THE ORIGINS OF MODERN PINDARIC CRITICISM

'There, was *Opinion* her Sister, light of Foot, hoodwinkt, and headstrong, yet giddy and perpetually turning.'

Swift, *The Battle of the Books*

' 'Tis true, there is a sort of morose, detracting, ill-bred People, who pretend utterly to disrelish these polite innovations.'

Swift, *A Tale of a Tub*, section VII

It has been said that 'the history of Pindaric criticism is the history of the cardinal problem, unity';[1] but this history has yet to be fully explored. Young's pioneering study passes dismissively over the centuries preceding the publication, in 1821, of Boeckh's commentary—a landmark, indeed, but Boeckh's approach to the poet did not spring into being from nothing; it was the product of a long tradition of careful study, in which Pindar had been widely admired and diversely understood.[2] This paper attempts to document that claim; its primary purpose is therefore historical. But the study of the history of scholarship is of most value when it helps us to understand our own place in that history, disclosing and encouraging us to think critically about our tacit or ill-considered assumptions. I shall therefore conclude by pointing briefly to a possible implication of this history for some more recent work on the poet.

I

Pindar has often been taken to be what at times he professes to be: a disorderly poet, prone to drift helplessly into inept divagations. But the passages in which he lays claim to this fault reveal, on closer inspection, a calculated intent. Like other displays of self-consciousness in Pindar, they are deployed at crucial points of articulation in a poem's structure. Just as a reference to the importance of καιρός marks the transition to a catalogue of the laudandus's minor victories at *P.* 9.78–9, or from a catalogue of family victories to the myth at *O.* 13.47–8, so the claim to have digressed (or to be in danger of digressing) from the laudator's proper theme concludes one section and marks the transition to a new section of the poem at *P.* 11.38–42 (curtailing the myth) or *N.* 3.26–7. If we compare Ba. 5.176–8, 10.51–2, we see that the technique is not wholly idiosyncratic.

This evidence of calculation and convention should deter us from taking the poet's claims at face value; we must reckon with a rhetorical pose. But how much are we to discount? Since the poet is making deliberate use of a conventional device, we can hardly accept his professions of helplessness; but does that mean that he has not digressed, or that his digressions, though genuine, have been artfully contrived? For the critics of the early nineteenth century, this question was answered as soon as asked; the very idea that Pindar might have digressed was

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[1] David Young, 'Pindaric criticism', in: *Pindaros und Bakchylides*, ed. W. M. Calder & J. Stern (*Wege der Forschung* cxxxiv, Darmstadt 1970) 1–95; the quotation is from p. 2. (This is a revised reprint of an article first published in the *Minnesota Review* iv [1964] 584–641; in spite of its shortcomings, some of which I shall touch on in due course, it remains an essential survey of developments in Pindaric studies during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.)

[2] 'Pindar was generally misunderstood, unappreciated, and unpopular before Boeckh and Thiersch'

(Young [n. 1] 3 n. 4); this, as we shall see, is scarcely adequate. Little work seems to have been done, however, on the earlier history of Pindaric criticism; in addition to P. B. Wilson's thesis, 'The knowledge and appreciation of Pindar in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries' (Oxford D.Phil., 1974), see Z. Lempiecki, 'Pindare jugé par les gens des lettres du XVIIe et du XVIIIe siècle', *Bullétin Internationale de l'Académie Polonaise des Sciences et des Lettres (Cracovie), Classe de Philologie*, 1930, 28–39.

intolerable: 'neque poeta ratione, non caeco impetu in carminibus pangendis versatus, . . . crimine digressionum onerandus', as Boeckh has it.[3] But on what was this intolerance grounded? When and how did it arise?

The assumptions underlying this position are seen at their clearest in Dissen's introductory essay *de ratione poetica carminum Pindaricorum et de interpretationis genere in iis adhibendo*.[4] His fullest statement of principle reads as follows:

> Est omnis omnino classici operis ratio haec, ut totum ponatur ubique, ut et singulus quisque locus, singula quaeque pars unitate placeat, et aliud maius vinculum adsit omnis partes complectens. (lxiii)

In context, this principle is being cited to justify an interpretative method, the culminating phase of which is the quest for a 'summa sententia . . . qua omnes partes orationis, dialogi, carminis contineantur'. Thus the *vinculum*, in Dissen's view, the unifying factor, is an underlying theme, of which the poem as a whole is an exposition; each part of the whole is to be explained by reference to the contribution which it makes to that exposition, and is artistically justified if and only if it makes such a contribution. In other words, the *vinculum* is the poem's *Grundgedanke*— to use a term which, as we shall see, has achieved some notoriety in Pindaric studies; this Dissen states at the very beginning of his essay: 'Quum omne carmen summa aliqua sententia (Grundgedanken) contineatur, toti subjecta, unde singulae in eo positae partes pendeant . . .' (xi). Hence his hostility to digression; given this premise, the mythological element of a poem (for example) cannot be construed as digressing from the 'thema propositum carminis' (xx), but must be thought to have some latent bearing on the *Grundgedanke*: 'in fabulis igitur ideale exemplum inest sententiae carmini subjectae' (xxi).

Dissen's basic assumptions were held in common with Boeckh, with whom he had collaborated in the edition of 1821.[5] In that joint venture no extensive programmatic statement is to be found, but the editors' operative assumptions are revealed clearly enough by remarks made in the commentary itself. For example, Boeckh analyses *P. 5* into three sections, but having done so he hastens to re-integrate them by appeal to a shared *Grundgedanke*:

> Deinde vide quomodo omnes tres partes in una cogitatione suam habent coniunctionem, quippe in ea, a qua poeta carmen exorsus est: *Late potentes opes sunt, siquis illas virtute temperatas fato dante comites habeat.* (295)

In the commentary on *O. 2* we can observe how this impulse towards thematic integration was allied to Boeckh's most characteristic exegetical device, the assumption of a covert reference in the details of the poem to the immediate historical context of its composition—a method appropriately dubbed 'historical allegory' by Young:[6]

> Varia vides esse, quae in hoc carmine tanguntur; neque tamen ideo haec varia sine ratione composita in unum corpus sunt. Etenim omnia ad unam rem pertinent, ad dissensiones Theronis et eius partium cum Hierone . . . Itaque nihil est alieni, sed in rerum gestarum nexu indissolubili etiam carminis poetica, quam dicunt, unitas posita est. (122)

More systematic statements were subsequently drawn out of him. In his review of Dissen's

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[3] A. Boeckh, *Pindari opera quae supersunt*, II/2 (Leipzig 1821) 6–7.

[4] Prefaced to his edition (Gotha & Erfurt 1830); cited here from the reprint with additional notes by Schneidewin (Gotha 1843).

[5] See n. 3 above. In addition to Young's (somewhat unsympathetic) account (n. 1), see J. K. & F. S. Newman, *Pindar's art* (Berlin 1984) 1–22. The Newmans stress the Idealist background to Boeckh's work; I shall attempt to show, however, that this determined the articulation more than the substance of his theory, the origins of which were historically more remote. (So, for example, in the eighteenth century the underlying

premise of the theory could be formulated in terms of the Leibniz-Wolff philosophy, as in A. Baumgarten's *Meditationes philosophicae de nonnullis ad poema pertinentibus* [Halle 1735], propositions 65–6: 'Id cuius repraesentatio aliarum in oratione adhibitarum rationem sufficientem continet, suam vero non habet in aliis, est *thema*. Si plura fuerint themata non sunt connexa; pone enim A esse thema, B item, si fuerint connexa aut ratio sufficiens τοῦ A est in B aut τοῦ B in A, ergo aut B aut A non est thema. Iam vero nexus est poeticus; ergo poema unius thematis perfectius illo, cui plura themata.')

[6] Young (n. 1) 9.

commentary, in his polemical exchange with Hermann, and above all in the *Encyclopädie*, Boeckh developed an extremely subtle theory of unity and applied it to Pindar, without, however, calling into question the underlying assumption of his and Dissen's earlier work.[7]

According to Boeckh's developed theory, the unity of a Pindaric poem, as of any genuine work of art, can be considered on a number of different planes. The first plane is that of the text's *objective* unity. In a tragedy, the object would be the play's action, unified according to Aristotelian precepts; in an epinician poem the object is the victory, together with its historical circumstances (conceived not *per se*, as a confused mass of actual events, but as grasped by the poet's idealising intuition). This objective content is not, however, present for its own sake; it always serves some purpose beyond itself, a purpose which is itself unitary, and which determines the poem's *subjective* unity. Boeckh takes it as self-evident that this unitary purpose is the expression of a *thought*: 'welche nothwendig eine *Gedanken*einheit ist' (*Enc.* 132).[8] Thus the action of a tragedy (for the theory of the *Grundgedanke*, for Boeckh as for Dissen, is applicable to the interpretation of all kinds of poetry, and is not peculiar to Pindar) is to be understood as the expression or 'embodiment' of some unitary theme: 'Aber zugleich ist die ganze dramatische Handlung nur Verkörperung eines Grundgedankes, dessen Darstellung also Gesammtzweck erscheint' (*Enc.* 146).[9] Objective and subjective unity together determine the poem's *material* unity, the functional subservience of objective to subjective content ensuring that the two, taken together, *are* unified. This is distinguished, finally, from its *formal* unity, that is, the logically and rhetorically apt disposition and interconnection of its parts in the service of this material unity.

Though he was confident that anyone with an adequate grasp of the individual and generic character of Pindar's poetry would accept his own approach (*Enc.* 114), Boeckh (a distinguished theoretician as well as a classical philologist) clearly understood the 'circular' nature of interpretation, the mutually confirming interplay of premise and conclusion. As he observes in his review of Dissen, those who are content to read apparent irrelevance in Pindar as digression or ornament will conclude that such ornamentation was a norm of ancient lyric, and will appeal to that norm in support of their reading, while those not so content will infer to and from some other norm:

> Denn so lange man sich bei dessen Verständniss und Auslegung damit befriedigte, was nicht zur Sache zu gehören schien, als Abschweifung oder Schmuck anzusehen, schien es Gesetz der Hellenischen, oder wenigstens Pindarischen Lyrik, mit solchem Schmucke das Lied aufzustutzen; und aus diesem Gesetz erklärte man sich denn, was kein anderes Verständniss zuzulassen schien; anderes Verständniss dagegen führt zur Erkentniss eines anderen Gesetzes, und ist letzteres zum Bewusstsein gekommen, so genügt auch da, wo es nicht unmittelbar erkannt werden kann, eine Erklärung nicht mehr, die jenem loseren Gesetz angepasst wäre. (374)

Can this circle be broken, or at least rendered benign, by the application of some external

control? A few years later, reviewing Hermann's *De Officio Interpretis*, Boeckh spoke of his own interpretation as resting on 'a historical and theoretical exposition of the basic principles of composition current in antiquity' ('eine geschichtlich-theoretische Entwicklung der in den Alten ausgeprägten Grundsatze der Composition', 439). In practice, however, this admirable programme is somewhat compromised by a marked disproportion between theory and historical evidence. Boeckh can cite only two ancient texts in support of his reconstruction (439–40, cf. *Enc.* 133): Plato *Phaedrus* 264c, which says rather less than Boeckh needs, and Proclus' commentary on the *Republic*, which (as I shall argue elsewhere) reflects a distinct break with earlier traditions.[10]

In spite of their sharp polemical exchanges, Hermann did not differ fundamentally in stated principle from Dissen or Boeckh.[11] He accepts their basic assumption that a poem must be bound together by some unifying idea: 'Soll ein Gedicht entstehen, so wird eine poetische Idee erfordert, die den Stoff zu einem Ganzen verbinde' (31). It is solely with respect to the nature of a 'poetic idea' (also *Hauptgedanke*) that Hermann assails Dissen; that a poetic idea must engage our feelings ('eine poetische Idee aber ist ein Gedanke, der von irgend einer Seite das Gefühl in Anspruch nimmt') is a point which Dissen, with his pedantic, 'micrological' formulae, has in Hermann's view failed to grasp. In practice, however, Hermann did not conform strictly to that premise. Boeckh points out in his review of *De Officio Interpretis* that Hermann's interpretation of *P.* 2 fails to establish any thematic or functional connection between the two parts into which it divides the ode ('Der Verfasser . . . setzt zwei in ihrem Zweck und Grundgedanken ganz verschiedene Theile, die nur äusserlich, man kann sagen mechanisch, durch ein eben so äusserliches von beiden Theilen verschiedenes Bindesmittel zusammengehalten werden', 439). Hermann had written:

> Haec etsi satis obscura sunt, illud statim apparet, duas esse partes huius carminis, quarum in priore Hieronis potentia et sapientia laudetur, in altera autem Pindarus se adversus obtrectatores defendat. (116)

It is true that Hermann asserts that a 'simplex argumentum' results (128; *cf.* Boeckh 441–2, 453); but (by contrast with Boeckh in his partition of *P.* 5, cited above) he does not explain how this is so (it is far from self-evident). Elsewhere he clearly abandons the basic shared assumption, denying Dissen's premise, 'mythicis solere summam sententiam carminum contineri' (111):

> Nam neque caussa est ulla, cur summa argumenti in rebus fabulosis versetur, et carmina Pindari contrarium demonstrant idque necessario, quia non de fabulis illis, sed de aliis rebus scripta sunt, fabulae autem ornandi tantum caussa insertae.

This view of myth—'ornandi tantum caussa'—is clearly the very position to which Boeckh had opposed himself in his review of Dissen: 'mit solchem Schmucke das Lied aufzustutzen'.

<center>II</center>

Boeckh's criticism of Hermann's reading of *P.* 2 is perfectly fair—given a view of unity such as that the language of which Hermann himself sometimes speaks, and which he shares with Boeckh and Dissen: a 'centripetal' view, as one might call it, eschewing digression and diversity of theme or function in a single poem. It is striking, however, that Hermann's interpretation of *P.* 2 is a traditional one, that had long been accepted without centripetal qualms. The scholia are quite content to read the first part of the poem as an encomium of Hiero and the latter part as

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[10] The late Neoplatonist theory of unique σκοπός which Proclus presupposes is a misinterpretation of Plato, and quite untypical of earlier Greek attitudes to literary unity; I hope to publish a more extensive survey of the Greek critical literature in due course.

[11] See G. Hermann, review of Dissen: *Neue Jahrbücher für Philologie und Paedagogik* ((1831) 44–91, cited from *Opuscula* VI (Leipzig 1835) 1–69; *De officio interpretis* (Leipzig 1834), cited from *Opuscula* VII (Leipzig 1839) 96–128.

Pindar's self-defence;[12] and such an interpretation was standard among the Renaissance commentators.[13] Thus Lonicer:

> Continet hic hymnus duos potissimum status. Primus laudatorius est, quo Hieronem a victoria curru obtenta laudat. Alter est paraeneticus: commonefacit enim Hieronem, ne adulatoribus aurem accommodet. Ante paraenesin illam ad gratitudinis suasionem digreditur, Locros Epizephyrios et quicunque beneficium accepissent ab Hierone, gratos esse debere benefactori subindicans. Atque in eo eucharistias loco bonam hymni partem absolvit. (305)

Similarly Aretius:

> Itaque tres sunt partes: prima de laudibus Hieronis, cuius occasionem obtulit victoria. Secunda de ingratitudine et gratitudine, quod argumentum imposuit illi officium suum. Tertia contra obtrectatores, qui ad defensionem sui videntur compulisse Pindarum. (233)

And Benedictus:

> Tria praestat hoc encomio: primum laudat Hieronem a victoria curruli. Deinde ad locum de Gratitudine digreditur. Tertio monet ne aurem adulatoribus accommodet. (274)

In none of these commentaries is any attempt made to reintegrate the three parts of the poem in the way required by Boeckh.

By far the most subtle and detailed analysis of the poem from this period is that of Erasmus Schmid, elegantly set out in schematic form on pp. 62–3 of his commentary.[14] The main headings of his analysis are as follows:

   (i) *exordium*;
  (ii) *propositio*: 'Hiero victor currulis, est celebrandus';
 (iii) *confirmatio*, consisting of three *argumenta*:
     (a) his skill as a racer of chariots;
     (b) the magnitude of his glory ('quae etiam communicatur Ortygia, quam commendat a tutela Dianae');
     (c) the gods assisting him (Artemis, Hermes, Poseidon);
  (iv) *digressio*, justifying the writing of a celebratory ode: 13–56 are analysed as a series of arguments, with *amplificatio*, in defence of the laudator's task;
  (v) *confirmatio* (continued): three further *argumenta*:
     (d) Hiero's wealth and generosity;
     (e) his warlike youth;
     (f) his wisdom in old age;
     the *confirmatio* is concluded with a προσφώνησις (67);
  (vi) *commendatio* of the present song;
 (vii) *paraenesis* addressed to Hiero, 'de cavendis obtrectatoribus'; this is subdivided into no less than fourteen arguments;
(viii) *epilogus* (93–6).

Despite the complexity of this analysis, the traditional view of the underlying structure of the poem—as a praise of the victor followed by advice and/or self-defence—is clearly in evidence, and Schmid shares the Renaissance indifference to showing that the poem's major subdivisions

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[12] See A. B. Drachmann, *Moderne Pindarfortolkning* (Copenhagen 1891) 5–17, for a discussion of the Pindaric scholia (there is a Latin summary on p. 314).

[13] The commentaries cited in this paragraph are those of J. Lonicer (Basel 1535), B. Aretius (Geneva 1587), and J. Benedictus (Saumur 1620).

[14] E. Schmid, *Pindari carmina* (Wittemberg 1616). An indication of Schmid's analytical style can be gained from his treatment of the exordium of *P*. 2, which (he

says) indicates (i) the place (a) to which the song is brought (Syracuse, which is praised for: its size; the protection it receives from Ares; the bravery of its people; the competitive aptitude of its horses), and (b) from which the song is brought (Thebes, which the poet calls λιπαραί), and (ii) what is brought (i.e., a song celebrating Hiero's chariot victory). In the original these subdivisions are set out in tabular form, using curly brackets.

could be subordinated to a single theme or purpose. The centripetal assumption that was common ground for scholars of the early nineteenth century was not recognised by their sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century predecessors.

It has long been customary to scorn Schmid's mode of analysis; as one eighteenth-century critic put it, 'vitentur studiose exsecrabiles istae tabulae Schmidtianae'.[15] But it is worth attempting to reach a sympathetic understanding of its rationale. In fact Schmid's analysis does not differ in kind from that undertaken by the other early commentators we have mentioned; it is only—and by far—the most rigorous and most sophisticated application of a shared approach. This approach is (obviously) rhetorical, but in two senses. First (and most obviously) the terms of the analysis are drawn directly from the late Graeco-Roman rhetorical systems. To us this is likely to seem at best quaint, at worst a perversely anachronistic imposition of a framework wholly alien to archaic poetry. But at a time when this rhetoric was still taught and actively used the perversity could not have been so apparent; rhetoric provided the commentator with a familiar and very flexible tool, the use of which was entirely natural. At a deeper level, the approach is rhetorical in the sense that it attempts to grasp each poem as a plausible utterance in a particular context; its aim is to show how each part of the poem can be construed as a rhetorically appropriate response to some salient and response-demanding feature of that context. It is for this reason that the nineteenth-century requirement that all parts of a poem be subordinated to a *single* theme or function is alien to the Renaissance commentators. If the situation to which the poem responds is a complex one, then a complex response is required. Thus while the nineteenth-century commentator is bound to deny the existence of any substantial digression in a Pindaric poem (any *formal* digression must be taken to promote covertly the *Grundgedanke*), his Renaissance colleague may accept and approve the digression as warranted by its bearing on some subsidiary feature of the assumed context of utterance (as the assumed presence of *obtrectatores* in Hiero's court justifies the dual function—praise and self-defence—ascribed to *P. 2*).

Having justified the parts of the poem individually, the rhetorical commentator will of course wish also to show that they are disposed appropriately in relation to each other, that the poet has organised his response to the rhetorical demands of the context in the most effective way. In the case of Pindar it is recognised that special norms of propriety are applicable to lyric, in which far-reaching digression and abrupt transitions exploiting some unobvious association help to achieve the generically apt effect of inspired sublimity. Touching on 'longiunculas illas digressiones' (one of the features of Pindar's odes 'quae nescio an excusare, an vero potius profiteri, laudare, et praedicare debeam'), Sudorius explains that lyric and dithyrambic poets employ them 'partim ut hoc genere scribendi lectorum fastidium vitarent, partim ut diversarum rerum, sententiarum, historiarum, fabularum coacervatione, furoris et cuiusdam divini afflatus opinionem sibi in vulgus artificiose quaererent'.[16] Boileau expressed the point more memorably: 'chez elle [l'Ode], un beau désordre est un effet de l'Art'.[17] This 'beau désordre' may seem remote from Schmid's tidy schematisms; what, one might ask, has become of the *furor* and *afflatus* in such a reading (many have asked what has become of the poetry)? But that is a superficial view. Schmid attempts to schematise only an underlying logical and rhetorical structure; it is not denied that this structure is realised in the text itself in a way that, deliberately abrupt, allusive and arresting, disguises its real orderliness.

III

The order which commentators discerned underlying Pindar's text in no way conflicted

[15] J. G. Meusel, *De veterum poetarum interpretatione* (Halle 1766) 37.

[16] N. Sudorius, *Pindari opera omnia* (Paris 1582) 2. (Note *artificiose*: these rhetorically minded critics were

not confused by Pindar's rhetorical poses.)

[17] *L'art poétique* II 72 (*Oeuvres complètes*, ed. F. Escal [Paris 1966] 164); the poem was published in 1674.

with the appearance of 'fine disorder' which many admired in the surface of the text.[18] But in time some, whose taste was offended by Pindar's apparent excesses, began to doubt the reality of the underlying order; these would speak slightingly, with Perrault, of 'le galimatias impénétrable de Pindare'.[19] By comparison with Homer, Pindar was only a minor theatre of operations during the 'querelle des anciens et des modernes'; but his reputation was attacked, and the whole controversy reflects a declining readiness to accept traditional evaluations and traditional techniques and assumptions in criticism. A consequence of this new climate of thought is the confusion which prevails in Pindaric criticism during the eighteenth century, by comparison with the Renaissance or with the early nineteenth century, when a new consensus had been achieved. Here we shall mention briefly some representative figures of the main tendencies of critical thought.

La Motte provides a convenient example of the 'modernist' attack on Pindar, and shows how this attack could be allied to an early manifestation of the centripetal assumption:[20]

> C'est de cet enthousiasme que doit naître ce beau désordre dont M. Despréaux [Boileau] a fait une des règles de l'ode. J'entends par ce beau désordre, une suite de pensées liées entre elles par un rapport commun à la même matière, mais affranchies des liaisons gramaticales, et de ces transitions scrupuleuses qui énervent la poésie lyrique, et lui font perdre même toute sa grâce. . . . Pour moi je crois indépendamment des examples, qu'il faut de la méthode dans toutes sortes d'ouvrages; et l'art doit régler le désordre même de l'ode, de manière que les pensées ne tendent toutes qu'à une même fin.   (90–1)

In its expectation of an apparent disorder with an orderly structure underlying it, this is entirely traditional; the novelty is the requirement of a single subject and single purpose as a condition of orderliness in the underlying structure. This condition Pindar does not, in La Motte's view, meet; a subtle polemicist, he argues that a defender of the 'ancients' like Boileau shows better taste in practice (in his 'Ode sur la Prise de Namur')[21] than he does in his admiration of Pindar: 'il n'a pas mis un autre désordre que celui que je reconnais ici pour une beauté. L'auteur n'y sort pas un moment de sa matière et il n'a pas jugé à propos d'imiter Pindare jusque dans ces digressions, ou il était forcé par la sécheresse de ces sujets'   (91).[22]

How could Pindar be defended in the face of such an attack? Fraguier, writing at about the same time, accepted that there were digressions in Pindar, not all of which could be explained as

[18] See, for example, Congreve's criticism of Cowley's 'Pindaric Odes': 'The character of these late Pindariques, is, a Bundle of rambling incoherent Thoughts, express'd in a like Parcel of irregular Stanzas. . . . There is nothing more regular than the Odes of *Pindar*, both as to the exact observation of the Measures and Numbers of his Stanzas and Verses, and the perpetual Coherence of his Thoughts. For tho' his Digressions are frequent, and his Transitions sudden, yet is there ever some secret connexion, which tho' not always appearing to the Eye, never fails to communicate itself to the Understanding of the Reader.' (This optimistic judgement is to be found in 'A Discourse on the Pindarique Ode', published in 1706; *Complete works* [London 1923] IV 83.) Compare Edward Young on the ode: 'Its conduct should be rapturous, somewhat abrupt, and immethodical to a vulgar eye. That apparent order, and connexion, which gives form and life to some compositions, takes away the very soul of this. . . . Thus Pindar, who has as much logic at bottom as Aristotle or Euclid, to some critics has appeared as mad' ('Discourse on Lyric Poetry', first published in 1728; *Complete works* [London 1854] I 415–16).

[19] C. Perrault, *Parallele des Anciens et des Modernes* (Paris 1688) II 235, cf. III 184.

[20] A. Houdart de La Motte, 'Discours sur la poésie en

général, et sur l'ode en particulier', in *Odes* (Paris 1707); cited from *Les paradoxes littéraires de La Motte*, ed. B. Jullien (Paris 1859) 78–110.

[21] Published in 1693, with a prefatory 'Discours sur l'Ode', replying to Perrault's attack on Pindar. (In the *Oeuvres complètes* [n. 17 above], the 'Discours' may be found on pp. 227–9, the ode on pp. 230–4; it is interesting to observe that Boileau suppressed the original second stanza, which had contained a 'Pindaric' self-defence [p. 1023].)

[22] In his 'Discours a l'occasion des Machabées' ([n. 20] 440–70), the preface to one of his own tragedies (published in 1722), La Motte argues that dramatic critics had neglected the most important of the 'unities', that of 'interest': 'Si plusieurs personnages sont diversement intéressés dans le même événement, et s'ils sont tous digne que j'entre dans leurs passions, il y a alors unité d'action et non pas unité d'interêt, parce que souvent, en ce cas, je perds de vue les uns pour suivre les autres, et que je souhaite et que je crains, pour ainsi dire, de trop de côtés' (455). I have argued elsewhere (see n. 9 above) that 'unity of interest', though desired by many modern critics, is regularly neglected in Greek tragedy; this is another instance of the discrepancy between current centripetal assumptions and Greek aesthetics.

contributing to the victor's glorification: 'il y en a d'autres que la seule poësie amène dans la chaleur de la composition, et qui ne sont que de purs embellissemens' (42).[23] But he thought that the excellence of their content was sufficient justification:

> Mais ces digressions qu'on blasme comme contraires aux règles de l'art, et qui dans un grand poëte sont l'effet de l'impression violente que les différents objets qu'il envisage font sur son imagination, ne détournent jamais Pindare de son sujet que pour le conduire à quelque chose de plus élevé, et quand il donne cet effort à son esprit, c'est toûjours pour présenter au nostre de plus grandes et de plus nobles idées. (38)

Less naïve, perhaps, is Robert Lowth.[24] He states as a general principle concerning lyric poetry:

> Odarum scriptoribus ea licentia praecipue conceditur, ut varietatis hujusce gratia in crebras digressiones libere excurrant; nec modo veniam habent, sed laudem etiam meretur isthaec audacia evagandi. (257)

Pindar's practice is admittedly extreme; Lowth contrasts the restraint of the Hebrew Psalmists with Pindar's *felix audacia* in digression. This he explains as the product of necessity; Pindar's restricted and unpromising subject-matter (this point, which we have met already in Sudorius and La Motte, is a constant refrain of Pindaric criticism) would become tedious 'nisi hos locos summa cum libertate tractare, aliosque etiam longius disjunctos interdum quaerere statuisset poeta' (258). This is not, for Lowth, merely to excuse a fault:

> Habet igitur necessitatis excusationem; nec modo veniam, sed laudem merito adeptus est: atque ita quidem, ut multa ejusmodi, quae in alio nec defendenda essent nec ferenda, in Pindaro hoc nomine probari, vel etiam laudari posse videantur.

Lowth cites *P.* 3 to illustrate his point; what other poet, he asks, could get away with devoting half of a poem in praise of Hiero to Asclepius? 'Sed ferenda est poetae audacia, si ex his rerum angustiis in liberioris campi spatia vel temerario aliquantum impetu effugerit.' For Lowth, therefore, an understanding of the poetic rationale of Pindar's digressiveness can turn a potential blemish into a positive beauty.

A much less distinguished scholar, Friedrich Barth, attacked the problem in a dissertation on poetic digressions published in 1766.[25] Barth accepts the point (which those who wished to minimise Pindar's digressive habits made much of) that a victory, so far from being a private affair, had significance for the family and city of the victor also; but he does not think this sufficient grounds for denying that Pindar digressed:

> Tamen vel unius odae Pindaricae accurata perlectio, ubi quidem laudes maiorum victoris fusius persequitur, unumquemque satis docebit, digressiones a re proposita fuisse factum, Pindarumque modo argumenti sui amplificandi caussa, modo eruditionis ostentandae gratia, modo suavitatis caussa maioris, modo etiam ob alias quasdam rationes, tam late evagatum fuisse. (15)

Barth makes the important point that what needs to be explained is not simply the inclusion of myths indirectly connected with the victor, but also the seemingly disproportionate attention which Pindar sometimes devotes to them; in such cases 'nemo mihi persuadebit, haec omnia cum primario poetae argumento ita esse connexa, nihil ut per digrediendi licentiam allatum esse verisimile videatur'. He argues, too, that the existence of an indirect association with the victor does not suffice to show that material is functionally integral to the poem's 'primary argument'; the myth of *P.* 4, for example, 'quae omnia maiores Arcesilai attingunt quidem, sed tamen non ita sunt cum proposito Pindari coniuncta, ut necessitate quadam in his rebus, extra ordinem allatis, versari debuerit' (16). Yet Barth does not regard the conclusion that Pindar digresses as detracting from his merit as a poet:

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[23] C. F. Fraguier, 'Le caractère de Pindare', in: *Mémoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belle-Lettres*, vol. 2 (Paris 1717) 34–47 (this volume covers the years 1701–1710).

[24] R. Lowth, *De sacra poesi Hebraeorum* (Oxford 1753); the references are to Lecture 26.

[25] F. G. Barth, *De digressionibus poeticis* (Wittemberg 1766); for his discussion of Pindar, see pp. 14–20, 34–9.

Neque vero periculum est, ne nimia digressionum, in Pindaro tali modo occurentium, frequentia laudi poetae aliquid detrahatur; illud potius infra luce meridiana clarius fiet, summum in digressionibus latere poetae artificium, neque minus divinum prodere copiaque rerum abundans ingenium.   (20)

These defenders of Pindaric digressions would have concurred, it seems, with the views expressed by Joseph Trapp in his Oxford lectures on poetry.[26] Having described the characteristic style of lyric poetry—order underlying a contrived appearance of disorder; abrupt and elliptical transitions; digressive *licentia* (84–7)—Trapp considers the legitimacy of digression. Although he prefers digressions of a modest kind ('quae, arrepta occasione ab Adjuncto aliquo, vel Circumstantia, Rei propositae, ad aliam transeunt, non tamen a principe materia penitus alienam; qua aliquantisper ludunt, deinde arrepta similiter ab aliquo Illius Adjuncto occasione, ad primum Institutum inopinato revertuntur'), he accepts that more radical digressions ('quae a re principio proposita penitus aberrant, et ad eandem numquam regrediuntur') are perfectly acceptable, 'defendendae proculdubio . . . imo et nonnunquam plurimum laudandae': 'Non enim semper cogitur Poeta uni Argumento, a quo exordium ceperat, ad exitum usque immorari' (89–90). Trapp, therefore, inclined but was not dogmatically attached to centripetal principles; but this tolerant view ran counter to that increasingly dominant.

Two contemporary rhetorics will suffice to illustrate the climate of opinion.[27] John Lawson writes as follows:

> There is one Thing relative to Design, worthy of particular Observation: That every Discourse should have *one principal Subject*; the Explanation, Proof, and Enforcement whereof should be the main Scope, to which all other Heads should be subordinate; or rather that they should be only Branches or different Views of it, and all concur in the End to its Strength and Illustration.   (377–8)

Lawson argues that this 'Unity of Design' is an essential feature of all works of art, and he cites Euripides' *Hecuba* as defective, 'containing two distinct Actions, faulty thus joined, separately very beautiful'.[28] Hugh Blair takes a similar view. He raises the question of unity first in his discussion of preaching (though he remarks there that it is 'of great consequence in every composition'):

> What I mean by unity is, that there should be some one main point to which the whole strain of the Sermon should refer. It must not be a bundle of different subjects strung together, but one subject must predominate throughout.   (II 108–9)

The point is raised again in connection with lyric poetry. Its characteristic style ('the liberties it is allowed to take, beyond any other species of Poetry') is explained by the empassioned nature of music and song: 'Hence, that neglect of regularity, those digressions, and that disorder which it is supposed to admit; and which, indeed, most lyric Poets have not failed sufficiently to exemplify in their practice' (II 354). Blair does not wish to deny lyric poetry its distinctive character; but he insists that its excesses should be curbed by the principle of unity:

> The Licentiousness of writing without order, method, or connection, has infected the Ode more than any other species of Poetry. Hence, in the class of Heroic Odes, we find so few that one can read with pleasure . . .

[26] J. Trapp, *Praelectiones poeticae* (ed. 3, London 1736).

[27] J. Lawson, *Lectures concerning oratory* (Dublin 1758); H. Blair, *Lectures on rhetoric and belle-lettres* (London 1783). (Blair's lectures were written in the late 1750s or early '60s, according to G. Kennedy, *Classical rhetoric and its Christian and secular tradition* [London 1980] 234–5.)

[28] A frequent complaint against Euripides' *Hecuba* in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century criticism (see, for example, the discussion in Hermann's edition of the play [Leipzig 1831], xv–xvi). In the Renaissance, by contrast, the play was greatly admired—and not only because, as the first play of the triad, it was most familiar (see N. G. Wilson *A&A* xix [1973] 87); as the sixteenth-century editor Gaspar Stiblinus (Basel 1562) commented: 'Haec fabula propter argumenti tum varietatem, tum plusquam tragicam atrocitatem, iure principem locum tenet' (38).

> I do not require, that an Ode should be as regular in the structure of its parts, as a didactic, or an
> Epic poem. But still, in every Composition, there ought to be a subject; there ought to be parts
> which make up a whole; there should be a connection of those parts with one another.   (II 356)

The source of lyric poetry's licentious 'infection' is, of course, Pindar; 'his genius was sublime',
Blair allows:

> But finding it a very barren subject to sing the praise of those who had gained the prize in the public
> games, he is perpetually digressive, and fills up his Poems with Fables of the Gods and Heroes, that
> have little connection either with his subject, or with one another.   (II 357)

Given this climate of opinion, it is not surprising that the defence of Pindar increasingly
shifted from the justification of digressiveness to its denial (we have already seen Barth's reply to
one such attempt).[29] In 1764 Chabanon, in one of a series of annotated translations of Pindar
presented to the *Académie des Inscriptions et Belle-Lettres*, attacked a defence of this kind mounted
by Garnier in his (apparently unpublished) reply to Chabanon's earlier treatment of *P*. 2.[30]
Garnier's objection was that, in the scholiastic interpretation, which Chabanon had followed,
the various parts of the poem are fragments unconnected with each other, 'ou du moins qui ne
tendoient pas directement au même but' (367). He has attempted, therefore, to reunite the
detached fragments: 'les unir, les attacher ensemble, et faire, en un mot, que les premiers et les
derniers vers de l'ode, n'eussent qu'une même fin'; for Garnier is wholly committed to a
centripetal view of unity: 'M. l'abbé Garnier ne peut concevoir que Pindare ait rassemblé dans
une ode, des recits, des maximes et des conseils qui n'aient pas tous un seul objet et une fin
commune'. Garnier's approach to the problem seems (though Chabanon gives few details) to
have foreshadowed Boeckh's method of historical allegory;[31] Chabanon remains sceptical:

> M. l'abbé Garnier a trouvé dans l'histoire des temps ou Pindare écrivoit, un événement auquel il
> rapporte ingénieusement les recits et les maximes contenus dans l'ode dont je parle: le morceau par-là
> devient plus un; mais cet avantage, le doit-on à l'auteur ou à l'interprète? . . . L'art de l'allégorie est
> un art trompeur.

Chabanon was, in fact, sympathetic to Garnier's aesthetic premises,[32] and says that he would
welcome his efforts, were they to have any prospect of success; if not, 'je verrais dans une ode de
Pindare, ce que j'y ai vu jusqu'à présent, un tout dont les parties sont rapprochées et quelquefois
liées, mais jamais dépendantes absolument les unes des autres, comme dans un ouvrage où tout
tend au même but' (368).

I mention Garnier, partly for his anticipation of Boeckh's method of historical allegory,
partly because Chabanon, in his brief retort, puts his finger so precisely on the crucial premise at

[29] An eccentric instance can be found in A. F.
Ruckersfelder's *Sylloge commentationum et observationum
philologico-exegeticarum et criticarum* (Utrecht 1762). He
argues that Pindar always has a single *Grundgedanke* (15:
'quod omnia in ejus carminibus, faciant ad confirman-
dam, vel illustrandam unicam propositionem primar-
iam, sine digressionibus, aut aliis poetarum licentiis,
duplicem scopum conjungentibus'); but he regards this
regularity as *unique* to Pindar, and does not think it
necessary to poetic excellence (10: 'en, exempla carmi-
num, elegantissimorum certe, quae non unicam sed
duplicem veritatem confirmant, quaeque non ad
unicum, et simplicem, sed ad duplicem scopum directa
esse videntur'; he cites Ps. 19, Hor. *Odes* 1.12).

[30] The main source is Chabanon's paper on *P*. 4, in:
Mémoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belle-Lettres,
vol. xxxv (Paris 1770) 364–85; his paper on *P*. 2 was
read in 1762 and published in vol. xxxii of the *Mémoires*,
485–96. Chabanon says that Garnier's reply was read to
the Academy, but I have not found it in the *Mémoires*, or

elsewhere.

[31] Boeckh seems to have been anticipated also in J. F.
Vauvilliers' *Discours sur Pindare* (Paris 1772). Vauvilliers
imposed a requirement of centripetal unity ('Ainsi ce
que nous appellons dans l'Ode, épisode ou écart, ne
devient plus qu'une digression froide et ridicule, si le
Poëte n'a pas l'art de le lier à son sujet, de manière à ne
former qu'un tout inséparable' [16–17]); and he
regarded the odes as uniting a subject or occasion (i.e.,
the victory) with 'l'objet particulier du Poëte'—for
example, the poet may use the character or circum-
stances of the victor for (public or individual) instruc-
tion, correction or exhortation (72–3): thus a recon-
struction of the circumstances will disclose 'la raison des
épisodes, qui ne paroissent avoir par eux-mêmes aucune
relation directe avec la victoire'. (I have not seen this
work, and am here indebted to P. B. Wilson [n. 2] pp.
284–91.)

[32] *Cf.* vol. xxxii, 459–60 for his unease over Pindar's
'disorder', and for his attempts to mitigate the fault.

issue. More influential was the work of Schneider and Jacobs.[33] Schneider cites Lowth's remarks on Pindar, but is unwilling to allow his appeal to necessity and *felix audacia* (which in Lowth's view more than barely justified the digressions), preferring to see in Pindar's excesses 'a product of his heady and prodigal imagination' ('ein Auswuchs der unnüchtern und schwelgerischen Einbildungskraft', 83). He does not dissent from Lowth's perception of the fact of digressiveness; the myth of Coronis and Asclepius in *P*. 3, for example, has 'neither relevance nor proportion', and with the wish for Hiero's health with which the poem opens it has 'only a quite forced and unnatural connection' ('nur eine ganz erzwungene und unnatürliche Verbindung', 83–4). Clearly, unlike Lowth, he regards this trait as unequivocally an artistic flaw. He argues that a correct grasp of the essential features of epinician (the integration of the praise of the victor with that of family and city, and with thanksgiving to the gods and heroes responsible for the victory: 68–9) can rescue some of the poet's apparent digressions from blame, but concedes that it leaves a large number open to the charge of irrelevance and disproportion ('es bleiben aber dennoch genug Erzählungen übrig, denen man mit Recht vorwerfen kann, daß sie zum Hauptinhalte fremd und außerwesentlich sind, daß ihnen Verbindung, Intereße und Proportion fehlen', 73). *N*. 1 is an example—the myth in itself is a 'masterpiece of lyric poetry' (75), but it distracts the poet from his *Hauptgegenstand* (78); it has no discernible connection with the victor, and renders the ode a grotesque conflation:

> Er wollte eigentlich nur eine Erläuterung von einem Gemeinsatze geben, deßen Bestimmung und Beziehung auf den Sieger Chromius die alten Ausleger schon vergeblich gesucht haben, und verlor sich in eine Episode, die gar kein Verhältniß zum Ganzen hat, und dem Gedichte die fabelhafte Gestalt eines Hippocentaurus gibt.

In *P*. 2 (a peculiar mixture, in Schneider's view, of the victor's praise and bitterness against the poet's detractors), the Centaur's birth is a superfluous addition to the myth of Ixion, itself unnecessary and disproportionate, arbitrarily added to illustrate a premise so commonplace and obvious as to need no proof, no elucidation at all (87). Without an adequate functional relation to the programmatic centre of epinician, the elements which should adorn a song become faults:

> Nur allein die Gedanken, die Erzählungen, die Beyspiele machten die Schönheiten eines solchen Liedes aus, welche die Eitelkeit des Siegers befriedigen konnten, und eine genaue Beziehung auf seine Person, Familie und Vaterland hatten; ohne dieselbe verloren sie allen Reiz und wurden Fehler. (83)

Jacobs' essay has the great merit of rejecting the common assumption that Pindar's subject-matter was dry and uninteresting; he stresses the importance of agonistic success in Greek culture, and concludes: 'arm war also der Stoff der Dichters gewiß nichts' (62). The popular explanation of Pindar's digressiveness as a desperate evasion of his uncongenial encomiastic task ('man sagt: Pindar habe die Schwierigkeiten seines Stoffs auf die Art überwunden, daß er sich wenig oder nicht von denselben bekämmere, sondern bey der ersten Gelegenheit in das Gefild der Mythen ausschweife, und sich gerade bey den Gegenständen am längsten aufhalte, die am weitesten aus seinem Wege lagen', 60) is therefore untenable; and in fact the digressiveness of Pindar's poems has in Jacobs' view been greatly exaggerated. There remain a few exceptions; in *N*. 1, for example, the narrative 'apparently stands in no adequate relation to the whole', even though, regarded in its own right, it is extremely fine (67). But in general, Jacobs concludes, a closer acquaintance with the oldest traditions of family and city would show us that what we take to be an unnecessary digression is perfectly in order: 'Aber in hundert Fällen, wo wir ihn auf einer unnützen Digression zu ertappen glauben, wurde uns eine genauere Kenntniß der ältesten Familien- und Stadte-Geschichte zeigen, daß alles schön und regelmassig zusammenhängt' (64–5). The centripetal reclamation of Pindar is here well advanced.

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[33] J. G. Schneider, *Versuch über Pindars Leben und Schriften* (Strasburg 1774); F. Jacobs, 'Pindar', in: *Charaktere der vornehmsten Dichter aller Nationen* (=*Nachträge zu Sulzer's allgemeine Theorie der schönen* *Kunste*), ed. J. G. Dyk & G. Schaz (Leipzig 1797–1808) I 49–76. (This article, published anonymously, is acknowledged in Jacobs' *Vermischte Schriften* VII [Leipzig 1840] 350, although not reprinted.)

IV

If for a poem to be acceptably unified it must have a single theme or function, then exegetes wishing to assert Pindar's poetic excellence must attempt to show that apparent digressions have some covert bearing on the central theme, and that the apparent combination of two or more themes in a single poem can be reduced to one. If the way to achieve this integration is not apparent, it can only be assumed that a key has been lost, that there are relevant facts about the victor and his circumstances (or those of his family or city) which have been lost, but of which the interpreter could perhaps provide a speculative reconstruction. This is Jacobs' view, and Boeckh's method is founded on the same conclusion. If we return to his dispute with Hermann over the integration of *P*. 2, we will find an example of his technique; he repeats in his review of Hermann's essay (440) the interpretation he had proposed in his commentary:

> Finis igitur poetae summus erat, ut bellum cum Therone et Polyzelo, ut nuptias, quas Hiero sibi parare vi et fraude conabatur, dissuaderet, simul et eos, qui Theronis ac Polyzeli partes et ipsum poetam calumniabantur, Hieroni ipsi redderet suspectos: quod et ipsum ad dissuadendum bellum pertinet, quoniam istorum hominum malis artibus aucta simultas erat.   (243).

This learned and ingenious fiction is typical of Boeckh's method (compare the account of *O*. 2, cited above). In a passage from the *Encyclopädie* which neatly illustrates the circular process of interpretation on which he remarks elsewhere, Boeckh states the norm which he has inferred from his impression of 'Pindar's individuality and the generic nature of his lyric poetry':

> Wer . . . die Individualität Pindars und das Gattungscharakter seiner Lyrik kennt, ist ausser Zweifel, dass die Digressionen einen besondern Sinn haben müssen und also historisch zu erklären sind. Sie haben ihre Bedeutung in einer unausgesprochenen Beziehung auf die Person, welche der Dichter besingt; hat man diese historische Beziehung erkannt, so schliesst sich das Gedicht zu einer vollkommenen Einheit zusammen.   (114)

Seeming digressions must have some hidden significance, and that significance must be elucidated historically—that is, by the reconstruction of an unstated connection between the content of the digression and the circumstances of the laudandus.

A modern reader might wish to observe, with Chabanon, 'l'art de l'allégorie est un art trompeur'; in fact, no aspect of early nineteenth-century Pindaric criticism has been rejected more firmly during the recent resurgence of unitarianism than its weakness for historical speculation. In this movement, attention has been directed once more to the encomiastic nature of epinician poetry; an analogy with the rhetorical exegesis of the Renaissance has been noted,[34] although the analysis is now based on a close internal study of the genre's *topoi*, rather than on the application of an externally derived rhetorical system. Clearly, an encomium by its very nature cannot be wholly abstract; it is not held, therefore, that connections with particular circumstances can be excluded entirely. But over and again historical speculation has been exposed as illusory when its alleged grounds have been explained purely with reference to the conventions of the genre.

Exponents of this new approach have largely refrained from systematic discussion of the concept of 'unity'; but there is evidence that the centripetal premise is still a tacit force. Consider, for example, these programmatic statements from Bundy (I have added emphasis to bring out the typically centripetal insistence on singularity and exclusiveness of purpose): 'there is *no* passage in Pindar and Bakkhulides that is not in its primary intent encomiastic—that is, designed to enhance the glory of a particular patron' (3); 'this is an oral, public, epideictic literature devoted to the *single* purpose of eulogising men and their communities' (35); 'to follow the

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[34] See H. Lloyd-Jones, *JHS* 103 (1973) 116; this article contains a useful survey of the new approach (initiated by W. Schadewaldt, *Der Aufbau der Pindarischen Epinikions* [Halle 1928], and deriving much of its impetus from E. L. Bundy, '*Studia Pindarica*', UCPCP xviii [1962] 1–92), as well as a demonstration of how *P*. 2 can be handled from this perspective.

movement of the ode is . . . to pursue the fulfilment of a *single* purpose through a complex orchestration of motives and themes that conduce to *one* end' (91). So, too, Slater asserts his belief in 'one *Gedankengang*, one and one only . . .; and to this chain of argument I feel that all else is subordinate'; 'all statements directly or indirectly back the arguments in favour of the victor's personal characteristics, his mode of life, ancestry, and so on'.[35] As Slater implies (196), this is not far removed from belief in a *Grundgedanke*—although that is a concept we have been taught to abhor.

No critic has pressed the campaign against *Grundgedanken* more vigorously than David Young in his historical survey of Pindaric criticism (n. 1 above). His positive theory of unity is, it must be said, expressed in excessively vague terms; for example, '"Unity", when applied to a poem, is a critical term simply meaning that the poem makes sense as a whole' (2 n. 3). The problem with this is that people's ideas about the conditions which a poem must fulfil if it is to 'make sense as a whole' are (as this study has shown) susceptible to radical change. It would be surprising if Young's seemingly innocent formula were not in practice narrowed by unargued assumptions about how a poem ought to 'make sense as a whole'; and this suspicion is confirmed by some of his remarks. His criticism of Bundy, for example, seems to demand more than his bare formula entitles him to: 'the unity he seeks is only unity of purpose' (86); why should that not suffice? Compare this: 'Bundy does not present the *epinicia* as literature in the strict sense, for they are not of catholic interest, but are simply and only encomia designed merely to praise specific men to whom the odes were not only dedicated but wholly devoted' (86). Against this one might cite Young's own admirable remarks on the catholic interest of athletic achievement;[36] but we should note also the evidence of an *a priori* conception of what literature ought to be. This emerges elsewhere very clearly: 'the critics who have engaged in such a practice . . . have failed to perform their roles as critics, since they have misinterpreted the methods of poetry' (90). This sally is directed against Hermann—ironically so, for Hermann made the very same criticism of Dissen (31), as did Dissen in turn of Schmid:

> Schmidius commentarium amplum doctumque scripsit, in eo vero erravit maxime, quod pro temporum illorum judicio ad logicas et rhetoricas divisiones frigidissimas omnem in his carminibus tractationem et dispositionem rerum revocavit. Sane habet etiam poetica ars leges suas, sed alia est rhetorica, alia poesis. (liii)

(Young again: 'Dissen's difficulties and those of almost all subsequent Pindaric scholars arose from vague and mistaken notions about both unity and poetry' [5].) Such allegations are quite futile. Even if (absurdly) one supposed that we had, at last, achieved true insight into the essential nature of poetry, we could not know *a priori* that Pindar shared our insight. Conceptions of poetic propriety change; therefore we cannot know in advance what 'poetry' entails in a Pindaric context.

How fairly does Young treat his predecessors' 'vague and mistaken notions'? 'The passages of the ode,' he writes, 'are not bound together by a single thought, but are bound together to make a single thought, which is the ode' (35). But it is not clear that the binding together of a poem's parts by purely formal means (for example, by repeated words and images) suffices to make it a 'single thought'; the parts so bound must develop a coherent underlying complex of thought for this effect to be possible. But it makes little difference whether one calls this underlying complex a *Grundgedanke*, or—with Young—'the *Grund* on which the *Gedanken* of the poem are built';[37] the idea that there is a real difference here could only survive if one took a very unsympathetic view of the significance which nineteenth-century theorists ascribed to their *Grundgedanken*: which, indeed, Young seems to do; what could be more misleading than the

[35] W. J. Slater, *CJ* 72 (1976/7) 196–7; but for an important qualification see *Classical Antiquity* 2 (1983) 129–32.

[36] D. Young, *Three odes of Pindar* (*Mnemosyne* Suppl. 9, Leiden 1968) 90–3.

[37] D. Young (n. 36) 66.

claim that Dissen offered a *Grundgedanke* as 'a substitute for the poem or as its equivalent' (5)?[38]
In effect, Young is insisting that underlying coherence of thought requires coherent
development and expression in the text; but who has ever doubted it? Dissen's introductory
essay proceeds from *de sententiarum ratione, quae epiniciis subjectae* to *de tractatione argumenti* and *de
dispositione partium*—as Young is aware (5–6 n. 15); Boeckh's theory involved formal as well as
material unity. There are indeed important differences of emphasis and method: on the material
plane Young is (quite rightly) hostile to historical allegory; on the formal plane he emphasises the
repetition of words and phrases as a means of achieving coherence—perhaps attaching
disproportionate significance to it (it leads him into a fanciful treatment of *O.* 7). What is not
clear is that there has been any radical break with the centripetal approach to questions of poetic
unity; Young's comments on Schadewaldt's reading of *N.* 7, for example, are surprisingly
reminiscent of Boeckh's attack on Hermann.[39]

     The vigour and diversity of contemporary Pindaric studies makes it hazardous to generalise,
but there is little to suggest that Young's failure to question centripetal assumptions is untypical;
certainly, few critics even today would willingly burden Pindar with the *crimen digressionum*
against which Boeckh sought to defend him. But why should this be so? Do we know that
Pindar and Pindar's audiences would have shared our distaste? Has that been established by
literary-historical arguments, backed by sounder evidence than the mutable preferences of
modern criticism? For digression was no crime until Pindar's licence to digress was revoked, and
that (as we have seen) was a relatively recent development, the result of a new consensus that
emerged gradually in the century preceding Boeckh. 'Recent' does not mean 'wrong', of course;
but nor does it mean 'right', and it should not be taken for granted that this development was
faithful to the literary aesthetics, the 'Grundsatze der Composition', in Boeckh's phrase, of fifth-
century Greece. It makes little difference whether we prefer to say that a poem is bound together
'by' or 'to make' a single thought; but why, if a poem is 'to make sense as a whole', *must* one
assume that the thought is 'single' at all? It is perhaps because their historical perspective has been
too limited that Young and other recent critics have been able to beg this fundamental question.

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[38] None of the proponents of *Grundgedanken* would
have disputed the comment which Young quotes from
Rauchenstein (himself a *Grundgedanke* theorist): 'nicht
der Grundgedanke ist die Poesie . . . sondern die Dar-
stellung derselben im Liede' (19 n. 49, citing R.
Rauchenstein, *Zur Einleitung in Pindars Siegeslieder*
[Aarau 1843] 133). When Young speaks (for example)
of 'the assumption . . . that the unity in "unity" refers
not to the whole poem but to a single *vinculum* within
the poem' (p. 10), he is engaging in wild polemic. No
one disputed that the unit was the poem; the question
was, what made the poem a unit? The *Grundgedanke*
theory answered: the coherently expressed develop-

ment of a single thought; it is not obvious that Young's
answer is fundamentally different—and neither is self-
evidently right.

[39] Young (n. 1) 62: 'In his analysis of Nemean 7, the
two elements ['the praise of the victor and Pindar's
persönliche Absicht'] do not become one but are merely
dovetailed. Parts of the poem concerned with Pindar's
supposed *apologia* for the offence taken by the Aegine-
tans at Paean 6 alternate or coexist with parts concerned
with the program . . . That is not unity . . .' Yet, as we
have seen, Renaissance commentators would have
found nothing untoward in such an interpretation.