

## THE IMAGE OF THE EAGLE IN PINDAR AND BACCHYLIDES

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THERE ARE THREE PASSAGES in the Pindaric *epinicia* where an eagle appears in the poem without its relation to the context being made explicitly clear: *Nemean* 5.21, *Olympian* 2.86–88, *Nemean* 3.80–82. Bacchylides uses the same image once, at 5.16–30.

Traditionally these well-known passages are considered to contain a comparison between the poet and the eagle. The similarity is found in the loftiness of both bird and poet, or, as Bowra puts it:

The eagle is the king of birds and moves in a celestial region high above the earth. . . . [The image of the eagle] draws attention to the irresistible onset of the creative drive when the Muse is at work in him [Pindar]. At such times space and time mean nothing to him, and he swoops on his theme, as an eagle crosses the sea (*N*.5.21). In the strength of such a flight there is something elemental and almost savage, which recognizes no restraint and no obstacle . . . (*N*.3.80–2).<sup>1</sup>

This interpretation has led to Pindar being called “the Theban Eagle.”<sup>2</sup>

Richard Stoneman, in an article ironically entitled “The ‘Theban Eagle’” (*CQ* 26 [1976]: 188–97), raises objections to the traditional interpretation and suggests that in all four passages it is the addressee who is being compared to an eagle rather than the poet himself. In a reply to Stoneman’s article by Paola Angeli Bernadini (“L’ ‘aquila tebana’ vola ancora,” *QUCC* 26 [1977]: 121–26), the traditional interpretation is defended and all eagle images are again made to refer to the poet.<sup>3</sup>

There are two flaws in the interpretative method used on both sides. First, it must be remembered that the hearer is guided by the context in which the image occurs. Each passage, therefore, has to be interpreted separately. It cannot be taken for granted *a priori* that the image of the eagle has the same relevance in every instance. Second, one should bear in mind that the passages in which the eagle occurs do not relate the image unambiguously to either the victor or the poet. The bird flies over, and Pindar leaves it to the audience to decide whether the eagle has features in common with the poet or with the victor. Deliberate polyinterpretability is not excluded.

1. C. M. Bowra, *Pindar* (Oxford, 1964), p. 9. Cf. also W. Schadewaldt, *Der Aufbau des Pindarischen Epinikion* (Halle an der Saale, 1928; repr. ed., Darmstadt, 1966), p. 23, n. 1.

2. See D. M. Robinson, *Pindar, a Poet of Eternal Ideas* (Baltimore, 1936), pp. 34–35; G. Highet, *The Classical Tradition: Greek and Roman Influences on Western Literature* (Oxford, 1949), pp. 221–26.

3. G. Arrighetti, “In tema di poetica greca arcaica e tardo-arcaica,” *Studi Classici e Orientali* 25 (1976): 253–314, discusses Bacchyl. 5.16–30, Pind. *Ol.* 2.86–88, and *Nem.* 3.80–82, on pp. 294–303 in some detail, but does not challenge the traditional interpretation of the eagle images.

The second point has been raised in two recent studies. Thomas K. Hubbard (*The Pindaric Mind: A Study of Logical Structure in Early Greek Poetry*, Mnemosyne Supp. 85 [Leiden, 1985], pp. 149–52) argues that the eagle metaphor is ambiguous, expressing “an ideal of preeminence which encompasses both subject and object” (p. 152). Deborah Steiner (*The Crown of Song: Metaphor in Pindar* [London, 1986], pp. 104–6) observes that “the flexible nature of the symbols he selects permits Pindar to express two subjects in one metaphor” (p. 105) and concludes that “Pindar’s birds need not represent exclusively either the athlete or the poet, and to assign a single term of reference to an image is to mistake the fluid character of the Pindaric metaphor which conflates and compresses, building unities where none previously existed. The eagle is symbolic of merit wherever it is found, the lesser crows and jackdaws vain imitators of its unattainable prowess” (p. 106).

Both studies have the merit of departing from the traditional view that the image has one and the same referent in all instances. Unfortunately, however, they are in danger of making the same mistake as the earlier critics, since they defend polyinterpretability for all occurrences of the image, without defining the function of each occurrence of the image in its own specific context. Both Hubbard and Steiner seem to overplay their hands by proposing a generalized ambiguous interpretation for all four passages.<sup>4</sup>

My aim is to define both the relevance and the purpose of the eagle image in each of the four passages, starting from the basic assumption that, since Pindar does not provide any signals unambiguously relating the image to a specific referent, the interpretation of the image is left to the hearer, who is guided by the associations evoked by the image in its context. The theoretical implications of this premise will be discussed in the next section of this paper.

In defining the nature of the image’s relevance in each of the four passages, it is necessary to determine the specific means by which this relevance is established. This aspect has not been fully appreciated by previous studies on the subject. My second objective is, therefore, to determine the types of clues used to impart to the audience the relevance of the eagle image. I will attempt to define the precise procedure by which the audience is prompted to identify the image with the poet or the victor or with both. As I hope to demonstrate, different strategies are applied in each of the four passages; and this, to my mind, makes the image of the eagle an illustrative case study for Pindaric imagery in general.

#### METHOD

The relevance of a poetic image is connected with the “cooperative principle,” as described by H. P. Grice, and, more specifically, with Grice’s “maxim of relation,” which states that the hearer (audience) will always assume that what the speaker (poet) says is relevant.<sup>5</sup> If the denotation of a

4. Steiner, in fact, does not deal with all four passages, but she appears to present her analysis as being generally applicable.

5. “Logic and Conversation,” in *Syntax and Semantics*, vol. 3: *Speech Acts*, ed. P. Cole and J. L. Morgan (New York, 1975), pp. 41–58. The “cooperative principle” entails that the hearer will always assume that what the speaker says makes sense.

word or the literal interpretation of an utterance is irrelevant in the context, the hearer is led to assume that this word or utterance is used as an image, referring to some other notion in reality than it does by virtue of its denotation.<sup>6</sup> In the case of the eagle Pindar does not provide any explicit signals relating the image to a specific notion in the context.<sup>7</sup> In accordance with the "cooperative principle," therefore, the hearer assumes that the statement about the eagle is meant by the poet to be a statement about something else, and searches for possibilities of identifying the eagle with some other notion. In this process the hearer is guided by the associations evoked by the image. These associations are context-independent, insofar as the complete set of associations is embedded in the culture and language shared by the poet and his audience. Since, however, a specific context hardly ever activates the complete set of associations, the interpretation of the image is to a high degree steered by the specific context in which it occurs.

The relevance of an image is to be distinguished from its purpose. Whereas the relevance can be brought out by substituting a literal equivalent, the purpose is the surplus value of the image over this literal equivalent; in other words, the reason for the poet's use of an image instead of its literal equivalent.<sup>8</sup> In trying to define the purpose of imagery, it must be realized in the first place that the use of imagery is a convention of the poetic genre. Second, imagery has an aesthetic function. The advantage of imagery is that it presents ideas in a more visual manner than its literal equivalent. Moreover, imagery makes special demands upon the concentration and intellect of the hearer. This, too, is always part of the purpose. Finally, the advantage of using an image may be that the image evokes associations that are different from those evoked by its literal equivalent. As a result, those associations that are not directly evoked by the context may also come into play.

#### "FLYING" IN POETIC CONTEXTS: THE EAGLE'S CHARACTERISTICS

Both the poet and the victor may be associated with "flight" or "wings." The poet's art is winged (like Homer's: Pind. *Nem.* 7.22–23), and the Muses have wings (Pind. *Isthm.* 64–65, Bacchyl. frag. 20b3–4, Archil. 181.11 W.). The person sung about may also be associated with wings or flight (Pind. *Pyth.* 8.32–34, 88–91, *Pyth.* 9.125, *Nem.* 6.48–49, Theog. 237–39; cf. also Hom. *Il.* 19.384–86).

The characteristics of the eagle make the bird fitting to serve as a comparison for the poet as well as the victor. As Zeus' bird (Pind. *Ol.* 2.88, *Pyth.* 1.6, 4.4, Eur. *Ion.* 156, Callim. 1.68), the eagle is the king of birds (Pind. *Isthm.* 6.50, *Pyth.* 1.6–7, where the eagle is portrayed as sitting on

6. One of the main characteristics of metaphor according to J. R. Searle, *Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts* (Cambridge, 1979), p. 77, is that there is a discrepancy between the speaker's intention and the literal meaning of the utterance: "Strictly speaking, whenever we talk about the metaphorical meaning of a word, expression, or sentence, we are talking about what a speaker might utter it to mean, in a way that departs from what the word, expression, or sentence actually means."

7. Contrast the practice of Pindar's predecessors in the epic tradition, who explicitly relate images to a specific notion by means of signals like ὥς, οἷον, etc.

8. For this "purpose" the term "target" has been suggested by W. Nowottny, *The Language Poets Use* (London, 1962), p. 59. See also M. S. Silk, *Interaction in Poetic Imagery, with Special Reference to Early Greek Poetry* (Cambridge, 1974), p. 10.

Zeus' scepter).<sup>9</sup> Thus the eagle is appropriate as an image that visualizes the superiority of the person compared;<sup>10</sup> this may be the victor's superiority over his opponents as well as the poet's superiority over his rivals. As Zeus' messenger (Hom. *Il.* 24.292, Bacchyl. 5.19–20; cf. also Pind. *Isthm.* 6.49–50), the eagle is a fitting image for the poet,<sup>11</sup> while its strength and speech (Hom. *Il.* 21.252–53; cf. Pind. *Isthm.* 4.47 and *Pyth.* 2.50–51 respectively) constitute a ready-made analogy for the victor's physical qualities.<sup>12</sup> The eagle soars high (Arist. *HA* 619a25; *Anth. Pal.* 9.222.2; ὑσιπέτης, Hom. *Il.* 12.201, 21.251, *Od.* 20.243, etc.), fixes his sharp eyes on his prey (Arist. *HA* 620a1–2, Ael. *NA* 2.26), and swoops down upon it with unflinching precision. This method of catching prey (Pind. *Nem.* 3.80–81) reminds one of the image of words, like arrows, hitting the bull's eye (Pind. *Nem.* 6.26–28; cf. *Ol.* 2.83, 89–90, 13.93–95).

There is one passage in Pindar where the eagle is unambiguously used as an image for the victor (*Pyth.* 5.107–15):<sup>13</sup>

ἄνδρα κεῖνον ἐπαινέοντι συνετοί·  
 λεγόμενον ἔρέω·  
 κρέσσονα μὲν ἀλικίας  
 νόον φέρβεται  
 γλῶσσάν τε· θάρσος δὲ τανύπτερος  
 ἐν ὄρνιξιν αἰετὸς ἔπλετο·  
 ἀγωνίας δ' ἔρκος οἶον, σθένος·  
 ἐν τε Μοῖσαισι ποτανὸς ἀπὸ ματρὸς φίλας,  
 πέφανταί θ' ἄρματῆλάτας σοφός.

Even if the hearer does not take the victor Arcesilas as the subject of ἔπλετο in line 112, he or she is all the same forced by the context to apply the image of the eagle to the victor, since it is the victor's mind and verbal powers that are being praised (109–11), and the superiority of the eagle over other birds is here restricted to its θάρσος (111). Ἐν τε Μοῖσαισι ποτανός (114) leaves open the possibility of interpreting this phrase as implying that the victor owes his flight at least partially to the poet.<sup>14</sup> But even then it is the victor who flies and not the poet.

9. Cf. also Pausanias' description of Phidias' Zeus statue in Olympia (5.11.1).

10. The eagle is τελειότατος πετεηνῶν, Hom. *Il.* 24.315.

11. For the association of the poet with an ἄγγελος, cf. Pind. *Pyth.* 9.1–3, *Nem.* 5.2–8, 6.57, *Pyth.* 2.3–4. J. Duchemin, "Il simbolo dell' aquila nella poesia pindarica," *Cognoscenza religiosa* 6 (1972): 403, notes that the eagle's status as herald to Zeus is parallel to the poet's role as an intermediary between gods and men.

12. In *Isthm.* 4 the eagle may at first sight seem to be a negative figure, since it is indirectly to be identified with the victor's opponents (τόλμα γὰρ εἰκὼς [sc. Melissus, the victor] / θυμὸν ἐριβρεμετᾶν θηρῶν λεόντων / ἐν πόνῳ, μῆτιν δ' ἀλώπηξ, αἰετοῦ ἅ τ' ἀναπνιγμένα ρόμβον ἴσχει / χρὴ δὲ πᾶν ἔρδοντ' ἀμαυρῶσαι τὸν ἐχθρόν, 45–48). The point, however, is that the eagle symbolizes superior strength, which can only be overcome through cunning, the fox standing for that. The victor for whom this ode is written lacks the physique to rely entirely on his strength (cf. lines 49–51) and must therefore beat his opponents by other means, such as cunning. Line 48 serves as a justification for this. The emphasis on the physical superiority of the victor's opponents by means of the image of the eagle adds to the glory of the victor, since he was able to beat them nonetheless.

13. Thus Stoneman, "'Theban Eagle,'" p. 189, and Hubbard, *Pindaric Mind*, p. 150. Surprisingly, neither Bernadini nor Steiner deal with this passage.

14. To my mind, this phrase does not mean that he is ἀπὸ μητρὸς πεπαιδευμένος, but rather that ἀπὸ τῆς πρώτης ἡλικίας ἐνδοξος ἦν (both interpretations are given as equivalent alternatives by the scholiast ad loc.); cf. lines 5–8 of the same ode (esp. κλυτὰς, 6). The royal victor Arcesilas had obtained his excellence and glory through birth. For the poet contributing to the victor's flight, cf. esp. *Pyth.* 8.32–34.

The purpose of the image here is twofold. In the first place it visualizes the victor's superiority over his rivals in a very impressive way. Secondly, it presents the victor as airborne, thus preparing for line 114. The interaction between the eagle images and ποτανός may have an aesthetic function in itself, but, apart from this, it may also visualize the victor and the poet as working towards a common goal, both making efforts to make the victor "fly," the victor by surpassing his opponents and the poet by commemorating his deeds. In spite of the fact that the purpose of the image is to relate poet and victor to one another, it will be clear that the image is not ambiguous to the extent that it is applicable both to the victor and to the poet. It is the victor who is like an eagle. The poet helps him to be so.

Against this background, we will now consider the four epinician passages where the eagle appears separately within an uncertain context.

## I

Pindar *Nemean* 5.19–23:

εἰ δ' ὄλβον ἢ χειρῶν βίαν ἢ σιδαρίταν ἐπαινῆσαι  
 πόλεμον δεδόκηται, μακρά μοι  
 αὐτόθεν ἄλμαθ' ὑποσκάπτει τις· ἔχω γονάτων  
 ὁρμὴν ἐλαφράν·  
 καὶ πέραν πόντοιο πάλλοντ' αἰετοί.  
 πρόφρων δὲ καὶ κείνοις ἄειδ' ἐν Παλίῳ  
 Μοισᾶν ὁ κάλλιστος χορός, . . .

Line 21 contains a general statement about the capacity of eagles.<sup>15</sup> The generic character of the statement accounts for the plural αἰετοί. The statement is in itself fully comprehensible, but it has, on a literal level, nothing to do with the context in which it occurs. So, in accordance with the principles outlined above, the hearer is led to assume that the statement about eagles is meant by the poet to be a statement about something else. The first person reference to the poet in lines 19 and 20, combined with the fact that line 21, like line 20, expresses the idea of covering a distance, strongly argues in favor of applying the image of the eagle to the poet.<sup>16</sup> The fact that line 21 begins with καὶ indicates that the content of the following statement is an extension of the preceding one.<sup>17</sup> And, as is often the case, the second statement adds specificity to the first one. The poet travels long distances; i.e., he crosses the sea.<sup>18</sup> This can be interpreted literally as mirroring the transition from the site of the first episode of the myth on Aegina (8, 16) to Thessaly, where the second episode

15. The alliteration lends the line an almost proverbial ring. On alliteration as a characteristic feature of proverbs see Silk, *Poetic Imagery*, pp. 224–25; further references are to be found there.

16. This is what Bernadini calls "l' accostamento più naturale e logico tra il balzo compiuto dal poeta e il volo transmarino" ("Aquila tebana," p. 125)—although I think one cannot speak of "compiuto" until line 22.

17. For a general account of καὶ effecting continuity, see C. M. J. Sicking, "Devices for Text Articulation in *Lysias* I and XII," in C. M. J. Sicking and J. M. van Ophuijsen, *Two Studies in Attic Particle Usage*, *Mnemosyne Supp.* 129 (Leiden, 1993), pp. 10–17.

18. It is therefore precisely the opposite of "a generalized extension of the long leap which the poet is about to take" (my italics), as is assumed by Hubbard, *Pindaric Mind*, p. 152. The distance that has to be covered (as implied by the Greek words μακρά ἄλματα and ὁρμὴν ἐλαφράν) is specified as πέραν πόντοιο.

occurs (22). The first episode is Peleus' and Telamon's murder of their half-brother Phocus (9–13), a tale that was rejected (14–18), and the second episode is about Peleus and Hippolyta and the wedding of Peleus and Thetis (22–37 [41]). The poet flies across the sea and the scene switches from Aegina to Thessaly. In line 26, with ὥς, he picks up the narrative thread and starts to relate the tale of Peleus.

The function of καί in line 22 has often been misunderstood. Its position seems to suggest that it throws its force exclusively on κείνοις. However, as κείνοις must refer to "those men I spoke about earlier," i.e., the Aeacids,<sup>19</sup> this would suggest that there is another implied audience, which is not the case.<sup>20</sup> Καί in line 22 must belong to the whole sentence ("it is also the case that the Muses willingly sang for them that . . ."),<sup>21</sup> underscoring the parallelism between the willingness of the Muses to sing about the story of Peleus and Hippolyta and Pindar's own willingness to do so. The placement of πρόφρων, in the marked position directly before δέ, emphasizes the Muses' willingness as a parallel to Pindar's own enthusiasm (19–21). The train of thought (14–26) may be summarized as follows: "I am telling the story of the Aeacids, but now I have encountered an episode unfit to relate, so I am not going to use it, since it is not always profitable wholly to reveal the precise truth and being silent is often the most sensible thing to do. If, on the other hand, I have to praise laudable things, I can leap far and I can cross the sea. This is what I am doing now, skipping a part of the story and picking up the thread in a place across the sea. And this episode I am now going to relate is an excellent subject for my song, for it is a subject the Muses willingly sang about too." Stoneman's argument ("Theban Eagle," p. 195) for applying the image to the victor, with the conclusion that it is the victor's fame that "flies even across the sea," fails to appreciate the way in which the image is embedded in the context as a transition from the first episode of the myth to the second.<sup>22</sup>

19. Stoneman, "Theban Eagle," p. 195, adopts Bury's suggestion (*The Nemean Odes of Pindar* [London, 1890], pp. 85–86, 92) that the referent of κείνοις in line 22 is αἰετοί in line 21, the eagle being a symbol of the Aeacids. But if we reject Bury's symbolism, which is based on the phonetic resemblance between αἰετός and Αἰακός, the image of Muses singing for eagles is absurd. Κείνους is often used to refer to a person who has not been mentioned for a long time (e.g., κείνον in Pind. *Ol.* 1.101, referring to Hieron, last mentioned in line 23; see E. Des Places, *Le pronom chez Pindare: Recherches philologiques et critiques* [Paris, 1947], pp. 67–68).

20. The suggestion made by S. Fogelmark, "καὶ κείνοις: Pindar, *Nemean* 5.22," in *Arktouros: Hellenic Studies Presented to Bernard M. W. Knox on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday*, ed. G. W. Bowersock, W. Burkert, M. C. J. Putnam (Berlin and New York, 1979), pp. 71–80, following Dissen, Fennell, and Cerato, that καί in καὶ κείνοις implies an allusion to the wedding of Cadmus and Harmonia, who like Peleus and Thetis heard the Muses sing at their wedding, is needlessly fanciful. Neither Cadmus nor Harmonia are mentioned in this ode, and an allusion to their wedding has no function at all in it.

21. An illustrative example of this is Xen. *An.* 1.3.13 ἀνίσταντο οἱ μὲν ἐκ τοῦ αὐτομάτου . . . οἱ δὲ καὶ ὑπ' ἐκείνου ἐγκέλευστοι. For Pindar cf. *Isthm.* 5.17–19 τιν' δ' ἐν Ἴσθμῳ διπλόα θάλλουσ' ἀρετά, / Φυλακιδ', ἄγκειται, Νεμέα δὲ καὶ ἀμφοῖν / Πυθῆα τε, παγκρατίου ("At the Isthmus a double victory is planted for you and thrives; this is also the case at Nemea for both of you, [one for you] and [one] for your brother"); *Ol.* 1.28–29 ἡ θαύματα πολλὰ· καὶ πού τι καὶ βροτῶν / φάτις ὑπὲρ τὸν ἀλαθῆ λόγον / δεδαυδαμένοι ψεύδεσι ποικίλοις ἐξαπατῶντι μῦθοι ("and [καί], I suppose [που], to some extent [τι] it is also the case that [καί] what people say . . ."). Cf. also Hom. *Od.* 21.29, Hdt. 1.201 (final sentence). See further, W. J. Verdenius, "Καὶ Belonging to a Whole Clause," *Mnemosyne* 29 (1976): 181.

22. Stoneman, "Theban Eagle," p. 195, is well aware of the fact that the verses preceding the image of the eagle contain statements about Pindar's poetic qualities and that it is unnatural not to relate the imagery

The image of the eagles here applies solely to the poet. The context steers the hearer to the interpretation that the statement about the eagles is meant by the poet to be a statement about himself.<sup>23</sup> The association activated by the context is that eagles, like the poet, have the ability to cover great distances and to do so without effort (cf. ἐλαφράν, 20). The purpose of the image may be that Pindar associates himself with the more general associations of the notion "eagle," not directly evoked by the context, namely associations of merit and superiority.<sup>24</sup>

## II

### *Olympian* 2.83–90:

πολλά μοι ὑπ' ἀγκῶνος ὥκέα βέλη  
 ἔνδον ἐντὶ φαρέτρας  
 φωνάεντα συνετοῖσιν· ἐς δὲ τὸ πᾶν ἐρμανέων  
 χατίζει. σοφὸς ὁ πολλὰ εἰδὼς φυᾶ· μαθόντες δὲ λάβροι  
 παγγλωσσίᾳ κόρακες ὥς ἄκρανα γαρυέτων<sup>25</sup>  
 Διὸς πρὸς ὄρνιχα θεῖον·  
 ἔπεχε νῦν σκοπῷ τόξον, ἄγε θυμέ· τίνα βάλλομεν  
 ἐκ μαλθακᾶς αὐτε φρενὸς εὐκλέας δῖστοις ἰέντες;

In this passage the image of the eagle and the chattering crows is unambiguously related to referents in the context by means of ὥς: the eagle is identified with the σοφός (86), and the crows are the μαθόντες (86). The problem here is how to apply this opposition as a whole to the persons referred to in the context.

to them. He therefore proposes the following construction: it is the victor who is compared to an eagle, but "Pindar is using the victor's greatness as a paratactic simile for the excellence of his own art." Apart from being very far-fetched, the Greek text does not provide any evidence for this interpretation. Hubbard, *Pindaric Mind*, p. 152, wants to interpret the image of the eagle here as expressing an ideal of preeminence encompassing both poet and victor (and the Aeacids in general). However, his observation "that the soaring achievements of the *laudandi* (both the victor and the Aeacids) are what necessitates the poet's long leap" fails to recognize the function of this passage as a transition from the first episode of the myth to the second. Moreover, Hubbard's argument is entirely based upon the word "soaring" in his own text.

23. One might argue that insofar as the Aeacids, like the poet, have crossed the sea (15–16) and the poet's leap is in fact in pursuit of theirs, this could be a reason for applying the image of the eagles to the object of praise, i.e., to the Aeacids, as well. However, as I have argued above, the specific context in which the image occurs is crucial to the interpretation of its relevance. The image here occurs in a transitional passage, in which the poet himself makes first-person statements about his way of handling transitions in subject matter. The statement about the eagles is formally characterized by means of καί (21) as an extension and amplification of these first-person statements. So, in my opinion, the context unambiguously guides the hearer to apply the image to the poet—in spite of its being on factual grounds applicable to the Aeacids as well.

24. The verb πάλλοντ' (21) is a metaphor, taken from the terminology of swaying missiles (cf., e.g., *Pind. Nem.* 3.45, *Hom. Il.* 15.645), evoking the picture of a javelin being thrown at a distant mark. Thus, directional effectiveness is attributed to the flight of the eagle and consequently to Pindar's way of handling thematic transitions, in a way quite similar to passages where Pindar uses bow or javelin imagery in order to suggest that his words "hit" his subject matter as javelins and arrows hit their target, i.e., that he presents his subject matter in exactly the right way (cf., e.g., *Nem.* 6.26–28, *Ol.* 2.83, 89–90, 13.93–95). After having broken off an episode of the story of Peleus as being unfit to relate, Pindar suggests that with his next theme he will "score a bull's eye," in other words, that his next theme will be an excellent theme to deal with and that he will deal with it in exactly the right way.

25. Whether one prefers to read γαρύετον (with the mss.) or γαρυέτων (following Bergk) is a matter of interpretation.

At first sight it is perhaps more natural to identify the σοφός and the eagle with the poet, because the vocal capacities of the crows are emphasized (παγγλωσσία, γαρυέτων, 87) and secondly because the image is followed by a comparison between the poet's words and arrows (89–90). The chattering crows, the μαθόντες, are traditionally identified with Pindar's rivals. The verb γαρυέτων (or γαρύετον) in line 87 has given rise to much speculation. Does Pindar mockingly hint at Simonides and Bacchylides,<sup>26</sup> or at the two Sicilian rhetoricians Corax and Tisias?<sup>27</sup> If the form is interpreted as third person plural,<sup>28</sup> the reference to rivals is less specific: "Let them go on chattering." With this line of interpretation παγγλωσσία, "saying everything," has to be taken in a quantitative sense and might be meant as a characterization of the encomiastic excess of Pindar's rivals.<sup>29</sup> Their poetic methods would then be presented as lacking in selective use of their material as opposed to Pindar's own method. He mentions just a few of the heroes living on the μακάρων νᾶσον (70–71) and breaks off this catalogue in line 83 with the statement "I have many swift arrows under my arm in my quiver," this being the common break-off motif of "too much to tell."<sup>30</sup>

Stoneman, however, proposes a different interpretation ("Theban Eagle," p. 191). He identifies the σοφός (86) with one of the συνετοί (85) and this σοφός is the same person as the one who is compared to an eagle. The συνετοί, and consequently the σοφός, refer to the recipients of Pindar's ode.<sup>31</sup> The contrast between the eagle and the crows then refers to a contrast between two kinds of men in Pindar's audience. The μαθόντες, the chattering crows, are those who lack talent, success, and fame; they are the inferior men whose lot is darkness (cf. *Nem.* 3.41) and who are liable to be overcome by φθόνος or κόρος (cf. 95–98). According to this line of interpretation παγγλωσσία, "saying everything," has to be taken in a qualitative

26. For a detailed discussion of the numerous suggestions made, see J. van Leeuwen, *Pindarus' tweede Olympische ode*, vol. 1 (Diss. Leiden; Assen, 1964), pp. 240–52.

27. As has been suggested by A. W. Verrall, *Journal of Philology* 9 (1889): 14ff. and 197; B. L. Gildersleeve, *Pindar: The Olympian and Pythian Odes* (New York, 1890; repr. ed., Amsterdam, 1965), p. 153, does not disapprove. See also T. Cole, "Who was Corax?," *ICS* 16 (1991): 65–86 (esp. p. 81).

28. The third person plural imperative γαρυέτων is morphologically difficult, but not impossible. See van Leeuwen, *Tweede Olympische*, 1:243–45; further references are to be found there.

29. If κόρος in line 95 is interpreted as referring to the possibility that the poet might say too much (as it clearly does in *Pyth.* 8.32), this interpretation becomes the more likely, since in that case Pindar would explicitly present himself as not making the same mistake as he criticizes his rivals for. On the idea of κόρος referring to encomiastic excess, see E. L. Bundy, *Studia Pindarica* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1962), p. 29, n. 71 (where Bundy draws the parallel between the μάργοι ἄνδρες of line 96 and the κόρακες of line 87); see also pp. 73–74 and p. 90, n. 123.

30. On this break-off motif, see W. H. Race, *Style and Rhetoric in Pindar's Odes* (Atlanta, 1990), 41–57.

31. "Συνετός, both in Pindar and elsewhere in archaic Greek literature, often refers to the poet's listeners," G. W. Most, "Pindar *O.* 2.83–90," *CQ* 36 (1986): 313; cf. *Pind. Nem.* 7.60, *Pyth.* 3.80, *Nem.* 4.31, frag. 105.1, *Bacchyl.* 3.85, etc. Most, however, does not identify the σοφός with one of the συνετοί. He takes ἐς τὸ πᾶν as being equivalent to an adverb and ἐμμανέων as "expression, the translation involved in transferring meaning from the language of silent thought to that of spoken discourse" (p. 309) and he paraphrases as follows: "I have many swift arrows under my arm in my quiver that speak to those with understanding, and they thoroughly crave oracular announcers. Wise is that announcer who knows many things by nature; but those who have only learned speak out futilities like many-tongued vociferous crows in comparison to the divine bird of Zeus" (p. 316). It is clear that, if this line of interpretation is followed, the image of the eagle applies exclusively to the poet. The main objection to this interpretation is the fact that συνετοῖσιν then is reduced to an irrelevant detail; the natural association of this word with σοφός and μαθόντες, which are semantically related to it, is ignored.



sense as a characterization of indiscriminate speech, or slander.<sup>32</sup> The bird of Zeus must then be the mighty tyrant Theron.<sup>33</sup> In this case the eagle refers to the object of praise and the subsequent exhortation to aim the bow may be read as an exhortation to praise this person who is compared to an eagle. The question, "at whom do we aim?," is then to be read as a question concerning the identity of this person. This question is answered indirectly in the subsequent lines: "at Acragas I draw and I praise Theron" (90–95).

To my mind, neither interpretation can be preferred to the other and I do not believe we are supposed to make a choice. The immediate context in which the image occurs (σοφὸς ὁ πολλὰ εἰδὼς φυῶν μαθόντες δὲ λάβροι / παγγλωσσία κόρακες ὡς ἄκραντα γαρυέτων / Διὸς πρὸς ὄρνια θεῖον, 86–88) is a gnomic statement about "knowing by nature" being superior to "learning."<sup>34</sup> It is one of the main characteristics of such gnomic passages that they are meant to be universally applicable to every human condition. Pindar has carefully formulated this passage in order to permit the application of the gnomic idea to both human activities referred to in the context, i.e., to both Theron's athletic and political ambitions and Pindar's own profession as a poet. I therefore submit that this is an example of deliberate polyinterpretability. In other words, the gnomic passage as a whole—and consequently the image occurring in it—is, by the poet's deliberate design, susceptible to more than one interpretation.

There are several reasons why the eagle is best taken to represent both poet and victor simultaneously. First, the preceding context raises both possibilities, both poet and victor being present in 83–86, the latter implicitly as one of the συνετοί. Second, both possibilities are sustained throughout by recurrent ambiguity: the birds' vocal capacities are emphasized on the one hand, which suggests identification of the eagle with the poet; the semantic link between σοφός and συνετοῖσιν, on the other hand, suggests application of the image to the victor. Third, both possibilities are sustained by double reference, as especially with παγγλωσσία. Last, the subsequent lines (89–100) still leave open both possibilities.

### III

#### *Nemean* 3.76–84:

χαῖρε, φίλος· ἐγὼ τόδε τοι  
πέμπω μεμιγμένον μέλι λευκῷ  
σὺν γάλακτι, κίρναμένα δ' ἔερσ' ἀμφέπει,  
πόμ' αἰδοῖμον Αἰολίσσιν ἐν πνοαῖσιν αὐλῶν,  
ὅπερ περ. ἔστι δ' αἰετὸς ὡκύς ἐν ποτανοῖς,  
ὃς ἔλαβεν αἶψα, τηλόθε μεταμειόμενος, δαφαινὸν ἄγραν ποσίν·

32. Cf. Hubbard, *Pindaric Mind*, p. 151, n. 74.

33. This identification was also suggested by E. A. Freeman, *History of Sicily*, vol. 1 (Oxford, 1891), pp. 530–31. W. H. Race, "The End of *Olympia* 2: Pindar and the *Vulgus*," *CSCA* 12 (1979 [1981]): 251–67, explicitly rejects this interpretation (p. 260), mainly because it "would be singularly anticlimactic" (p. 267, n. 29).

34. For this idea, cf. *Ol.* 9.100–108, *Nem.* 1.25–28, 3.40–42, 7.54–58. For an illuminating discussion of the idea, see Hubbard, *Pindaric Mind*, pp. 107–24. Further references are to be found there.

κραγέται δὲ κολοιοὶ ταπεινὰ νέμονται.  
 τὴν γε μὲν, εὐθρόνου Κλεοῦς ἐθελόισας, ἀεθλοφόρου λήματος ἔνεκεν  
 Νεμέας Ἐπιδαυρόθεν τ' ἄπο καὶ Μεγάρων δέδορκεν φάος.

The context immediately preceding the image leads the hearer to apply the image of the eagle to the poet. The first person reference to the poet sending a "cocktail of song" (76–80) and the association between ὀψέ περ and ὥκυσ (80) strongly argue in favor of this.<sup>35</sup> The poet is late, but he is fast; coming from afar he catches his prey.<sup>36</sup> Pindar uses this association as an excuse for the delay,<sup>37</sup> an excuse that, on closer consideration, does not hold. However fast he may be, the delay cannot be made up. But then, by means of a shift in the imagery, by concentrating on the eagle's superiority over other birds, Pindar does give an excuse that is valid. The κραγέται κολοιοὶ must be interpreted as Pindar's rivals. Bernadini ("Aquila tebana," p. 124) rightly observes that the image, thus interpreted, visualizes the excellence of Pindar's poem, and that this can be regarded as a satisfactory compensation for the delay.<sup>38</sup>

The last two verses (83–84), however, argue for applying the image to the victor as well. The particles γε μὲν in 83 point in this direction. The victor (τὴν, 83) has achieved success and fame, and the particles stress the contrast with those who have not. Μὲν is a signal indicating that something will follow, often a clause with a corresponding δέ. The normal procedure is that the *topic* referred to in the marked position before μὲν is opposed to another *topic* mentioned in the position before the corresponding δέ (cf., e.g., ἐμοὶ μὲν . . . τὸ δέ, *Ol.* 1.84–85).<sup>39</sup> Γε is restrictive; it is a signal indicating that the statement made in 83–84 applies to the person referred to by τὴν and to no one else.<sup>40</sup> Here the *topic* opposed to τὴν is not expressed, so the contrast is left implicit.<sup>41</sup> As the passage about the eagle

35. Bernadini, "Aquila tebana," p. 124: "il contrasto tra ὀψέ περ e ὥκυσ, che evidenzia indiscutibilmente la relazione tra la velocità del volo e il ritardo del poeta."

36. Similarly, the poet elsewhere hopes to "hit the target like an arrow" (*Nem.* 6.26–28). I do not believe Mary Lefkowitz' suggestion that "Pindar concentrates on describing what it feels like to seize control from his competitors at the moment of victory" (*First-Person Fictions: Pindar's Poetic "I"* [Oxford, 1991], p. 163). Pindar does indeed imply a contrast between himself and his rivals by contrasting the eagle to the κραγέται κολοιοί, but these are not the same as his δαφνοῖδὸν ἄγρην. The point of similarity is, as in the case of the arrow simile, that Pindar claims to find exactly the right words. Cf. also what Aristotle tells us about the eagle: λαμβάνει δὲ μέγα, ὅταν λάβῃ, *HA* 619b29–30.

37. The nature of the "delay" involved here may be of two kinds. It may be literal delay in the poem's delivery (as with *Ol.* 10), as it is almost universally interpreted by commentators since antiquity, or it may be a delay internal to the structure of the poem itself, i.e., the praise of the victor being delayed after much material not directly relevant to the poet's encomiastic task in its narrowest sense (thus C. A. P. Ruck, "Marginalia Pindarica," *Hermes* 100 [1972]: 153–58; Hubbard, *Pindaric Mind*, pp. 46, 61). As in both cases the delay is something demanding recompense, the exact nature of the delay does not affect my argument with respect to the relevance and function of the image of the eagle.

38. Stoneman, "Theban Eagle," p. 194, tries to eliminate this possibility by stating that "there is no need to assume a connection of thought at all" between 76–80 and 80–84. Apart from the fact that an interpretation that does explain connections in thought is, to my mind, preferable to one that does not, the semantic relation between ὀψέ περ and ὥκυσ is too close to be ignored.

39. See Sicking, "Text Articulation," p. 13. The first sentences of Xen. *An.* 1.1.1 and 1.1.2 are classic examples of this device.

40. In other words, the particle marks the *scope* of a statement.

41. There is no reason to interpret γε μὲν as a representation of the so-called "adversative" γε μάν (as Denniston, p. 387, does, on Bowra's advice) or of the so-called "progressive," or "affirmative" γε μάν

contains a similar contrast, the hearer is invited to apply the image of the eagle to the victor and to identify the chattering jackdaws with those for whom the light does not shine. Moreover, the image of an eagle catching his prey is in itself suggestive of a victor in the pancration.

Thus, the context immediately preceding the image steers the hearer to the interpretation that the statement about the eagle is meant by the poet to be a statement about himself; consequently, he will apply the image of the chattering jackdaws to his rivals. When, however, the audience hears 83–84, they are prompted to reassess the equation and decide that the image of the eagle applies also to the victor, the inferior birds then referring to his opponents. Both Privitera<sup>42</sup> and Hubbard (*Pindaric Mind*, pp. 150–51) conclude that the eagle in this passage represents the poet as well as the victor, but neither appreciates the shift that occurs. It is only in retrospect that the listener realizes the double relevance of the image.

The purpose of the image, when applied to the poet, is to visualize the superiority of the poet over his rivals, which can be regarded as a compensation for the delay. Pindar then economically exploits the contrast between superiority and inferiority in order to imply a similar contrast between the victor and his opponents, thus adding to the victor's glory.

#### IV

Bacchylides 5.14–33:

ἐθέλει (δὲ)  
 γάρυν ἐκ στηθέων χέων  
 αἰνεῖν Ἰέρωνα. βαθὺν  
 δ' αἰθέρα ζουθαῖσι τάμων  
 ὕψου πετρύγεσαι ταχεί-  
 ας αἰετὸς εὐρύνακτος ἄγγελος  
 Ζηνὸς ἐρισφαράγου  
 θαρσεῖ κρατερῶ πίσυνος  
 ἰσχύϊ, πτάσσοντι δ' ὄρνι-  
 χες λιγύφθογγοι φόβῳ·  
 οὐ νιν κορυφαὶ μεγάλας ἴσχουσι γαῖας,  
 οὐδ' ἄλδς ἀκαμάτας  
 δυσπαῖπαλα κύματα· νο-  
 μᾶι<sup>43</sup> δ' ἐν ἀτρύτῳ χάει

(Stoneman, "Theban Eagle," p. 194). Pindar uses both γε μάν and γε μέν. In both other Pindaric occurrences of γε μέν it is followed by a corresponding δέ (excepting *Pyth.* 4.50 [μέν byz.: μάν codd.]): in *Ol.* 12.5–8 αἶ γε μέν . . . ἐλπίδες is opposed to σύμβολον δ' . . . πίστον; in *Nem.* 10.33–36 ἀδεῖται γε μέν . . . ὀμφαί is balanced by γαῖα δὲ καυθεῖσα πυρὶ καρπὸς ἐλαίας . . . ἐν ἀγγέων ἔρκεσιν παμποικίλοις (lines 25–36 can be paraphrased as follows: "Theaios has won in Delphi, Corinth, and Nemea, but, Zeus, there is still one thing he wants—and his victories give him the right to do so—the Olympic Games are most highly valued. Sweet Athenian voices, in prelude [to this much wanted Olympic victory], have celebrated him and olive oil has come to Argos"; γε indicates that, although the Olympic Games are most highly valued, the voices celebrating his Athenian victory were nothing less than ἀδεῖται). Cf. also Hes. *Th.* 871–72, *Op.* 774–76, *Sc.* 282–85, 288–91, 301.

42. G. A. Privitera, "Eracle e gli Eacidi nella terza «Nemea»,» *GIF* 29 (1977): 268–69.

43. Walker, Blass: νομαί[ται A; νομαί[ται A<sup>1</sup>; see H. Maehler, *Die Lieder des Bakchylides: Erster Teil, die Siegeslieder*, 2 vols. (Leiden, 1982), ad loc.

λεπτότριχα σὺν ζεφύρου πνοι-  
αῖσιν ἔθειραν ἀρίγνω-  
τος {μετ'}<sup>44</sup> ἀνθρώποις ἰδεῖν·  
τῶς νῦν καὶ (ἐ)μοὶ μυρία πάντα κέλευθος  
ὑμετέραν ἀρετὰν  
ὑμνεῖν.

In this passage the image of the eagle follows the statement “the servant of Urania (i.e., Bacchylides) wishes to praise Hieron” (14–16). This suggests that the eagle appears because of its similarity to Hieron, illustrating the qualities of the man the poet wishes to praise. Indeed, the description of the eagle as θαρσεῖ κρατερᾷ πίσυνος ἰσχύϊ (21–22) is more suggestive of the victor than of the poet, especially since the eagle is given “opponents,” who shrink from fear of him (22–23). Moreover, the phrase ἀρίγνωτος {μετ'} ἀνθρώποις ἰδεῖν (29–30) suits the mighty tyrant Hieron better than the poet.

The passage ends with a signal characterizing it as a simile: τῶς νῦν καὶ (ἐ)μοὶ μυρία πάντα κέλευθος / ὑμετέραν ἀρετὰν / ὑμνεῖν (31–33). Surprisingly, this is an entirely explicit application of the image of the eagle to the poet. The eagle flies high, unimpeded by any obstacle, and likewise the poet also has a thousand ways to praise the victor.<sup>45</sup> So 31–33 prompt the hearer to perform the same kind of retrospective reassessment as in *Nemean* 3, but in the reverse direction. But unlike the passage quoted from *Nemean* 3, the hearer may have been prepared for this shift of reference. Earlier, the eagle is called the εὐρύνακτος ἄγγελος Ζηνός (19–20), which evokes the not unusual association of poets with heralds,<sup>46</sup> the more so since the eagle is contrasted with other birds that are λιγύφοοι, an epithet for heralds in Homer (*Il.* 2.50, *Od.* 2.6, etc.).

In sum, Bacchylides introduces the image of the eagle as illustrating the superiority of the victor. A shift of reference is anticipated in the characterization of the eagle as a herald, and the lines immediately following the image apply it to the poet explicitly. Thus the hearer is prompted to reassess the equation and decide that the image of the eagle applies not only to the victor but also to the poet.<sup>47</sup>

#### CONCLUSION

The image of the eagle has single relevance in only one of the four passages discussed. In *Nemean* 5.21 the image, occurring in a transitional

44. Secl. Walker, Blass, Festa, Maehler; see Maehler ad loc.

45. Stoneman, “Theban Eagle,” p. 197, suggests to take “τῶς with κέλευθος rather than with καὶ ἐμοί, ‘there are likewise many paths of praise open to me’, i.e. there are many virtues which I could attribute to Hieron, just as there are many activities distinctive of the eagle.” Word order is strongly against this. “Likewise” and “also for me” in close proximity will naturally be taken together.

46. For the association of the poet with an ἄγγελος, see n. 11 above. Stoneman, “Theban Eagle,” p. 196, explicitly leaves this association out of account: “the eagle is described as ἄγγελος Ζηνός because it is, not because Bacchylides is the herald of Hieron’s achievement. Bacchylides does not weigh every word.”

47. The double relevance of the image in this passage has been recognized by M. R. Lefkowitz, “Bacchylides’ *Ode* 5: Imitation and Originality,” *HSCP* 73 (1969): 54 (in *First-Person Fictions*, p. 163, however, she retains the traditional interpretation), and Hubbard, *Pindaric Mind*, p. 152, n. 77, but both fail to appreciate the precise procedure by which the application to the poet is only retrospectively established.

passage, unequivocally applies exclusively to the poet. It illustrates his way of handling thematic transitions. In the remaining three passages the image has a double relevance: it is, by the poet's design, applicable to both the poet and the victor. These three passages differ, however, in the type and disposition of the clues used to guide the audience to the double identification.

In *Olympian* 2.86–88 the image occurs in a gnomic passage, which is carefully formulated in order to allow the gnomic idea to be applied both to the victor's athletic and political ambitions and to Pindar's own profession as a poet. The eagle represents both poet and victor simultaneously, because the preceding context raises both possibilities and because both possibilities are sustained throughout by recurrent ambiguity or double reference, while the lines following the passage still leave open both possibilities.

In the two remaining passages the eagle represents both poet and victor too, but sequentially rather than simultaneously. In *Nemean* 3.80–82 the audience is at first led to apply the image of the eagle to the poet, but once they hear 83–84 they are prompted to reconsider the equation and decide that the image applies to the victor as well. In Bacchylides 5.16–30 it is the other way around. The image of the eagle first illustrates the superiority of the victor. The characterization of the eagle as a herald anticipates a shift of reference from victor to poet. The passage then ends with an explicit application of the image to the poet.

It must be concluded that the relevance of the image of the eagle is neither uniform nor context-independent. In interpreting the image the hearer is guided by the associations evoked by the image in its own specific context. As the contexts differ in the types and disposition of the clues that steer the hearer in a linear perception of the passage containing the image, his or her interpretation of the image will vary accordingly.<sup>48</sup>

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