

“This is not a true story”: Stesichorus’s *Palinode* and the Revenge of the Epichoric

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SUMMARY: While many have written on the fragment of Stesichorus’s *Palinode* presented to us in the *Phaedrus*, most of this work has focused on attempting to understand the function the palinode may have played within Stesichorus’s work or his performance tradition, and on the nature of Stesichorus’s offense against Helen, the offense which prompted her blinding of him and his subsequent creation of the *Palinode* fragment itself. Careful examination shows that the language it uses is carefully chosen to situate Stesichorus’s work in opposition to epic and Panhellenic versions of the story of Helen.

A. “THIS IS NOT A TRUE STORY”

FEW BIOGRAPHICAL ANECDOTES CONCERNING GREEK LYRIC POETS HAVE BEEN AS EVOCATIVE OR AS MEMORABLE AS THAT OF Stesichorus’s blinding by Helen, and of his recovering sight following the composition of the *Palinode*. This anecdote has generated considerable scholarly work in the past few decades, but most of this work has focused on its authenticity or otherwise and on attempting to account for the anecdote within the life of Stesichorus himself.¹

¹ See Sider 423–31 for an interpretation of the problem in terms of performance traditions—that the blindness of Stesichorus was a performative gesture, used within a performance of the false *logos* of Helen as a dramatic introduction to a performed palinode. d’Alfonso 419–29 offers a further development of this interpretation. In a forthcoming work I will argue for my own, more expansive, understanding of the sort of performance tradition that might underlie this anecdote; for my current purposes, however, I shall leave bracketed the question of just what sort of biographical or performance reality might underlie the anecdote. The bibliography on this question is too large to be discussed in a footnote, but among the works I have found most helpful have been Farina, Podlecki, Woodbury, Bassi, Cingano, Leone, Massimilla and West. I am grateful to the editor and to the two anonymous readers for their invaluable suggestions.

Insufficient attention has, I believe, been placed on understanding the story of Stesichorus's blinding in the appropriate context, i.e. the fragment of the *Palinode* that Plato has Socrates quote in the *Phaedrus*, and the *Phaedrus* as a dialogue in its own right. I will argue that a closer examination of the text of the fragment itself, especially its first line, will provide the most suitable context in which to interpret the biographical anecdote. This first line, which I provisionally translate, following Louise Pratt, as "This is not a true story," situates the *Palinode* within a complex network of ideas concerning truth and lies, fictionality and narrative. Beyond that, it also places the poem that it ostensibly introduces firmly on the side of local cultic and lyric tradition, as opposed to the Panhellenic narrative of epic.

The *Phaedrus* is probably our oldest, and certainly our most important source for the story of the blinding of Stesichorus; it is, moreover, our only source for this fragment of the *Palinode* (Plato, *Phaedrus* 243a2–243b3):

ἐμοὶ μὲν οὖν, ὦ φίλε, καθήρασθαι ἀνάγκη· ἔστιν δὲ τοῖς ἀμαρτάνουσι
περὶ μυθολογίαν καθαρὸς ἀρχαῖος, ὃν Ὅμηρος μὲν οὐκ ᾔσθετο,
Στησίχορος δέ. τῶν γὰρ ὁμμάτων στερηθεὶς διὰ τὴν Ἑλένης
κακηγορίαν οὐκ ἠγνόησεν ὥσπερ Ὅμηρος, ἀλλ' ἄτε μουσικὸς ὢν
ἔγνω τὴν αἰτίαν, καὶ ποιεῖ εὐθὺς --

Οὐκ ἔστ' ἔτυμος λόγος οὗτος,

οὐδ' ἔβας ἐν νηυσὶν εὐσέλμοις,

οὐδ' ἵκεο Πέργαμα Τροίας·

καὶ ποιήσας δὴ πᾶσαν τὴν καλουμένην Παλινωδίαν παραχρῆμα
ἀνέβλεψεν.

So, my friend, I need to be purified. There is an ancient purification for those who have erred in *muthologia*, one which Homer did not perceive, but Stesichorus did. For when he was robbed of his eyes because of his slander of Helen, he was not ignorant like Homer, but since he was *mousikos* he knew the cause, and created² immediately:

'This is not a true story,

You did not embark in the broad-benched ships,

You did not reach the citadel of Troy.'

² *Poieō* here could, crucially, mean either "compose" or "perform"—or, in light of modern understanding of the practice of oral poetics, both. I have translated the verb here as "create," in order to emphasize the ambiguity of the language of composition and performance in this period. There are similarly ambiguous semantics in Chinese for the verb *fu*, as used in the early historical text the *Zuozhuan*; at times this verb must mean "compose," at other times, it must mean "perform," and at still other times it might mean either. A comparative study of the vocabulary of performance and composition would be beneficial to both the Hellenic and Sinological communities.

And when he had created the whole of the so-called *Palinode* he recovered his sight immediately.”

The provisional translation of the first line I have offered above, “This is not a true story,” is deceptively simple, and each word within this line, when understood within the context of the song culture of which it is a part, is freighted with programmatic significance. My discussion of this line will begin from its end, with the demonstrative pronoun *houtos*, and will then proceed backwards through the line, attempting at each stage to offer a closer examination of the significance of each word in its cultural context.

1. “This” (*houtos*)

In contemporary English usage, demonstratives are easily ignored; seldom indeed will they be expected to carry much interpretive significance. As Egbert Bakker has shown, however, within the poetic language of Homer and Hesiod, demonstratives make a much more significant contribution to the understanding of the sentences of which they form a part.³ To summarize Bakker’s argument briefly, Homer and Hesiod have a choice between anaphoric and deictic demonstrative forms, and within the deictic category, they have three demonstratives to choose from, rather than the two in English. The anaphoric demonstrative *ho*, which is in the diachronic process of being transformed into the definite article during the Archaic period, can only point at an object which has already been mentioned in the text, while the deictic demonstratives point at an object, person, or event immediately before the eyes of the speaker and/or the hearer.⁴ Where our “this” points to an object nearer the speaker, and “that” to an object further away, the Greek demonstrative system includes *hode*, which points at an object near the speaker, *houtos*, which indicates an object near the hearer, and *ekeinos*, which indicates an object relatively remote from either. Through a careful and detailed examination of the uses of *hode* and *houtos* in Homeric and Hesiodic epic, Bakker shows that the selection of either of these forms is not arbitrary, but rather governed by a complex set of principles.

A scene from the *Teichoscopia* in the third book of the *Iliad* provides one of Bakker’s most decisive illustrations, one which coincidentally involves

³ See Bakker.

⁴ Bakker 1–2 discusses the oral-performative quality of deictic demonstratives, which allow an oral narrator vividly to present events as unfolding before his or her or the audience’s eyes, while a narrator in a written text is able to disappear behind the story he or she narrates.

our heroine, Helen.⁵ As Priam points specific Achaean heroes out, he uses the speaker-oriented demonstrative *hode* as he cannot yet assume that his hearer (Helen) knows who the object of his deixis is (*Iliad* 3.166–67); when Helen replies she refers to them using the hearer-oriented demonstrative *houtos*, which indicates to Priam as her hearer that she and he are part of a shared community of understanding, for whom the reference of the deictic pronouns is clear (3.177–78).

This use of deixis in re-enacted speech within epic, re-creating vividly for the audience the appearance of the heroes of the Achaean army before the walls of Troy, represents only the most straightforward use of deictic pronouns in Homer and Hesiod. Bakker shows that *houtos* is used within epic narration to represent breaks in the narrative, where the narrator subsumes the voices of his characters within his own and sums up the action in a direct engagement with his audience. In the *Iliad*, such an engagement is found at the end of the *Catalogue of the Ships* in Book Two, where the Homeric narrator breaks from the long and detailed listing of the heroes and cities represented at Troy by saying, Οὔτοι ἄρ' ἡγεμόνες Δαναῶν καὶ κοίρανοι ἦσαν. “*These* then were the leaders and the princes of the Danaans” (*Iliad* 2.760).⁶ Similarly, each of the songs sung by the bard Demodocus to the Phaeacians in Book Eight of the *Odyssey* is summed up with the phrase, ταῦτ' ἄρ' ἀοιδὸς ἄειδε περικλυτός. “*These things* then the famous bard was singing” (*Odyssey*, 8.83, 8.367, 8.521). The songs of Demodocus are presented as reported speech rather than re-enacted as such within the narrative, creating, at least initially, a distance between the song of Demodocus and the *Odyssey* of which it is a part, but the *tauta* of the narrator pulls this one-time performance of the songs before Odysseus himself into the present of the narrative and audience.⁷ Something similar happens on a much larger scale near the end of the *Odyssey* when Odysseus, reunited at last with Penelope, re-enacts for her in bed the whole

⁵ Bakker 6–7.

⁶ So Bakker 8–9: “The narrator addresses his audience directly, as if the object of reference is cut loose from the narrative, and is a reality before everyone’s eyes; as if he is saying: ‘There you have them, those who were the leaders of the Danaans.’” Moving beyond the scope of Bakker’s article, his idea of the *Catalogue* as a performative unity, re-enacted before the spectators is reinforced by the new invocation to the muse which occupies the following line. The narrator has completed the *catalogue*, and has marked that completion by making its contents vividly present for us as audience. It is as if the force of this re-enactment exhausts the rhapsode’s capacity for “total recall” brought on by the inspiration of the Muse, necessitating a fresh invocation to re-charge his capacities for visualization and re-presentation.

⁷ Bakker 12–13.

story of his homecoming, the story that is the *Odyssey* itself. Once again, the narrator breaks off his *précis* of Odysseus's long narration, and says: τοῦτ' ἄρα δεύτατον εἶπεν ἔπος, ὅτε οἱ γλυκὺς ὕπνος / λυσιμελὴς ἐπόρουσε, λύων μελεδήματα θυμοῦ. "This then was the last word (*epos*) he spoke [to her] when sweet sleep / the limb-loosener, rushed upon him, releasing cares from his heart (*thumos*)" (*Odyssey* 23.342–43).⁸ The use of narrative deixis here collapses the distinction between the telling of the *nostos* [homecoming] of Odysseus that is being performed within the narrative of the epic, and the telling of the *nostos* of Odysseus that is the epic itself. *Touto ... epos* sits ambiguously between "this word," as in the last word of Odysseus before he sleeps, and "this epic"—the *Odyssey*.

This capacity of narrative deixis to render vividly present before the audience large blocks of narrative action within epic, is, I contend, the key to understanding the function of *houtos* in the Stesichorus fragment quoted by Socrates in the *Phaedrus*. The use of the pronoun that, within the synchronic system of Archaic epic poetry, indicates hearer-oriented deixis is far from arbitrary. Metrical considerations aside, the Stesichorean narrator has four possible demonstratives to choose from, *ho*, *hode*, *houtos*, and (*e*)*keinos*, and the choices he does not make are as significant as the one he does. The *logos* of Helen⁹ is not identified anaphorically by *ho*—it is not a story to which the narrator has made brief reference earlier, and of whose previous mention he is now reminding his audience. It is not identified by the speaker-oriented *hode*, which would indicate that the story that is the referent of the demonstrative, while known to the narrator, has yet not been identified for his audience; the use of *hode* would imply that the narration of a *logos*, perhaps one unfamiliar to the audience, was yet to come. Finally, it is not identified by the demonstrative of more remote deixis, *ekeinos*, which would establish the *logos* as known to speaker and audience, but beyond, or at least at the edges of, their current sphere of interest.

Houtos is none of these things. The use of *houtos* in this line indicates that the *logos* it describes is vividly present before the audience, that it has just been narrated for them, and that the narrator is establishing a connection to his audience by means of their shared awareness of this *logos*. The story of Helen's abduction by Paris, of her journey to Troy and her sojourn there, and of her ultimate re-capture and re-union with Menelaus, exists in a sort of virtual reality, conjured up for the audience through the power of deixis. This audience, as constructed by the poem, has the action of this story take

⁸ Bakker 13–14.

⁹ The significance of *logos* will be discussed in the following section.

place before their eyes, and is imagined as sharing in the narrator's understanding and awareness of it—only to have the whole story be withdrawn, rejected as untrue.

2. “Story” (logos)

What, then, is the nature of this withdrawn and rejected story, this *logos*, of Helen? The notoriously difficult *logos* is perhaps best understood partly in terms of what it is not, and the alternative term against which it is arrayed most commonly is *muthos*. An enduringly popular interpretation has placed *logos* in opposition to *muthos*, contrasting rational discourse, abstraction and philosophy on the one hand to symbolic and anthropomorphic discourse oriented towards religion on the other.¹⁰ Viewed from within this context, the choice of *logos* in our Stesichorean fragment may seem odd. Conditioned as we are by Plato (or rather by centuries of scholarship and philosophical tradition derived from Plato)¹¹ to view *logos* as unitary and true and *muthos* as multifarious and potentially false, the notion of a false *logos* is unsettling. In fact, our thought processes should probably operate in the reverse direction; instead of interpreting the significance of *logos* here in light of existing theories, we should attempt to build an understanding of the term from its use in context, bearing in mind the potential significance of differences in genre, period, register, and so on.

Several recent scholarly investigations have in fact explored precisely the meaning given to both *muthos* and *logos* in early Greek texts. Both Claude Calame and Bruce Lincoln have undertaken careful studies of the uses of both

¹⁰ See Lincoln 341n.1. for useful bibliography on the history of this opposition within classical scholarship.

¹¹ We would do well to remember that *muthos* and *logos* are in flux, not only within the diachronic evolution of the Greek language, but also within Platonic dialogue, and especially within the *Phaedrus*. In *Khôra*, Derrida shows how a subtle and careful reading of the *Timaeus*, and particularly of *khôra* within that dialogue, demonstrates the internal falsity of the dichotomy between *muthos* and *logos*. Within the *Phaedrus*, even a staunchly empiricist reading of the dialogue shows that *logos* is consistently associated with dubious, duplicitous and written discourse, such as Lysias's speech as recited by Phaedrus (e.g. at 227b6), while *muthos* is used, for example, in connection with the presumably privileged speech of Socrates himself, in the mock-poetic invocation and conclusion to Socrates' first speech (237a9 and 241e8, respectively), as well as of the account of the soul as a team of horses and a charioteer in Socrates' second speech (253c7). Also prominent in the *Phaedrus* is that dialogue's own favorite *triton genos*, the term *muthologia*, used especially of the story of the blindness of Stesichorus and the composition of the *Palinode*. In a future work, I will examine in more detail the implications my reading of the *Palinode* may have for a reading of the *Phaedrus*.

terms in a range of early texts; their conclusions are distinct although they do overlap to some extent. The larger aim of Calame's article is to explore the range of terms in Greek texts which refer to concepts analogous to the notions of "myth" and "ritual" so central to modern anthropological work, in order to demonstrate that these modern constructs do not correspond to any conceptual category in the Greek tradition. As part of this argument, Calame examines the uses of *muthos* and *logos* in early epic traditions. He observes that *logos* is a term encountered relatively rarely in Homeric epic.¹² Where it is found, *logos* is often connected with untrustworthiness. It is frequently associated, in both Homeric and Hesiodic epic, with the adjective *haimulios*, with connotations of flattery, deception, and seduction.¹³ Most significant for Calame is a celebrated line from the prologue to the *Theogony* of Hesiod in which the Muses tell the Hesiodic narrator that they know how to tell lies that look like the truth, ἴδμεν ψεύδεα πολλὰ λέγειν ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα (*Theogony* 27).¹⁴ Calame sees this as a "*point de non-retour*" in the history of textualization, a moment when the epic tradition itself thematizes its own capacity to tell falsehoods.¹⁵ Such themes are of course present in some form in the Homeric epics as well, as with the various false *Nostoi* Odysseus performs in the *Odyssey*, and it is not necessary to accept Calame's conclusions about the history of textualization to take his point that *logos* is a term which, in Homeric and Hesiodic epic at least, is more likely to refer to deceptive language (and, specifically, deceptive narrative) than to objective and rational discourse. Calame traces the evolution of our notion of *logos* from the gradual specialization of another term, co-ordinate with *muthos* in the epic tradition, *epos*. *Epos* for Calame begins to become specialized already in Alcman and Pindar, with the result that the singular is restricted to the meaning "word," while the plural, *epea*, comes to mean "poetry," and, gradually, "epic poetry."¹⁶ With this specialization of *epos*, *logos* begins to take over functions previously assigned to *epos*, functions that Calame glosses as "*énoncé*," "*discours*," "*discussion*," "*prophétie*," and "*maxime*." In other words, it gradually begins to take on the polysemous role we associate with it; but Calame is careful to stress that, even for Plato, while *logos* is now marked for positive associations, it is still distinguished from *muthos* on the basis of the

¹² By my own count, the root *log-* and its derivatives are found fewer than ten times in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* together.

¹³ E.g. at *Odyssey* 1.56, *Theogony* 890 and *Works and Days* 78 and 789.

¹⁴ We shall return to this passage later when we examine the connotations of the "truth"-word used in our Stesichorean line, *etumos*, which is the word used here as well.

¹⁵ Calame 186.

¹⁶ Calame 187.

use-value of a narrative, rather than its truth-value.¹⁷ As we explore what it means for Stesichorus to call Helen's story a *logos*, we will need to set aside the more familiar associations of the term.

The function of *muthos* and *logos* in early epic is explored further by Bruce Lincoln. He observes that, in the Homeric and Hesiodic epics, *muthos* is most frequently used of masculine discourse, that it is spoken by the most powerful speaker within a context, often within the context of battle or litigation, that it is often oriented towards boasting or command, and that *muthos* is only rarely marked as untrue or doubtful.¹⁸ *Logos*, in contrast, is usually uttered by women, by weaker parties in a situation, or by someone offering care to another, and is frequently marked as suspicious or false through modification by the adjective *haimulios*, connection to the noun *pseudea*, "lies," or through its use in the plural (indicating through the very multiplicity of narrative the unreliability of any individual version). It is often associated with cunning or guile, and is identified as the weapon of the weak against the power of the strong—as such, it is rarely used in battlefield or litigation scenes.¹⁹

Connected with the idea of *muthos* as the authoritative speech of a powerful individual *within* an epic narrative is the idea of *muthos* as a kind of narrative making a specific claim to authority. Gregory Nagy has observed that *muthos*, derived from the verb *muô*, used for marked activities of both vision and speech, comes to be used of the marked activity of speech associated with ritual, that is, with what we characterize as myth.²⁰ In this use, *muthos* becomes associated with the local aspect of myth, as opposed to its Panhellenic aspect. Epic, the Panhellenic poetic tradition *par excellence*, tends naturally to emphasize the Panhellenic at the expense of the local, but the tension between the two is to be found in lyric traditions (such as the Stesichorean tradition) as well. In a Panhellenic context, that which is *muthos* will be devalued, but within the context of local traditions it may be the Panhellenic narrative that is devalued.

Lincoln's opposition within early epic between authoritative and powerful *muthos* and weak, deceptive, and multiform *logos* helps us to understand why it is a *logos* of Helen, and not a *muthos*, that Stesichorus rejects in his *Palinode*. Whether we accept Calame's model of an epic tradition increasingly aware of its own power to create plausible deceptions, or with Lincoln's associa-

¹⁷ Calame 187.

¹⁸ Lincoln 360.

¹⁹ Lincoln 354.

²⁰ Nagy (1990) 66. This use seems part of a diachronic evolution of the term; it comes into particular prominence in the early fifth century, through Pindar, Herodotus and Hecataeus, among others.

tion of *logoi* with attempts by the weak to use verbal cunning to defeat their superiors, we see a clear sense in which the characterization of the story of Helen as a *logos* already marks it for us as suspect. Again, what this story is not is as significant as what it is: it is not *epea*, already for Calame marked as a technical term for poetry. Nor is it a *muthos*, a term associated *within* epic with the discourse of the powerful, and *beyond* epic with local ritual traditions—the story Stesichorus is rejecting is not marked as local, and may thus have Panhellenic associations. Indeed, the story rejected by the *Palinode* is the Panhellenic narrative *par excellence*, the capture of Helen by Paris and the consequent war with Troy. It is also singular, rather than plural—although it is in the nature of *logoi* to be multiform, it is one specific form of the story of Helen that Stesichorus is repudiating here. As the prologue to the *Theogony* reminds us, to speak in *logoi*, and to say things which are false (*pseudea*), does not exclude the possibility that that speech may well look like the truth (*etumoisin homoia*)—and that the Muses can inspire false tales as well as true ones. The next question we must address is the sense in which our particular story is thought of as false.

3. “True” (*etumos*)

Once again, the language of our Stesichorean fragment is chosen with care from among a set of culturally meaningful terms, and the significance of the choice can only be understood through examining the alternative not chosen. In this case, there are a variety of adjectives corresponding roughly to “true.” The most important alternative to the *etumos* we find here is of course *alêthês*, and my discussion shall focus on the potentially meaningful distinction between them. Most now accept Martin Heidegger’s etymology of *alêthês* as derived from *lanthanô*, “to escape notice.” There is, however, considerable disagreement as to the semantic application of this etymology. Heidegger himself glosses *alêtheia* as *Unverborgenheit*, or “unhiddenness,” implying that this version of truth is a quality inherent to the object to which it is applied.²¹ Others have disputed this claim, and Tilman Krischer, for ex-

²¹ See e.g. Heidegger 33 and 220–223, as cited in Cole. The bibliography on *alêtheia* in particular is substantial and I cannot do justice to it here. Marcel Detienne constructs a structural opposition between *alêthês*/praise/speech/light/memory and *lêthê*/blame/silence/darkness/forgetting (Detienne 25). Page duBois, building to some extent on Detienne’s work, emphasizes the force and violence associated with the notion of truth as something hidden, and Heidegger’s own implication in such a hermeneutics (duBois 127–40), and Louise Pratt finds the Homeric uses of *alêtheia* pertain to an idealized notion of “commemorative history,” of a “non-fictional” account of events told with unswerving adherence to a Muse-inspired narrative (Pratt 7).

ample, has suggested that *alêtheia* refers instead to a kind of discursive truth; Gretchen Kromer concisely glosses this view as “the type of truth which may be communicated by an individual.”²² Thomas Cole takes this view one step further, and argues that *alêtheia* refers not to the object of discourse or to its speaker, but to the discourse itself, to the “process of transmission” by which a story is told, with nothing added or left out, in proper sequence, and so on.²³ Wherever we align ourselves in this discussion it is clear that truth-as-*alêtheia* is intimately connected to memory, to knowledge of the past and to its transmission in discourse, and already in the archaic tradition the word is associated with Panhellenic narratives and can be opposed to local *muthoi*, as in Pindar *Olympian* 1.28–29:

ἦ θαύματα πολλά, καὶ πού τι καὶ βροτῶν
φάτις ὑπὲρ τὸν ἀλαθῆ λόγον
δεδαίδαλμένοι ψεύδεσι ποικίλοις ἐξαπατῶντι μῦθοι.

Indeed there are many wondrous things. And the words that men tell, *muthoi* embellished by varied falsehoods, beyond wording that is *alêthês*, are deceptive.²⁴

Note that, when *muthos* is marked as local and opposed to that which is *alêthês*, the unmarked term for discourse which is *alêthês* is *logos*, and that the *logos* which is *alêthês* is also singular, in contrast to the *muthoi*, which are plural. As Nagy observes, *muthoi* may be imagined in this passage as an undifferentiated outer core of potentially conflicting local traditions, with the *alêthês logos* as the differentiated and true (because consistent) inner core of Panhellenic traditions.²⁵

While there is a strong tradition of defining *muthos* and *logos* in terms of each other, *alêthês* and *etumos* are not as obviously members of a complementary pair, and much less critical attention has been paid to *etumos*. Krischer, who does specifically contrast our two truth-terms, connects *etumos* to that which is genuine, *echt*, or factual, *tatsächlich*.²⁶ Cole compares *alêthês* not only to *etumos*, but also to *nêmertês* and to *atrekês*, and argues that *etumos*’s semantic range covers “communication which is, or will prove to be, in conformity with the facts, or to what is in fact the case, by contrast with uninformed

²² Krischer 171–74. Kromer 425.

²³ Cole 13.

²⁴ Translation from Nagy 1990: 134.

²⁵ Nagy 1990: 60–66 has an extensive discussion of the function of *alêthês* in a Panhellenic cultural context.

²⁶ Krischer 166.

report, wishful thinking, or as yet unconfirmed hypothesis.”²⁷ While Krischer and others argue that the word itself is derived from *eimi* “to be,” I believe weight should also be given to Chantraine’s proposed connection to *etazô*, meaning “to investigate,” in which case it would convey an underlying notion of something that has been examined and found to be true.²⁸ The proof can be in the results that accrue; in the lexicographer Hesychius we find the term *etumodrus*, “true oak,” which Hesychius glosses as “the kind bearing sweet acorns” ἡ τὰς γλυκείας βαλάνους ἔχουσα (Hesychius epsilon 6663). Just as an oak tree proves that it is *etumos* by bearing sweet acorns, so a *logos* can prove that it is *etumos* by bearing results, *inter alia*, in local cult.²⁹

If as Nagy suggests *alêthês* in Pindar and others can be marked programmatically for Panhellenism, then it is at least plausible that *etumos* and its doublet *etêtumos* can be marked as local, or epichoric.³⁰ By this view, which draws also on the discussion above of *muthos* vs. *logos*, the story of Helen rejected by the *Palinode* may be not *etumos*, because it is not a genuine local tradition in accord with local ritual practice. An examination of the uses of both adjectives in early epic and lyric traditions will help us to see the ways in which *etumos* can be marked as the kind of inherent truth revealed

²⁷ Cole 13. He points out that this semantic range corresponds to that assigned to *alêthês* in the fourth century and afterwards. This is an important point, but we must always remember that, as with *muthos* and *logos*, the diachronic shifts in the meanings of these terms has a synchronic element as well. That is, while the terms *alêthês* and *etumos* undergo evolutionary shifts in meaning, the timescale for this change is long, and it is common enough to find both meanings co-existing within a single period, or even a single text.

²⁸ For the *eimi* etymology, see Kirscher 166, who specifically rejects the *etazô* etymology. For the *etazô* etymology, see DELG.

²⁹ The distinction between *etumos* and *alêthês* is a multivalent and fluid one, and it is not my intention to offer my own reading to the exclusion of other views; other scholars have, however, made observations similar to my own. Pratt (123, 125, 128) observes that Pindaric mythological narrative is not characterized as *alêthês*. Pratt is interested mostly in the “fictionality” of Pindar’s myths, and their status as “appropriate” rather than as true, but her empirical observation lends itself as well to other paradigms. Wilhelm Luther, on whom Detienne relies for his reading of *etumos* (Detienne 25), generally glosses the adjective with *wirklich* and *wahre*, in general accord with others. He does, however, observe additionally the Homeric use of the adjective with respect to oaths and mantic speech, in which context a “true” (*wahre*) oath is one that is honored and realized (*eingelöst und verwirklicht*) (Luther 58). There do seem to be contexts in which *etumos* as an adjective emphasizes the results of an act as providing its validation; as we shall see, I believe that one such context can be the sphere of local cult.

³⁰ Nagy 1990: 422–423. Nagy translates these adjectives as “genuine,” marking their distinctive epichoric qualities.

through investigation or through results obtained, rather than that asserted in discourse, and will provide further evidence to connect *etumos*-truth with local cult.³¹

Both truth-adjectives are used with the same degree of frequency in Homeric epic—forms of *alêthês* occur nineteen times, as compared to nineteen occurrences of *etumos* or *etêtumos*. The adjective *alêthês* is overwhelmingly used (eighteen out of nineteen times) in formulaic expressions with verbs of saying, including, significantly, *mutheomai*,³² but also *katalegô*,³³ *en(n)epô*,³⁴ *agoreuô*,³⁵ *eipô*,³⁶ and others. The vast majority of these uses of *alêthês* with verbs of saying involve either first person singular forms, typically future tense (nine occasions), or else imperative constructions in direct or indirect speech (seven occasions). *Alêthês* is thus clearly a word for truth in performance, truth as proclaimed, recounted, narrated, or spoken in the assembly. It is a truth that one feels a compulsion to proclaim oneself, or it is a demand of truthfulness exerted upon one's speech by another. It is not a truth that simply exists, but rather one that must be asserted, with the inherent possibility of challenge or contradiction. The one instance in Homeric epic of the use of *alêthês* without a verb of saying suggests no less strongly this notion of truth as a dynamic process. As the Trojans are attacking the Achaeans and pressing them back to their ships, the battle is evenly balanced between the two sides, and the gods are on the point of deciding the course of the battle (*Iliad* 12.432–438):

ἀλλ' οὐδ' ὥς ἐδύναντο φόβον ποιῆσαι Ἀχαιῶν,
 ἀλλ' ἔχον ὥς τε τάλαντα γυνὴ χερνήτης ἀληθής,
 ἢ τε σταθμὸν ἔχουσα καὶ εἴριον ἀμφὶς ἀνέλκει
 ἰσάζουσ', ἵνα παισὶν ἀεικέα μισθὸν ἄρῃται·
 ὥς μὲν τῶν ἐπὶ ἴσα μάχῃ τέτατο πτόλεμός τε,
 πρὶν γ' ὅτε δὴ Ζεὺς κῦδος ὑπέρτερον Ἑκτορι δῶκε
 Πριαμίδῃ, ὃς πρῶτος ἐσήλατο τεῖχος Ἀχαιῶν.

³¹ For my purposes, I will ignore other truth-words, such as *nêmertês* and *atrekês*, already ably documented and discussed by Cole and others. I will also not dwell on the uses of *eteos*, except to note here that the adjective occurs 21 times in Homer, always in conditional clauses, generally with verbs of saying or knowing. In other words, it refers to kinds of truth that are not yet certain, but (generally speaking) will become certain on the basis of events or results to come. In the following survey, I cover familiar territory, from, I hope, an original perspective.

³² *Iliad* 6.382, *Odyssey* 11.507, 14.125, 17.15 and 18.342.

³³ *Iliad* 24.407, *Odyssey* 7.297, 16.226, 17.108, 17.122, 21.212 and 22.420.

³⁴ *Odyssey* 3.247.

³⁵ *Odyssey* 3.254 and 16.61.

³⁶ *Odyssey* 13.254.

But even so the Trojans were unable to put the Achaeans to rout, but they held their ground, just as a weaving-woman, true [*alêthês*], holds her balance up, putting the wool and the weights in on each side and setting them equal, that she might earn a living for her children, poor woman. Just so were they drawn up, equal, for battle and for war, until when Zeus granted greater glory to Hector, son of Priam, who was the first to spring towards the wall of the Achaeans.

This Homeric simile, rather unusually, is equipoised between the narrative that precedes it and that which follows it. The Achaeans are holding their ground firmly, just as the woman holds her scale tightly to ensure that it gives a fair reading, but the simile of the balance has clear resonance as well with the description of Zeus deciding to which hero he will grant the greater glory. There is no ambiguity about the adjective *alêthês*, which must modify the woman, but her truth extends metonymically and is expressed metaphorically through her scale, so that the adjective colors our understanding of it as well. The scale is true [*alêthês*] because it is able to discern among competing weights to determine which is the heavier; just so does Zeus determine whose glory is to be greater—and just so does the epic tradition know how to distinguish what is *alêthês* from what is *pseudos*.

The adjective *etumos* is less strongly associated with the idea of truth as something to be asserted in performative speech and more with the notion of truth as something to be determined by investigation. There are, additionally, clear distinctions in use between *etumos* and *etêtumos*, distinctions which, however, may derive as much from the metrical forms of the words as from the semantic ranges of these two adjectives. *Etumos* is found in combination with forms of *pseudos*, the adjective for “false,” on three of the six times in which it is used in Homer; twice in the formulaic phrase, *ψεύσομαι, ἢ ἔτυμον ἐρέω*;³⁷ “will what I say be true or false?” used by speakers to mark the following utterance as a speculation on their part (a speculation which in both cases turns out to be true). On the third occasion, it is found in a phrase strikingly similar to that found in the line quoted from the prologue to the *Theogony* above, as Odysseus tells Penelope a false version of his *nostos*: *ἵσκε ψεύδεα πολλὰ λέγων ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα* · “Speaking, he feigned many lies like the truth” (*Odyssey* 19.203). This sort of truth is not *alêthês*, not a *muthos* asserted by the speaker, but rather a *logos* (*nota bene* the use of *legô* here) sought from another, where the listener is aware (or in Penelope’s case, should be aware) of the danger that what is being told may look like the truth without being true.

³⁷ *Iliad* 10.534 (Nestor hearing the night-raid party of Diomedes and Odysseus returning) and *Odyssey* 4.140 (Helen saying that Telemachus must be Odysseus’ son).

Even when *etumos* is not explicitly associated with *pseudês*, the suggestion often remains that what is being heard may be false and would require independent confirmation to be accepted as true. This doubt can be made explicit, as when Menelaus mocks Antilochus during the chariot-race at the funeral games of Patroklos: “Since the Achaeans untruthfully say that you possess understanding,” ἐπεὶ οὐ σ’ ἔτυμόν γε φάμεν πεπνῶσθαι Ἀχαιοί (*Iliad* 23.440). A claim has been made concerning Antilochus’s wisdom, but that claim is revealed to be false through his actions. When Penelope describes to Odysseus the gates of horn and ivory, through which true and false dreams respectively issue from Hades, the true events which the gate of horn brings to pass are described as *etuma* (*Odyssey* 19.567). The truth, however, of such dreams is always prospective; whether what a specific dream foretells will come true or not is not self-evident,³⁸ but rather it is something that will be revealed by subsequent events. Finally, when Eurycleia announces to her mistress Penelope that Odysseus has indeed returned, she says, ἀλλ’ ἔτυμόν τοι/ἦλθ’ Ὀδυσσεὺς καὶ οἶκον ἰκάνεται, ὡς ἀγορεύω, “But truly Odysseus came and arrived at his home, as I am proclaiming” (*Odyssey* 23.26–27). Eurycleia’s identification of Odysseus’s return as *etumon* is not simply a claim she is asserting, but a fact she knows to be true, and that she knows she can prove.

The adjective *etêtumos*, of the same etymological derivation as *etumos*, is frequently found in the formulaic expression καὶ μοι τοῦτ’ ἀγόρευσον ἐτήτυμον, ὅφρ’ ἐν εἰδῶ, “And speak to me truly, that I may know well,” which accounts for seven of its fourteen occurrences in Homer, all in the *Odyssey* (it is a formula used frequently to make enquiries of travelers).³⁹ The adjective is also frequently used as an attribute of persons or of objects, rather than of discourse, being used of causes, messengers, *nostoî*, and children,⁴⁰ all things whose truth or legitimacy is not immediately discernible, but which may prove themselves to be true in time.

Let us examine the relevant passages in more detail. Poseidon suggests to Teucer and others of the Achaean heroes that Agamemnon is in truth (*etêtumon*) the cause, (*aitios*), of the disaster befalling the Achaeans as the Trojans approach their ships (*Iliad* 13.111); this is a truth which Poseidon could

³⁸ Even when, as with the eagle in Penelope’s dream of the geese, its truth-value is directly asserted, in this case as *esthlos* (*Odyssey* 19.544), this assertion seems not to reassure Penelope. The truth or falsehood of the dream will only be revealed if and when Odysseus returns and re-establishes himself.

³⁹ *Odyssey* 1.174, 4.645, 13.232, 14.186, 24.258, 24.297, and 24.403. Note that Odysseus is either the speaker or the addressee on five of these seven occasions, and as such the *etêtumos* is no guarantee of the sincerity of either the questioner or the questioned.

⁴⁰ *Iliad* 13.111, 22.438, *Odyssey* 3.241 and 4.157 respectively.

simply assert as *alêthês*, but he chooses instead to conditionally mark it as *etumos*, no doubt because Achilles' return to battle will soon prove the truth of his claim. The true messenger (*etêtumos angelos*) who has not yet reported Hector's death to Andromache will convey a message whose truth is all too well borne out by the facts. Telemachus tells Mentor that his father will not have an *etêtumos nostos* (*Odyssey* 3.241); Odysseus has already had many *nostoi* in the reports of travelers, which may have been *etumoisin homoioi*, but none of them were *etumoi/etêtumoi*, because none were confirmed by Odysseus's presence. When Peisistratus tells Menelaus that Telemachus is the *etêtumos huios*, the "true son," of Odysseus (*Odyssey* 4.157), he does so because Menelaus has already been persuaded by the physiognomic similarities between the two. In all four cases, the speaker or narrator does not expect or need the listener to accept his truth on faith; he is always able to command clear and unambiguous evidence in support of his claim. Our adjective is similarly used adverbially of the agreement between Thetis and Zeus to honor Achilles, and of the merit of Achilles' warding off evil from the Achaeans, both of which will be demonstrated by subsequent events.⁴¹

Finally, when Eurycleia informs Penelope of Odysseus's return, Penelope initially denies the truth of this statement: ἄλλ' οὐκ ἔσθ' ὅδε μῦθος ἐτήτυμος, ὥς ἀγορεύεις, "But this [*hode*] *muthos* is not *etumos*, as you are saying it" (*Odyssey* 23.62). This line, an obvious parallel to our Stesichorean line, is nonetheless tellingly different from it. Penelope uses *hode*, the demonstrative pronoun of close speaker-oriented deixis, which may initially seem a strange choice, since it is clear to both speaker (Penelope) and hearer (Eurycleia) which *muthos* is meant. The choice of *muthos* rather than *logos* may also seem incongruous; Eurycleia is hardly in a position of power or authority over Penelope. In fact, Penelope's choice of words is quite careful, as befits her character. She characterizes Eurycleia's speech as a *muthos* because she views it as empty and foolish boasting, having in fact warned her that her rejoicing in the death of the suitors was inappropriate: μαῖα φέῦλη, μή πω μέγ' ἐπεύχεο καρχαλόωσα. "Dear nurse, never exult greatly nor laugh out loud [about this]" (*Odyssey* 23.59). Her use of *hode* reinforces the idea that she and Eurycleia do not share an understanding of the *muthos* identified deictically, since Eurycleia views it as a *logos* which is *etumos*, and Penelope views it as a *muthos* which is not *etumos*. Penelope's description of the *muthos* as not *etêtumos* rather than as not *alêthês* emphasizes that, while it is claimed as true by Eurycleia, subsequent events can be expected to show that it is not true at all. To over-translate her words, Penelope is in effect saying, "this claim

⁴¹ *Iliad* 1.558 and 18.128, respectively.

you're making—and I don't agree with you at all about it—I believe that it will be proven false by events.”

It seems possible, then, to draw fairly clear distinctions between the adjectives *alêthês* and *etumos/etêtumos* in Homer, based on how they are used. Most fundamentally, *alêthês* is used of statements made by people, either by the speaker himself (the speaker of an *alêthês* statement is generally male) as a claim of the value of what he is about to say, or as an enjoiner to a speaker to make his words true. The possibility of falsehood is inherent within the term, but the determination of the truth-value of a statement identified as *alêthês* will be made on the basis of the authority of the speaker or the hearer. *Etumos* and *etêtumos*, by contrast, are terms used by speakers to characterize someone else, or something else, as possessing a potential for truth. Often, this potential is explicitly cast into doubt, or even negated, and it is always subject to verification from outside sources, and particularly from subsequent events. If these are the meanings these terms have in Homeric epic, what can we say about their evolution in later texts?

As Cole and others have suggested,⁴² the main story here is the triumph of *alêthês* over *etumos/etêtumos*, especially in prose; the latter pair of adjectives is never found, for example, in Herodotus, Thucydides or in extant works of Aristotle,⁴³ and only found three times in Plato, twice in conjunction with our fragment of the *Palinode*.⁴⁴ Within the early lyric tradition, broadly defined, *etumos* and *etêtumos* are found, albeit rarely: five times in Pindar, twice in Stesichorus (including our passage),⁴⁵ twice in Theognis, and once in Bacchylides. In Pindar, *etumos/etêtumos* is found in uses similar to those we have already seen in Homer; wealth adorned with *aretê* (πλοῦτος ἀρεταῖς δεδαιδαλμένος) is described as the truest light for men (ἐτμώτατον ἀνδρὶ φέγγος) (*Olympian* 2.53–56), a truthfulness that will surely be shown by the blessings they bestow, not simply by the authority of the speaker. Significantly for us, *etumos* can also be used in contexts associated with cultic practice; the worship that has been performed by the family of the *laudandus* of

⁴² Cole 13, Kromer 426.

⁴³ It is found twice in the *Fragmenta Varia* of Aristotle (1.16.102.53 and 7.39.308.6) and three times in the *De mundo*, sometimes attributed to Aristotle, but rejected as spurious from ancient times.

⁴⁴ The third use of *etumos* in Plato is also in the *Phaedrus*, at 260e5, where Socrates claims that a Spartan would argue that there could never be a true (*etumos*) *tekhne* of speech (*logos*) without truth *alêtheia*. A spurious work, the *Axiochus*, contains a further use of *etumos* (Ax. 366b5).

⁴⁵ And one other, highly fragmentary, which can add little to our discussion (fragment S104.3, from *P. Oxy.* 32.2619).

Olympian 6 is characterized as gifts, prayers and sacrifices given *etumôs* to Hermes (*Olympian* 6.77), and in *Pythian* 1 Zeus is enjoined to ensure that the fortunes of king and citizen alike at Aetna are determined based on an *etumon logon* (*Pythian* 1.68). In *Nemean* 7, the Pindaric narrator announces that he will praise the true glory of men, κλέος ἐτήτυμον αἰνέσω (*Nemean* 7.63).⁴⁶ Perhaps the most interesting Pindaric passage of all from our point of view, and one which illustrates concisely the distinction between *alêthês* and *etumos* from our perspective is found in *Olympian* 10, where truth, *alêtheia* itself, is characterized as *etumos*, having been put to the test by Time (ὅ τ' ἐξελέγχων μόνος ἀλάθειαν ἐτήτυμον Χρόνος) (*Olympian* 10.53–55). Moreover, what is being tested by time here is Herakles' establishment of a sanctuary for Zeus at Olympia, and, ultimately, the Olympic Games. The Games, a supremely Panhellenic event, will aspire to truth of the *alêtheia* variety; but that Panhellenic truth will first have to be found authentic in terms of local cult. Nothing could demonstrate more compellingly that *alêtheia* is a quality claimed, and *etumos* a quality demonstrated through the course of events; ultimately, from the epichoric perspective, even *alêtheia* itself must be tested to see if it is *etumos*.⁴⁷

The Bacchylides passage in which *etumos* is found parallels these passages from Pindar. In an ode to Pytheas of Aegina, winner of the pancratium at

⁴⁶ Nagy 1990: 423 offers a very interesting and useful reading of this passage: "Just as the voice of Stesichorus in his *Helen* song proclaims that his version of the *logos* 'tale' of Helen is *etumos* 'genuine' by virtue of claiming that the Homeric version is the opposite (Stesichorus PMG 192.1), so also the voice of Pindar, as it proclaims in *Nemean* 7 its mission to praise what is noble, claims the control of a *kleos* 'glory' that is *etêtumon* 'genuine' (verse 63)." Nagy goes on to argue that, even as Pindar seeks to confer Panhellenic legitimacy on the *kleos* he is singing, it is a *kleos* derived from local Aeginetan cultic traditions, a *kleos* both ignored and threatened by Panhellenic epic.

⁴⁷ Both Kromer and Nicholson, coming as they do from somewhat different perspectives, justly remind us that conceptions of truth in this Pindaric ode are not at all stable, but are in fact open to interpretation by poet and audience. Kromer traces a distinction in this ode between *atrekeia* as a "businessman's" notion of truth (i.e. as accuracy), equating this somewhat with what is *etumos* and contrasting it to *alêtheia*, which is for her discursive, continuous and subjective, the truth of the poet that confers immortality on the *laudandus*. Nicholson, who is interested primarily in *alatheia* in this context, demonstrates convincingly that erotic attraction to the *laudandus* is a constitutive aspect to the poet's claim to truth in this and other epinician poems. A perspicuous reading of *Olympian* 10 will no doubt have to take these and other dimensions of the Pindaric experience of truth into account, and it is not my intention here to construct such a reading. Instead, I wish to draw attention to the contrast between *alatheian* and *etêtumon*, reinforced by their proximity and by the use of the latter to modify the former. Pindar may claim that his song is *alatheis*, but his claim is grounded in its being *etêtumon*.

Nemea, Bacchylides describes his own poems as a gift to Lampon, the father of the *laudandus*, a gift he is able to give through his trust in the Muses. If Clio, representing the Muses, has truly (*etumôs*) given him the gift of song, his songs will herald Lampon to the people with delightful words τὰν εἰκ' ἐτύμως ἄρα Κλειὼ πανθαλῆς ἐμαῖς ἐνέσταξ[εν φρασίν,] τερψιπεεῖς νιν ἄ[ο]ιδὰὶ παντὶ καρύζοντι λα[ῶ] (Bacchylides, *Epinician* 13.195–198). For Bacchylides, then, the quality of his song that guarantees its efficacy in the preservation and distribution of *kleos* is that it his possession of it is *etumos*, that is, that it has been activated through a direct inspiration from the Muses.

One of our passages from Theognis picks up on a theme we have already seen, the lies (*pseudea*) which may look true (*etumos*). In discussing the myth of Sisyphus, and his miraculous return from the dead, Theognis breaks off the narrative to question its truth-value: οὐδ' εἰ ψεύδεα μὲν ποιοῖς ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα “And if you do not tell lies that are like true things” (Theognis 1.713). What is *etumos* here is described by the negation of the idea that lies may look like true things; in a context, furthermore, where what may or may not be *etumos* is an epichoric narrative of a hero's life, one which differs from the Panhellenic version by allowing Sisyphus to return from the dead. Again, what is *alêthês* can be stated with the authority of epic; what is *etumos* requires investigation and proof. As Lowell Edmunds has pointed out, this passage is unlike the prologue to the *Theogony*, where the Muses' capacity to tell lies that look like the truth is balanced by the ability to tell truths when they choose. Here, the capacity to create plausible fictions assumes the value that the ability to speak the truth has in Hesiod.⁴⁸ Edmunds also observes that the reference to Nestor's skill in speech in the following line suggests that the Theognidean tradition has epic poetry in mind when it speaks of plausible fictions—a possibility reinforced within the epic tradition itself, when we remember that when, at *Odyssey* 19.203, Odysseus is described as making many lies look as if they were *etumos* (see above), his capacity to tell the truth is not mentioned. In our Theognidean passage, a lyric tradition seems to be commenting on the capacity of an epic tradition to subsume a wide variety of epichoric *etumoi logoi*. Since what is *etumos* from the perspective of one locality will be lies, *pseudea*, in other localities, epic, viewed from an epichoric perspective, has the capacity to make lies appear true.⁴⁹

The contrasts between *muthos* as authoritative speech coming from someone in a powerful position, and *logos* as crafty speech used by the powerless, seem to underlie our second Theognidean passage, in which it is suggested

⁴⁸ Edmunds 107–8.

⁴⁹ See also Nagy 1990: 421–424 on this point.

that the base may become base through listening to the wrong people (*Theognis* 1.305–308):

Τοὶ κακοὶ οὐ πάντες κακοὶ ἐκ γαστρὸς γεγόνασιν,
ἀλλ' ἄνδρεσσι κακοῖς συνθέμενοι φιλήν
ἔργα τε δαίλ' ἔμαθον καὶ ἔπη δύσσημα καὶ ὕβριν
ἐλπόμενοι κείνους πάντα λέγειν ἔτυμα.

Base men are not all born base from the womb,
but if they join together with base men in friendship
they learn cowardly deeds, and ill-omened words and *hubris*,⁵⁰
since they expect all that these base men say (*legô*) to be true (*etumos*).

The idea that the speech of base men (the *kakoi*) might be false will not be surprising; the fact that it may seem true is rather more remarkable. Within the context that we have established for the use of *etumos*, however, we can see that being *etumos* is precisely the kind of truthfulness that lies can easily adopt, whether those “lies” be the local traditions of another place (and thus not *etumos* for one’s own locality), or whether they be the *logoi* of the lower orders. In addition to being the kind of truth that needs to be proven, then, an *etumos*-truth is the sort of truth whose value depends on one’s own perspective, a particular rather than a universal truth. It is also the sort of truth that might be uttered by someone who is socially or politically marginal; unable to rely on his or her inherent authority to make his or her words *alêthês*, such a speaker can only hope that his or her words will turn out to be *etumos*.

If the *logos* of Helen is described in the *Palinode* as being not *etumos*, as opposed to being not *alêthês*, what, then, does this mean? We have already observed that Stesichorus is making it clear that the *logos* is not true in terms of local cult, even if it may be true in terms of Panhellenic epic. Our examination of the roles of these two “truth”-adjectives in Homer showed additionally that in Homeric epic a statement characterized as *alêthês* will rely on the authority of its speaker or hearer for proof of its truth, while a statement that is *etumos* will be subject to independent verification in terms of its efficacy—a child will be an *etumos* son to his father if he behaves as a son to the father, whereas he would be an *alêthês* child if his father were to proclaim him as such. The same would seem to hold true in negation. The Stesichorean tradition, then, by marking the Panhellenic version of the *logos* of Helen as not *etumos*, is not so much making the claim that it is a false story (and staking its own reputation on that claim); rather, it is seeking to demonstrate that the Panhellenic

⁵⁰ See Nagy (1985) for a discussion of the function of *hubris*, “outrage,” in the Theognidean corpus, and specifically for its attribution as a quality of debased nobles.

version is not efficacious. While the evidence here is more mixed than with *muthos* and *logos*, we have seen evidence from Pindar and Theognis to suggest that one of the ways in which an *etumos*-truth may be seen as efficacious is in the results it provides in cult, and even, as at Theognis 1.713 and *Olympian* 6.77, in local cultic myth and ritual. Taking the evidence for all three words together, then, I would suggest that when Stesichorus performs the Panhellenic version of the *logos* of Helen (which the epic tradition would characterize as a *muthos* rather than a *logos*), it is ritually ineffective—which is demonstrated concretely through the blinding of the poet.

4. “Is Not” (ouk est’)

In contrast to the highly marked language found in the rest of the line (*houtos*, *logos*, and *etumos*), the words which I have translated “is not” are simple and unmarked forms and require no further comment in and of themselves. What is significant, however, is that Stesichorus’ rejection of the Panhellenic *logos* of Helen for the epichoric one is expressed for us in terms of the negation of the Panhellenic, rather than in terms of the affirmation of the epichoric. In an insightful article, Karen Bassi explores the construction of femininity in the *Palinode*, and specifically the way in which the story of the *eidōlon*, the image of Helen that Stesichorus claims went to Troy in her place, simultaneously rehabilitates her character and allows the stain of adultery to remain. Helen is exonerated from having lived with Paris in Troy—but if she traveled to Egypt with him, then she is still guilty of the impulse to adultery, even if that impulse endured a shorter time.⁵¹ Bassi is specifically interested in questions of gender, but her work has implications for questions of genre as well, especially her notion of the “discourse of denial,” which she characterizes as “a mode of self-conscious textual antagonism in which one text affirms its own authority or validity by contrastively representing the inadequacy, untruthfulness or insufficiency of another.”⁵² At the same time, Bassi argues, such a discourse, by assuming and adapting the earlier text or tradition, has the effect of constructing that tradition, as well as destroying it.⁵³

Within our quotation, the deixis of *houtos* re-enacts the Panhellenic *logos* of Helen before our eyes, and it is further recapitulated by the next two lines

⁵¹ There are, of course, other interpretations of the evidence by which Helen was never abducted at all. Bassi’s specific argument concerning the ambiguous construction of womanhood in the *Palinode* is dependent upon accepting a version of the story in which she goes willingly to Egypt. That notwithstanding, the article contains a number of very useful ideas, on which this section of my argument draws.

⁵² Bassi 51.

⁵³ Bassi 51–52.

of the *Palinode*, “You did not embark in the broad-benched ships, you did not reach the citadel of Troy.” Both these lines not only recapitulate the content of the Trojan epic cycle, they also revisit its language. The “broad-benched” (εὐσέλμοις) ships of the *Palinode* echo very precisely a formulaic expression found no fewer than twenty-nine times in the Homeric epics, in both singular and plural, in virtually every grammatical case, and in a wide variety of metrical positions within the line.⁵⁴ The frequency with which this adjective is paired with the noun, “ship” *naus*, within the epic tradition makes it clear that boarding a broad-benched ship metonymically means entering the epic tradition. The “citadel of Troy” Πέργαμα Τροίᾱς, presents a somewhat more complex reference to Homer. Although the Trojan citadel is indeed referred to as *ta Pergama* in Homer, it is never referred to as the *pergama* of Troy, which implies a later usage of the term as a generic label for citadels, rather than as the specific name of the citadel at Troy. It is as if, in stressing the epichoric qualities of his *logos* of Helen, Stesichorus is removing the local color from the (Panhellenic) description of Troy. As the camera zooms in on the epichoric foreground, it loses context in the Panhellenic background.

The *Palinode* seeks not only to assert an epichoric version of the *logos* of Helen, but also to do so by refuting the Panhellenic version, the one in which the abduction of Helen is responsible for the Trojan War. The “denial” in this discourse, then, is no small matter; it is a denial of the justification of the Trojan War itself, the core event of the Panhellenic epic tradition. In saying that Helen did not go to Troy, the *Palinode* is suggesting that the Trojan War was fought over a meaningless *eidôlon*, not a woman, that it was a war without a purpose. By implication, the epic tradition derived from it is largely without purpose as well, honoring the deluded heroes of an unnecessary war. Ultimately, the *logos* that is not *etumos* is the epic tradition itself. The stakes for Stesichorus (and by implication for Plato's Socrates) are here very high indeed.

5. “This... Is Not... A True... Story...” (ouk est' etumos logos houtos)

This deceptively simple line of text, then, which seems to say only, “This is not a true story,” turns out to have rather more to say than that, or at any rate to say what it says in rather more nuanced terms. We have seen that *etumos*, *logos* and *houtos* are, each of them, culturally significant terms, each part of a system of alternatives, chosen for a specific reason. What the *Palinode* is refuting about Helen is not a *muthos* but a *logos*, it is characterized as not being *etumos* rather than not being *alêthês*, and is identified with one of a set of four possible demonstrative pronouns. Furthermore, this epichoric ver-

⁵⁴ Note, however, that, for metrical reasons the adjective takes slightly different forms in the two traditions: in Homer it is εὐσσελμος; in Stesichorus, εὐσέλμος.

sion of the *logos* of Helen is presented in the form of a denial of the Panhellenic, a choice that endows this performance of the *logos* with a Panhellenic significance of its own.

“This is not a true story,” then, is a patently inadequate translation—it touches the surface of what is being said without capturing any of the depth. A fuller translation will necessarily be an over-translation, sacrificing consistency of style and register, as well as readability, in an attempt to say all. “This—this story here, the one we all know and that I have created before your eyes—this story, not imagined in its aspect as an authoritative saying, but rather as the twisting and potentially misleading words of an illegitimate usurper, this one story out of many that could be told, is not an epichoric story, is ineffective in terms of local cult, will not bear fruit for us if we tell it and hear it, should not be accepted as true because of where we hear it, but can be found wanting in terms of the results we see from it—and, with it, the whole epic tradition.” The *Palinode* dramatizes a serious challenge to Homeric epic, reasserting the power of local cult over Panhellenic *muthos*, just as Helen, in blinding Stesichorus, reasserts her epichoric status as a goddess over her Panhellenic status as the adulterous and treacherous wife of Menelaus.

In this context, we can understand more clearly why it is that Plato’s Socrates chooses to refer to Homer as not *mousikos*, a claim that may initially seem odd. Both Homer and Stesichorus, Socrates claims, were blinded by Helen for their slanders against her. Homer, operating in the world of Panhellenic epic, does not have access to the *etumos* version of Helen’s story, in which his salvation would lie; it is only the locally-oriented lyric poet who can apply local knowledge to find an effective solution to his blindness. Plato has Socrates privilege the epichoric over the Panhellenic, for reasons that soon become apparent.

As Socrates recounts the story of Stesichorus’s blindness, he and Phaedrus are seated beneath a plane tree sacred to Achelous (*Phaedrus* 230.b.6), alongside a stream that may or may not be the site of Boreas’s rape of Oreithyia (*Phaedrus* 229.b.4 ff); significantly, Phaedrus’s interest in these local cultic issues lies in whether the stories are *alêthês*, not in whether they are *etumos*, and, equally significantly, Socrates’ response is to open up a series of other epichoric possibilities for the story—that the story of Oreithyia was set in some other location, possibly elsewhere in the vicinity, possibly on the Areopagus. Phaedrus and Socrates (as scripted by Plato) enter into a philosophical discussion, one which will of course lead to Socrates’ own palinode, against the universalizing discourse of the rhetorical speech rather than against the universalizing discourse of epic. Socrates’ palinode will include a *muthos* of his own, when he describes the soul in terms of a chariot driven by horses

(253.c.7). Socrates is aligned with the local and lyric traditions, Phaedrus and rhetoric with the hapless Homer, who cannot see the epichoric tree for the Panhellenic forest.

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