victory, Orestes, son of a father
victorious in battle below Troy,
receive the garlands to tie in your locks.
For you come home not from running a useless sprint
but from killing the foe
Aegisthus, who murdered your father and mine.

The effects in *Electra* are less complex than those in *Agamemnon*. But again the use of the tropes of the victory ode is fraught. At one level it juxtaposes brutal violence with nonviolent competition, underscoring the savagery of what has taken place. The perversion of athletic language and values is reinforced by the tacit glance in Electra's speech toward the intellectualist tradition of criticism of athletics found elsewhere in Euripides and earlier in Xenophanes.²⁵ There is a double irony in Electra's insistence on the uselessness of athletic victory, both in her self-alignment with the rationalist strand in Greek thinking at a moment of passionate desire for violence and in the stress on the comparative usefulness of bloody revenge, which is here about to complete the destruction of the house of Atreus. But the victory celebration also, in presenting revenge as a straightforward act of uncompromising violence against an enemy, presents us with victory at its most naive and simplistic. In doing so it articulates the emotional and ethical distinction between the two acts of revenge. Aegisthus was an enemy. In marked contrast to Aeschylus, the play puts him in control of the killing of Agamemnon and the victimisation of his family.²⁶ For all the ugliness of Aegisthus' death and the consequent questions it raises about the ethics of revenge, his killing is infinitely easier to justify than the matricide which follows, which will destroy its perpetrators as well as its victim. The epinician motifs stress the glory of unalloyed success in preparation for the horrendous act to follow, a point to which I shall return.

²⁵ Euripides *Autolycus* fr. 282 Kannicht = 1 Jouan-Van Looy, Xenophanes fr.2 West. For this tradition see Bowra 1964, 185ff.

²⁶ *El.* 8-42.

Deployment of the markers of the victory ode at a moment of success recurs in *Andromache* 766-801. The context is suitable, since the aged Peleus has just seen off the blustering Menelaos. The chorus congratulate him on his success:

ἢ μὴ γενοίμαν ἢ πατέρων ἀγαθῶν
 εἶην πολυκτῆτων τε δόμων μέτοχος.
 εἴ τι γὰρ πάσχοι τις ἀμήχανον, ἀλκῶς 770
 οὐ σπάνις εὐγενέταις,
 κηρυσσομένοισι δ' ἀπ' ἐσθλῶν δωμάτων
 τιμὰ καὶ κλέος· οὔτοι λείψανα τῶν ἀγαθῶν
 ἀνδρῶν ἀφαιρεῖται χρόνος· ἅ δ' ἀρετὰ
 καὶ θανούσι λάμπει.
 κρεῖσσον δὲ νίκαν μὴ κακόδοξον ἔχειν
 ἢ ξὺν φθόνῳ σφάλλειν δυνάμει τε δίκαν. 780
 ἠδὺ μὲν γὰρ αὐτίκα τοῦτο βροτοῖσιν,
 ἐν δὲ χρόνῳ τελέθει
 ξηρὸν καὶ ὄνειδεσιν ἔγκειται δόμος.
 ταύταν ἦνεσα ταύταν καὶ φέρομαι βιοτάν,
 μηδὲν δίκας ἔξω κράτος ἐν θαλάμοις
 καὶ πόλει δύνασθαι.
 ὦ γέρον Αἰακίδα,
 πείθομαι καὶ σὺν Λαπίθαισί σε Κενταύ- 791
 ροις ὀμιλήσαι δορὶ
 κλεινοτάτῳ, καὶ ἐπ' Ἀργώϊου δορὸς ἄξενον ὑγρὰν
 ἐκπερᾶσαι ποντιᾶν Ἐυμπληγάδων
 κλεινὰν ἐπὶ ναυστολίαν,
 Ἰλιάδα τε πόλιν ὅτε τὸν πάρος
 εὐδόκιμον ὁ Διὸς ἴνις ἀμφέβαλε φόνῳ
 κοινὰν τὰν εὐκλειαν ἔχοντ' 800
 Εὐρώπαν ἀφικέσθαι.

Either let me not be born or let me come from good ancestors

and share a home rich in possessions.
for if some disaster falls, there is no shortage
of protection for the wellborn.
For those heralded from a good house
there is honour and fame. Time does not erase the remains
of good men; and their excellence
shines even when dead.
Better not to have inglorious victory
than to bring down justice with malice and might.
For at first this is sweet for mortals
but in time it becomes
withered and the house is prey to insult.
This is the life I praise and seek to win,
to have no power without justice
in house or city.
Aged son of Aeacus,
I do believe that with Lapiths and Centaurs
you consorted with spear
most glorious and on the ship Argo you passed
the clashing sea rocks to the unfriendly sea
on that renowned voyage,
and when in former time the son of Zeus
encircled with death the famous city of Troy
you returned to Europe
with your share of the glory.

Commentators²⁷ have rightly detected the presence of epinician here. Though the themes which the ode rehearses – ageless glory, the posthumous survival of *areta*, the importance of good birth, the negative role of *phthonos* – are not exclusive to epinician, they are recurrent motifs in the genre. The summary narrative of Peleus’ achievements,

²⁷ Stevens 1971, pp. 186-7, Allan 2000, pp. 217-221, who deals in detail with the epinician echoes.

locating his present triumph in the context of his past acts is also perfectly at home. Combined thus in song which celebrates a victory they become almost an epinician shopping list. And again the association is reinforced by the use of dactylo-epitrite. Again, however, as in the case of the *Agamemnon*, it is interesting to note that it is not just the victory ode as a type but the Pindaric model which most readily comes to mind, with its obsessive concern with eugenics. Here too the stylised Pindaric mode, because of the explicitness of its generic labeling, is the one which proves most useful for a dramatist who wishes to invoke the victory ode as a poetic type and as occasion. For those in the audience who know their Pindar well, beyond the stylised rhetoric, the narrative of the career of this Aeacid (792) has an additional dimension. A quarter of his surviving victory odes were composed for Aiginetans and almost all of these contain a mythic narrative focused on the Aeacidae, several with catalogues of achievement of the sort deployed by the chorus here.²⁸

As in *Electra* success here is provisional and shortlived. Apart from any thematic relevance to the play,²⁹ here again the epinician mode proves an invaluable way to articulate a moment of triumph, since once more the victory ode is brought into play before the plot becomes more complicated, in this case with the cynical destruction by Orestes of Neoptolemus, the individual on whom the family has pinned its hopes of survival. In these cases Euripides' use of the victory ode resembles the common tragic (especially Sophoclean³⁰) use of celebratory hymns in the moment before catastrophe to emphasise by contrast the completeness of the reversal which follows. The epinician was an ideal choice for this role. It is a repeated notion in the odes of Bacchylides and Pindar that the victor has reached the height of human achievement.³¹ This notion is frequently accompanied by a warning against or prayer to prevent possible reversal of fortune. The association of the victory ode with the pinnacle of achievement makes it the perfect foil for subsequent disaster, while the tragic plot movements in juxtaposing celebration with

²⁸ For the catalogue (in the form either of a list or a list culminating in a narrative moment) cf. Pindar *N.* 3.32-63, *N.* 4.44-68, *I.* 5.34-42, *I.* 6.24-56.

²⁹ See Allan 2001, *loc. cit.*

³⁰ See Sansone 1975, p. 110, Burton 1980, pp. 22-31, 59-61, 132-4, 170-172.

³¹ E.g. Pindar *O.* 1.103ff., *O.* 3.43-5, *P.* 8.88-97, *P.* 10.22-30, *N.* 3.19-21, *N.* 11.13-16, *I.* 5.12-16, Bacch. 3.92-5, 5.50-55.

reversal activate what is merely potential in the victory odes written for real athletic victories.

It will be obvious that there is a pronounced reductivism in the way in which tragedy treats the victory ode in the cases we have examined so far. The victory ode, like most occasional poetry, locates itself in the context of past and sometimes future. The song is both framed by and frames a larger context. And this context commonly incorporates darker moments; vicissitude is part of the epinician worldview. What we have commonly in tragedy is an opportunistic extraction of key elements whose effect is to present the victory ode as a simple – even simplistic – exercise in celebration of a moment of glory. Both the Euripidean cases we have examined omit the sombre moralising and complex presentation of Pindar and the emotional depth and tragic sentiment of Bacchylides. We have not the victory ode but a simulacrum which comes close to but never quite becomes caricature. Part of the reason is that to use the epinician or any other occasional lyric form in tragedy one has to turn it inside out. The victory ode in tragedy comes embedded in a narrative context external to it. Vicissitude, tragic sense and emotional complexity come elsewhere in the larger text. Hence what tragedy extracts is for the most part the celebratory dimension, calculatedly oversimplifying the epinician. The tragedians are not engaging in objective literary or cultural history, nor are they offering a transparent mimesis for the sake of verisimilitude. Tragedy uses lyric genres to create moods and situations for its own purpose; this is ruthless – and legitimate – exploitation for dramatic effect.

A more complex use of the victory ode is found in Euripides' *Heracles*.³² Heracles was above all others the great epinician hero. In one sense, his presence in the victory ode was justified by his mythical role as founder of the Olympic games. But his life and labours also made him the archetypal athletic victor. His association with the genre is understandable, almost inevitable. Athletics were about toil and Heracles was the great toiler, the individual who above all others had devoted his life to physical achievement. His career articulated the furthest limits of what the human body and will can achieve.

³² For a detailed discussion of epinician motifs in *Heracles* see now Swift 2010, pp. 142-156.

And some at least of his personal victories were won with skills later canonised within the athletic programmes. But he also encapsulated better than any other single figure the oppositions within the athletic career in the Greek context. He was for the most part a loner (Iolaos is never a full partner) in a world in which athletics is not a team activity; at the same time his labours had an altruistic dimension, ideal as the prototype for the athlete where the justificatory-laudatory rhetoric and the common perception (sometimes opposed but never successfully refuted) stressed physical labour for the civic good. Accordingly it comes as no surprise to find him so prominent in the victory ode. He evidently figured in the generic epinician which by Pindar's time at least was attributed to Archilochus.³³ He repeatedly appears, either as central figure or in passing, in Pindar's epinicians and also features in Bacchylides' most majestic ode. It is therefore fitting that the tragedy which bears the most marked impression from the epinician is the *Heracles*. In the other Euripidean plays which we have examined the epinician is used to mark a moment of triumph before catastrophe. In this play we find a double use of the victory ode reflecting the double reversal in the plot. The first stasimon³⁴ begins with reflection on poetic alternatives in priamel form (348-56):

αἴλινον μὲν ἐπὶ εὐτυχεῖ
 μολπᾷ Φοῖβος ἰαχεῖ
 τὰν καλλίφθογον κιθάραν
 ἐλαύνων πλήκτρῳ χρυσέῳ·
 ἐγὼ δὲ τὸν γᾶς ἐνέρων τ'
 ἐς ὄρφναν μολόντα παῖδ',
 εἴτε Διός νιν εἶπω
 εἴτ' Ἀμφιτρύωνος ἴνιν,
 ὕμνησαι στεφάνωμα μό-
 χθων δι' εὐλογίας θέλω.

Phoebus sounds a dirge for Linus
 after song of success,

³³ The text is printed as fr.324-5 in West's *Iambi et elegi Graeci* (among the spurious attributions). For this song see further below p.25.

³⁴ For the Pindaric 'flavour' of this ode see Barlow 1996, p. 139.

playing his fine-voiced lyre
with plectrum of gold.
But I wish to hymn the son who from the depths of the earth
came to the light,
whether I must call him son of Zeus
or son of Amphitryon,
as garland of praise for his labours.

The resemblance to Pindar fr. 128c in the juxtaposition of genres here may be coincidental but is highly suggestive. More overtly reminiscent of Pindar and more difficult to dismiss are the lines which close the priamel, in which the praise of Heracles is described as στεφάνωμα μόχθων, ‘a garland for labours’; here both the syntax³⁵ and the image of song as a garland (a Pindaric, not a Bacchylidean trope) are firmly Pindaric in inspiration. More generally reminiscent of the victory ode is the notion at the end of the first stanza that achievements arising from toil glorify the dead. The idea of posthumous survival in song is at least as old as Homer. But in the context of a song to an individual it inevitably suggests the epinician promise of poetic survival for the laudandus. There follows a catalogue-like narrative of Heracles’ labours. The emphasis here is very much on his achievements, reinforcing the impression that we are in the terrain of the victory ode. As often in tragedy, this narrative prepares for the twist at the end of the song, since (as the chorus sees it) Heracles will not return from his final journey. And immediately following the song the children of Heracles come from the stage building with their mother dressed for death. The song began with reference to lament, slipped into celebration but it turns out after all to be a lament, a *threnos*. Its opening also uses the motifs of the rhapsodic hymn, an affiliation also traceable in the narrative of achievements. This complex song combines elements of lament, of celebration of achievement, of narrative hymn. It articulates both the greatness of the missing Heracles and the scale of the loss. It comes fittingly at the darkest moment of the family fortune.

³⁵ Cf. P.9 1-4:

ἐθέλω χαλκάσιδα Πυθιονίκαν
σὺν βαθυζώνοισιν ἀγγέλλων
Τελεσικράτη Χαρίτεσσι γεγωνεῖν
ἄλβιον ἄνδρα διωξίππου στεφάνωμα Κυράνας·

Particularly interesting for the present discussion is the complex generic hybrid which the ode creates. We have already encountered this effect in *Electra* 859-865.³⁶ Because tragic lyrics (as distinct from the tragic performance as a whole) are usually not tied to a specific cult or externally defined moment (it is the intra-textual performative context which allows the tragic ode to align itself with recognisable song forms), tragic song is able to modulate between lyric genres, combining as well as reshaping. This is not of course unique to tragedy. Generic categories are not hard and fast, and were especially porous in the performance defined context of Greek song.³⁷ But classificatory terms for genre go back at least to Homer and categories of a sort were recognised at least by the middle of the fifth century.³⁸ We find modulation between genres in archaic lyric, especially in Pindar who notoriously plays with the potential for generic combination.³⁹ But this kind of play is much more extensive in tragedy. Genre in archaic lyric is to a large extent defined by the text-external performative context. Because tragedy identifies generic affiliation at any one moment through stylised generic markers, and because the occasionality within the drama is frequently defined by mood and situation rather than formal features such as cult, time, patron or location, tragedy is at liberty to juxtapose and shift between markers and in the process move between genres. Genres surface and sink or mix like musical motifs.

A similar combination of genres occurs in the second stasimon (637ff)⁴⁰ with its complex and mixed content. It begins without any specific generic markers in a rejection of old age and praise for youth, then moves to the typically epinician theme of good birth (655-664), before moving to the praise of Heracles as victor (680-1)⁴¹:

ἔτι τὰν Ἡρακλέους
καλλίνικον αἰίδω.

³⁶ See p.8 above.

³⁷ See Carey 2009.

³⁸ See Calame 1974.

³⁹ See in particular Young 1971.

⁴⁰ The epinician background to this ode is noted by Parry 1965; see also Barlow 1996, p. 152.

⁴¹ The words may also, as Richard Rawles observes to me, hint at the proto-epinician attributed to Archilochus, for which see p.15 above.

Still I sing
the victory celebration of Heracles.

The ode ends as a paean, but epinician elements persist, in the praise of birth, of *areta* and of labour (μοχθήσας 698). The third stasimon continues the emphasis on victory, with the victory ode present in a more attenuated form, as the tyrant is being killed; the killing is presented as the last labour of Heracles and as *kallinikos* (786-8). All of this of course is now about to be overturned. The image of the hero as athlete returns in a grotesque form later in the messenger speech, as he participates in an imaginary Isthmian games, the product of his mad delusion, in the seizure which leads to the killing of his children.

The generic lability noted above is of course not unique to Euripides. It is a marked feature of tragic lyric and is found much earlier in one of the briefest victory odes in tragedy, in the parodos of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* (160-175):

Ζεὺς ὅστις ποτ' ἐστίν, εἰ τόδ' αὖ-
τῷ φίλον κεκλημένῳ,
τοῦτό νιν προσεννέπω·
οὐκ ἔχω προσεικάσαι
πάντ' ἐπισταθμώμενος
πλὴν Διός, εἰ τὸ μάταν ἀπὸ φροντίδος ἄχθος
χρὴ βαλεῖν ἐτητύμῳς·

οὐδ' ὅστις πάροιθεν ἦν μέγας,
παμμάχῳ θράσει βρύων,
οὐδὲ λέξεται πρὶν ὄν·
ὅς δ' ἔπειτ' ἔφυ, τρια-
κτῆρος οἴχεται τυχών·
Ζῆνα δέ τις προφρόνως ἐπινίκια κλάζων
τεύξεται φρενῶν τὸ πᾶν

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Zeus, whoever he is, if this
is the name he wishes to be called,
thus I address him.
I have nothing to compare
weighing all things in the balance,
except Zeus, if one is to cast the vain burden of thought
from the mind in truth.

And he who before was great,
full of all-conquering boldness
shall not even be recognized as once existing.
And he who followed
is gone, having met one who threw him three times.
In eagerly sounding victory praise for Zeus
a man will reach full sense.

The complex quasi-hymn to Zeus incorporates a telescoped narrative of the generations of divine rulers in which victory and succession are presented in an athletic metaphor (*triakter*) and this in turn is followed by a brief third person injunction to sing an epinician to Zeus, an instruction which is in part carried out by the vocalisation of the order in a fittingly Pindaric manner.

My final example from surviving tragedy again concerns Heracles and is, along with the entrance of Agamemnon in Aeschylus, arguably the cleverest play with the victory ode in tragedy. It comes from the *Trachiniae* of Sophocles (497-530). The choral ode comes at a transitional moment, between Deianeira's humble and humane acceptance of her rival and her subsequent attempt to win back her husband, between her insistent demand for honesty and her own desperate and destructive use of deception. The ode focuses on the divine force which will motivate the change and prepares the audience for what will follow. It links – in a manner profoundly typical of this play – present action

with past. It takes us back to the struggle between Achelous and Heracles for the virgin Deianeira narrated by Deianeira herself in her opening monologue. The epinician associations are well discussed by Easterling in her commentary. The victory ode is summoned up by several features. The struggle itself is presented as an athletic contest (503-6):

ἀλλ' ἐπὶ τάνδ' ἄρ' ἄκοιτιν
τίνες ἀμφίγυοι κατέβαν πρὸ γάμων·
τίνες πάμπληκτα παγκόνιτά τ' ἐξ-
ἦλθον ἄεθλ' ἀγώνων·
Now for this woman as bride
which mighty rivals entered the lists for her marriage?
Which ones came forth for the contests of the games
Full of blows and full of struggle?

It is a contest for a prize (505) and the participants are described in the language of athletic competitors (504), while the emphasis on physical labour (505) reminds us of Pindar's praise of wrestlers, runners and pankratiasts. The assimilation stretches to the use of technical athletic terms for the wrestling (520) in what looks (appropriately in view of the combatants) like a pankration (520-2):

ἦν δ' ἀμφίπλεκτοι κλίμακες,
ἦν δὲ μετώπων ὀλόεντα πλήγματα
καὶ στόνος ἀμφοῖν.
There were close-locked grapplings,
there were deadly blows from foreheads
and deep cries from both. (trans. Jebb, adjusted)

And we are prepared for all of this by the keyword *nika* in the very first line of the ode (497):

μέγα τι σθένος ἄ Κύπρις ἐκφέρεται νίκας ἀεί

Great is the might of victory which the Cyprian ever wins.

Again as in *Andromache* association is helped by rhythm, since the ode incorporates elements of dactylo-epitrite. This ode offers a particularly imaginative play with the concepts and motifs of the victory ode. Normally in the victory ode gods are invoked as patrons of the games and as benefactors of victor and city. Here she plays an ambiguous role. She is the umpire between Heracles and Achelous (515-6); in this capacity she is part of the traditional divine machinery of the victory ode. But *nivka~* and *ἐκφέρεται* in the opening line make her the laudanda.⁴² The victor is not the contestants but the goddess who promotes the contest, Aphrodite, something which reflects her controlling role in the events of the play. These disjunctions prepare for the most daring reconfiguration. In the first stanza the female is explicitly the prize; like any other prize she is an object. When we reach the final stanza the contest is focalised from the perspective of the woman who is the prize. The prize is subject as well as object and we see what the contest means for her. This subjectification of the prize (reinforced by the light ring-composition in which ἄκοιτιν 503 is echoed by ἀκοίταν 525) is one of the most remarkable changes on the tropes of the genre to be found in tragedy; and, as so often with Sophocles, bold change is presented dexterously and by implication. The deviation from generic type is admirably well placed. Deianeira has been witness of and object in her own life. The switch here from object to subject occurs just before Deianeira attempts finally to make the change from active to passive, motivated by the goddess praised in this victory ode, a change which will destroy her and everything she loves.

Inevitably, given the fact that tragedy for us is represented by a minute fraction of the works performed during the classical period, the reader pauses to ask if what we see is in any way representative of the fifth century theatrical experience. I see no reason to suppose that the intermittent but relatively frequent engagement which we see in what remains is a product of the accident of survival. Other tragic plots offered opportunities for exploitation of the victory ode. One would like to see for instance if Aeschylus'

⁴² See Easterling 1982, p. 134.

Hoplôn krisis made any use of the genre. We can be more confident about the *Alexandros* of Euripides. This play was an ideal context for more substantial engagement with the tropes of the victory ode. There was certainly an athletic competition in the play and one rich in irony of more than one sort. Paris was victorious in the funeral games set up in mourning for his supposed death when he was exposed as an infant,⁴³ thus both victor and ‘patron’, with a blurring of roles reminiscent of the first stasimon of *Trachiniae*. He won as a slave against members of the royal house. The slave victory received emphatic treatment in the plot, which uses this reversal as the basis for sustained debate about merit and status. Paris’ victory turned on its head – at least superficially – the natural expectations of elite aristocratic competition and with it potentially the social order.⁴⁴ At the same time it turned on its head the emphasis on good birth which formed the basis of (at least the Pindaric) epinician. It is therefore no surprise that we find a choral song⁴⁵ questioning the nature of good birth and concluding that it resides in internal qualities rather than external factors. Though the victory ode did not have a monopoly on questions of breeding, the motif is highly suggestive in a play with athletics at the heart of the plot, especially as the ode targets not just good birth but songs in praise of good birth; their opening words tacitly confront an implied expectation of their song:

περισσόμυθος ὁ λόγος εὐγένειαν εἰ
 βρότειον εὐλόγησομεν.
 Waste of words the tale, if we are
 to praise mortals’ noble birth.

Their choice instead to ask what constitutes good birth makes the song almost an anti-epinician. The victory ode and concomitant celebrations feature in a stichomythic exchange where the resentment of the members of the Trojan royal house at the victory of the upstart might remind the alert listener of the *phthonos* motif common in the victory

⁴³ See the hypothesis, Jouan-Van Looy 1998, pp. 43-6 with bibliography, fr.46a Kannicht = 6 Jouan-Van Looy.

⁴⁴ See especially fr. 62 Kannicht = 26 Jouan-Van Looy.

⁴⁵ Fr.61b Kannicht = 20 Jouan-Van Looy.

ode.⁴⁶ Given the amount of space given over to Paris' athletic victory, it is possible that the engagement with victory songs was more extensive still than the fragments suggest.

The victory ode is less prominent in comedy than in tragedy. But between them the two genres cover the whole cultural range of the victory celebration. At the beginning of *Olympian 9* Pindar distinguishes between the spontaneous celebration at the moment of victory and his own more elaborate commissioned poem for the civic celebration (*O.* 9.1-8):

τὸ μὲν Ἀρχιλόχου μέλος
φωνᾶεν Ὀλυμπίᾳ,
καλλίνικος ὁ τριπλὸς κεχλαδῶς
ἄρκεσε Κρόνιον παρ' ὄχθον ἀγεμονεῦσαι
κωμάζοντι φίλοις Ἐφαρμόστῳ σὺν ἑταίροις·
ἀλλὰ νῦν ἑκαταβόλων Μοισᾶν ἀπὸ τόξων
Δία τε φοινικοστερόπαν σεμνόν τ' ἐπίνειμαι
ἄκρωτήριον Ἴαλιδος
τοιοῖσδε βέλεσσιν...
The song of Archilochus
sounding at Olympia,
the resounding thrice-repeated song of triumph,
sufficed to lead Epharmostus by the hill of Cronus
in procession with his dear companions.
But now from the bow of the far-shooting Muses
send such arrows of song
on Zeus of the red lightning and the sacred
height of Elis.

Revealingly, when the victory of the Aristophanic hero is made the subject of choral celebration, the model chosen is not the grand odes commissioned by aristocrats and

⁴⁶ Fr.62d Kannicht = fr. 28-9 Jouan-Van Looy. For the motif see n.15 above.

rulers from the great Panhellenic choral poets for formal public celebration but the impromptu celebration at the moment of victory. The ‘Archilochus song’ to which Pindar refers turns up (or at least the refrain does) in the celebration by Dicaeopolis of his victory in the drinking competition at the end of *Acharnians* (1227-1234):

ΔΙ. ὄρατε τουτονὶ κενόν. τήνελλα καλλίνικος.

ΧΟ. τήνελλα δῆτ' , εἴπερ καλεῖς γ' , ὦ πρέσβυ, καλλίνικος.

ΔΙ. καὶ πρὸς γ' ἄκρατον ἐγχείας ἄμυστιν ἐξέλαψα.

ΧΟ. τήνελλα νυν, ὦ γεννάδα· χῶρει λαβῶν τὸν ἄσκόν.

ΔΙ. ἔπεσθέ νυν ἄδοντες· ὦ τήνελλα καλλίνικος.

ΧΟ. ἀλλ' ἐψόμεσθα σὴν χάριν

τήνελλα καλλίνικον ἄ-

δοντες σὲ καὶ τὸν ἄσκόν.

DICAEOPOLIS: You see this empty cup. Hurrah the happy victor!

CHORUS: Hurrah for sure, at your call, old man, happy victor.

DIC.: And furthermore I filled it with unmixed wine and drained it at one swig.

CHORUS: Hurrah now, noble fellow. Go now and take your wineskin.

DIC.: Follow now singing ‘Hurrah. Oh happy victor’.

CHORUS: Then we shall follow in your honour

singing ‘hurrah the happy victor’

for you and your wineskin.

The victory celebrated in this song has more than one dimension. In its immediate context it is the success in the drinking competition at the Anthesteria. In the larger context of the play it is the triumph of the hero over his civic opponents and the triumph of peace over war. In the dramatic competition it also, as references to victory at the end of a play often do, has a proleptic quality, predicting, inviting and requesting the victory of the play, which will also be followed by a celebration.⁴⁷ The intra- and extra-textual

⁴⁷ See most recently Wilson 2007, p. 278. Wilson rightly draws attention to the absence of a communal element in Dikaiopolis’ victory. He shares his success with no-one. The comic celebration of victory substitutes unshared self-assertion for familial and socio-political frame in which the formal epinician always locates the victorious athlete. Yet, interestingly, though the victory is solitary, the celebration is

celebrations are fluently linked by the exit of the drunken victor followed by his gang of celebrants, which enacts for the audience the informal victory *komos* as presented by Pindar at the opening of the *Ninth Olympian*.

A fragment of the refrain, with the same multiple layers of reference, also marks the final victory of the sausage seller in *Knights* (1254-5):

ὦ χαῖρε καλλίνικε· καὶ μέμνησ' ὅτι
ἀνὴρ γεγένησαι δι' ἐμέ·
Hail, happy victor, and remember that
you have become a man because of me.

More reminiscent of tragedy is the generic promiscuity in the celebration at the end of *Birds* (1720-65), where the epinician refrain, the last vocal sounds of the performance, occurs in a wedding song and is combined with the refrain which defines the paean (1763). And because the addressee has now taken power from Zeus, the closing words also contain elements of a hymn in praise of a god:

Ἄλαλαί, ἰὴ παιῶν·
τήνελλα καλλίνικος, ὦ δαιμόνων ὑπέρτατε
Alalai! Hail Paean!
Hurrah, happy victor,
supreme of gods.

What makes this example particularly interesting is the tacit generic boundary drawing involved. The hero in this play is actually offered celebratory song in the manner of the great Panhellenic poets at the foundation of his city (*Birds* 917-9):

μέλη πεπόηκ' εἰς τὰς Νεφελοκοκκυγίας

communal. It is significant that the excluded chorus unlike Lamachos voice no resentment of the lone success of the comic hero; this is self-assertion sanctioned by the popular voice.

τὰς ὑμετέρας κύκλια τε πολλὰ καὶ καλὰ
καὶ παρθένεια καὶ κατὰ τὰ Σιμωνίδου.

I have composed songs for your Clouduckooland,
many fine circular dances
and maiden songs and songs after Simonides.

The lyric poet who plagues him offers him a number of lyric songs, including snatches of Pindar and bits and pieces of his own (924-45), all in the grand style of choral lyric. These the hero rejects roundly as the product of charlatan poets. In contrast, simple ritual songs combined with the traditional song for impromptu celebration of victory serve the comic hero at the end.⁴⁸

The epinician like other lyric forms⁴⁹ is absorbed, reworked and hybridised by Athenian drama. Poets extract key features from this artform, producing a stylised and reduced form which almost (but not quite) amounts to a caricature of the original. A frequent feature noted above is the way in which tragic songs slip in and out of the epinician mode; poets introduce victory odes alongside and frequently in interactive combination with other lyric genres to create complex effects and underscore changes in tone and emphasis. The tragedians often play in an overt way with the tropes of the genre. The rhetorical ploys of panegyric obscure the very specific urgency of the moment (*Agamemnon*); roles which are kept separate in the epinician proper are blurred (*Trachiniae*, *Alexandros*); the victory ode is turned inside out by having the vicissitude which would normally be part of its narrative of past and present fall outside and after the celebration (*Electra*, *Andromache*); its core values are rejected or inverted (*Electra*, *Alexandros*). In part all this is simply a means of enhancing the dramatic moment and the thematic message. But it is difficult to resist the impression that another part of what is at issue is inter-generic rivalry and display. Tragedy highlights its ability to do things with other literary forms which the principal exponents cannot. By locating the victory ode

⁴⁸ Interestingly, where Aristophanes does draw on the tradition of formal lyric epinicians by named authors (*Knights* 405-6) for (anticipated) comic celebration, his source is Simonides at his most (seemingly) informal (fr.512), not the more solemn manner of Pindar. For Simonides in Aristophanes, see Rawles 2011.

⁴⁹ The rich vein of choral lyric genres reworked in tragedy is explored in depth by Swift 2010.

within a larger – and shifting – context the tragedians also tacitly emphasise the dynamic nature of their medium in contrast to the static nature of the lyric genres which they absorb. In the case of comedy the engagement is more fleeting. But for all the brevity of its appearances the deployment in comedy is very revealing. Unsurprisingly, highflown lyric compositions are raw material for parody and burlesque, while the comic poet wears his populist badge in his rejection of the grand manner in favour of the traditional impromptu modes of celebration. Epinician becomes another means of demonstrating demotic credentials.

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