Pindar's Homer and Pindar's Myths

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It has been generally acknowledged that Pindar owes little to Homer as a source of mythological material—in Bowra's words: "almost nothing." The judgement seems confirmed by the most cursory glance at a catalogue of Pindar's myths: there is much of unknown provenance (presumably, drawn from local traditions), and much from the other poems of the Epic Cycle; but nothing from the main narrative of either Iliad or Odyssey.

This imbalance is, on the face of it, surprising—and becomes more so on reflection. Homer's heroes would be ideal exemplars of many of the virtues of epinician. On a simple level, Achilles' encounter with Hector would seem to be attractive material because it is the fight between the greatest hero of each side. It also offers a richer dimension: Achilles' decision to fight Hector—the symbol of his decision to fight rather than flee to a comfortable old age (II. 9.410–16, 18.79–126)—epitomises the choice between obscure comfort and glorious endeavour: a classic epinician opposition. But in Pindar, Hector appears as Achilles' opponent just three times; each time briefly, in a catalogue—and nowhere as the climactic term (Ol. 2.81f; Isthm. 5.39, 8.55).

Finally, one would have thought that the Iliad and Odyssey would furnish excellent material for Pindar's style of mythological narration, well described as "brief and condensed with sudden flashes to illuminate ... the mythological land-

1 C. M. Bowra, Pindar (Oxford 1964) 283.
2 See e.g. Appendix III of F. Nisetich, Pindar's Victory Songs (Baltimore 1980).
3 The equivalence of warrior and athlete is central to Pindar: D. C. Young, Pindar, Isthmian 7: Myth and Exempla (= Mnemosyne Suppl. 15 [Leiden 1971]) 39–43; cf. B. K. Braswell, A Commentary on the Fourth Pythian of Pindar (Berlin 1988) index s.v. "games." The locus classicus is Isthm. 1.50f; cf. Ol. 2.43ff, 10.16ff; Pyth. 8.26ff; Nem. 1.16ff, 5.19ff.
4 E.g. Ol. 1.81–85, Pyth. 4.185ff; K. Crotty, Song and Action: The Victory Odes of Pindar (Baltimore 1982) ch. 4, esp. 108–11.
scape." Material as well known as the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* would provide excellent reference points for such allusive narration.

The absence of Homeric material from Pindar, then, remains surprising. This article is concerned with this absence: exploring it; suggesting a reason for it; and finally drawing wider conclusions from it.

The phenomenon repays exploration because it is not as straightforward as it at first seems: it has been argued that some Homeric myths do in fact appear in Pindar; and, more persuasively, Köhnken and others have shown that Pindar does make some use, highly sophisticated and allusive, of Homer—without actually narrating mythological material from the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. (The water of this argument is muddied by the difficulty of pinning down exactly what Pindar means when he refers by name to “Homer”: does he mean the author of those two epics only, or of the whole Epic Cycle?) I consider these matters in the first part of this article and conclude that the two Homeric epics are, indeed, not quarried for source material as the other epics of the Cycle are. In the second part, I consider possible reasons for the absence and, through a comparison of the rejection of unsuitable mythological matter in *Nem. 7* with that in *Ol. 1*, identify the quality that disqualifies Homeric myth from Pindar. In the third, appealing to the generic demands of epinician, I draw wider conclusions.

I

Young offers the two most striking counterexamples to the bald statement that Pindar does not draw mythological material from the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. The first is the suggestion, based on verbal similarities, that the Tlepolemos myth (*Ol. 7*) is drawn from *Il. 2.653–70*. But the verbal similarities are not striking.7

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7 Young 82f, 83 n.1, 90. The best is *Il. 2.655f* on the Rhodians:

... ἐκφεύγοντες διὰ τρίχα κοσμηθέντες
Λίνδον Ἱπλισάν τε καὶ ἀργινόντα Κάμειρον.
Further, there is good evidence, in the form of details that do not appear in Homer, that Pindar was using another source. These non-Homeric components defy explanation as Pindar’s inventions, contributing in some way to the drift of the poem. For example, Pindar describes Tlepolemos ἐλθόντα ἐκ θαλάμων Μιδέας (Ol. 7.29). This detail neither appears in Homer, nor can be situated in the landscape of the Homeric account. The only plausible explanation is that it is an allusive detail taken from another version; other accounts certainly existed ([Hes.] fr. 232 M.-W.). It is tempting to conclude that it is to the Homeric version that Pindar refers in 21.

Young also suggests (55 n.3), arguing from “similarities of content,” that Pyth. 3.101ff and Isthm. 8.56ff draw on Od. 24.58–73 for their descriptions of Achilles’ funeral. But what of the Aethiopis, in which the funeral was presented not as digression, but as part of the main course of the narrative (Chrest. 196–200 = EGF p.47.24–30)? Given that Agamemnon’s account of Achilles’ burial in the Odyssey conforms to Proclus’ outline of the same events in the Aethiopis, similarity of content is no warrant for believing that in his descriptions of Achilles’ funeral Pindar was following the Homeric Odyssey rather than the non-Homeric Aethiopis. We cannot know

Cf. Ol. 7.73–76 on the Heliadai:

εἰς μὲν Κάμηρον
πρεσβυτατον τε ἡλιό-
σον ἐτεκεν Λίνδον τ’ ἑπάτερθε δ’ ἔχον
dιὰ γαῖαν ἄμφω̂ς διασαμένοι πατριώ̂ιαν
ἀστέων μοῖρας, κέκληναι δὲ σφιν ἔδραι.

8 As M. M. Willcock, who, though he follows Young, conveniently notes the discrepancies, concedes: Pindar: Victory Odes (Cambridge 1995) 118f.

9 A strategy for the interpretation of odd details in Pindar’s myths that dates back to the scholiast (Isthm. 1.15b); Young 54, 34–43.

10 Pace Willcock (supra n.8) ad loc; see W. J. Verdenius, Commentaries on Pindar 1 (=Mnemosyne Suppl. 97 [Leiden 1987]) ad loc., who suggests that the story lying beneath these lines is that Likymnios, as a bastard, failed to inherit his father’s kingdom and so remained in his mother’s house (θαλάμων Μιδέας). This hint at a family feud is attractive.

11 O. Smith, “An Interpretation of Pindar’s Seventh Olympian Ode,” ClMed 28 (1967) 172–85 at 176; Verdenius (supra n.10) ad loc.

12 E. Thummer, Pindar: Die isthmischen Gedichte (Heidelberg 1968–69) II 139, thought that Isthm. 8.56a was an echo of Od. 24.93. But the verbal echo is slight and the thought different. I consider whether the opposition of Homeric and non-Homeric would have had any meaning for Pindar at 324f below.
what allusions to the *Aethiopis*’ account might be concealed within the Pindaric text. Certainly, Pindar followed the *Aethiopis* in the immediate sequel to the burial: Achilles is taken to a better place, the White Island; in the *Odyssey*, his shade is left stalking the Underworld.  

A comparable preference for the Cycle over the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* is shown in the matter of Achilles’ infancy. Pindar treats the subject in three places (Pyth. 3.100f, 6.21-27; Nem. 3.43-58) and nowhere prefers the Homeric version to the Cyclic.

The Iliadic account of Achilles’ early life has Peleus and Thetis living together, sending him off to war, and then waiting in vain for his return. A more folkloric version appeared, it is generally agreed, in the *Cypria*. Here Thetis attempts to immortalise her son through alternately burning him and anointing him with ambrosia, and then, surprised by Peleus, hies away. (This version would appear to be the older, for it leaves traces in the Iliadic text.) And this is the one that Pindar prefers.

It would seem, then, most likely that there is not one surviving example of Pindar’s dependence on the *Iliad* or *Odyssey* as a mythological source. This indifference is in itself surprising; and it becomes doubly so when juxtaposed with a survey of the use, more sophisticated than simply quarrying him for material, that Pindar does make of Homer.

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14 Il. 16.222f, 574; 18.57ff, 89f, 331f; 19.422; Thetis bringing Achilles up: 1.44f; 18.55ff, 438.
17 For example, Thetis lives in the sea apart from her husband (1.357f, 18.35f, 24.72ff); and Chiron did have some part in Achilles’ education (he taught him medicine, 11.831f). This latter is the last vestige of what would appear to be a classic fosterage at the margins of society by a maternal relative; Chiron was, in one genealogy, Thetis’ father (Σ A. Rhod. 1.558; Hyg. *Fab*. 14; Dict. Cret. 1.4; Tzetzu. *Ant. homerica* 185). See J. Bremmer, “Importance of the Maternal Uncle and Grandfather in Archaic and Classical Greece and Early Byzantium,” ZPE 50 (1983) 173–86.
Köhnen triumphantly demonstrated that the enigmatic exchange between Apollo and Chiron the centaur in *Pyth.* 9 is an echo of the exchange between Zeus and Hera in *Il.* 14. Scholars had been puzzled by the dialogue in *Pyth.* 9 between Apollo and Chiron, in which Apollo quizzes the centaur about the girl he sees fighting a lion and asks how he should behave (30–37). Chiron, in his answer, points out the absurdity of Apollo, τὸν θεοῦς θεότατον ψεύδει θεγεῖν (42), needing information and advice (39ff). Pindar’s exploitation of the Homeric original turns on the identity of Hera’s response to Zeus and Chiron’s to Apollo. Hera would be ashamed to lie with Zeus on Mt Ida, and proposes retreat to her chamber, which Hephaestus has fitted with close-fitting doors (*Il.* 14.330–40), opened κρυπτῇ (168). And so Chiron answers Apollo (*Pyth.* 9.39ff):

κρυπταὶ κλαίδες ἐντὶ σοφᾶς
Πειθοῦς ἑράν φιλοτάτων,
Φοίβε, καὶ ἐν τῷ θεῷ τούτῳ κόνδρωπος ὁμῶς
αἰδεύοντι, ἀμφαιδον ἀδείοι,
ας τυχεῖν τῷ πρῶτον εὐνάς.21

The parallel demonstrates the power of Cyrene’s beauty and Apollo’s desire for her, by allusively comparing first Apollo’s urgency to Zeus’ on seeing Hera wearing Aphrodite’s girdle,22 and then his witlessness to that of the victim of whispered seduction, ἡ τ’ ἐκλέψε νόν πύκα περ φρονεόντων (*Il.* 14.217), embroidered upon the girdle. All this glorifies Cyrene, and thus Pindar’s Cyrenean patron.

Homeric forms lurk behind *Pyth.* 3 also. Hayden Pelliccia has argued that the argument of the first part of the poem follows a typical Homeric pattern: unattainable wish followed by “the

20 Köhnken (*supra* n.19) 87f.
21 They are secret keys
With which *Persuasion* knows how to unlock
The sanctuaries of love,
Phoibos: Gods and men alike
Shy of it being spoken of, when first they come
To some sweet maidenhead.

This translation, and those from Pindar that follow, is from C. M. Bowra, *The Odes of Pindar* (Harmondsworth 1969).
expansion of the wish with a narrative, at the completion of which the wish is recapitulated, and finally dismissed.” In *Pyth.* 3 the wish is for Chiron to be alive (1-5); the narrative follows (6-62); the wish is recapitulated and spelled out: if Chiron were alive he might cure Hieron (63-76); and it is finally dismissed: Hieron’s safety is placed in the lap of the gods (אֲלַל אֶפֶּעַד אֱסַאָסְתָא מֶּנֶּנֶּגֶו נֵהָדֳו מֶּטְרֵי, 77f). The particular Homeric model is *Od.* 1.253-71, in which Athena/Mentes first offers a prayer to Odysseus’ safe return (255f), follows it with a short narrative of the first time he saw Odysseus (257-64), recapitulates and spells out the wish (265f), and finally leaves it in the lap of the gods:

too'os oun mnistetirion omilieseion 'odousseus-
pantes k' okeumoroi te genoiaato pikroigamoi te.  
all, h toi men tauta theon en goynasi keita,  
kev vostrhias apostesetai, he kai oik,  
oisin eni meqarosai.25

Another dynamic use of a Homeric model, very similar to that of the Δίος ἀπάτη in *Pyth.* 9, occurs later in the same poem (*Pyth.* 3.80ff):

ei de logon sunevmen korufain, 1erw,  
orbain eipista, mavenanov isetha proteron  
en par' elon pigma sviduo dainontai brotois  
othanatoi.26

Chief among the proteron is Homer, for the image springs from that of Zeus’ urns:

douli gar te pithoi katakietatai en Diws oidei  
dofon oina didwsi, kakhw, eetero de etanv.  
ou men k' ameixezes dws Zevw terpikerauvyos,  
allote men te kakh d' ge kuretai, allote d' eswli.27

24 Pelliccia (*supra* n.23) 55ff.
25 26 *Od.* 1.267-71.
26 And you, Hieron,  
Having the wit to know  
What sayings are sharp and true, have learned the old proverb:  
“With every blessing God gives a pair of curses.”
Critics have been distracted by the apparent change from Homer’s two urns to the equivalent of three in Pindar. So it seems to have been ignored that both Homer and Pindar go on to use Peleus as paradigmatic of the gnome.

We compare *Pyth.* 3.85-95, 100-103):

> αἰῶν δ’ ἀσφαλής
> οὕκ ἔγεντ’ οὔτ’ Αἰακίδᾳ παρὰ Πηλεῖ
> οὔτε παρ’ ἀντιθέω Κάδμῳ· λέγονται μάν βροτῶν
> ὀλβὸν ὑπέρτατον οἱ σχεῖν οἴτε καὶ χρυσαμάτων

90 μελλομενάν ἐν ὦρε Μοισᾶν καὶ ἐν ἐπιστύλιοις
> ἀυν Θῆβας, ὡπὸ’ Ἀρμονίαν γάμεν βοώπιν,
> ὃ δὲ Νηρέος εὐβούλου Θέτιν παίδα κλυτάν,
> καὶ θεοὶ διασάντο παρ’ ἀμφοτέροις,
> καὶ Κρόνον παίδας βασιλῆς ἰδον χρυ-
> σέαις ἐν ἔδραις, ἔδαν τε

95 δέξαντο.

100 τοῦ δὲ [sc. Peleus’] παῖς, ὅν περ μόνον ἀθανάτα
> τίκτεν ἐν Θῆβαις Θήτις, ἐν πολέμῳ τό-
> ξοῖς ἀπὸ ψυχῶν λιπῶν
> ὠργεν πυρὶ καιομένων
> ἐκ Δαναῶν γόνον.31

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28 Σ *Pyth.* 3.141; Young 51. We should not lose sight of the fact that Pindar does not mention urns.


30 II. 24.534-40.

31 Untroubled life
Neither Peleus had, the son of Aiakos,
Nor godlike Kadmos.
These two, they say, had the utmost bliss of men:
They heard the Muses
singing, with gold in their hair,
On that mountain and in seven-gated Thebes
(When one
Married soft-eyed Harmonia, and one Thetis,
Wise Nereus’ golden child)
The passages run parallel, but for Cadmus’ intrusion and Pindar’s elaborations: Homer’s ἀγλαὰ δῶρα (534) are Pindar’s ὑπέρτατον (89); II. 24.537 becomes Pyth. 8.89–95 and παναύριον (540) becomes 101f. They then continue on broadly similar lines. Achilles notes that Priam was once prosperous, but is now beset with care, and urges him to endure and not endlessly and pointlessly mourn his son (24.543–51). Pindar touches on the same themes in general terms: he notes the precariousness of good fortune and urges that one make the best of one’s lot (Pyth. 3.104–109).

If II. 24.534ff do lie behind Pyth. 3.86ff, then the precise nature of Peleus’ disappointment at Pyth. 3.100f becomes clear: his only son (μόνον) was not the marvellous progeny he might have expected from his divine bride (ἄθανατα) and was doomed: οἱ οὗ τι παιδὸν ἐν μεγάροις γοην γένετο κρειόντων, ἀλλὰ ἐνα παιδά τέκεν παναύριον.32

More broadly, the Homeric model enriches the close of this ode. Pyth. 3 has a strong consolatory tone;33 and the consolation that Pindar offers Hieron in this ode is informed by Achilles’ consolation of Priam.34 Pindar exploits the brilliance of II. 24 to

And with both the Gods feasted. They saw those Kings,
The sons of Kronos, sitting on golden thrones,
And took their marriage gifts....

And Peleus’ son, the only son
Whom immortal Thetis bore to him in Phthia,
Killed by an arrow in battle, was burned with fire
And woke the Danaans’ tears.


33 Indeed, there is so little celebration in Pyth. 3 that some have thought it not an epinician at all, but instead a consolation in the desirable form of an epinician, which Pindar regrets he cannot bring (72ff; cf. Pelliccia [supra n.23]). Alternatively, the poem might be at once an encomium and a consolatio (so e.g. W. J. Slater, “Pindar’s Pythian 3: Structure and Purpose,” QuadUrbin n.s. 29 (1988) 51–61). But the only mention of a victory is at 73f, where ποτέ suggests that it was not a recent win. D. Young, “Pindar Pythians 2 and 3: Inscriptional ποτέ and the Poetic Epistle,” HSCP 87 (1983) 31–42, attempts to explain ποτέ away (it is to be read from the perspective of the future audience); but see M. R. Lefkowitz, The Victory Ode (Park Ridge 1976) 163 n.42; Robbins (supra n.29) 307–12. For the present argument it need only be agreed that it has a consolatory tone.

buttress his poem in a number of ways. First, Priam, as a pattern of kingship, is a flattering analogue for Hieron.\footnote{See \textit{e.g.} \textit{Il.} 3.105ff, 20.183; M. van der Kolf, "Priamos (1)," \textit{RE} 22.2 (1954) 184ff.} The pathos of his situation in \textit{Il.} 24 generates sympathy for Hieron, his analogue: for, by the time of Aristotle at least, Priam is also the pattern of good fortune turned to bad.\footnote{\textit{Eth. Nic.} 110a5–9: παλλαὶ γὰρ μεταβολαῖ θίνουσαι καὶ παντοίπαι τύχαι κατὰ τὸν βίον, καὶ ἐνδήξεται τὸν μάλιστ' εὐθυνοῦντα μεγάλας συμφορὰς περισσεῖν ἐπὶ γῆρος, καθάπερ ἐν τοῖς Τραυκάσις περὶ Πρώσιμον μυθεύεται· τὸν δὲ ταυταῖς χρησάμενον τύχαις καὶ τελευτησάντα αθλίως οὐδεὶς εὐδαιμωνίζει. Λίττικ further on he describes a man encountering Πρώσιμας τύχαις (1101a8).} In \textit{Pyth.} 3 he is thus a third paradigm, generated only through allusion,\footnote{Cf. the allusive citation of Semele at 98f: Robbins (\textit{supra} n.29) 314f.} exemplifying the frailty of human flourishing and the preponderance of misfortune.

Finally, the shadow of \textit{Il.} 24 prepares us for the claims of the last lines of \textit{Pyth.} 3, formally guaranteed by the examples of Nestor and Sarpedon (112). The epinician theme that poetry gives lasting value to human achievement—some sort of immortality—is a commonplace;\footnote{E. L. Bundy, \textit{Studia Pindarica} (=\textit{CPCP} 18 [Berkeley 1962]) II 86ff.} but here it provides a surprisingly confident ending for a poem that has focused not on triumph but on the limits of achievement and the universality of misfortune.\footnote{R. W. B. Burton, \textit{Pindar's Pylhian Odes} (Oxford 1962) 78, with Young 62–68.}

In the Homeric poems, however, the thought is not a triumphal boast but a comfort.\footnote{J. Griffin, \textit{Homer on Life and Death} (Oxford 1980) 96–102.} Alcinous wonders why Odysseus weeps (\textit{Od.} 8.577–80):

\begin{quote}
\textit{εἰπὲ δ' ὁ τι κλαίεις καὶ ὀδύρεις ἐνδοθι θυμῶ Ἀρχείων Δαναοῖν ἵδε Ἡλίον οἴτον ἀκούων, τὸν δὲ θεοὶ μὲν τεῦξαν, ἐπεκλώσαντο δ' ὀλέθρον ἀνθρώποις, ἱνα ἤσι καὶ ἐσσομένοισιν ἀοιδῇ.}
\end{quote}

The use of the Homeric model at \textit{Pyth.} 3.80ff suggests that the claim of the last lines has this melancholy colour—and this is confirmed by the otherwise curious choice of Nestor and

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35 See \textit{e.g.} \textit{Il.} 3.105ff, 20.183; M. van der Kolf, "Priamos (1)," \textit{RE} 22.2 (1954) 184ff.
36 \textit{Eth. Nic.} 110a5–9: παλλαὶ γὰρ μεταβολαῖ θίνουσαι καὶ παντοίπαι τύχαι κατὰ τὸν βίον, καὶ ἐνδήξεται τὸν μάλιστ' εὐθυνοῦντα μεγάλας συμφορὰς περισσεῖν ἐπὶ γῆρος, καθάπερ ἐν τοῖς Τραυκάσις περὶ Πρώσιμον μυθεύεται· τὸν δὲ ταυταῖς χρησάμενον τύχαις καὶ τελευτησάντα αθλίως οὐδεὶς εὐδαιμωνίζει. Λίττικ further on he describes a man encountering Πρώσιμας τύχαις (1101a8).
37 Cf. the allusive citation of Semele at 98f: Robbins (\textit{supra} n.29) 314f.
41 So too Helen explains that Zeus has given her and Paris κακὸν μόρον, ὡς καὶ οἴνοισιν ὀξύρωσει πλῆθος ὀξιδίμοι εὐσομένοις (\textit{Il.} 6.357f); cf. 22.30ff; \textit{Od.} 5.309–12, 24.200ff.
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...
Sarpedon as exemplars. They are ideal paradigms of the consolatory theme: all must die, for they both represent a maximum; even the oldest must die; and even the most favoured. The failure of each emphasises the failure of the other to cheat death. The force of the argument is: even Nestor and Sarpedon died, but they are at least celebrated in song. The application to Hieron is, of course, left implicit: even they died, and so shall you; but as they were celebrated in song, so shall you be.

The addressee of such remarks could only be in extremis. I suspect that the analogy between Hieron and Priam had an even more poignant dimension. Priam's particular grief is that he lived too long. His case shows that the postponement of

42 Young suggested (62) that they are “deliberately random names”; Gildersleeve (supra n.32: 269), that they were paradigmatic of mourning. The only critic to confront the real difficulty here is D. Sider, “Nestor and Sarpedon in Pindar, Pythian 3,” RhM 134 (1991) 110f, who argues that the two are ap­posite because they are “among the very few in the Iliad who explicitly state the theme of non omnis moriar.” But the passages he cites, Il. 11.761, 12.310–28, do not show this.

43 R. Lattimore, Themes in Greek and Latin Epigraphs (Urbana 1942) 250–56. The locus classicus is Achilles’ confrontation of his own mortality at Il. 18.117ff.


45 Nestor’s age: Il. 1.250ff; cf. 11.669ff; Pyth. 6.35; J. Schmidt, “Nestor, (1),” RE 17.1 (1936) 119f. E. R. Curtius, European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages, tr. W. R. Trask (Princeton 1973) 80ff, notes the use of the extremely old as consolatory material. He cites Tithonus, who is associated with Nestor in old age at e.g. Prop. 2.25.10; cf. Schmidt 120.

46 A late epitaph from Teos (EG 298.71):

τῆς ἐπ' ἔμοι λόπης παραμόθιον ἐμ ωρεὶ θέσθε
touton· kai makhron paiides énérhein ébain.

Cf. Lattimore (supra n.43) 254. Sarpedon is not simply the son of a god, but the dearest son of Zeus (Il. 16.432–61). Zeus’ dilemma over whether to save him dramatises how near he came to defying his mortality.

47 The application to Hieron is generated through the first person in 111f: Young 58f.

48 [Plut.] Mor. 113E: "μεῖον," γὰρ ὄντως "ἐδάκρυσεν Τροίλος ὁ Πρίμως," (καὶ) οὕτως, ἐν προτετελεύσει ἐν τῇ ἀκμαζώσης αὐτῶ τῆς βασιλείας καὶ τῆς τοσαύτης τύχης; cf. Cic. Tusc. 1.85; Juv. 10.258; cf. too Il. 24.244ff.
death does not simply controvert the natural order of things, but is not even desirable (μὴ, φίλα ψυχά, βίον ἀθάνατον συνεδέε): if no cure is possible, then death may be our physician.49

Smaller, more straightforward—but still dynamic—uses of Homeric originals occur at Ol. 9.66 and Nem. 2.14 (cf. n.67 infra). The latter is a vaunt about Salamis (2.13f):

καὶ μᾶν ἄ Σαλαμίς γε θρέψαι φῶτα μαχατάν
δινατός, ἐν Τροίᾳ μὲν "Εκ-
τωρ Αἴαντος ἄκουσεν.

ἀκούσεν is a puzzle. Critics have, in the main, interpreted it as “obey” in a metaphorical sense and thus “submit to”;50 but ἀκούω can only mean “submit to” in the sense of obeying orders—which is not what is needed here.51

The best explanation remains Monro’s.52 Hector hears Ajax just before their duel in Il. 7, when he spoke to him ἀπειλήσας (7.225–32). But the passage specifically referred to here occurs a little earlier, when Ajax, chosen by lot to fight Hector, closes his address to the other Achaeans:

οὐ γὰρ τίς με βή γε ἐκὼν ἀκοντα δίηται,
οὐδὲ τι ἱδρεύῃ, ἐπεὶ οὐδὲ ἐμὲ νῆδα γ’ οὔτος
ἐλατομαί ἐν Σαλαμίνι γενέθαι τε τραφέμεν τε.53

Munro suggests that Pindar has simply made a small mistake in attributing this vaunt to Ajax’s exchange with Hector a few lines


51 See R. Kannicht, ed., Euripides Helen (Heidelberg 1969) ad 733.


53 Il. 7.197–99.
later, and translates “Salamis was ever the nurse of heroes: such as the boast of Aias to Hektor.” The effect of this is that the vaunt is made again on the present occasion and Ajax becomes a flattering analogue for the laudandus.

In Ol. 9 Pindar describes the succession of Opous to his father’s throne. This, according to Eust. ad II. 2.531, was the upshot of a family feud. Pindar not only glosses over the unhappy quarrel, but by using vocabulary used by Homer to describe Phoenix’s happy adoption by Peleus, in which Peleus amicably handed over to him the rule of the Dolopes (II. 9.483), also suggests that Opous’ succession was similarly happy:

\[
\text{πόλιν δ' ὀψασεν λαόν τε διατάν (Ol. 9.66)}
\]
\[
\text{καὶ μ' ἀφνειόν ἔθηκε, πολὺν δὲ μοι ὀψασε λαόν (II. 9.483).}
\]

Such use of Homer approaches the non-allusive borrowings of vocabulary noted by Bowra (supra n.1: 215–19), who emphasised that even on this small scale, Pindar uses Homeric material in novel ways.

These examples of Pindar’s sophisticated use of Homer serve to counterpoint Homer’s absence as a mythological source. They emphasise its strangeness: it is a genuine phenomenon.

This observation enables comment on an interesting side issue: when Pindar writes of ‘Homer’, what does the name signify? Does it refer, in accord with our usage, to the author of the Iliad and Odyssey only or to the author of those and the other poems of the Cycle? The earliest surviving expression of scepticism of Homer’s authorship of epics other than the Iliad and Odyssey occurs at Hdt. 2.117 (= Cypria fr. 14 PEG; cf. Il.

54 Cf. the misquotation of II. 15.207 (ἐσθλῶν καὶ τὸ τέτυκται, ὃτ' ἀγέλως αὔσμα εἰδῆ) at Pyth. 4.277f:

\[
\text{τῶν δ' Ὀμήρου καὶ τὸ τευχέμενος}
\]
\[
\text{ῥήμα πόρσυν': ἄγελων ἔσθλον ἔφα τε-
\text{μὰν μεγίσταν πράγματι παντὶ φέρειν.}
\]

Some have doubted that this does refer to II. 15.207, but see Braswell (supra n.3) ad loc.; Burton (supra n.39) 170f.

55 The victor was in fact from Acharnai (16) but must have had some connection with Salamis—perhaps as a member of the family Salaminioi: Instone (supra n.50) 115.

56 M. van der Kolf, Quaeritur quomodo Pindarus fabulas tractaverit quidque in eis mutariit (Rotterdam 1923) 104.
The question seems to have remained a matter of controversy until the time of Aristotle’s *Poetics*. The name of Homer appears four times in the Pindaric corpus (*Pyth.* 4.277; *Nem.* 7.21; *Isthm.* 3/4.55; *Pae.* 7b.11), and none of these passages can be construed so as to prove definitively either an inclusive or exclusive interpretation.

Rather than studying the passages where Homer is named, however, we may consider what use Pindar makes of Homeric material. Nagy argues that the fact that Hector slips undistinguished into catalogues with the heroes from the rest of the Cycle—Telephus, Cycnus, Memnon—indicates that Pindar regarded them all as characters from the same canon. But a difference of treatment has now emerged: Pindar does not make straightforward large-scale use of Homer as a source of mythological material, as he does of the other poems of the Cycle. This divergence shows that he perceived a qualitative difference between the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* and the other poems of the Cycle; and the simplest inference that he, or anyone, might draw from the perceived difference was that Homer did not write the other poems of the Cycle.

II

What might be the explanation for the absence of Homer? Wilamowitz swept to the conclusion that Pindar found

58 *Poet.* 23 (1459a17ff); Pfeiffer (*supra* n.57) 73f, 117.
59 E. Fitch, “Pindar and Homer,” *CP* 19 (1924) 57–65, argued that *Pyth.* 4.277f did not refer to any known passage in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, but see *supra* n.54.
60 See F. Nisetich, *Pindar and Homer (=AJP* Mono. 4 [Baltimore 1989]) esp. 1-23, 70ff. His arguments rest on two crucial passages. In the first, *Nem.* 7.20–24, Pindar does specify Homer as the author of the *Odyssey*, but this does not, of course, rule out his authorship of other poems in the cycle. The second is *Isthm.* 3/4.53–60, in which Nisetich (10ff) discovers an antithesis between the poet of the *Aethiopis* and Homer (53f: 59f). But the true antithesis there is between Ajax’s contemporaries, who failed to honour him, and the epic poet who did.
63 *Pindaros* (Berlin 1922) 463.
Homer unsympathetic; this unlikely hypothesis is immediately disproved by the familiarity evidenced by the sophisticated use of Homer that we have seen.

On the opposite tack is an intuitively attractive explanation—an appeal to the brilliance of Homer: “the cycle is seen as a repository of saga rather than as a literary work, in sharp contrast to the works of Homer. Pindar did not want to impinge on territory where a supreme poet had already trod.”

On this course, one might go further and suggest that at the core of the poetics of Homer and Pindar lies the same principle (however obscurely expressed): βαί α' ἐν μακρόσι ποικίλλειν ἄκοι σοφοῖς (Pyth. 9.77f); and it is this identity of aesthetic purpose that makes it unfeasible for Pindar to treat the material, for it has already received a ‘Pindaric’ treatment at the hands of Homer.

But these explanations simply defer the problem, which now becomes: why should Pindar not cover the same ground as Homer?

Another approach suggests that the answer might be found in the one place where Pindar explicitly challenges the authority of Homer, Nem. 7.20–27:

έγω δὲ πλέον' ἔλπομαι
λόγον Ὄδυσσεος ἦ πάθαν
διὰ τὸν ἀδυνατή γενέσθ' Ὄμηρον·
ἐπεὶ μεγάλεσι οἱ ποτανά (τε) μαχανά
σεμνόν ἐπεστὶ τι· σοφία

δὲ κλέπτει παράγωσα μύθοις. τυφλὸν δὲ ἔχει
ἥτορ ὁμιλοῖ αὐθαῖρον ὁ πλείστος. εἰ γὰρ ἦν
ἐ τῶν ἀλάθειαν ἔδεμεν, οὐ κεν ὀπλῶν χολωθείς
ὁ καρπερὸς Αἰξα ἐπαξε διὰ φρενῶν
λευρὸν εἰφος.66

64 Stoneman (supra n.18) 63; cf. M. Davies, The Epic Cycle (Bristol 1989) 10.
66 But I hold that the name of Odysseus
Is more than his sufferings
Because of Homer's sweet singing;
For on his untruths and winged cunning
A majesty lies.
Art beguiles and cheats with its tales
And often the heart of the human herd is blind.
If it could have seen the truth,
Following the lines establishing song as recompense for successful labour (11f), the dictum that Odysseus' *logos* was more than his *patha* must, on first reading (or hearing), suggest that Homer's account of Odysseus' experiences outweighs his travail: that Homer was so good a poet that Odysseus was more than recompensed. But if the account exaggerates, it is false (22f).

πάθαν suggests that this is the Odysseus of the *Odyssey* (1.4, πολλὰ δ᾿ ὑπὸ γενόμενον, ἐν κατά θυμόν). 67 Reluctant to imagine Pindar impugning Homer and taking advantage of the *hoplon krisis* that follows, some critics have referred the ὄτ of 22 to Odysseus, as we know of his *patha* through his own account to Alcinous (Fraenkel [*supra* n.67] 360). But context, metaphor, and vocabulary all suggest that Homer is meant. 68 Certainly, by lines 25f the ὄτ have shifted to Odysseus' lips, for they are the slippery argument with which he triumphed in the contest for Achilles' armour. To enable that slide, there is some ambiguity in lines 21–24, where the unfocused cusp of the shift from the particular of Homer's narration of Odysseus' *patha* to the particular of Odysseus’ specious rhetoric embraces σοφία—both Homer's and Odysseus’—and, in ὃμιλος ἀνδρῶν ὁ πλείστος, both the majority of mankind (i.e., Homer's audience) and the voting majority amongst the crowd of Greeks at Troy. 69

In *Nem.* 7, then, Pindar's mistrust of Homer is that he distorts the truth. Is this the reason for Pindar's failure to use Homer as a mythological source—that Homer's myths are un-

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_Aias would not, in wrath about armour,_
_Have driven a smooth sword through his breast._

67 H. Fraenkel, *Wege und Formen frühgriechischen Denkens* (Munich 1968) 360. Later in the poem, Pindar allusively casts further doubt on Homer's championship of Odysseus. *Nem.* 7.35ff recalls *Od.* 1.4; and it emerges that Neoptolemos, not (as Homer claimed) Odysseus, was the true sacker of Troy: A. Köhnken, *Die Funktion des Mythos bei Pindar* (Berlin 1971: hereafter 'Köhnken') 69f.


69 See T. Hubbard, “The Subject/Object Relation in Pindar's Second Pythian and Seventh Nemean,” *QuadUrbin* 51 (1986) 53–72 at 63f; G. W. Most, *The Measures of Praise: Structure and Function in Pindar's Second Pythian and Seventh Nemean Odes (=Hypomnemata 83* [Göttingen 1985]) 150: “the fact that the four books of Odysseus' fabulations are reported in *oratio recta* means that the words are simultaneously both Odysseus' and Homer's.”
trustworthy versions; that his depictions of the heroes are wrong?

This straightforward explanation is immediately ruled out by another of the occasions on which Pindar names Homer.\(^2\) In Isthm. 3/4 Ajax is used to demonstrate how we cannot know our fate πρὶν τέλος ἄξρον ἰκέσθαι (50). The lesser man tricked Ajax (Isthm. 3/4.53–60):

\[\begin{align*}
\text{ιστε μάν} \\
\text{Ἀϊάντος ἁλκάν, φοίνιον τὰν ὕπια} \\
\text{ἐν νυκτὶ ταμῷν περὶ ὧ φασάγανο μομφάν ἔχει} \\
\text{παῖδεσιν Ἐλλάνων ὅσοι Τροίανδ' ἔβαεν.} \\
\text{ἄλλ' ὃμηρός τοι τετίμακεν δι' ἀνθρώπον, ὃς αὐτοῦ} \\
\text{πᾶσαν ὀρθῶσας ἄρετάν κατὰ ράβδων ἐφρασεν} \\
\text{θεσπεσίαν ἐπέων λουποῖς ἀθύρηιν.} \\
\text{τούτῳ γάρ ἁθάνατον φανάει ἐρπεῖ,} \\
\text{εἰ τις εὐδ΄ ἐπὶ και πάγ-} \\
\text{καρπὸν ἐπὶ χθόνα καὶ διὰ πόντον βέβακεν} \\
\text{ἐργασίαν ἄκτις καλὸν ἁσβεστος αἰεὶ.}\]
\end{align*}\]

Instead of being associated with Ajax’s adversaries, as he is in Nem. 7, Homer\(^2\) is here on the side of the angels: setting Ajax’s virtue aright\(^3\) and bringing him the immortality of song in compensation for his mistreatment by the other Greeks who went to Troy (Kohnken 110–14).

All the qualities with which the poetry of Homer is credited in Isthm. 3/4—recognition of true virtues, recompense for πόνος, immortalisation—are, in fact, characteristics of epinician. Indeed, in Nem. 7 it transpires that Pindar is claiming them for

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\(^2\) Nisetich (supra n.60) 2, 23.

\(^3\) You know Of the valour of Aias. He ripped it in blood
On his own sword late at night,
And brings reproach to all sons of the Hellenes
Who went to Troy.
But Homer has done him
Honour among men; for he set straight
All his prowess, and to his wand of celestial words
Told of it, to the delight of men to come.
For this goes forth undying in speech
If a man says a thing well.
Over the fruitful earth and across the sea
The sunbeam of fine things has gone
Unquenchable forever.

\(^2\) Either as the author of just Iliad and Odyssey or of the whole cycle.

\(^3\) On ὀρθῶσας see Young 78 n.2.
himself, in implicit contrast to Homer. In *Nem. 7*, the first myth introduces the notion of deceptive reputations and gives two instances—Odysseus’ and Ajax’s—exemplifying excess and deficiency of repute. The myth of Neoptolemus, complex, confused and, in some earlier versions, highly uncomplimentary to the hero, follows. The story is a test case of extreme difficulty for the praise poet who wishes to honour him, but Pindar successfully navigates his way through it, rediscovering the true version and saving Neoptolemus’ honour. He stands back in triumph and claims: he is the true witness for the Aeacids’ deeds; he invites a Molossian, who knows the true story about Neoptolemus because it is for him traditional material, to approve of his version (64f); and he prays for the future—suggesting the ultimate revelation of truth that will bear him out. All these claims contrast him with Homer, who exaggerated Odysseus’ *pathē*. Seeing the depiction of Homer in *Nem. 7* as a true and complete reflection of Pindar’s view of him is therefore impossible, for in *Isthm. 3/4*, working within the same nexus of ideas, Pindar produces an exactly antithetical judgement.

74 D. Young, “A Note on Pindar Nemean 7.30f,” *CSCA* 4 (1971) 249–63 at 252f; Carey (*supra* n.68) 147.

75 Evidence for my observations on *Nem. 7* is to be found in R. Mann, “Myth and Truth in some Odes of Pindar” (diss.Oxford 1992) ch. 7, esp. 313–68, 445–61 for an examination of the mythological confusion surrounding Neoptolemus—a confusion exacerbated by his use as a symbol by both the Crisaean (who picture him attacking the Delphic shrine) and the Amphictions (who picture him liberating it).

76 That Pindar is the witness of 49 follows from my interpretation of 31f, the *kephalaion* that 49 recapitulates. θεος in 32 is the divine element in any egregious human achievement—here, logically, the poet’s (the scholiast [*Nem. 7.46a*] thought the god the Muse). There is thus no polar opposition between the mortal and the divine. It seems to me *prima facie* unlikely that Pindar should be comparing his own poetry unfavourably with anything; and thus I rule out the notion that Pindar is here discussing honour that is bestowed by a divine, rather than mortal power (Most [*supra* n.69] 151). C. Carey, “Pindarica,” in R. Dawe, J. Diggle, and P. Easterling, edd., *Dionysiaca* (Cambridge 1978) 21–44 at 38, makes the best case for Apollo both in 31f and 49f.


Homer was wrong about Odysseus, but right about Ajax; and this entirely comprehensible verdict, that Homer was wrong in some particulars and right in others, gives no insight whatsoever into the reasons for Homer's absence from most of Pindar.

But there is something to be learnt from the Nem. 7 passage. Why should the audience believe his claim that Odysseus' virtues were exaggerated and that Ajax was the better man?

In Ol. 1, where Pindar confronts a similar case of exaggeration, he works hard to ensure the triumph of his own version: first he introduces the possibility of exaggeration (28ff) and then, as he outlines the neighbour's story, sabotages it, and finally recoils from it: it would entail γαστριμαργινον μακάρον τιν' είπειν (52). The crucial word is γαστριμαργινον—not "cannibal," nor yet simply "gluttonous" (Gerber) but the brutish "belly-crazy" of Howie. Plato (Tim. 73A) describes the function of stomach and entrails: men have them ὅτι ταχὺ διεκπερώσα ἡ τροφή ταχὺ πάλιν τροφῆς ἐτέρας δείσθαι τὸ σώμα ἀναγκάζοι, καὶ παρέχουσα ἀπληστίαν, διὰ γαστριμαργίαν ἀφιλόσοφον καὶ ἀμοισαν πάν ἀποτελότω τὸ γένος, ἀνυπήκοον τοῦ θειοτάτου τῶν παρ' ἡμῖν. What

80 W. J. Verdenius, Commentaries on Pindar 2 (=Mnemosyne Suppl. 101 [Leiden 1988]) ad Ol. 1.27; Köhnken 52; Richardson (supra n.65) 385ff.
81 Nagy 66; P. Veyne, Did the Greeks Believe in their Myths? (Chicago 1988) ch. 5.
82 W. J. Slater ("Pindar and Hypothekai," Tiresias Suppl. 2 [Montreal 1979] 79–82 at 80) wrote that the audience of epinician could think of Hesiod where the Muses are said to inspire truth or lies like truth. The audience were then perfectly aware that they could be listening to lies, and like a good orator the poet will do his best to raise this issue and lay their suspicions to rest. That is the whole point I am sure in the elaborate recusatio in Olympian 1; it is designed to make us feel that Pindar is honest and religious unlike previous bards.... His audience contained potential sceptics.
83 E.g. rather than Demeter alone eating one part of him, the gods ate Pelops up (φάγον, 51), which makes the business of revival, and the ivory shoulder, problematic. See T. Gantz, "Pindar's First Olympian: The Masters of Darkness," RStCI 26 (1978) 24–39 at 33f.
is important about γαστρίμαργος is: how unlike a god. It makes no sense. A god could not be γαστρίμαργος. 85

In Nem. 7, however, there is no comparable process of sabotage. The logic herein is a pleasing circularity: Pindar posits that Odysseus’ reputation is, thanks to the genius of Homer, inflated (20f); this is because (ἐπεὶ, 22) there is something marvellous about his lies (22f); and, indeed, such power can deceive (23f)—most people cannot discern the truth (23f); and this is proved (γὰρ, 24) by the fact that most of the people at Troy backed Odysseus over Ajax, thus ensuring Ajax’s death (24–27); and their blindness neatly tallies with the starting hypothesis that Odysseus was not as good as words painted him. Which is thus, spuriously, confirmed.

This tautology is neat, but goes no way towards the proof of the original hypothesis. Why should the potentially sceptic audience let Pindar get away with pulling himself up by the bootstraps in this way? The answer is that there is one element here that is for them an axiom, on which the whole argument depends—Ajax’s superiority over Odysseus. And this is axiomatic because they are Aeginetans, and he is an Aeacid, their hero. He should by rights have been judged best of the Achaeans after Achilles; and thus Homer’s glorification of Odysseus throughout the Odyssey is necessarily exaggeration. Pindar’s challenge to Homer’s authority is enabled by the attitudes of the audience: “What the poet tells is true or false, depending on where he tells it: the local traditions on which the poet’s immediate audience have been reared constitute the ultimate criterion of truth.” 86

And indeed, these tensions appear in the choice—but typically opaque—slogan that appears immediately after the myth of Neoptolemus at Nem. 7.49–52.

οὐ γενόδε ὁ μάρτυς ἐργαζομ. ἐπιστατεῖ,
Αἴγινα, τῶν Δίως τ’ ἐκγόνων. θρασύ μοι τὸν’ εἶπεῖν

85 To this whole process, cf. Woodbury’s reconstruction of Stesichorus’ palinode: “Helen and the Palinode,” Phoenix 21 (1967) 157–76 at 166, with n.16, 170, 173f. In Ol. 1 Pindar has sabotaged the traditional version to lend credence to his apostasy.

It is now broadly agreed that \( \theta ρας \) \( μοι \) \( τόδε \) εἰπέν \( μ \) must mean "I make bold to say this" (Woodbury [supra n.79] 113). The interpretation of the next line then should reflect that it has been marked by this vaunt: it must accommodate the line being audacious. A perfectly reasonable interpretation is to see it as an elaboration of 49.

So, with Carey, I take \( \dot{o} \)δόν in apposition with τόδε, and supply εἶναι. The \( \dot{o} \)δόν ... λόγων is the course of Pindar's poetry, as laid out by the deeds he describes there. κυρίαν must mean, broadly, "right," whether it functions within the road image ("right road") or outside it ("legitimate").\(^{87}\) Whichever; κυρίαν connotes authority: this is the proper road to be on. The ἀρεταῖς are those of the Aeacids: the deeds of excellence by which the road of words is led.\(^ {88}\)

οἶκοθεν appears problematic: whose house is involved? It may refer to the Aeacids' home of Aegina; then the sentence means "the right version of the song about the Aeacids' deeds is that of the Aeginetans" (Köhnenk 75ff). Or it may refer to Pindar: "I know the right version of the song." The problem is that the sense of οἶκοθεν boils down to "here"; it might be marked by Αἶγιναι or μοι (50).

Once we accept, however, that Pindar's preference is for the tradition favoured locally, the ambiguity becomes unobjectionable: the right version of the song about the Aeacids' deeds will simultaneously be Pindar's and that of the Aeginetans.

In Nem. 7, then, Homeric and local traditions are ranged against each other; and it is the local tradition that is preferred. And this opposition dramatises a fact that is implicit throughout the corpus, of which the absence of Homer is only half the story, and which is as true for the stories of which no Iliadic/Odyssean version exists as for the stories of which they do: for every ode of Pindar in which a myth appears it can be said that a less well-known myth—be it from one of the lesser epics of the cycle, or the Hesiodic corpus, or a local tradition—has been chosen over a Homeric one.

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\(^{87}\) Carey (supra n.76) 37 and (supra n.68) 156.

This is the observation that provides a possible solution to the problem of Homer’s absence from Pindar; a solution that reveals why Pindar should be reluctant to follow in Homer’s footsteps. It is suggested by considering a reductionist restatement of the whole question. If the observation of the preference for the lesser-known myth is combined with Bundy’s tenet (supra n.38: 3) that “there is no passage in Pindar ... that is not in its primary purpose enkomiastic—that is, designed to enhance the glory of a particular patron,” then the question becomes: what encomiastic function did lesser-known myth perform better than Iliadic/Odyssean?

The answer lies, I suggest, in the notion of epinician as monument. This is a topic neglected, I suspect, in part because of the famous lines in which Pindar contrasts his own art with that of the sculptor (Nem. 5.1ff):

Oùk ἀνδριαντοποιος εἰμι, ὡστε ἐλινύσοντα ἐργά-
ζοθαι ἀγάλματ' ἐπ' αὐτῶς βαθμίδος
ἐσταότ' ἀλλ' ἐπὶ πάσας
ολκάδος ἐν τ' ἀκάτορ, γλυκεὶ ἀοιδά,
στειχ' ἀπ' Ἀιγίνας διαγγέλλοισ'.

But the genuine contrast here is not between sculptor and poet but between ἐπ' αὐτῶς βαθμίδος and ἐπὶ πάσας ὄλκάδος: between the monument that appears on its plinth and nowhere else and the monument that goes everywhere. The first is sculpture; the second, epinician. Because Pindar contrasts this aspect of his work with sculpture does not mean that the media


90 I am no maker
Who fashions figures to stand unmoved
On the self-same pedestal.
On every merchantman, in every skiff
Go, sweet song, from Aigina,
And spread the news....


do not share other qualities, although the poem is superior, because, going everywhere, it is more conspicuous.

The notion of poem as monument is a theme thoroughly explored at *Nem.* 7.11–16:

> εἰ δὲ τύχῃ τις ἔρδων, μελίφρον· αἰτίαν
> ῥοξάτι Μοισάν ἐνέβαλε· ταὶ μεγάλαι γὰρ ἄλκαι
> σκότον πολὺν ὄμνιν ἔχοντι δεόμεναι·
> ἔργοις δὲ καλοῖς ἔσσετον ἴσαμεν ἐνὶ σὺν τρόπῳ,
> εἰ Μναμοσύνας ἔκατι λῃπαράμπυκος
eπαρί (τις) ἁποινα μόσθον κλυταίς ἐπέων ἀοίδαις.  

Now, if song is to preserve deeds, it must itself be memorable. Epinician must mark its victory and myth must play its part in this.

Given the degree of familiarity with the Homeric poems evidenced by the sophisticated level of allusion that we have seen, would any retelling of a Homeric story mark the victory it was supposed to celebrate? Certainly, Pindar claimed that Homer had celebrated Ajax permanently (Nisetich [*supra* n.60] 12; *Isthm.* 3/4.55ff):

> ἀλλ᾽ Ὄμηρός τοι τετίμακεν δὲ ἀνθρώπων, δὲ αὐτοῦ
> πάσον ὀρθωσιᾶς ἀρετάν κατὰ ῥάβδον ἔφρασεν
> θεσπεσίων ἐπέων λοιπάς αὕρειν.

Ranged against Homer, any retelling would be a pale shadow: it would not be linked with the victor, but remain rooted in its Homeric source. The occasion would not be marked.

And this, I suggest, is the reason for the absence of Homer from Pindar: Homeric myth could not properly mark his

93 If any man's actions prosper, he strikes
A honey-hearted well of the Muses' streams.
Even high deeds of bravery
Have a great darkness if they lack song;
We can hold a mirror to fine doings
In one way only,
If with help of Memory in her glittering crown,
Recompense is found for labour
In echoing words of song.

94 As every part of the epinician must; consider, for example the striking, memorable openings (e.g. *Ol.* 1, *Ol.* 6 or *Nem.* 5 itself). Note the theme of conspicuousness in these: δὲ χρυσός αἰθόμενον πῦρ ἔτε διαπέπει νυκτί (*Ol.* 1.11); ἀρχιμένου δ᾽ ἐργος πρόσωπον χρηθὲς τηλευτῆς (*Ol.* 6.31).

patrons' victories, because it would have recalled not the victory, but its own Homeric past. It was so fully in the public domain that it could not be particular to any one victory celebration. Homer was too well-known for Pindar to use. The myths that Pindar does relate, on the other hand, offer him the opportunity to provide their authoritative relation, and thus in turn distinctively to ornament his patrons' achievements.

This gives content to the appealing but unsatisfying notion of Pindar's refusal to walk in the shadow of Homer. Pindar avoided Homeric myth because it was so well-known; it was so well-known because of the quality of its narration in Homer.

This nexus of ideas is neatly illustrated by the comparison of Griffin and Nagy on the uniqueness of Homer. Griffin (supra n.62: 53) ascribed the difference between the Cycle and the Iliad and Odyssey to “the exceptional genius which went into the creation of the two Homeric epics.” Nagy, however, uses a model of evolving traditions and concentrates on the panhellenism of the Homeric epics: how well-known they were. He argues that “the cycle epics are so different from the two Homeric epics not because they are more recent or more primitive but rather because they are more local in orientation and diffusion” (supra n.86: 8.14 n.4; cf. Nagy 70–81). The Homeric epics have evolved to acquire their panhellenic character. Pindar operates within the same tradition of panhellenisation (Nagy 416), transforming local into panhellenic traditions.

This is Pindar's poetry going out on every boat announcing Aegina (Nem. 5.1ff), just as Homer blazed out the name of Ajax (Isthm. 3/4.55–60), and returns us to the notion of conspicuous monument. The myth makes a bid for panhellenic status, and the patron's fame is secured.

96 The authoritative relation thus proves that his praise of the victor is reliable. I argue elsewhere (supra n.75) that Pindar's myths are less innovative than is widely believed; hence their authority.

97 Hence, I am sure, the emphasis on the novelty of song at Ol. 9.47ff (cf. Od. 1.351f) which reveals that Nem. 8.20f, a more controversial passage, refers to the risk in the attempt to produce a new authoritative version of a myth.


99 If the myth is drawn, as many are, from traditions local to the victor, then, as the myth is placed in the hellenic canon, so are the city's defining traditions acknowledged throughout Greece.
The notion of myth as monument suggests an approach to the large problem of the function of myth in Pindar. Most contemporary scholarship approaches this question by seeing the myth of an epinician as a paradigm of themes stated elsewhere in the poem— which paradigm either plays a part in an accumulation of significant detail and motif to form a complex unity with every other part of the poem, or explores and illuminates themes that are suggested by the rest of the poem, while resisting neat integration with it. I suggest that the function of myth is to provide a distinctive and distinguishing ornament on the monument to his patron's achievement and thus to mark that achievement.

The two approaches are not, in fact, contradictory but complementary. Indeed, my hypothesis should encourage rather than disappoint interpretative textualists. Bearing it in mind, they need not attempt to force every detail, however recalcitrant, of a myth into a unitarian interpretative schema. Nor, on a larger scale, need they be disturbed by the counterexample of a myth that resolutely resists unitarian assimilation with the rest of the poem in which it occurs, and which thus suggests that the whole paradigmatic approach is wrong-headed. The view of myth as a conspicuous monument to the patron’s achievement, comprising striking details that conduce to that end, offers a sufficient explanation for any myth or any detail in a myth: they are simply marking the victory. There may be a paradigmatic relation over and above this function; there may not. This having been said, the model of myth as

100 The classic exposition is Young (supra n.3) esp. 35–38.
101 An approach exemplified by Young (esp. 2, 106) and Köhnken (esp. 227).
103 One approaches Pindar as encomiastic poetry; the other as poetic encomium. This convenient formulation appears in H. Lee, “The ‘Historical’ Bundy and Encomiastic Relevance in Pindar,” CW 72 (1978–79) 65–70 at 67.
104 The charge of hyperinterpretation is commonly levelled at the interpretative textualist: S. Radt’s review of Köhnken, Gnomon 46 (1974) 113–21; Verdenius (supra n.10) 4f, 57; cf. Young 106. Avoiding hyperinterpretation by seeing the paradigm as an extreme, whose every detail need not be integrated into a unitarian interpretation, simply substitutes one difficulty for another: if these details are not to be related to other elements in the poem, why are they there?
monument can confirm the sceptic's position also: if the hunt for a paradigmatic relation within a poem does not offer a reasonable quarry, it should be abandoned and not elaborated until it works out.\textsuperscript{105}

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