

THE ΚΩΜΟΣ OF PINDAR AND BACCHYLIDES AND THE SEMANTICS OF CELEBRATION

There are currently multiple interpretations regarding the semantics of κῶμος in epinician poetry. The purpose of this paper is to query the validity of these several suggestions and to put forth an interpretation that resolves problems that these discordant readings leave unanswered. I argue that in epinician odes κῶμος means ‘celebration’ and refers, generally,¹ to the first celebration at which an epinician ode was performed. Others have interpreted κῶμος as celebration; however, I undertake a detailed analysis of the word here to clarify the confusion in epinician criticism that this word continues to cause.² The paper, then, should also make a contribution to etymological studies of archaic and early classical Greek. In addition to arguing that κῶμος means celebration, I shall also suggest that κῶμος never means firstly ‘chorus’, ‘ode’, ‘procession’ or ‘band of revellers’ in the extant epinician odes of Pindar and Bacchylides, although all four of these translations have been put forth for κῶμος. I shall suggest, rather, that the polysemic noun κῶμος has elicited these several denotations because celebration may be interpreted in diverse manners: celebration is comprised by the various acts and utterances which are parts of celebration as a whole. Epinician victory celebrations regularly included processions, revels, epinician odes and choral performances, for example. Thus, Pindar and Bacchylides’ use of κῶμος within its celebratory context on occasion may metonymically overlap with the chorus, the ode or the people holding the celebration in honour of the victor. Indeed, Pindar and Bacchylides on occasion exploit κῶμος to link the celebration closely with their odes and choruses. Since κῶμος generally refers to a particular historical victory celebration at which an epinician ode was performed or might be performed, it should not be interpreted metaphorically but rather literally in relation to the particular occasions that elicit epinician song.³ Moreover, κῶμος refers to ‘static’ aspects of celebration in addition to possible ‘mobile’ celebrations. Thus, I broaden Heath’s assertion that κῶμοι are ‘mobile celebrations’ to include non-mobile celebrations or non-mobile aspects of celebrations too;⁴ that is to say, although victory celebrations may regularly have

¹ O. 9.1 shows that Pindar included informal celebration within the semantic range of κῶμος.

² For other interpretations of κῶμος as celebration, see e.g. D.E. Gerber, *Lexicon in Bacchylidem* (Hildesheim, 1984), 133–4; M.R. Lefkowitz, ‘Who sang Pindar’s victory odes?’, *AJPh* 109 (1988), 1–11, at 9; I. Rutherford, *Pindar’s Paeans: A Reading of the Fragments with a Survey of the Genre* (Oxford, 2001), 55 n. 73.

³ Contrast K.A. Morgan, ‘Pindar the professional and the rhetoric of the *komos*’, *CPh* 87 (1993), 1–15, at 5. The participle *κομῶσας* at *N.* 5.28 refers generally to celebration of Heracles’ festival at Olympia, i.e. the ancient Olympics, not to celebration of an athletic victory specifically; however, the context shows that the *laudandus* too would have been a victor. Accordingly, the celebration may be understood both in reference to Heracles and Aristagoras’ ‘would-be’ victory. Similarly, at *P.* 3.73, Pindar’s reference to a hypothetical κῶμος for Hieron is based on the characteristics of traditional victory revels.

⁴ M. Heath, ‘Receiving the *komos*: the context and performance of epinician’, *AJPh* 109 (1988), 180–95, at 182; M. Heath and M.R. Lefkowitz, ‘Epinician performance’, *CPh* 86 (1991), 173–91 at 184.

included processions, we need not delimit the epinician κῶμος to the procession. Having clarified the epinician genre's celebratory vocabulary, we shall better understand the historical contexts of praise as well as the rhetorical and ideological use that Pindar and Bacchylides make of κῶμος in their odes. Pindar and Bacchylides use the κῶμος, celebration, to verbally bring to life the immediate celebration at which their odes were performed. One consequence of the thesis put forth here is a greater awareness of and appreciation for the eminent present and the immediate celebration that pervades the atmosphere of the odes.

What all scholars have left unquestioned with regard to κῶμος is the manner in which lexical meaning is constructed and the manner in which, within later Greek literature and culture, κῶμος shifts semantics outside epinician poetry. It is not correct to say that the word sometimes means celebration, sometimes means chorus, sometimes means ode, sometimes means revel band and so forth, as many scholars regularly do. Rather we should speak of κῶμος as a noun which has a base meaning in epinician poetry, but which can also be interpreted in various manners as audience members and readers may choose to think of the individual units that comprise celebration. We can try to recuperate the authorial intention of Pindar and Bacchylides by examining their linguistic usage of κῶμος, as I do here, but we must also admit that such attempts are always fraught with methodological difficulty. For meaning is contingent not upon the author but upon the audience who receives and interprets κῶμος in any discursive and social context.

In the discussion that follows, I address the several manners in which Pindar and Bacchylides use κῶμος and its related forms and examine the competing interpretations of κῶμος since this contested term deserves scrutiny. I also consider the discursive contexts that lead scholars to consider ode, chorus, procession and band of revellers as viable translations for κῶμος in epinician odes. I only then turn to the suggestions of other scholars, so that my interpretations of the relevant epinician passages are not based upon the interpretations of others. Finally, I consider the etymology of κῶμος as well as the meaning of the word outside epinician poetry to see how my suggestion relates to the use of κῶμος in non-epinician contexts.

1. NOMINAL FORMS

Pindar uses the simplex o-stem noun κῶμος sixteen times, and separating the uses of κῶμος into groups isolates specific characteristics of κῶμος. On four occasions, Pindar refers to 'this κῶμος'.⁵ In these passages, κῶμος is modified by the demonstrative adjective, which has deictic force.⁶ Two important conclusions may be drawn from these passages, assuming that the linguistic utterances that refer to the performance context are not fictive. First, Pindar considers the κῶμος to be occurring during the performance of the epinician ode. Thus, κῶμος does not refer to a victory procession antecedent to the celebration and performance of the ode proper, nor does it refer to a revel band or chorus unless we are to assume that Pindar calls his chorus a κῶμος; but, as I note below, there is no evidence

⁵ O. 4.9; O. 8.10; O. 14.16; P. 5.22.

⁶ On *deixis* in Greek lyric, see particularly N. Felson (ed.), *The Poetics of Deixis in Alkman, Pindar, and Other Lyric*, vol. 37, *Arethusa Monographs* (Baltimore, MD, 2004).

for this interpretation. These are important points for we shall see that scholars have argued otherwise. Pindar considers his work, moreover, to be at the same time as the *κῶμος*, not at a time before or after the *κῶμος*. Since, however, the performance of the ode is part of the victory celebration, it is not surprising that interpreters, starting with the scholiasts, read *κῶμος* as ode or chorus in these passages.⁷ Indeed, Pindar may very well have referred to the *κῶμος* in such a manner so that his odes become focal points of the celebration and, in fact, become the celebration, so to speak. At *O.* 14.16–17, for example, Pindar refers to ‘this *κῶμος* stepping lightly’ (τόνδε κῶμον ... κοῦφα βιβῶντα). Pindar’s rhetoric focalizes the broader celebration through the dancing that occurs while his chorus performs the ode. Here, ‘this *κῶμος*’, accordingly, may seem to be a reference not to the broader celebration, but rather to be a reference to the chorus itself.

Pindar uses *κῶμος* without the demonstrative deictic adjective eleven times, and several passages suggest that we should not consider *κῶμος* as a synonym for either ode or chorus.⁸ At *O.* 6.18, Pindar, referring to his patron, Hagesias, calls him ‘master of the *κῶμος*’.⁹ ‘The Syracusan’ refers to Hagesias, the patron of the ode. Although it makes perfect sense for Hagesias to be master of his own celebration, it may make less sense for Hagesias to be master of either the chorus or the ode, since these are positions that Pindar or a proxy should fill. Alternatively, we may consider Hagesias’ being master of the *κῶμος* viable on multiple levels, since as the commissioner of Pindar, the patron is the master of the ode, chorus and celebration. *I.* 2.30–2 shows clearly, however, that Pindar considers *κῶμοι* and songs, *αἰδαί*, to be separate entities.¹⁰ Accordingly, it is preferable to interpret Hagesias’ mastery in relation to the complete celebration itself that is held on his behalf. If *κῶμος* meant song, Pindar would not have used the disjunctive οὔτε to link *κῶμων* and *αἰδᾶν* at *I.* 2.30–2. This point will become important below when we consider Dunkel’s most recent etymological suggestions for *κῶμος*. There is, then, no reason to conflate *κῶμος* with an ode despite many scholars’ suggestions.

A particularly good comparandum for the interpretation of *κῶμος* in Pindaric epinician is the use of *κῶμος* in Bacchylides’ epinician odes. Remarkably, the use of *κῶμος* in Bacchylides’ poems has not been taken into account in discussions of *κῶμος* in Pindar’s odes. There are two extant examples of Bacchylides’ use of *κῶμος* and also two lacunae that modern editors have filled with the noun *κῶμος*.¹¹ In all four examples the noun refers to victory celebrations. On one occasion Bacchylides uses *κῶμος* in a manner that appropriates the festive context into the performance of his ode. The passage in question is in poem 11, lines 10–14: καὶ νῦν Μετ[α]πόντιον εὐγύνων κ[ατέ]χουσι νέων κῶμοί τε καὶ εὐφροσύνη θεότιμον ἄστυ ὑμνεῦσι δὲ Πυθιονίκον παῖδα θαητ[ό]ν Φαῖσκον (‘and now celebrations of lovely-limbed young men and pleasures fill Metapontium, city honoured by the gods, and the [young men] sing the Pythian victor, the marvellous son of Phaiscus’). Here, the epexegetic genitive (νέων) dependent on *κῶμοι* delineates *κῶμοι*, which

⁷ See below.

⁸ *O.* 6.18; *O.* 6.98; *P.* 3.73; *P.* 5.100; *P.* 8.20; *P.* 8.70; *N.* 3.5; *N.* 9.50; *I.* 2.31; *I.* 6.58; *I.* 8.4.

⁹ τὸ καὶ ἀνδρὶ κῶμον δεσπότην πάρεστι Συρακοσίῳ (this is true also for the Syracusan who is master of the revel).

¹⁰ καὶ γὰρ οὐκ ἀγνώτες ὑμῖν ἐντὶ δόμοις οὔτε κῶμων, ᾧ Θρασύβουλ’, ἐρατῶν, οὔτε μελικόμπων αἰδᾶν (‘and so, your family’s house(s) are not unfamiliar with delightful celebrations, Thrasybulus, nor with songs of honey-sweet acclaim’).

¹¹ 9.103 (fragmentary part of papyrus; reconstruction not certain); 11.12; 13.74; fr. 4.68.

does not mean odes since κῶμοι are comprised of young men. Some polysemy may be at play, however. Bacchylides focusses on the celebrations of young men and the pleasures that pervade Metapontium. Indeed, E. Bundy, recognizing the celebratory context discussed in this ode, went so far as to claim that εὐφροσύνη was the technical term used for victory celebrations.¹² I would rather take κῶμοι as the term for celebrations and interpret εὐφροσύνη literally in relation to the pleasures that are part of victory celebrations. Bacchylides does not provide a new explicit subject for the verb ὕμνεῖσι, although the people singing are the young men of the κῶμοι mentioned in the previous clause. Bacchylides, then, effectively brings the broader celebratory context into play by suggesting that all the people attending the celebration, not only his trained chorus, are singing songs in honour of the victor. Similarly, in a fragmentary paeon (fr. 4), Bacchylides says that young men care for athletic games (γυμνασίῳ), αἰοί and κῶμοι.¹³ Here, the nouns lead from competition to victory celebrations, and κῶμοι refer to celebrations derived from winning athletic competitions.

2. VERBAL FORMS

Verbal forms, moreover, support the assertion that κῶμος means celebration. The root κῶμ- appears in the verb κωμάζω, a denominative verb formed from the noun κῶμος itself with the addition of the suffix -άζω. Pindar uses the verbal form nine times.¹⁴ His reason for using the verb and participle so frequently is that they have programmatic importance in the context of celebratory poetry. In his extant epinicians, however, Bacchylides does not use the denominative verb. From the passages in which Pindar uses the verbal root κῶμ-, we can draw several conclusions: first, the verb's root meaning is 'to celebrate'.¹⁵ This is not surprising since the meaning of denominative verbs is closely related to the meaning of the noun on which they are formed, although they can develop secondary meanings. There is no evidence, however, that κωμάζω has any secondary meanings in epinician poetry that prescribe the manner of celebration.

Several examples support the assertion that κωμάζω means 'I celebrate'. *N.* 11.24–9, where the aorist participle κωμάσας takes the festival of Heracles as its direct object, shows the victor performing a would-be athletic celebration with victory fillets tied in his hair.¹⁶ The κῶμος and fillets refer metonymically to an Olympic victory via hendiadys. Similarly, at *N.* 2.24, the chorus exhorts the citi-

¹² E.L. Bundy, *Studia Pindarica* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1962), 2.

¹³ Lines 61–8: τίκτει δέ τε θνατοῖσιν εἰρήνην μεγαλὰ ποῦτον | καὶ μελιγλώσσω ἀοιδᾶν ἄνθεα | δαιδαλέων τ' ἐπὶ βωμῶν | θεοῖσιν αἰθεσθαι βοῶν ξανθὰ φλογί | μηρὶ εὐμάλλων τε μήλων | γυμνασίῳ τε νέοις | αὐλῶν τε καὶ κῶμων μέλειν.

¹⁴ *O.* 9.4; *P.* 9.88; *N.* 2.24; *N.* 9.1; *N.* 10.35; *N.* 11.28; *I.* 3.8; *I.* 4.72; *I.* 7.20.

¹⁵ Slater suggests that κωμάζω means a) 'hold a triumphant procession'; b) 'celebrate with a victory hymn, or procession'. His definitions delimit the meaning of the verb too tightly; see W.J. Slater, *A Lexicon to Pindar* (Berlin, 1969), 296. As Durante notes, 'e infatti il derivato κωμάζω non significa altro che "celebrare, festeggiare"'; see M. Durante, 'Greco ΚΩΜΟΣ, ANT. IND. S'AMSA-', in *Studi linguistici in onore di Tristano Bolelli* (Pisa, 1974), 119–35, at 124.

¹⁶ ναὶ μὰ γὰρ ὄρκον, ἔμην δόξαν παρὰ Κασταλίᾳ | καὶ παρ' εὐδένδρῳ μολὼν ὄχθῳ Κρόνου | κάλλιον ἂν δηριώντων ἐνόστησ' ἀντιπάλων, | πενταετηρίδ' ἑορτὰν Ἡρακλέος τέθμιον | κωμάσας ἀνδρησάμενός τε κόμαν ἐν πορφυρέοις | ἔρρεσιν.

zens of Acharnae to celebrate Zeus (*κωμάξατε*); they are to do so by singing a song.¹⁷ Since celebration is often accompanied by singing, *κῶμος* regularly occurs in discursive contexts with song. Moreover, in *P.* 9.89, the narrator ‘celebrates’ the Tyndaridae for the good that they have done him (*τοῖσι τέλειον ἔπ’ εὐχῇ κωμάσομαι τι παθὼν ἔσλόν*). The examples, interestingly, do not hint at any act of procession. It is, accordingly, not celebration with procession but simply celebration that is the primary meaning of *κωμάζω*. In *I.* 7.20, the narrators say that Strepsiades should be celebrated ‘in accompaniment to a sweet-strained hymn’ (*κῶμαζ’ ἔπειτεν ἄδυμελεῖ σὺν ὕμνῳ*). If *κωμάζω* meant to celebrate with a hymn, it would be pleonastic for Pindar to use the dative with *σύν*. Similarly, at *N.* 2.24, discussed above, after bidding the Acharnians to celebrate Zeus, Pindar specifies the manner of celebration by saying that they are to do so by singing. At *P.* 4.1–4, Pindar bids the Muse to rouse a breeze of hymns for Arcesilaus, while Arcesilaus celebrates (*κωμάζοντι*; cf. too *O.* 11.16). Accordingly, just as we saw above in relation to *aidai* and *κῶμοι*, Pindar views the semantics of *κωμάζω* and *ὑμνέω* as discrete. These examples cumulatively suggest that *κῶμος* means celebration and, moreover, none of these verbal forms suggest that the nominal form *κῶμος* could firstly mean revel band, chorus, procession or ode, despite the claims discussed below of several scholars.¹⁸

3. ADJECTIVES AND APPOSITIVES ASSOCIATED WITH *ΚΩΜΟΣ*

The descriptive adjectives and appositive phrases associated with *κῶμος* also support the assertion that *κῶμος* means celebration. Pindar refers to his own song as an *ἐπικῶμος ὕμνος* (*N.* 8.50; cf. too *P.* 10.53) and refers to his chorus as emitting an *ἐπικωμίαν ὄπα* (*P.* 10.6). As Slater remarks (s.v.), the adjective means ‘celebratory’. This related adjective, then, also suggests that *κῶμος* means celebration. Pindar too uses the adjectives *ἀγλαόκωμος* and *ἐγκῶμος* to position his odes within their celebratory context: these adjectives, like *ἐπικῶμος*, regularly qualify nouns that refer to song.¹⁹ The adjective *ἐπικῶμος*, qualifying *ὕμνος*, indicates that hymns participate in some broader relationship with *κῶμοι* but that, of course, they are not themselves *κῶμοι*. Accordingly, we should not equate hymns (i.e. odes) with *κῶμοι* (cf. *I.* 7.20; *N.* 6.32–3) although, as discussed below, scholars have made this claim. It makes perfect sense, however, for *ὕμνοι* to be associated with *κῶμοι* since Pindar’s odes were performed at *κῶμοι*, celebrations. An *ἐπικῶμος ὕμνος* is, quite literally, a hymn sung *at* (*ἐπι-*) a celebration.

¹⁷ *τόν, ὦ πολὶ- | ται, κωμάξατε Τιμοδήμῳ σὺν εὐκλείῃ νόστῳ | ἄδυμελεῖ δ’ ἐξάρχετε φωνῇ.*

¹⁸ The phrase ‘receive the *κῶμος*’ means that a divinity or host should welcome the *κῶμος* (see *O.* 4.9; *O.* 6.98; *O.* 8.10. *P.* 5.22; cf. Thgn. 1046; Eur. *Ba.* 1167), as H. Mackie has successfully argued regarding the reception motif in general; see H. Mackie, *Graceful Errors* (Ann Arbor, MI, 2003), 102–4. In relation to the gods, the reception motif showcases the celebration as a gift-offering of gratitude to a divinity. Pindar’s rhetoric in such phrases, then, successfully positions the celebrations as gifts to the gods who granted the victories: *κῶμοι* function in a context of gift exchange.

¹⁹ Cf. Slater s.v.

Adjectives associated with κῶμος further position the noun within a context of celebration and joy. At *P.* 8.67–71 κῶμος is referred to as ἀδυμελής, having a sweet *melos*: ὦναξ, ἐκόντι δ' εὐχομαι νόῳ | κατὰ τιν' ἁρμονίαν βλέπειν | ἀμφ' ἑκάστον, ὅσα νέομαι. | κῶμῳ μὲν ἀδυμελεῖ | Δίκα παρέστακε. W. Race translates the passage tellingly, 'O lord, I pray that with a willing mind you look with harmonious favor on each step that I take. Beside the sweet singing revel band Justice has taken her stand.'²⁰ Race's decision to translate κῶμος as revel band leaves him in an awkward position for a translation of ἀδυμελής. His translation 'sweet singing' stretches the semantics of ἀδυμελής. Literally, Pindar says that the κῶμος has a sweet tune; the adjective does not suggest that a κῶμος is able to sing. The reason he says that the κῶμος – the celebration – has a sweet tune is that his ode is currently being performed amidst the celebration: the larger celebration fades into the background while Pindar's ode takes centre stage. And rhetorically it is to Pindar's advantage for the audience to interpret the κῶμος in relation to Pindar's ode and chorus, rather than in relation to the larger celebration.

At *N.* 3.4 κῶμος is called μελίγαρυσ ('honey-voiced') and the ode's first strophe is worth considering at some length, since Pindar uses κῶμος within a larger celebratory context:

ὦ πότνια Μοῖσα, μᾶτερ ἀμετέρα, λίσσομαι,
τὰν πολυξέναν ἐν ἱερομηνία Νεμεάδι
ἵκεο Δωρίδα νᾶσον Αἴγιαν· ὕδατι γάρ
μένοντ' ἐπ' Ἀσωπίῳ μελιγαρύων τέκτονες
κῶμων νεανίαί, σέθεν ὅπα μαϊόμενοι.
διψῇ δὲ πρᾶγος ἄλλο μὲν ἄλλον,
ἀθλονικία δὲ μάλιστ' αἰοδᾶν φιλεῖ,
στεφάνων ἀρετᾶν τε δεξιωτάταν ὀπαδόν·

Mistress Muse, our mother, I beg you, come to Aegina, the Dorian island much visited by strangers in the Nemean sacred month. For builders of honey-voiced *kōmoi* wait at the water of Asopus, while longing for your voice. Each accomplishment thirsts for something different, but victory in athletic competition loves song most of all, a most fitting companion for crowns and accomplishments.

In the previous passage, Race chose to translate κῶμος as revel band. Here, however, he translates κῶμων as revels. He has made a jump from people to object, presumably, because the noun νεανίαί ('young men') in this passage already provides the people. Since revels are synonymous with celebrations, Race and I are in agreement regarding the meaning of κῶμος here and, since the young men are builders of honey-voiced celebrations, we may choose to interpret the young men in reference to Pindar's chorus. However, we need not identify the young men as being synonymous with Pindar's chorus. All the young men who celebrate the victor and sing, even if they do so informally at the celebration, may be considered here. Accordingly, the νεανίαί may be interpreted in multiple ways. What is important to note is that the young men are the builders of κῶμοι. They are the builders of celebrations because of their participation in the celebrations, and the celebrations are honey-voiced because of the men's singing. Pindar effectively positions his ode within the broader celebration by focussing on singing as a fundamental aspect of celebration. Finally, at *I.* 2.31, κῶμοι are ἐρατοί ('beloved': καὶ γὰρ οὐκ ἀγνώτες

²⁰ W. Race (ed.), *Pindar: Olympian Odes, Pythian Odes* (Cambridge, MA, 1997), 35.

ὑμῶν ἐντὶ δόμοι | οὔτε κώμων, ὦ Θρασύβουλ', ἐρατῶν, | οὔτε μελικόμπων
 αἰοιδᾶν). This passage was used above as evidence to show that Pindar considers
 κῶμοι and songs to be discrete entities. In passing, I mention here that Pindar
 considers κῶμοι to be 'beloved'; this is an unsurprising description for victory
 celebrations since they are dear to the victor and other interested parties.

4. PREVIOUS INTERPRETATIONS OF ΚΩΜΟΣ IN EPINICIAN CRITICISM

Several scholars interpret κῶμος differently than I have suggested above. For instance, E. Bundy, M. Heath, M. Lefkowitz and S. Goldhill argue that κῶμος refers to a festive procession or by metonymy refers to the people taking part in the procession; Heath and Lefkowitz also suggest that the performance of the victory ode regularly took place at the end of the procession.²¹ In Heath and Lefkowitz's articles, the procession and the men who took part in it are often conflated and, moreover, Heath and Lefkowitz do not argue for their interpretation of κῶμος as both an abstract noun and as the people who celebrate in the supposed procession. Ideally, they would explain how both possibilities are viable. Lefkowitz sums up the position of Heath and Lefkowitz best:

In response to [Burnett's] criticisms Malcolm Heath and I recalled that it is the ancient commentators, and not the poet who speak of a chorus in connection with the performance of the odes. We tried to explain more clearly what function the κῶμος served in connection with the celebration of a victory, and why Pindar often speaks of his song as taking place within the context of a κῶμος. A κῶμος is not synonymous with a chorus but there is no reason why κῶμος or a group of men within it could not sing in unison, or dance. We argued that a κῶμος, since it is an informal group assembled only in response to particular occasions, would not and could not be trained to perform a victory ode, with its complex metres. Rather, if it sang, it would be a shorter song, presumably in praise of the gods or gods responsible for the victory.²²

This excerpt is a response by Lefkowitz to an argument made by Burnett in favour of viewing the κῶμος as the chorus.²³ The response to Burnett by Heath and Lefkowitz was made to clarify their argument for the validity of the solo hypothesis of epinician performance in response to Burnett's criticisms: for them, a κῶμος is not a trained chorus but rather an 'informal group' that has no relation to the chorus performing Pindar's ode.²⁴ But, as I have argued above, there is no good evidence for considering the κῶμος in epinician poetry to be a group whether formal or informal. G. Nagy points out that Pindar uses the vocabulary of κῶμος in performance because it allows Pindar to evoke the festive associations of a celebratory revel band in relation to his own chorus.²⁵ Indeed, Nagy acutely

²¹ Bundy (n. 12), 23; S. Goldhill, *The Poet's Voice: Essays on Poetics and Greek Literature* (Cambridge, 1991), 135–6; Heath (n. 4), 193; Heath and Lefkowitz (n. 4), 182, 83–4, 91. Cf. D. Steiner, 'Pindar's "ogetti parlanti"', *HSPH* 95 (1993), 159–80, at 165.

²² M.R. Lefkowitz, 'The first person in Pindar reconsidered – again', *BICS* 40.1 (1995), 139–50, at 141.

²³ A.P. Burnett, 'Performing Pindar's odes', *CPh* 84 (1989), 283–93.

²⁴ On the solo vs. choral hypothesis, see most recently C. Eckerman 'Pindar's *Olympian* 1.17 and solo vs. choral epinician performance', *Mnemosyne* (forthcoming).

²⁵ G. Nagy, 'Genre and occasion', *Metis* 9 (1994), 11–25, at 22–5.

points out that it is to the advantage of Pindar and Bacchylides to make their odes and choruses seem like the focal points of the victory celebrations.

Some scholars have also suggested that the *κῶμος* in epinician poetry is not to be understood as an informal group, but rather as a synonym for the chorus performing the ode. This is, for instance, the assumption of A. Burnett²⁶ and this interpretation goes back to the Hellenistic scholiasts.²⁷ But, as Heath has noted, 'we must be cautious here. There was no continuous tradition of epinician performance linking the Hellenistic scholars to the fifth century; and this Hellenistic usage differs strikingly from that of Pindar and Bacchylides, who *never* use *χορός* of the epinician *κῶμος* and its performance.'²⁸ In favour of her interpretation, Burnett writes, 'since a *κῶμος* is a group of males who sing and dance, it is natural to suppose that the victory songs bear witness, with these terms, to the mode of their own performance'.²⁹ She argues that *κῶμοι* must sing, since a descriptive adjective for *κῶμος* is *μελίγαυρος* ('honey-voiced'), in *Nemean* 3.4.³⁰ There are two problems here. It is not obvious that a *κῶμος* is a group of males who sing and dance and, as mentioned above, Pindar here presumably refers to a *κῶμος* being *μελίγαυρος* via metonymy.³¹ Moreover, the author of the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* believed that a *κῶμος* and a chorus are discrete entities and this provides very strong evidence from archaic poetry that the chorus and *κῶμος* were, in fact, separate things.³² Moreover, further evidence could be brought against associating the *κῶμος* with a chorus.³³ Thus, Burnett does not offer substantial evidence in support of making *κῶμος* a synonym for chorus while there is in fact substantial evidence that can be brought against the claim.

Finally, the confusion regarding the meaning of *κῶμος* has led some scholars to blend the disparate interpretations in the hope of making sense of them. Such interpretations properly address the interpretive difficulty that *κῶμος* raises in epinician poetry; however, these scholars have not provided an explanation to support the several denotations that *κῶμος* then supposedly bears. As mentioned

²⁶ (n. 23) above. Heath (n. 4), 186 notes, 'unequivocal identifications of *kōmos* and chorus are hard to find in the literature of fifth and earlier centuries'. In response, see C. Carey, 'The victory ode in performance: the case for the chorus', *CPh* 86 (1991), 192–200, at 193.

²⁷ For an extensive catalogue of equivalences see Heath and Lefkowitz (n. 4), 175 n. 4. Callimachus too connects the *κῶμος* with a chorus (fr. 384.38). The scholiasts do not cite any sources for their belief that epinician odes were performed by choruses; cf. Lefkowitz (n. 22), 140.

²⁸ Heath (n. 4), 184. However, as Carey notes, 'the Hellenistic scholars from whose works the scholia derive their information may have had earlier authority for their apparently unanimous assumption that the victory odes were performed by choruses', C. Carey, 'The performance of the victory ode', *AJPh* 110 (1989), 545–65, at 539.

²⁹ Burnett (n. 23), 286.

³⁰ *Ibid.* 288.

³¹ Similarly, *P.* 5.100.

³² *εὐκῆλος μὲν ἔπειτα φέρειν εἰς δαῖτα θάλειαν | καὶ χορὸν ἱμερόεντα καὶ ἐς φιλοκυδέα κῶμον, | εὐφροσύνην νυκτός τε καὶ ἡματος* ('confidently bring (the lyre) to a flourishing feast, to a lovely chorus, and to a glory-loving *κῶμος*, a pleasure during night and day', 480–2). The adjective *φιλοκυδέα* ('glory-loving') which modifies *κῶμον*, is particularly apposite within the context of victory celebrations. There is, then, no need to emend the text to find a more suitable adjective to modify *κῶμον* here. For discussion of positions wrongly in favour of emending the adjective, see Durante (n. 15), 119–20, 126.

³³ For example, as Durante notes, with reference to several passages, 'in un filone documentario che ha inizio con la lirica lesbica, il derivato *κωμάζω* indica non una manifestazione corale, ma l'esibizione di un singolo', *ibid.* 122.

above, it is the primary meaning ‘celebration’ that allows metonymic meanings such as ode, chorus and revellers to seem plausible. Carey suggests that *κῶμος* may refer, on occasion, to the *hymnos*, the song itself.³⁴ He argues, ‘that the song [i.e. epinician song] may be designated *kōmos* is indicated by Pindar’s use of the verb *κωμάζω* of his own activities as panegyrist, as *P.* 9.89, *I.* 4.72, *I.* 7.20’. In *P.* 9.89 and *I.* 4.72, however, as Heath and Lefkowitz have pointed out in response to this claim, *κωμάσσομαι* and *κωμάξομαι* mean simply ‘celebrate’.³⁵ Similarly, Carey’s third example, *I.* 7.20, shows that Pindar considers the verbal meaning of *κῶμος* to be distinct from the hymn, for there, as noted above, the hymn is expressed with a dative of accompaniment: the importance of the hymn is not inherent within the verb’s root. At *O.* 4. 6–10, Pindar exhorts Zeus to accept ‘this *κῶμος*, a very long-lasting light for achievements of great strength’ (*τόνδε κῶμον, χρονιώτατον φάος εὐρυσθενέων ἀρετᾶν*). Carey uses this example to ‘prove’ that Pindar sometimes uses *κῶμος* to refer to his song: ‘the victory *κῶμος* is clearly transient; what lasts is the ode’.³⁶ This interpretation, however, is problematic. The memories of the *κῶμος* (‘celebration’) would literally be a very long-lasting light for the victor, since it was a party that the victor could look back upon with fondness; the ode itself could be kept as a particularly strong memento of the occasion, and every re-performance of the ode, to some extent, would bring the first victory celebration back to life for the patron.³⁷ If, as I have suggested, the meaning of *κῶμος* is not firstly ode, none the less it is plausible that members of the audience might have interpreted the phrase ‘a very long-lasting light for achievements of great strength’ in relation to Pindar’s ode. This is an important point that has to be made in relation to Carey’s interpretation. It is not that ‘this *κῶμος*, a very long-lasting light for achievements of great strength’ ‘proves’ that Pindar on occasion used *κῶμος* as a synonym for ode; rather, Pindar’s language allows audience members to stretch the semantics of *κῶμος* and interpret it in relation to the ode if they so wish. Clearly it would be to Pindar’s benefit to stretch the semantics of *κῶμος* in a manner that makes his own ode the centrepiece of the victory celebration.

The Pindaric lexicographer J. Rumpel suggests that *κῶμος* may mean different things depending on whether it is found in the singular or in the plural. If the noun is in the plural according to Rumpel, *κῶμοι* means epinician odes.³⁸ Again, Rumpel is not completely incorrect; rather, we need to redefine the discussion. It is not that *κῶμος* in the plural means something different from what the noun means in the singular; rather, Pindar and Bacchylides on occasion use *κῶμος* in the plural in a manner that allows the audience to interpret *κῶμος* in relation not only to the generic celebrations but also in relation to the odes performed at the celebrations, if they so choose. None the less, a literal translation – ‘celebrations’ – works equally well in all these circumstances and, I believe, is preferable

³⁴ Carey (n. 28), 549; id. (n. 26), 196.

³⁵ Heath and Lefkowitz (n. 4), 184.

³⁶ Carey (n. 28), 549; cf. id. (n. 26), 196.

³⁷ A translation of the superlative *χρονιώτατον* as ‘longest lasting’ makes no meaningful difference.

³⁸ See Rumpel s.v. *κῶμος*. W. Slater glosses *κῶμος* (p. 296) as ‘victory procession, triumph of a victor’. The translation ‘victory procession’ is too specific since it refers to the procession that on occasion preceded the static celebration at which epinician odes were generally performed.

to Rumpel's interpretation.³⁹ K. Morgan, like Rumpel, interprets κῶμος in various manners. Depending on the word's discursive context, she reads it as a reference to the 'festive context' of an epinician ode, to the ode itself or to the chorus that performs the ode.⁴⁰ As I have shown above, the evidence suggests that we should not firstly conflate κῶμος with an ode, nor with a chorus, nor with a band of revellers; however, Rumpel, Carey and Morgan are all correct in noting the semantic slippage that may occur with regard to κῶμος in discrete discursive contexts.

5. CONCLUSION

Etymology too provides corroborative evidence that κῶμος means celebration. G. Dunkel notes that 'the term κῶμος, of some importance to literary history, is of controversial origin. Its original meaning is generally (but, I believe, wrongly) presumed to have been "a Dionysiac parade of noisy, singing, mocking celebrants" or the like'.⁴¹ And, as Dunkel notes, 'in the earliest attestation (*Hymn to Hermes* 481) [of κῶμος], a celebratory connection with feasting and dancing is to be sure undeniable'.⁴² The *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* provides the best corroborative evidence from archaic poetry for the interpretation that I have argued for here – of κῶμος as 'celebration'. In that passage κῶμος is used exactly as it is in epinician poetry. However, in relation to epinician poetry, Dunkel claims that for Pindar, κῶμος 'meant simply a "song of praise"'. Dunkel does not, however, examine a single Pindaric passage to substantiate this assertion. Accordingly, his conclusion is suspect, and, as we have seen already above, *I.* 2.30–2 shows conclusively that κῶμοι and odes are not the same thing for Pindar; accordingly, Dunkel's interpretation of κῶμος in epinician poetry is untenable. Regardless of this, Dunkel may very well be right to connect κῶμος with Vedic śāṃsa- 'praise' and a pre-form kṓms-o-. It would not be surprising that an epinician celebration in praise of a victory would semantically relate to 'praise'. This etymology moves far from that famously proposed by Aristotle (*Poetics* 3.5–6), linking κῶμος with κῶμη 'village' and based on his belief that comedy developed in Doric suburbs. Of course, it is not hard to dismiss Aristotle's folk etymology. The meaning of κῶμος proposed here fits squarely within the semantic range of κῶμος as witnessed in the archaic Greek poetry of the *Homeric Hymn* and fits well with Dunkel's reconstructed root.⁴³ With Dunkel, I see the development of κῶμος in the direction of Dionysiac revel and procession – as found, for instance, in Greek comedy and symposiastic contexts⁴⁴ – to be a 'major and characteristic innovation of Greek' occurring through a process of semantic specialization.⁴⁵ Since a large-scale semantic innovation of

³⁹ *N.* 3.5; *I.* 6.58; *I.* 2.31; *P.* 5.100.

⁴⁰ Morgan (n. 3) connects κῶμος with the 'festive context' (p. 1); 'Pindaric song is identified with that of the kōmos' (p. 4); 'young men have been transformed from an informal kōmos into what we would call the "chorus"' (p. 9). For criticism of Morgan's interpretation, see Nagy (n. 25), 22–5; Lefkowitz (n. 22), 142–4.

⁴¹ G. Dunkel, 'More Mycenaean survivals in later Greek: ὄνος, ὄμος, ζωμός, Διώνυσος, and κῶμος', in *Verba et structurae: Festschrift für Klaus Strunk zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Heinrich Hettrich et al. (Innsbruck, 1995), 13.

⁴² *Ibid.* 14.

⁴³ It is unfortunate that κῶμος is otherwise unattested in Homeric poetry.

⁴⁴ See Heath (n. 4).

⁴⁵ Dunkel (n. 41), 1–20, at 15. So too Durante (n. 15), 126–7.

κῶμος occurs in later genres such as comedy and within social contexts such as the symposium, those comparative materials provide no particularly helpful evidence for understanding κῶμος in epinician poetry. Likewise, the famed corpus of so-called komast vases unfortunately can offer us nothing specifically valuable in relation to epinician celebration.⁴⁶

The unwarranted confusion that surrounds the semantics of κῶμος in epinician poetry continues to be a problem for the interpretation of epinician odes and their performance context. If, as I have argued, κῶμος means ‘celebration’, there is no need to confuse it with the chorus, the ode, the procession and so forth, even if metonymy and the individual responses of audience members allow for creative slippage between the celebration and the various phenomena that make up that celebration. As Heath has pointed out, ‘in other early literature there is “a tendency to distinguish κῶμος from χορός” and a corresponding shortage of “unequivocal identifications of κῶμος and χορός”’.⁴⁷ As argued here, this is because κῶμος and χορός are discrete entities. Clarifying the semantics of κῶμος does not, however, provide us with the venue for epinician performance,⁴⁸ even though, as I understand it, κῶμος refers to a celebration that would include a feast and song.⁴⁹ As mentioned above, once we clarify the epinician genre’s celebratory vocabulary, as I hope to have done here, we should be in a better position to comprehend the historical contexts of praise as well as the rhetorical and ideological use that Pindar and Bacchylides make of κῶμος in their odes. Both poets position their odes within the victory celebrations at which they were first performed and, as Pindar’s and Bacchylides’ odes show, the word κῶμος has broad celebratory significance in the epinician genre.⁵⁰

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⁴⁶ On komast vases see E. Csapo and M.C. Miller (edd.), *The Origins of Theater in Ancient Greece and Beyond: From Ritual to Drama* (New York, 2007), Part 1 ‘Komasts and predramatic ritual’; and especially, with reference to previous bibliography, T.J. Smith, ‘The corpus of komast vases: from identity to exegesis’, 48–76.

⁴⁷ Heath and Lefkowitz (n. 4), 175.

⁴⁸ For performance and re-performance scenarios, see J.S. Clay, ‘Pindar’s sympotic epinicia’, *QUCC* 62 (1999), 25–34; B. Currie, ‘Reperformance scenarios for Pindar’s odes’, in C.J. Mackie (ed.), *Oral Performance and its Context* (Leiden, 2004), 49–69; T. Gelzer, ‘Mousa Authigenes: Bemerkungen zu einem Typ Pindarischer und Bacchylideischer Epinikien’, *MH* 42 (1985), 95–120; T.K. Hubbard, ‘The dissemination of epinician lyric: pan-Hellenism, reperformance, written texts’, in Mackie (ed.) (above), 71–93; E. Krummen, *Pyrros Hymnon. Festliche Gegenwart und mythisch-rituelle Tradition als Voraussetzung einer Pindarinterpretation* (Isthmie 4, Pythie 5, Olympie 1 und 3) (Berlin, 1990); C. Eckerman, ‘Pindar’s koinos logos and Panhellenism in Olympian 10’, *RhM* 151 (2008), 37–48, at 47–8; A.D. Morrison, *Performances and Audiences in Pindar’s Sicilian Victory Odes* (London, 2007), 5–19.

⁴⁹ In agreement, see C. Carey, ‘Pindar, place, and performance’, in S. Hornblower and C. Morgan (edd.), *Pindar’s Poetry, Patrons, and Festivals: From Archaic Greece to the Roman Empire* (Oxford, 2007), 199–210, at 204–5.

⁵⁰ Many thanks to Nancy Felson, Thomas Hubbard, Brent Vine and the anonymous referee for helpful comments on an earlier version of this article.