SCIENZE DELL'ANTICHITÀ

27.3 – 2021

SAPIENZA UNIVERSITÀ DI ROMA
DIPARTIMENTO DI SCIENZE DELL'ANTICHITÀ

Scienze dell'Antichità

23 – 2021

Fascicolo 3

La Rivista è organo del Dipartimento di Scienze dell'Antichità della Sapienza Università di Roma.

Nella sua veste attuale rispecchia l'articolazione, proposta da Enzo Lippolis, in tre fascicoli, il primo dei quali raccoglie studi e ricerche del Dipartimento, gli altri due sono dedicati a tematiche specifiche, con la prospettiva di promuovere una conoscenza complessiva dei vari aspetti delle società antiche.

Le espressioni culturali, sociali, politiche e artistiche, come le strutture economiche, tecnologiche e ambientali, sono considerate parti complementari e interagenti dei diversi sistemi insediativi di cui sono esaminate funzioni e dinamiche di trasformazione. Le differenti metodologie applicate e la pluralità degli ambiti presi in esame (storici, archeologici, filologici, epigrafici, ecologico-naturalistici) non possono che contribuire a sviluppare la qualità scientifica, il confronto e il dialogo, nella direzione di una sempre più proficua interazione reciproca. In questo senso si spiega anche l'ampio contesto considerato, sia dal punto di vista cronologico, dalla preistoria al medioevo, sia da quello geografico, con una particolare attenzione rivolta alle culture del Mediterraneo, del Medio e del Vicino Oriente.

I prossimi fascicoli del volume 28 (2022) accoglieranno le seguenti tematiche:

1. Ricerche del Dipartimento.
2. Produrre per gli dei. L'economia per il sacro nell'Italia preromana (VII-II sec. a.C.).
3. Scrittura epigrafica e sacro in Italia dall'Antichità al Medioevo. Luoghi, oggetti e frequentazioni.

DIPARTIMENTO DI SCIENZE DELL'ANTICHITÀ

Direttore
Giorgio Piras

Comitato di Direzione
Anna Maria Belardinelli, Carlo Giovanni Cereti, Cecilia Conati Barbaro, Maria Teresa D'Alessio, Giuseppe Lentini, Laura Maria Michetti, Francesca Romana Stasolla, Alessandra Ten, Pietro Vannicelli

Comitato scientifico
Graeme Barker (Cambridge), Martin Bentz (Bonn), Corinne Bonnet (Toulouse), Alain Bresson (Chicago), M. Luisa Catoni (Lucca), Alessandro Garcea (Paris-Sorbonne), Andrea Giardina (Pisa), Michael Heinzelmann (Köln), Mario Liverani (Roma), Paolo Matthiae (Roma), Athanasios Rizakis (Atene), Avinoam Shalem (Columbia University), Tesse D. Stek (Leiden), Guido Vannini (Firenze)

Redazione
Laura Maria Michetti
con la collaborazione di Martina Zinni

SAPIENZA UNIVERSITÀ DI ROMA

PRATICHE E TEORIE DELLA COMUNICAZIONE NELLA CULTURA CLASSICA

Online Workshop, 6-7 maggio 2021

a cura di
Giuseppe Lentini

INDICE

Estratto

Luigi Battezzato

AMBIGUITY AND POLITENESS IN PINDAR: THE CASE OF *PYTHIAN* 3*

1. Introduction: ambiguity and politeness as linguistic strategies

Many studies focus on Pindar's relationship with his patrons from a biographical, historical, cultural, and social point of view[1]. The language of Pindar has been studied in detail (phonetics, morphology, syntax, lexicon, pragmatics)[2]. On the other hand, Pindar's politeness techniques have not been studied in any detail. And yet Pindar's position vis-à-vis his patrons often required him to face complex linguistic problems: he masters the art of finding the exact 'measure of praise' (in Glenn Most's apt phrase)[3]. Praise is in fact a difficult linguistic act: excessive praise causes envy, while faint praise obviously displeases the patrons[4]. Praise, in Pindar, is often linked with prayers and wishes for the success and well-being of the patrons; but prayers and wishes must respect social and religious boundaries that Pindar must not cross.

The language of Pindar is not only difficult and obscure[5], but often ambiguous, much more so than that of, e.g., Bacchylides. This paper will explore the role of ambiguity in Pindar's *Pythian* 3. It will argue that ambiguity is a strategy used by Pindar to strike a delicate balance between different linguistic, social, and religious pressures; ambiguity allows Pindar to absolve his linguistic duty (and possibly go above his duty) while facing complex and contrasting pressures from his patron on one hand and the social and religious norms on the other.

Ambiguity is of course a crucial and unavoidable characteristic of literary texts, and of natural languages in general. Many philosophical approaches stress that not only is ambigu-

---

* I thank the organisers and participants of the conference and the press readers for their comments, as well as Bruno Currie and Stefano Fanucchi for suggestions and improvements. Many of their suggestions and questions would require a much longer discussion of problems in literary theory (e.g., on literary ambiguity and vagueness) and in the interpretation of Pindar; only a sketch of my approach can be advanced here. I alone remain responsible for the form and content of the paper.

[1] The bibliography is vast. See for instance, after the early biographical approach of Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 1922, the more complex approaches of Gentili 1988 (*passim*); Kurke 1991b; Hornblower 2004; Hornblower - Morgan 2007, Morgan 2015, with further references. Neer - Kurke 2019 offer a very original perspective on the relationship between poet, patron, and monuments.

[2] On phonetics and morphology see Tribulato 2016; on syntax Hummel 1993; on lexicon Slater 1969; on pragmatics Bonifazi 2001; Bonifazi 2004; DAlessio 2009; on ethnography and language Wells 2009; on Pindar's language and Homer: Sotiriou 1998. These works contain many further bibliographical references.

[3] Most 1985.

[4] On envy in Pindar see Vallozza 1989; Bulman 1992; Most 2003; Pitotto 2014; Stoneman 2014, pp. 126-133, with further references. Bruno Currie aptly compares Thucydides 2. 35. 2, esp. the passage where Pericles states that 'men can endure to hear others praised only so long as they can severally persuade themselves of their own ability to equal the actions recounted: when this point is passed, envy comes in and with it incredulity' (tr. Dent, from www.perseus.tufts.edu), μέχρι γὰρ τοῦδε ἀνεκτοὶ οἱ ἔπαινοί εἰσι περὶ ἑτέρων λεγόμενοι, ἐς ὅσον ἂν καὶ αὐτὸς ἕκαστος οἴηται ἱκανὸς εἶναι δρᾶσαί τι ὧν ἤκουσεν· τῷ δὲ ὑπερβάλλοντι αὐτῶν φθονοῦντες ἤδη καὶ ἀπιστοῦσιν. Stefano Fanucchi compares also Thucydides 6. 16. 2-3 (Alcibiades) with Hornblower 2004, pp. 258-261 and Hornblower 2008 *ad loc.*

[5] See Hamilton 2003; Thomas 2012.

ity a constitutive condition of language, but that for that reason the intention of the speaker is irrecoverable and unimportant: what matters is the written text, which can and should be deconstructed. The duty of the interpreter is to lay bare these contrasting, contradictory elements. On the other hand, interpreters who work in the linguistic tradition, influenced by analytical philosophy (see, e.g., Grice, Sperber), offer approaches that make allowances for the existence of ambiguity and vagueness in natural languages, as opposed to formal languages[6]. Politeness theory has its theoretical foundations in Grice's theory of communication, which is an intention-based theory of meaning. Grice's Conversational Maxims and Cooperative Principle presuppose that speakers normally avoid ambiguity in their linguistic interactions. Politeness theory explains ambiguity as an intentional strategy, that is, a strategy that we, as interpreters/interlocutors attribute to the speaker (whether or not the true intention of the speaker can be recovered)[7]. The interpretation of linguistic meaning, in these approaches, is founded on the idea that speakers intend to produce meaning, and to convey that meaning to the interlocutors. Ambiguity in literary texts is of course not simply a politeness strategy; it is frequently a literary strategy that enhances the aesthetic quality of the text. The paper will focus on the interaction between patron and poet, and on ambiguity as a linguistic strategy employed to negotiate social and religious demands.

2. PINDAR'S STYLE: COMPLEX AND AMBIGUOUS

Ancient discussions of Pindar's texts, especially those reported in the scholia, often noted the difficulty, lack of clarity (*asapheia*) and ambiguity (*amphibolia*) of Pindar's style[8]. Modern interpreters argue that Pindar occasionally makes conscious use of ambiguity[9]; for instance, deictics and pronouns are often ambiguous[10]. However, if, as Bundy influentially argued[11], everything in Pindar's victory odes is geared towards the goal of praising the *laudandus*, how could there be space for ambiguity and uncertainty? Commentators and interpreters often aim at limiting ambiguities and ruling out alternative interpretations of passages in Pindar's victory odes in order to offer a single, coherent interpretation of the "train of thought" of the odes, often from a rhetorical point of view: the array of fleeting allusions to myths, facts (often imperfectly know to us: e.g., successes in sport, family relations, political events), and the moral maxims interspersed in the odes dazzle the hearers to the point of threatening the recovery of a unitary meaning, except the most basic "praised be the winner" slogan. The approach by Bundy certainly helps to explain the rhetoric of some apparently elusive sequences but fails to capture the delicate balance of linguistic duties imposed on the speaker of Pindaric victory odes (other types of Pindaric poems will not be discussed in this paper).

---

[6] See e.g. HANKS 2013; SENNET 2016; SORENSEN 2018.

[7] On Grice and politeness theory see GRICE 1975; GRICE 1989; BROWN - LEVINSON 1987; for applications of these approaches to Greek literature, see esp. LLOYD 2004, p. 78; LLOYD 2006 and 2009; BROWN 2006; CATRAMBONE 2016; LENTINI 2018; BATTEZZATO 2020, with further references.

[8] For a list and discussion of ancient and modern references, see MOST 1985, p. 21. See also HAMILTON 2003 and THOMAS 2012.

[9] See RENEHAN 1969; KURKE 1991a; PFEIJFFER 1999, pp. 25-26, HORNBLOWER 2004, p. 367; NICHOLSON 2000b.

[10] See CALAME 2004; CURRIE 2013. On ambiguity in Greek literature see STANFORD 1939; EDLOW 1977; VERNANT 1978; OUDEMANS - LARDINOIS 1987; BATTEZZATO 2014 and VÖHLER *et al.* 2021, with further references.

[11] BUNDY 1986 [1962].

3. Poet, patron, and community: politeness and linguistic obligations

The voice speaking (in fact: singing, but we will not discuss music and metre in this paper) in a Pindaric victory ode ('the poet' or 'Pindar')[12] must address three interlocutors: in politeness theory, three 'faces'. The speaking voice must address the *laudandus*, but it must also take into account the civic community and the gods. The community and the gods are often addressed directly by the Pindaric speaker along with the *laudandus*[13]. Community and the gods are a constitutive, not occasional element of the linguistic landscape: the act of praise requires a community that hears the praise. The value system of Pindar, and that of the communities for which Pindar writes, has absolute faith in the notion that the gods listen to what is being said by the poet, just as they supported the *laudandus* in his sporting and/or political success. The poet of course praises his addressees: the *laudandus*, the community, and the gods. But different kinds of praise are due to each of them. The poet is normally primarily employed by the patron, who will be the object of praise in the poem (*laudandus*). If the poet praises the *laudandus* excessively, though, the song may make the community feel envy (a typical epinician emotion)[14]. Overstepping the mark (the *kairos*) is a fatal flaw in epinician rhetoric and attracts blame from human beings: see, e.g., *Pythian* 1. 81-83 'If you speak in due proportion, twisting the strands of many themes into a brief compass, less blame follows from men' καιρὸν εἰ φθέγξαιο, πολλῶν πείρατα συντανύσαις | ἐν βραχεῖ, μείων ἕπεται μῶμος ἀνθρώ|πων[15]. Envy, however, can come from the gods as well: this is the much-discussed 'envy of the gods'[16]. Speaking inopportunely (against *kairos*) can be offensive to the gods: see, e.g., *Olympian* 9. 35-39 'My mouth, fling this story away from me! Since to speak evil of the gods is a hateful skill, and untimely boasting is in harmony with madness' ἀπό μοι λόγον | τοῦτον, στόμα, ῥῖψον· |ἐπεὶ τό γε λοιδορῆσαι θεούς |ἐχθρὰ σοφία, καὶ τὸ καυχᾶσθαι παρὰ καιρόν |μανίαισιν ὑποκ᾽ρέκει.

Neither the *laudandus*, nor the gods, nor the community offer direct linguistic interactions in the text of the victory ode, of course, but the poetic voice often expresses their thoughts, intentions, and expectations and anticipates how they would react to the words of the poem. The poem, as a linguistic act, must take into account the 'faces' of these potential interlocutors. 'Face' is a crucial concept in politeness theory. The 'positive face', as defined by Brown and Levinson, 'is the want to be approved of or admired': this is the primary goals of the epinician genre (e.g., *Olympian* 2. 1-2 'Songs, rulers of the lyre, what god, what hero, what man shall we celebrate?' ἀναξιφόρμιγγες ὕμνοι, | τίνα θεόν, τίν᾽ ἥρωα, τίνα δ᾽ ἄνδρα κελαδήσομεν;). The praise of the poet addresses the 'positive face' of the *laudandus*. The 'negative face', on the other hand, 'is the want not to be imposed upon or impeded'[17]. This sentiment is not explicitly discussed in Pindar's victory odes, but the normative aspect of

---

[12] The identity of the speaking voice in Pindar's victory odes is the object of a complex controversy that cannot be discussed in detail here: is the speaking voice that of the poet Pindar, of the chorus, or even of someone else? For orientation on these topics see Lefkowitz 1991 and 1995; D'Alessio 1994; Currie 2013; Maslov 2015, pp. 97-116; D'Alessio 2020, with further references. I will use 'poet', or even 'Pindar', simply as a short-hand reference to the speaking voice of the poem. In the case of *Pythian* 3, the speaking and narrating voice coincides with that of a single individual, the implied author 'Pindar'. On the debate on the concept of implied author see Schmid 2014.

[13] See Maslov 2015, p. 310 for a list of addressees at the beginning of Pindar's victory odes, including deities, communities.

[14] See Konstan - Rutter 2003 and above, n. 4.

[15] Translations from Pindar, here and below, are taken from Svarlien 1990 (with small modifications in spelling, such as Chiron instead of 'Cheiron'); the Greek text of Pindar is cited from Maehler - Snell 1971. See also *Pythian* 10. 4. A discussion of the many philological, linguistic, interpretive, and metrical problems of the text of Pindar is impossible in this paper; the commentaries by Privitera 1982; Gentili *et al.* 1995; Gentili *et al.* 2013 and Cannatà Fera 2020 offer excellent guidance on the scholarly approaches to the passages quoted in the text, here and below. On the text of the *Pythian odes* see also the important edition by Liberman 2004.

[16] On the phrase and the concept see e.g. Dodds 1951, pp. 29-45; Harrison 2000, pp. 40-50.

[17] For these definitions, see Lloyd 2006, p. 226, paraphrasing various passages from Brown - Levinson 1987.

gnomic utterances is a constant imposition on the 'negative face' of the hearers. Gnomic utterances by definition do not include the specific indication of the person(s) that must obey the order implicit in the gnomic utterance itself. They are of great rhetorical help: they allow the speaking voice to give orders to, criticise, or warn the *laudandus* or the audience without being impolite to their 'negative faces'. Pindar, unlike, e.g., the characters of Euripides, does not use gnomic utterances to impose a specific course of action to the gods: compare Euripides, *Bacchae* 1348 'it is inappropriate for the gods to be like mortals in their anger' ὀργὰς πρέπει θεοὺς οὐχ ὁμοιοῦσθαι βροτοῖς with, e.g., Pindar, *Olympian* 2. 87-88 'one must not fight against a god' χρὴ | δὲ πρὸς θεὸν οὐκ ἐρίζειν[18].

Speakers intending to be polite normally avoid 'face-threatening acts', or try to minimise the 'threat', e.g., by choosing an indirect formulation of an order (a direct order would threaten the 'negative face' of the addressee) or by toning down criticisms (criticisms pose threats to the 'positive face' of the addressee). Scholars have produced a large body of research on politeness in classical texts, esp. dialogic ones, such as epic and tragedy[19]. Politeness theory starts from Grice's four maxims of conversation. The first three Maxims are the Maxim of Quantity ('Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange)'), Maxim of Quality ('Try to make your contribution one that is true'), and Maxim of Relation: ('Be relevant')[20]. We will be focusing here on the Maxim of Manner, which Grice formulates as 'Be perspicuous', a 'supermaxim' which 'includes various maxims such as 'Avoid obscurity of expression' and 'Avoid ambiguity''[21]. Pindar obviously constantly violates this maxim. Violations of any of the maxims are not arbitrary but invite interpretation from the interlocutors. Brown and Levinson label violations of the Manner Maxim as 'off-record politeness', i.e., they identify them as instances of a linguistic strategy used by speakers who want to avoid threatening the face of their interlocutors. As Brown and Levinson state:

> A communicative act is done off record if it is done in such a way that it is not possible to attribute only one clear communicative intention to the act. In other words, the actor leaves himself an 'out' by providing himself with a number of defensible interpretations; he cannot be held to have committed himself to just one particular interpretation of his act[22].

The strategies included under the 'off-record' label include: Be ambiguous, Be vague, Be incomplete/Use ellipsis[23]. Why would the Pindaric voice need to provide himself an 'out'? Whose faces is he afraid of?

The Pindaric voice in the victory odes often stresses the need to avoid giving offence to the gods. Two famous, crucial passages can be quoted:

Pythian 10. 17-21
May a good fate follow them in their future days as well, so that their noble wealth will blossom; [20] having received no small share of the delights of Greece, may they encounter no envious reversals at the hands of the gods.

ἔποιτο μοῖρα καὶ ὑστέραισιν
ἐν ἀμέραις ἀγάνορα πλοῦτον ἀνθεῖν σφίσιν·
τῶν δ' ἐν Ἑλλάδι τερπνῶν

[18]   On gnomic expressions in Pindar see Boeke 2007, with further bibliography. Boeke focuses on gnomai and Pindar's world view, rather than on the normative implication of gnomic utterances for the *laudandus* and the community.
[19]   See above, n. 7.
[20]   Grice 1975, pp. 26-27.
[21]   Grice 1975, p. 27.
[22]   Brown - Levinson 1987, p. 211.
[23]   Brown - Levinson 1987, p. 102.

λαχόντες οὐκ ὀλίγαν δόσιν, μὴ φθονεραῖς ἐκ θεῶν
μετατρ̕οπίαις ἐπικύρσαιεν.

Isthmian 7. 39-42
May the envy of the immortals not disturb [40] whatever delight I pursue from day to day as
I peacefully make my way towards old age and the allotted span of my life
ὁ δ᾽ ἀθανάτων μὴ θρασσέτω φθόνος,
ὅτι τερπνὸν ἐφάμερον διώκων
ἕκαλος ἔπειμι γῆρας ἔς τε τὸν μόρσιμον
αἰῶνα.

The fortunate state of the *laudandus*, and indeed the state, however fortunate or unfortunate, of each human being is temporary and precarious. The gods are constantly invoked by the speaking voice, and constantly watch human action, ready to help or punish. Divine envy is of course a major topic in Herodotus. As Harrison puts it, in reference to Hdt. 7. 10, ε

'The god', according to Artabanus, 'strikes the tallest creatures with lightning' and does not allow them to 'vaunt themselves'; he throws his bolts always against the biggest houses and tallest trees; 'for the god loves always to cut down those that excel'; out of envy the god inflicts fear or thunder on men, for he does not allow anyone other than himself to 'think big thoughts' […] 'the god' is envious here as 'the divine' is, or the gods are, elsewhere ([Hdt.] 1. 32. 1, 3. 40. 2, 4. 205. 1)[24].

The Pindaric voice of the epinician, however, often gives advice to the *laudandi*. Advice is a kind of threat to the 'negative face' of the *laudandi*. As Kurke notes

As with many other public performances, epinikion not only plays on shared values but also attempts to influence them in turn. Thus Pindar is also engaged in a kind of paideia as part of his negotiation with his audience. At times, he seems to be attempting to modify and modernize the behavior and attitudes of a reluctant aristocracy. […] Pindar's paideia is an attempt to draw the aristocracy into this public space as the condition of its survival in a new era[25].

The Pindaric voice must thus address three types of 'faces': those of the gods, of the community, and of the *laudandi*. Pleasing both the gods and the *laudandus* is a difficult balancing act. As Young noted

the encomiast must include a reminder of mankind's limitations. The reminder, which always has a somewhat sobering effect, may express the inaccessibility, even to the *laudandus*, of a fabulous place, of example, the land of the Hyperboreans in *Pythian* 10[26].

---

[24] Harrison 2000, p. 175. Note esp. Hdt. 1. 32. 1 τὸ θεῖον πᾶν ἐὸν φθονερόν τε καὶ ταραχῶδες. Cf. also Hdt. 7. 46. 3, 8. 109. 3, and Harrison 2000, p. 171. The notion of 'divine envy' is of course problematic from a moral point of view. Aristotle's definition of envy was such that gods could not feel 'envy' towards mortals (*Rhetoric* 1387b.22-28). The emotion described by Aristotle is different from that implied by Herodotus: Herodotus does not imply that the goods feel 'envy' because they lack the happiness that human beings attain, but because they are 'invidious' of human happiness, i.e., they do not like men to be happy beyond a certain extent, which would make them too similar to gods. This problem cannot be explored in detail here.
[25] Kurke 1991b, p. 260.
[26] Young 1968, p. 53.

The superiority of the divine is uncontested and unassailable; the actions of the gods are not easy to predict (even if just in hindsight) and human beings, including the poet and the *laudandus*, must tread carefully[27]. The poet in particular must take care to avoid threatening the negative face of the gods. This is what makes prayers especially complicated, from a linguistic point of view. Prayers request a god to act in a specific way: by definition, prayers pose threats to the negative faces of the gods. Yet the poet must ask the gods for prosperity, health, success for the *laudandus* and the community. Protagoras argued that Homer made a linguistic mistake when he used the imperative to address the Muse (*Iliad* 1. 1 'sing'). 'To order something to be done or not is, he [Protagoras] points out, a command' (Aristotle, *Poetics* 1456b 17-18 τὸ γὰρ κελεῦσαι, φησίν, ποιεῖν τι ἢ μὴ ἐπίταξίς ἐστιν)[28], not a prayer. Protagoras seems to imply that an optative, 'please sing', would be more polite[29]. Aristotle disagrees, implying that an imperative is appropriate in a prayer. Imperatives are indeed common in prayers, both in Pindar and in other authors[30], but Protagoras' statement draws attention to the fact that humans must be extremely careful when expressing prayers and should try not to offend the gods or impose on them.

The linguistic position of the speaking voice in Pindar is, however, complex: he is a 'prophet' of the gods, uttering the voice of the Muses or of Apollo[31], but also someone that speaks in return for monetary gifts by his patrons[32]. The poet must perform the linguistic acts (prayers, praise, blame) required by the patron, but he must present them as linguistic acts prescribed by normative reasons, i.e., divine and human norms. It is appropriate, indeed necessary, to praise and pray the way he does: the poet 'must' praise[33]. Implying otherwise would mean that the praise is undeserved, that the prayer will be ignored by the gods, and that the poetic voice is simply guided by profit. Profit is thus both essential to and perilous for the linguistic acts of praise and prayer: the song would not exist without the money paid by the patron, and the payment publicly displays the social eminence of the patron; but the accusation of greed would undercut the sincerity of the praise. This explains the crucial importance of *xenia* in Pindar. The poet is presented as the *xenos* of the *laudandus* (e.g. *Pythian* 3. 69 'to … the presence of my Aetnaean host', i.e. Hiero, παρ᾽ Αἰτναῖον ξένον, and *Pythian* 4. 299, 5. 31): patron and poet are apparently on the same level[34], and negative emotions, such as envy, are supposedly excluded from participants in a *xenia* relationship[35], but *xenia* can link people in a range of social positions. The balance between poet and tyrant

---

[27] MEISTER 2020, pp. 75-130 stresses that, on some occasions, some specific individuals are presented as nearing the state of happiness of the gods, a 'simulation of immortality' (see MEISTER 2020, p. 33, citing HALLIWELL 2008, p. 104). S. Fanucchi also points out to me that *Olympian* 1. 99-100 and *Pythian* 8. 96-97 offer other examples of 'simulation of immortality'.

[28] Tr. Fyfe, from www.perseus.tufts.edu.

[29] For the whole quotation, see Aristotle, *Poetics* 1456b 15-18 = 80 B 29 DK = D25 in LAKS - MOST 2016, pp. 50-51. On Protagoras and language see RADEMAKER 2013 and HUITINK - WILLI 2021, with further references.

[30] Bruno Currie draws my attention to, e.g., *Pythian* 1. 71-72: 'I entreat you, son of Cronus, grant that the battle-shouts of the Carthaginians and Etruscans stay quietly at home' λίσσομαι νεῦσον, Κρονίων, | ἥμερον ὄφρα κατ᾽ οἶκον ὁ Φοῖνιξ ὁ Τυρσανῶν τ᾽ ἀλαλατὸς ἔχῃ. Note that Pindar here softens the imperative 'grant' νεῦσον with 'I entreat you' λίσσομαι.

[31] See *Olympian* 1. 110-112, 4. 4-5 (with GENTILI *et al.* 2013 *ad loc.*), 10. 95-99, *Pythian* 4. 1-3, *Nemean* 3. 1-5, 9. 1-5, fr. 52f 5-6 ἐν ζαθέῳ με δέξαι χρόνῳ | ἀοίδιμον Πιερίδων προφάταν, fr. 150 μαντεύεο, Μοῖσα, προφατεύσω δ᾽ ἐγώ.

[32] On the nature of the epinician 'fee' (μισθός as monetary exchange, as apparently at *Pythian* 11. 41-44? or as 'gratitude', as at *Pythian* 1. 76-77?) and on its relationship to other social values (friendship, *xenia*, eros, 'gratitude') see the discussions by GENTILI 1988, pp. 161-165; KURKE 1991b, pp. 243-245; NICHOLSON 2000a; PELLICCIA 2009, pp. 245-247 and BOWIE 2012.

[33] See e.g. *Olympian* 1. 100-103, 6. 27, 8. 74-76, *Isthmian* 1. 40-45, 3. 7-8, and BUNDY 1986 [1962], pp. 10-11, 53-68.

[34] On *xenia* in Greek culture in general and in Pindar in particular see e.g. HERMAN 1987; MITCHELL 1997; KURKE 1991b, pp. 85-159; POTAMITI 2015; BATTEZZATO 2018, pp. 9-14, with further references.

[35] See KURKE 1991b, pp. 135-159; PARK 2013, p. 17, with further references.

is a delicate one. Envy is constantly associated with tyrants and kings: they are the object of envy (Herodotus 3. 52. 5, 7. 236. 1, 7. 237. 2, 8. 69. 1) but also, characteristically, like the gods, feel envy towards the success of their subjects (Herodotus 3. 80. 3-4). As Harrison put it, 'Tyrants or potential tyrants have a virtual monopoly over another divine characteristic also – envy itself'[36]. Moreover, tyrants are by definition suspicious. As the fictionalised tyrant Hiero explains to Simonides in Xenophon's dialogue (*Hiero* 1. 14), tyrants always suspect that praise is insincere (Xenophon, *Hiero* 1. 14):

"Praise, the sweetest of all sounds, is never lacking, for all your courtiers praise everything you do and every word you utter. Abuse, on the contrary, that most offensive of sounds, is never in your ears, for no one likes to speak evil of a despot in his presence" (tr. Marchant).

ἐπεὶ τοῦ μὲν ἡδίστου ἀκροάματος, ἐπαίνου, οὔποτε σπανίζετε· πάντες γὰρ οἱ παρόντες ὑμῖν πάντα καὶ ὅσα ἂν λέγητε καὶ ὅσα ἂν ποιῆτε ἐπαινοῦσι. τοῦ δ᾽ αὖ χαλεπωτάτου ἀκροάματος, λοιδορίας, ἀνήκοοί ἐστε· οὐδεὶς γὰρ ἐθέλει τυράννου κατ᾽ ὀφθαλμοὺς κατηγορεῖν.

See also Xenophon, *Hiero* 1. 15:

"And what pleasure," asked Hiero, "comes, do you suppose, of this shrinking from evil words, when one knows well that all harbour evil thoughts against the despot, in spite of their silence? Or what pleasure comes of this praise, do you think, when the praises sound suspiciously like flattery?"

[15] καὶ ὁ Ἱέρων εἶπε· καὶ τί οἴει, ἔφη, τοὺς μὴ λέγοντας κακῶς εὐφραίνειν, ὅταν εἰδῇ τις σαφῶς ὅτι οἱ σιωπῶντες οὗτοι πάντες κακὰ νοοῦσι τῷ τυράννῳ; ἢ τοὺς ἐπαινοῦντας τί δοκεῖς εὐφραίνειν, ὅταν ὕποπτοι ὦσιν ἕνεκα τοῦ κολακεύειν τοὺς ἐπαίνους ποιεῖσθαι;

Xenophon's dialogue offers a complex interplay of fiction and facts, seriousness and playfulness which cannot be investigated here[37]. It illustrates the *topos* that already emerged from Herodotus: tyrants and rulers in general are suspicious of excessive praise and question its truthfulness. The normal dynamics of linguistic interaction between poet and patron consists in a pact that puts the poet under the obligation to praise: the negative 'face' of the poet is threatened by the request to praise the patron. The linguistic interaction between patron and poet that creates their 'pact' obviously takes place before the creation of the poem. This pact is occasionally mentioned or alluded to by the poet himself (*Olympian* 2. 1-2). The poet, as we saw, presents his praise as the fulfilment of an obligation[38]: he must be truthful and must display gratitude (*charis*). When the patron is a tyrant, the linguistic dynamics are more complex, as the burden on the 'face' of the poet is stronger, and the truthfulness of his statements is more dubious. Moreover, it is more difficult for the poet to reject the request, and to limit his praise or the extent of the prayer that he is engaged to compose.

---

[36] HARRISON 2000, p. 164. See also KURKE 1991b, p. 220: 'In Pindar's poems for tyrants, no attempt is made to defuse the *phthonos* their success awakens; that they will be envied is taken for granted. […] If there is danger of *koros* in such contexts, it is not the tyrant's danger but the poet's: the laudator fears that his praises will cause satiety in his audience long before he approximates the tyrant's virtues'. See esp. *Pythian* 1. 85 ('envy is better than pity' κρέσσον γὰρ οἰκτιρμοῦ φθόνος).

[37] See SEVIERI 2004; TAKAKJY 2017; PARKS 2018; ZUOLO 2018; JORDOVIĆ 2020, with further references.

[38] See above, n. 33.

4. Poet and patron in *Pythian* 3: introduction

Pindar's *Pythian* 3 is a peculiar poem. It does not celebrate a specific sporting victory; it is mostly a long and complex prayer for the health of the ailing Hiero[39]. Here the poet's primary aim is not praise (even if praise of Hiero is indeed not lacking in the poem), but a prayer. However, the prayer is never explicitly formulated; the ode begins with a counter-factual statement or wish (even the nature of that statement is controversial) stressing that it is impossible for the poet to restore health to the patron. The ode is filled with gnomic utterances stressing the limits of human nature and discussing mortality as a defining characteristic even of the most famous heroes, such as Sarpedon (a controversial case, as we will see). The ode is thus atypical because it lacks focus on a single specific victory, concentrating instead on health as a central motif. It is, however, typical in addressing the theme of mortality and immortality, in its narration of myths, and in having a tyrant as a patron (a heightened, more powerful, more splendid version of the usual aristocratic patron).

Some interpreters view patron and poet as standing on an equal footing. For instance, Burton considers it 'a poem in which poet speaks to king as a friend to friend, sympathetically and with full confidence in the power of his poetry to give comfort in sickness and immortality on the lips of men'[40]. In fact, as we saw in the discussion of Xenophon, the speaking persona needs to prove his sincerity and to confirm his sympathy to the tyrant. The speaking persona is both higher and lower than the *laudandus*: higher, in his power to confer immortality, a power ultimately of divine origin, coming from the Muses or Apollo; lower, in social status. This power paradox occurs in other contexts, for instance in the contrasts between prophets and kings (e.g. Agamemnon and Calchas, Oedipus and Tiresias)[41]; the speaking voice of Pindar often asserts its prophetic quality[42]. The unequal balance of poet and patron, prophet and king, is what makes Pindar's linguistic negotiation delicate and complex.

The speaking voice, in this ode, utters a number of gnomic statements, stressing the need to respect the limits set by the gods for the mortal condition. Medda, for instance, interprets these statements as addressed primarily to the community, and conveying a message of social stability, whereas the praise is addressed primarily to the patron[43]. This certainly captures the essence of the problem. The poet, however, must also remind the *laudandus* of his human and social limitations: this is important in order to avoid envy both from the gods and the citizen[44]. But how do you respond to a request from a tyrant?

This paper will argue that Pindar uses amphibolic language in *Pythian* 3 as a politeness strategy (off-record strategy: be ambiguous, be vague) that allows the speaking voice to allude to possible criticism of the *laudandus*, while at the same time not committing the text firmly to that interpretation. In this paper, we will use the following working definitions: 'a term is vague to the extent that it has borderline cases' (e.g. 'tall') (Sorensen 2018); 'a word or phrase enjoying multiple meanings' is ambiguous (e.g. 'bank') (Sennet 2016). These working definitions can help us identify the core aspects of vagueness and ambiguity; ambiguity and vagueness can coexist at the phrase or sentence level (even if, at the level of the single word, they are distinct phenomena), for

---

[39] On the interpretation of this ode see esp. Burton 1962, pp. 78-134; Young 1968, pp. 27-68 and Young 1983; Lefkowitz 1976, pp. 142-157; Medda 1981; Pelliccia 1987; Slater 1988; Robbins 1990; B. Gentili, in Gentili *et al.* 1995, pp. 75-81; Currie 2005, pp. 344-405; Morgan 2015, pp. 260-299, with further references.

[40] Burton 1962, p. 90.

[41] See Battezzato 2020.

[42] See frr. 52f 5-6 and 150, above, n. 31.

[43] Medda 1981, p. 309.

[44] See e.g. Kurke 1991b, pp. 214-218 and *Pythian* 11. 50-58 (maxims addressing common citizens, and deprecating the lot of tyrants).

Estratto

instance when the referents of a vague sentence are left ambiguous (see, e.g., below, section 5, on *Pythian* 3. 59-62). It is impossible to discuss here in detail the literary and philosophical theory of ambiguity[45].

Currie argues that Pindar, in this ode, 'engages with Hieron's eschatological hopes, which may include heroization (as oecist: *Pythian* 1), but would also include the hopes proper to an initiate / hierophant in the mysteries of Demeter (cf. also *Olympian* 6)'[46]. If so, the *laudandus* has a special relation with the divine (mystery cults: as in *Olympian* 2) that excludes the non-initiated (i.e., the community at large) in front of which the *laudandus* is praised[47]. No explicit mention of heroization is made in the ode; some scholars object to this interpretation[48], while others follow it[49]. If one accepts that the poem alludes to the heroization of Hiero, this reveals a new linguistic problem for Pindar: an explicit allusion to heroization might be read as a threat to the positive face of the audience (excluded from the heroic status)[50].

Pindar, in this and other odes, uses negative examples taken from myth and inserts gnomic advice. The Pindaric voice often refrains from making explicit the reference of the negative example or of the gnomic advice. This practice can be read as a 'polite' strategy which allows alternative interpretations that direct criticism and blame to 'envious' human beings (citizens or non-citizens), thus contributing to the general rhetorically goal of the ode, namely praise (and, in this case, also a type of prayer). The ambiguity of negative examples achieves a complex rhetorical goal. This shows how politeness strategies are strictly linked not simply to rhetorical, but also to social, political, and theological practices and goals.

It is impossible to discuss here in further detail the relationship between this type of linguistic ambiguity and the more general category of literary ambiguity, but it is necessary to clarify a few points. Of course, many literary texts are ambiguous and/or vague in a way that enhances their poetical value: ambiguity and vagueness expand possible meanings, and create fascinating, unpredictable connections in the minds of the audience. Leopardi famously argued that vagueness creates pleasure because it creates images that satisfy human aspiration to the infinite[51], and that indefinite words are especially poetical because they suggest 'vast and indefinite ideas'[52]. Such phenomena clearly occur in ancient Greek poetry as well. For instance, when Pindar says that 'when the brilliance given by Zeus comes, a shining light is on man' ὅταν αἴγλα διόσδοτος ἔλθῃ, | λαμπρὸν φέγγος ἔπεστιν ἀνδρῶν (*Pythian* 8. 96-97) the metaphors 'brilliance given by Zeus' and 'shining light' are both ambiguous and vague[53]. The aesthetic pleasure of such metaphors derives precisely from the different connotations (transiency, splendour, glory) associated with light imagery. But this is different from vagueness and ambiguity in a narrative or poetic text that is not addressed to an interlocutor. Leopardi's iconic poem *The infinite* (*L'infinito*) has no addressee; it is a simple description of the sensory and mental experiences of the speaking persona. The ambiguity and vagueness of Pindaric images (and narrations) are part of a conversation with ever-changing addressees: the vagueness of phrases such as 'brilliance given by Zeus', the constant change of addressees, the continuous presence of gnomic passages that are by definition not addressed to a

---

[45] For a recent general overview, starting from EMPSON 1930 (1947), see KNAPE 2021.

[46] Quote from Bruno Currie, personal communication.

[47] See CURRIE 2005, pp. 344-405.

[48] See FERRARI 2007; MORGAN 2015, pp. 291-293; MEISTER 2019, p. 378.

[49] WILSON 2019, p. 332 n. 140.

[50] See Thucydides 2. 35. 2, quoted above, n. 4.

[51] Leopardi, *Zibaldone*, entry of January 16, 1821.

[52] 'Le parole lontano, antico e simili sono poeticissime e piacevoli, perché destano idee vaste e indefinite e non determinabili e confuse': Leopardi, *Zibaldone*, entry of September 25, 1821.

[53] On metaphors and conversational maxims, see below, n. 78.

specific person, allow patron and audience to apply a specific meaning to the images used, and to imagine themselves (or others) to be or not to be the person implicated in the statements of the poet. Pindar uses gnomic statements to issue admonishments ('threats to the negative face') and to make negative judgements ('threats to the positive face'); the lack of specific referents softens the 'threats to the face' of patron and audience and allows Pindar to be especially incisive without offending his interlocutors. Ambiguity about normative or performative statements (gnomic statements, prayers/promises etc.) has an implication for the dialogue with patron and audience. This also applies to mythical narratives. Pindar famously includes many negative narratives, that is narratives that include actions severely criticised and deplored by Pindar (e.g., the stories of Coronis and Asclepius in *Pythian* 3). The fact that Pindar does not compare these narratives to a specific action or person in the world of patron and audience has an important linguistic consequence. The fact that the application of myth to events, conditions, circumstances, people of the real word is left ambiguous has both aesthetic and linguistic advantages. It allows Pindar to insert narrative material that is potentially 'threatening' without violating conventions of politeness. This is the opposite of what Archilochus does in his poems: Archilochus often applies narratives and gnomic statements to specific individuals[54]. It is not by chance that Archilochus is designated by Pindar as the antitype of epinician poetry, the very example of everything that is to be avoided (*Pythian* 2. 52-56)[55]. This makes Pindar's poetic persona acquire a greater status: Pindar's voice acquires authority by speaking general truths. In conclusion: ambiguity and vagueness both contribute to the aesthetic pleasure generated by the text and to the linguistic strategy of politeness used by the speaking voice of the victory odes.

5. *Pythian* 3. 1-67: Pindar's impossible wish and the myth of Asclepius

Pindar's rhetorical task is difficult: Hiero's implicit desire (recovering health, avoiding death) is (apparently) unattainable. The speaking persona repeatedly states his inability to 'bring health' (*Pythian* 3. 73). The 'poet' wishes that he could bring Chiron back to life, because Chiron could heal illnesses, and Chiron taught Asclepius to heal (*Pythian* 3. 1-60). Pindar, however, also uses Asclepius' myth as an exemplum for renouncing impossible desires: Asclepius died because of his attempt to overcome death. The ode is a speech act that in some sense denies itself; 'use contradictions' is a typical off-record strategy.

The speaking voice avoids committing himself to a specific interpretation of the myth narrated at the beginning: no addressee is mentioned in lines 1-60, where the poet narrates the myth of Asclepius[56]. Not only that: in these lines the prayer for the healing of Hiero is never expressed explicitly. After the narration of the myth, the poet addresses his own soul (61-62 'Do not crave immortal life, my soul, but use to the full the resources of what is possible' μή, φίλα ψυχά, βίον ἀθάνατον | σπεῦδε, τὰν δ' ἔμπρακτον ἄντλει μαχανάν). This seems to imply that the myth was cho-

---

[54] See, e.g., the narrative connected with fragments 168, 172-181, 185 West, and the gnomic statement and proverb in 196a.13-15 and 38-41, with the commentary in Swift 2019.

[55] 'For my part, I must avoid the aggressive bite of slander. For I have seen, long before me, abusive Archilochus often in a helpless state, fattening himself with strong words and hatred. But to be rich by the grace of fortune is the best part of skillful wisdom' ἐμὲ δὲ χρεών | φεύγειν δάκος ἀδινὸν κακαγοριᾶν. | εἶδον γὰρ ἑκὰς ἐὼν τὰ πόλλ' ἐν ἀμαχανίᾳ | φο- γερὸν Ἀρχίλοχον βαρυλόγοις ἔχθεσιν πιαινόμενον· τὸ πλουτεῖν δὲ σὺν τύχᾳ | πότμου σοφίας ἄριστον. On this much-debated passage, see Lloyd-Jones 1973, pp. 121-122; Miller 1981; E. Cingano, in Gentili *et al.* 1995 *ad loc.*; Brown 2006; Morgan 2015, pp. 189-191, with further references.

[56] Pelliccia 2017 sees a pun on the name of Hiero in line 1 (Ἤθελον Χίρωνα 'I wished that Chiron' / 'I wished that also Hiero'), but this, even if attractive, remains speculative.

sen as a piece of self-advice: but Pindar's health or desire of immortality is never mentioned in the poem. This self-advice can be read as indirect advice to others[57], i.e., to Hiero. Hiero is finally mentioned in the third person at 68-71, and Pindar lavishes praise on him ('And I would have gone on a ship, cleaving the Ionian waters, to the fountain of Arethusa and the presence of my Aetnaean host, the king who rules Syracuse, gentle to his citizens, bearing no envious grudge against good men[58], a marvellous father to his guests' καί κεν ἐν ναυσὶν μόλον Ἰονίαν τάμνων θάλασσαν | Ἀρέθοι-σαν ἐπὶ κ ράναν παρ' Αἰτναῖον ξένον, | ὃς Συρακόσσαισι νέμει βασιλεύς, | πραῢς ἀστοῖς, οὐ φθονέων ἀγαθοῖς, ξεί|νοις δὲ θαυμαστὸς πατήρ). Only at line 80 is Hiero finally addressed in the vocative, and, briefly, in the second person, in a sentence in which Pindar heaps further praise on the tyrant (84 'It is your lot to be attended by good fortune' τὶν δὲ μοῖρ' εὐδαιμονίας ἕπεται). The poetic voice immediately switches to the third person (85-86 'For great destiny watches over the leader of the people, the tyrant, if over any man' λαγέταν γάρ τοι τύραννον δέρκεται, | εἴ τιν' ἀνθρώπων, ὁ μέγας πότμος), and never addresses Hiero again.

The citizens and the gods are mentioned in the third person (respectively at 69-71 and 76), but not addressed directly, as is frequent in other victory odes: for instance, in *Pythian* 2 the city and citizens are addressed in the vocative at the beginning (1-6), and Hiero, mentioned in the third person at line 5, is addressed in the vocative at line 18. The very lack of a precise addressee helps the speaking voice of the ode achieve his feat of elusiveness: the 'poet'[59] never explains the precise implication of the myths, nor, as we will see, the precise content of the prayer.

Pindaric victory odes often begin with a prayer (*Olympian* 3, 4, 12, 14, *Pythian* 8, *Nemean* 7, 8, 10, 11; *Isthmian* 5, 6)[60]. The speaking voice begins the poem by denying the possibility of uttering a prayer, a surprising move that subverts expectations (Pythian 3. 1-8):

> If it were proper for this commonplace prayer to be made by my tongue, I would want Chiron the son of Philyra to be alive again, he who has departed, the wide-ruling son of Cronus son of Uranus; […] just as he was when once he reared Asclepius, that gentle craftsman who drove pain from the limbs that he healed, that hero who cured all types of diseases.
>
> Ἤθελον Χίρωνά κε Φιλλυρίδαν,
> εἰ χρεὼν τοῦθ' ἀμετέρας ἀπὸ γλώσσας
> κοινὸν εὔξασθαι ἔπος,
> ζώειν τὸν ἀποιχόμενον,
> Οὐρανίδα γόνον εὐρυμέδοντα Κρόνου,

---

[57] As Bruno Currie notes, this happens frequently 'in choral lyric, e.g. Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, 471-474 or (non-choral) Archilochus, fr. 19 West'. See also Hubbard 1985, pp. 133-162 and Hubbard 1986.

[58] Pindar here denies the truth of the *topos* present in Herodotus 3. 80. 3-4 (tyrants feel envy towards their subjects); by denying it, he implies that the *topos* is widely known.

[59] The 'poet' speaks in the first person singular for most of the ode, in three large clusters: starting at line 1 (Ἤθε-λον); at line 61 φίλα ψυχά (self-address) (see 65 πίθον, 68 μόλον, 73 κατέβαν, 75 φαμί, 76 ἐξικόμαν, 77 ἐθέλω, 78 παρ' ἐμὸν πρόθυρον) and at the end (108 ἔσσομαι, 109 ἀσκήσω 111 ἔχω). The first-person plural is used at 59-61, together with the singular (γνόντα… εἰμὲν…) ('We [Svarlien: in fact: one] must seek from the gods what is appropriate for mortal minds, knowing what lies before our [in fact: one's] feet, and what kind of destiny we have' χρὴ τὰ ἐοικότα | πὰρ δαιμόνων μα-στευέμεν θναταῖς φρασίν, | γνόντα τὸ πὰρ ποδός, οἵας εἰμὲν αἴσας), introducing the self-address of 61 φίλα ψυχά. The shifts from the impersonal γνόντα to 'we' might suggest that Hiero is, or should, be included. The mixture of singular and plural continues at 64-65 ('But if wise Chiron were still living in his cave, and if our honey-voiced odes had cast a spell on his spirit, I would have persuaded' εἰ δὲ σώφρων ἄντρον ἔναι' ἔτι Χείρων, καί τί οἱ | φίλτρον ἐν θυμῷ μελιγάρυες ὕμνοι | 65 ἁμέτεροι τίθεν· ἰατῆρά τοί κέν νιν πίθον), but the mention of song indicate that the plural refers to the speaking voice. The poet speaks in the first-person plural again at 114 (γιγνώσκομεν); the plural possibly includes Hiero in the appreciation of Sarpedon and Nestor as role models. On the variations between first person singular and plural in Pindar see Maslov 2015, pp. 101-103.

[60] Maslov 2015, pp. 309-310.

[…]· οἶος ἐὼν θρέψεν ποτέ   5
τέκτονα νωδυνίας
ἥμερον γυιαρκέος Ἀσκλαπιόν,
ἥροα παντοδαπᾶν ἀλκτῆρα νούσων.

The prayer is 'commonplace' (κοινὸν … ἔπος)[61] but its content is not specified. The initial sentence is, moreover, ambiguous: is it a real conditional sentence, as in the translation above and in other ones,[62] or an unobtainable wish followed by a parenthetical comment in the conditional[63]? The ambiguity of χρεών is an added burden on the audience: does it mean 'necessary'[64] (which makes the sentence tautological: of course, one would wish it, if it is necessary) or 'proper', as many interpreters take it (a meaning not attested elsewhere in Pindar)[65]? And why would it be not proper or not necessary to pray for this? 'This commonplace prayer' (τοῦθ' … κοινὸν … ἔπος) seems identical with the text of the poem. But if it is not 'proper' nor 'necessary' to utter it, does Pindar imply that he is not uttering the poem he is presenting? The beginning of the poem seems to deny the very existence of the poem it introduces.

The sentence focuses on an impossible wish: the wish that a dead person, Chiron, were alive. This obviously introduces the theme of mortality, immortality, and healing. Why is Pindar's not a proper or a necessary wish? Because the gods do not allow – what? To resuscitate a dead person (Chiron / Asclepius)? Or to heal Hiero who cannot be cured? Pindar proceeds to narrate the myth of Asclepius, who was able to heal many types of illnesses (47-53), including 'summer fevers' (50), until he was bribed into resuscitating a dead man (54-57): whereupon Zeus promptly killed Asclepius with his thunderbolt (57-58). The entire myth thus suggests an obvious warning for human beings: do not overstep your mark, do not try to reach immortality (we will examine later the gnomic cluster of lines 58-62). Divine hostility to human attempts to overcome their mortal condition is made extremely clear. The speaking voice does not explicitly state how to connect these myths to the counterfactual wish of the poem's beginning. Pindar's 'off-record' strategy allows his text to be read both as a wish for Hiero's health and as a pious acceptance of the limitations of human nature – including human mortality. Hinting at the mortality of the patron, in the context of a discussion of the patron's illness, would amount to hinting at the patron's possible imminent death; that would be a clear threat to his face; and Pindar ably avoids doing that.

The stress on human limitation is crucial in a series of gnomic clusters that Pindar inserts at various points in the narration of the myth. Let us start with *Pythian* 3. 19-23:

Instead, she [= Coronis] was in love with what was distant; many others have felt that passion. There is a worthless tribe among men which dishonours what is at home and looks far away, hunting down empty air with hopes that cannot be fulfilled.

                    ἀλλά τοι
ἥρατο τῶν ἀπεόντων· οἷα καὶ πολλοὶ πάθον.   20
ἔστι δὲ φῦλον ἐν ἀνθρώποισι ματαιότατον,

---

[61] See YOUNG 1968, p. 30 and n. 4, MORGAN 2015, p. 274.

[62] See, e.g., LEFKOWITZ 1963, p. 219 ('I would wish that Chiron now dead were living, if it were proper to utter from my tongue this prayer'), YOUNG 1968, pp. 28-30 and (apparently) Gentili's commentary in GENTILI *et al.* 1995 ('Ἤθελον: con ἄν (κε), apodosi della irrealtà').

[63] As argued by, e.g., PELLICCIA 1987, Gentili's translation in GENTILI *et al.* 1995 ('Vorrei che il figlio di Filira, Chirone – se la mia lingua deve formulare | un voto comune – vivesse ancora'), and PELLICCIA 2017 ('I wish Chiron son of Philyra – if it is acceptable to make an out-loud wish of this saying shared in common – were alive, the departed one').

[64] So e.g. B. GENTILI, in GENTILI *et al.* 1995, p. 89 (see the previous note).

[65] See the discussion in PELLICCIA 2017, p. 68, n. 17.

ὅστις αἰσχύνων ἐπιχώρια παπταίνει τὰ πόρσω,
μεταμώνια θηρεύων ἀκράντοις ἐλπίσιν.

The relevance of these reflections to the myth is clear. But are they relevant for patron, poet, and community? Precisely because of their nature of general reflections, they potentially apply to all human beings, Pindar included. Did not Pindar wish for 'hopes that cannot be fulfilled'? Was his wish to bring Chiron to life not a love of 'what is distant'? What can be more distant for human beings than the dead? Or was that Hiero's wish? This maxim clearly shows why Pindar could not but stress the unattainability of his wish; indeed, it shows why Pindar fundamentally recanted his initial wish the moment he expressed it. The speaking voice (as often) does not specify who the maxim applies to. The maxim is not vague, but its application is left ambiguous. Similar considerations apply to the gnome about Asclepius' venality (*Pythian* 3. 54):

But even skill is enthralled by the love of gain
ἀλλὰ κέρδει καὶ σοφία δέδεται.

The relevance to the myth is obvious, but does this apply to poet, patron, or community? Is Pindar's own greed in question? Sophia 'skill' is a frequent byword for 'poetry' in Pindar[66] and the Pindaric muse is self-avowedly a 'lover of gain' (*Pythian* 11. 4 'Muse, it is your task, if you undertook to lend your voice for silver, to let it flit now this way, now that' Μοῖσα, τὸ δὲ τεόν, εἰ μισθοῖο συνέθευ παρέχειν | φωνὰν ὑπάργυρον, ἄλλοτ' ἄλλᾳ ταρασσέμεν, *Isthmian* 2. 6 'For in those days the Muse was not yet a lover of gain, nor did she work for hire' ἁ Μοῖσα γὰρ οὐ φιλοκερδής πω τότ' ἦν οὐδ' ἐργάτις)[67]. Pindar could be seen as implying that his poetic skill could be enthralled by gain to pray for impossible things; and he further implies that he is precisely resisting that wish.
    The final cluster of general reflections occurs at 59-62:

One must seek from the gods what is appropriate for mortal minds, knowing what lies before one's feet[68], and what kind of destiny we have. Do not crave immortal life, my soul, but use to the full the resources of what is possible
χρὴ τὰ ἐοικότα πὰρ
        δαιμόνων μαστευέμεν θναταῖς φρασίν
γνόντα τὸ πὰρ ποδός, οἵας εἰμὲν αἴσας.
μή, φίλα ψυχά, βίον ἀθάνατον
σπεῦδε, τὰν δ' ἔμπρακτον ἄντλει μαχανάν.

Here again Pindar resorts to vagueness and ambiguity. The impersonal 'one' (corresponding to an omitted impersonal subject in the Greek, i.e., τινα, with γνόντα in agreement) is ambiguous: it leaves literally unexpressed the referent of the maxim. The maxim itself is characterised by vagueness. What is 'appropriate' (ἐοικότα)? Is the wish for health appropriate (and we should retrospec-

---

[66] See SLATER 1969 *s.v.* σοφία b, and e.g. *Olympian* 1. 116, 9. 38 'to speak evil of the gods is a hateful skill' (i.e. poetic skill) τό γε λοιδορῆσαι θεοὺς ἐχθρὰ σοφία, *Pythian* 1. 12, 4. 248 'In poetic skill I am a guide to many others' πολλοῖσι δ' ἅγημαι σοφίας ἑτέροις, 6. 49, *Nemean* 7. 23 'poetic skill deceives, seducing us with stories' σοφία δὲ κλέπτει παράγοισα μύθοις, *Isthmian* 7. 18.
[67] On *Pythian* 11. 41-42 see P. BERNARDINI, in GENTILI *et al.* 1995 and FINGLASS 2007 *ad loc.*, with further references. On *Isthmian* 2. 6, a much-debated passage, see e.g. KURKE 1991b, pp. 240-256; CAIRNS 2011; BOWIE 2012, pp. 88-90. See also above, n. 32.
[68] Svarlien's translation, adapted. Svarlien simplifies the syntax by writing 'We must seek […] before our feet' in view of the first-person plural in 'we have'.

tively interpret χρεών in line 2 as 'appropriate')? Is the first-person plural ('what kind of destiny we have' οἵας εἰμὲν αἴσας) an inclusive plural ('my patron and I', or, rather, 'we humans'[69]) or a *plurale maiestatis* ('we' = the poetic voice/Pindar)? The address to Pindar's own 'soul' shifts again to the single individual speaking voice, but that does not rule out that Hiero is implied as well. Young commented on the 'well-known Pindaric use of ἐγώ whereby general commendations, often applicable to everyone but usually specifically applicable to the victor, are cast in statements made in the first person singular'[70]. The stress is again on limitation and mortality.

Only after the end of the mythical narrative are we finally told the purpose of the initial counterfactual wish. The utopian, counterfactual, wish is, as if it were not fragile enough, an indirect one. Chiron would not bring direct benefits to the patron (or the community). This is what Pindar says (Pythian 3. 63-67)

> But if wise Chiron were still living in his cave, and if our honey-voiced odes had cast a spell on his spirit, I would have persuaded him to send even now a healer to cure noble men of their feverish diseases, someone called a son of Apollo or of his father Zeus.

> εἰ δὲ σώφρων ἄντρον ἔναι' ἔτι Χίρων, καί τί οἱ
> φίλτρον <ἐν> θυμῷ μελιγάρυες ὕμνοι
> ἀμέτεροι τίθεν, ἰατῆρά τοί κέν νιν πίθον   3.65
> καί νυν ἐσλοῖσι παρασχεῖν ἀνδράσιν θερμᾶν νόσων
> ἤ τινα Λατοΐδα κεκλημένον ἢ πατέρος.

We need to wait until these lines to be able to infer Hiero's wish. What does Hiero desire that Pindar desires? A cure. Pindar would be able to provide one, but not directly. He would be able do to so by persuading Chiron to send Asclepius (who is dead, and would also need to be recalled from Hades, presumably against the will of the gods). But Pindar can persuade Chiron only if his 'honey-voiced odes had cast a spell on his [Chiron's] spirit'. Pindar uses a tautology: he could persuade Chiron, if his song had cast a spell on Chiron. Why the unusual caution[71]? Pindar's *mise en abyme* of his own (and Hiero's) wish has the obvious result of distancing the poetic voice from the wish itself. In this way, neither can the gods impute impiety to 'Pindar' nor can Hiero accuse him of not wishing him health. But 'Pindar' does not actually promise or pray for the health of Hiero. 'Pindar', in the first lines of the poem, utters a prayer but leaves it undetermined.

6. *Pythian* 3. 67-115: Pindar's prayer to the Mother and immortality

The speaking voice utters a prayer very late in the poem. But the prayer is a notoriously difficult one[72]. Pindar says (*Pythian* 3. 77-79):

> But I, for my part, want to offer a prayer to the Mother, the revered goddess whose praises, with those of Pan, girls often sing at night beside my doorway'

---

[69] Bruno Currie compares the first-person plurals at e.g. *Nemean* 6. 1-7 or *Olympian* 2. 30-34. On the pragmatics first person singular vs plural in tragedy see CONTI 2021.
[70] See YOUNG 1968, p. 12; KURKE 1991b, pp. 215-216. For the relevance of *Pythian* 3. 61-62 to Hiero see YOUNG 1968, p. 44 and n. 1, with further references.
[71] See, e.g., YOUNG 1968, p. 45.
[72] On these much-disputed lines see YOUNG 1968, pp. 46-50; SLATER 1971; LEFKOWITZ 1991, pp. 51-53, D'ALESSIO 1994, pp. 138-139; B. GENTILI, in GENTILI *et al.* 1995 *ad loc.*; CURRIE 2005, pp. 387-397; MORGAN 2015, pp. 286-287, with further references.

ἀλλ᾽ ἐπεύξασθαι μὲν ἐγὼν ἐθέλω
Ματρί, τὰν κοῦραι παρ᾽ ἐμὸν πρόθυρον σὺν
    Πανὶ μέλπονται θαμά
σεμνὰν θεὸν ἐννύχιαι.

Pindar, again, does not explain the content of the prayer. This is not an oversight, but a crucial choice, and is linked to his unattainable wish at the beginning of the poem. The Pindaric voice does not commit itself to a potentially impious wish for an Asclepius-like success against human mortality, which would amount to a quest for immortality. But Pindar does not overtly refuse to pray for Hiero's health. The prayer is a blank that can be filled by the patron and the community in accordance with their expectations.

Currie argues that Pindar chooses to pray the Mother in order to allude to mystery cults, which would link Pindar, adept of the Mother in Thebes, and Hiero, hierophant of Demeter and Persephone in Syracuse; this in turn would suggest that the unexpressed content of the prayer alludes to life after death, a wish that would be pious and in accordance with the will of the gods (the Mother, Demeter and Persephone), in contrast with Asclepius' impious actions that would offer immortality to humans on earth; Pindar would be offering something more substantial than immortal *kleos* through poetry[73]. This is the passage in the ode that comes closest to an allusion to an immortal afterlife. The allusion is possible, but not overt. If that was the ritual subtext detectable to Hiero, Pindar takes care not to make it explicit. Pindar's strategy of ambiguous and vague allusions could be explained by his wish not to offend the face of the community by affirming explicitly that only he and the patron, and a few initiates, are destined for an immortal afterlife. It remains unclear, however, why Pindar could not explicitly mention here the possibility of life after death (by mentioning, for instance, Achilles in the afterlife) as he does his *Olympian* 2[74].

Pindar obviously alludes to Hiero's ability to interpret the unexpressed content of the prayer in his riddle at lines 80-84.

Hiero, if you are skilled in understanding the true essence of words, you have learned and know the saying of earlier people[75]: "The immortals dispense to men two pains for every blessing." Fools cannot bear their pain with grace, but noble men can, by turning the good side outwards. It is your lot to be attended by good fortune.

εἰ δὲ λόγων συνέμεν κορυφάν, Ἱέρων,   80
    ὀρθὰν ἐπίστᾳ, μανθάνων οἶσθα π᾿ροτέρων
ἓν παρ᾽ ἐσλὸν πήματα σύνδυο δαίονται βροτοῖς
ἀθάνατοι. τὰ μὲν ὦν
    οὐ δύνανται νήπιοι κόσμῳ φέρειν,
ἀλλ᾽ ἀγαθοί, τὰ καλὰ τ᾿ρέψαντες ἔξω.
τὶν δὲ μοῖρ᾽ εὐδαιμονίας ἕπεται.

---

[73] See Currie 2005, pp. 294-297.

[74] See especially *Olympian* 2. 68-83, with C. Catenacci, in Gentili *et al.* 2013 *ad loc.*, with further references. As Bruno Currie notes (personal communication), life after death for the *laudandus* is not explicitly mentioned in *Olympian* 2 (or Bacchylides 3). In *Pythian* 3, life after death is not mentioned in reference to any human being (except in the negative exemplum of Asclepius).

[75] Svarlien's translation has been slightly adapted. Svarlien here translates π᾿ροτέρων as 'the saying of former times', which is clearly acceptable, but less close to the original in a point that is important for the discussion that follows.

Pindar stresses that only Hiero is 'skilled in understanding the true essence of words'. Note again how Pindar stresses the importance, and the difficulty, of 'knowing' by repeating the concept (you 'know how to know' συνέμεν […] ἐπίστᾳ, two synonyms). Pindar (80-83) himself makes use of a potential syntactic ambiguity in a famous passage of Homer (*Iliad* 24. 527-533) in order to claim that gods send more evils than goods to human beings: the use of two authorities (poetic and religious) is an 'excuse' for Pindar's refusal to enact explicitly an impossible verbal incantation that would bring back Chiron or guarantee (eternal) good health to Hiero[76]. Hiero is said by the poet to be able to solve riddles[77], and riddles come both before and after this statement: not just the unspoken prayer to the Mother, but also the statement that 'fools cannot bear their pain with grace, but noble men can, by turning the good side outwards. It is your lot to be attended by good fortune'. In this passage, everything is a contradiction: not only is good bad ('turning the good side outwards'), but one would assume that Hiero is one of 'noble men' (*agathoi*) who can turn the good side outwards (i.e., make the best of a bad situation)[78]. Hiero is definitely not one of the fools. But if Hiero is said to have only 'good fortune', how can he 'turn the good side outwards'? It would seem impossible for Hiero to have something that is not good. One would think that 'good fortune' (εὐδαιμονίας) is the same as 'the good side' (τὰ καλά). So the text both asserts that Hiero has something that is not 'good' (τὰ καλά) and denies that he has anything other than 'good fortune'. Pindar affirms and denies at the same time; and a contradiction is a violation of the maxim of quality: another off-record strategy. Pindar is thus able to both hint at the suffering that the illness is causing him and assert Hiero's (permanent) good fortune. The speaking voice goes on to confirm that the previous gnomic statement applies to Hiero (*Pythian* 3. 85-88):

For great destiny watches over the leader of the people, the tyrant, if over any man. But a secure life was not granted either to Peleus son of Aeacus or to godlike Cadmus

λαγέταν γάρ τοι τύραννον δέρκεται,

εἴ τιν' ἀνθρώπων, ὁ μέγας πότμος. αἰὼν δ' ἀσφαλής

οὐκ ἔγεντ' οὔτ' Αἰακίδᾳ παρὰ Πηλεῖ

οὔτε παρ' ἀντιθέῳ Κάδ᾿μῳ

'A secure life' is an unattainable goal. This is the most explicit passage in the ode, in that it directly connects this sapiential theme to the lot of the tyrant. The speaking voice will later confirm that good fortune is impermanent (*Pythian* 3. 105-106):

The prosperity of men does not stay secure for long, when it follows weighing upon them in abundance.

ὄλβος {δ'} οὐκ ἐς μακ᾿ρὸν ἀνδρῶν ἔρχεται

σάος, πολὺς εὖτ' ἂν ἐπιβ᾿ρίσαις ἔπηται.

Pindar uses 'vague' terms which may or may not refer to the same conditions (τὰ καλά, μοῖρ' εὐδαιμονίας, αἰὼν … ἀσφαλής, ὄλβος); these subtle lexical variations, and the lack of explicit appli-

---

[76] It is impossible to discuss here the details of the allusion to *Iliad* 24. 527-530: see the discussion by B. Gentili, in Gentili *et al.* 1995 *ad loc.*, Currie 2005, pp. 390-392 (one of the few scholars to argue against such an allusion; he argues that the link with Homer is weak, that 'earlier people' refers to earlier generations of hierophants or sages, and that the saying is a proverb), Richardson 1993 and Brügger 2009 ad *Iliad* 24. 527-530; Morgan 2015, pp. 287-288.

[77] Which again may suggest a link with knowledge of mystery cults: Currie 2005, pp. 389-390.

[78] As Young 1968, p. 51 states, 'the metaphor apparently refers to the practice of turning the best parts of a garment to the outside so that they alone are visible'; similarly B. Gentili, in Gentili *et al.* 1995 *ad loc.* 'Metaphors can flout the Quality Maxim in that their propositional content is, literally speaking, false' (Catrambone 2019, p. 305).

cation to specific individuals, are the signs of an off-record strategy. One can stress that the 'lot of good fortune' (84 μοῖρ᾽ εὐδαιμονίας) refers to human happiness and is different from 'secure life' (86 αἰὼν δ᾽ ἀσφαλής), an unattainable goal. But it all depends on small differences in terms that are necessarily vague: what is good fortune? What is 'secure life'? What is prosperity? By using these vague terms (and, often, ambiguous referents), Pindar can solve his politeness problem, actually warning Hiero that human prosperity is not eternal, without really saying so explicitly. Pindar, in addition to vagueness, employs ambiguity and contradiction again. The gnome of lines 105-106 appears to be directed to Hiero (who is definitely prosperous), but in the next sentence Pindar seems to apply it to himself: he (not Hiero) will be 'small in small things' and 'big in big things'[79] or 'among small people/big people'[80] (107-108 σμικρὸς ἐν σμικροῖς, μέγας ἐν μεγάλοις | ἔσσομαι). The use of implications contradicted by the statements that follow is constant.

The strategy of ambiguity is pursued until the very end of the poem (*Pythian* 3. 110-115)

But if a god were to give me luxurious wealth, I hope that I would find lofty fame in the future. We know of Nestor and Lycian Sarpedon, whom men speak of, from melodious words which skilled craftsmen join together. Through renowned songs excellence gains a long life. But few find that easy to accomplish.

εἰ δέ μοι πλοῦτον θεὸς ἁβ̓ρὸν ὀρέξαι,   110
ἐλπίδ᾽ ἔχω κλέος εὑρέσθαι κεν ὑψηλὸν πρόσω.
Νέστορα καὶ Λύκιον Σαρπηδόν᾽, ἀνθρώπων φάτῑς,
ἐξ ἐπέων κελαδεννῶν, τέκτονες οἷα σοφοί
ἅρμοσαν, γινώσκομεν· ἁ δ᾽ ἀρετὰ κλειναῖς ἀοιδαῖς
χρονία τελέθει· παύροις δὲ πράξασθ᾽ εὐμαρές.   115

The ode again ends with an ambiguous wish for immortality after death: Pindar alludes to Sarpedon's fate as narrated by Homer, a narration which, in turn, seems to deny immortality (*Iliad* 12. 323), while at the same time implying the possibility of hero status for Sarpedon[81]. The wish for 'high fame' (111 κλέος … ὑψηλόν) is ostensibly directed to the speaking persona, but the formulation is ambiguous enough to include the *laudandus* as well. If the poem hints at the possibility of some form of life after death for Hiero, that again is an inference that must be drawn by Hiero, not something that Pindar states explicitly. Pindar only mentions poetic immortality and implies (but never states) that his song can confer it on Hiero. Here the speaking voice seems to imagine a metamorphosis into the patron: if he were to receive 'luxurious wealth' such as that of Hiero, he would find 'fame' and become one of the 'few' whose 'excellence gains a long life' through song. But this precarious identification between speaker and addressee, between poet and patron, again focuses on the gulf that separates them: '*if* a god were to give me luxurious wealth'.

Pindar, at the very end of the poem, respectfully signals his social inferiority to Hiero, his prerogatives as poet, and highlights the complex linguistic balancing act that he managed to perform.

7. Conclusion

The paper argues that we can read Pindar's poem as a linguistic act that is performed in front of three groups of potential interlocutors: the patron, the gods, and the community. Only the pa-

---

[79] So Svarlien; similarly Young 1968, p. 59; Liberman 2004, p. 87; Morgan 2015, p. 268 and others.
[80] So, e.g., Ferrari 2008 *ad loc.*
[81] See Nagy 1990, pp. 122-142, Currie 2005, p. 50.

tron is addressed explicitly and directly (lines 80 and 84; mentioned in the third person at 68-71); the poetic voice mentions the community (69-71 and 76) and the gods (see esp. 77-79) without addressing them directly. The long initial section (1-60) lacks a direct addressee. The poetic voice, however, implies that all of the potential interlocutors hear everything: the gods will not be happy with impious statements expressed in sentences that are not explicitly addressed to them, nor will the patron be happy if the poetic voice slights him in sentences that do not address him directly. The importance of the gods as hearers of the Pindaric voice is an element that distinguishes the pragmatic aspect of his poetic language from that of, e.g., modern lyric and other purely literary types of texts.

The change of addressee does not affect the politeness aspect: the text presupposes that all three types of interlocutors are involved. The fact that some sections of the poem lack a specific addressee is, however, one of the elements that allow the poet to resort to ambiguity and vagueness: the relation of general reflections or cautionary narratives to one of the possible interlocutors can be left open by the lack of a specific addressee, in combination with other factors (e.g. the lack of explicit indications about the pact between poet and patron for this very peculiar poem, or the lack of specific explanations of the relevance of individual narratives or general reflections).

The main thrust of the argument of this paper is that Pindar resorts to ambiguity and vagueness on some of the crucial questions of the poem: the mortality of Hiero, his quest for health and, possibly, a form of life after death; Pindar's offer of literary immortality. The pressure of competing authorities motivates this choice.

The main advantage of a pragmatic approach to ambiguity and vagueness in Pindar comes from the fact that it explains linguistic strategies as reactions to social, political and religious contexts: it links language to power. Other, more strictly literary approaches are possible[82], and have in fact been used for the interpretation of Pindar. One can certainly discuss Pindar's rivals or predecessors as potential interlocutors; one can also take the Greeks as a whole, or posterity in general, as additional potential addressees[83]. We have other Pindaric texts where the linguistic pressure of these potential interlocutors is pragmatically active; one can think, for instance, of the importance of humankind in general in Pindar's *Pythian* 8. But exploring the interaction with these potential interlocutors is another, much longer project.

Luigi Battezzato
Scuola Normale Superiore
luigi.battezzato@sns.it

Bibliography

Battezzato 2014: L. Battezzato, *Ambiguity*, in H.M. Roisman (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Greek Tragedy*, Chichester 2014, pp. 96-98.

Battezzato 2018: L. Battezzato, *Euripides: Hecuba*, Cambridge 2018.

Battezzato 2020: L. Battezzato, *Oedipus and Tiresias: Im/politeness Theory and the Interpretation of Sophocles' Oedipus Tyrannus* in G. Martin - F. Iurescia - S. Hof - G. Sorrentino (eds.), *Pragmatic Approaches to Drama*, Leiden 2020, pp. 187-212.

---

[82] One of the anonymous readers suggests that reader-response criticism would offer a more useful approach to Pindar's narratives and texts; the main difference is that this would be a purely literary approach, as opposed to an approach that situates the text within a specific religious and socio-political context.

[83] The inclusion of these two groups of interlocutors was suggested by one of the anonymous readers.

Boeke 2007: H. Boeke, *The value of victory in Pindar's odes: gnomai, cosmology and the role of the poet*, Leiden 2007.

Bonifazi 2001: A. Bonifazi, *Mescolare un cratere di canti: pragmatica della poesia epinicia in Pindaro*, Alessandria 2001.

Bonifazi 2004: A. Bonifazi, *Communication in Pindar's deictic acts*, in *Arethusa* 37, 2004, pp. 391-414.

Bowie 2012: E. Bowie, *Epinicians and 'patrons'*, in C. Carey - P. Agócs - R. Rawles (eds.), *Reading the victory ode*, Cambridge 2012, pp. 83-92.

Brown 2006: C.G. Brown, *Pindar on Archilochus and the gluttony of blame (Pyth. 2. 52-6)*, in *JHS* 126, 2006, pp. 36-46.

Brown 2006: H.P. Brown, *Addressing Agamemnon: a pilot study of politeness and pragmatics in the "Iliad"*, in *TransactAmPhilosSoc* 136, 2006, pp. 1-46.

Brown - Levinson 1987: P. Brown - S.C. Levinson, *Politeness: some universals in language usage*, Cambridge 1987.

Brügger 2009: C. Brügger, *Homers Ilias. Gesamtkommentar. Band VIII. 24. Gesang. Faszikel 2. Kommentar*, Berlin 2009.

Bulman 1992: P. Bulman, *Phthonos in Pindar*, Berkeley 1992.

Bundy 1986 [1962]: E.L. Bundy, *Studia Pindarica*, Berkeley 1986 [1962].

Burton 1962: R.W.B. Burton, Pindar, *Pindar's Pythian odes: essays in interpretation*, Oxford 1962.

Cairns 2011: F. Cairns, *Money and the poet: the first stasimon of Pindar Isthmian 2*, in *Mnemosyne* 64, 2011, pp. 21-36.

Calame 2004: C. Calame, *Deictic Ambiguity and Auto-Referentiality: Some Examples from Greek Poetics*, in *Arethusa* 37, 2004, pp. 415-443.

Cannatà Fera 2020: M. Cannatà Fera, *Pindaro: Le Nemee*, Roma 2020.

Catrambone 2016: M. Catrambone, *Off-record politeness in Sophocles: the patterned dialogues of female characters*, in *Journal of Politeness Research-Language Behaviour Culture* 12, 2016.

Catrambone 2019: M. Catrambone, *Tragic conversation: politeness strategies in Sophocles' patterned dialogues*, PhD Scienze dell'Antichità, Scuola Normale Superiore, Pisa, 2019.

Conti 2021: L. Conti, *A first approach to ἡμεῖς in place of ἐγώ in Sophocles and Euripides: A deactualising device and expression of self-dignity*, in *Graeco-Latina Brunensia* 26, 2021, pp. 23-35.

Currie 2005: B. Currie, *Pindar and the cult of heroes*, Oxford 2005.

Currie 2013: B. Currie, *The Pindaric First Person in Flux*, in *ClAnt* 32, 2013, pp. 243-282.

D'Alessio 1994: G.B. D'Alessio, *First-person problems in Pindar*, in *BICS* 39, 1994, pp. 117-139.

D'Alessio 2009: G.B. D'Alessio, *Language and pragmatics*, in F. Budelmann (ed.), *The Cambridge companion to Greek lyric*, Cambridge 2009, pp. 114-129.

D'Alessio 2020: G.B. D'Alessio, *The problem of the absent I: lyric poetry and deixis in 'mediated' communication*, in *AION* 42, 2020, pp. 1-30.

Dodds 1951: E.R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the irrational*, Berkeley 1951.

Edlow 1977: R.B. Edlow, *Galen on Language and Ambiguity: An English Translation of Galen's "De captionibus (On fallacies)" with introduction, text, and commentary*, Leiden 1977.

Empson 1930 (1947): W. Empson, *Seven types of ambiguity*, London 1930 (1947 2nd ed.)

Ferrari 2007: F. Ferrari, *Review of Currie 2005*, in *Bryn Mawr Classical Review*, 2007 (https://bmcr.brynmawr.edu/2007/2007.01.31/).

Ferrari 2008: F. Ferrari, *Pindaro: Pitiche*, Milano 2008.

Finglass 2007: P.J. Finglass, *Pindar: Pythian eleven*, Cambridge 2007.

Gentili 1988: B. Gentili, *Poetry and its public in ancient Greece: from Homer to the fifth century*, Baltimore-London 1988.

Gentili *et al.* 1995: B. Gentili - P. Bernardini - E. Cingano - P. Giannini, *Pindaro: le Pitiche*, Milano 1995.

Gentili *et al.* 2013: B. Gentili - C. Catenacci - P. Giannini - L. Lomiento, *Pindaro: Le Olimpiche*, Milano 2013.

Grice 1975: P. Grice, *Logic and conversation*, in P. Cole - J.L. Morgan (eds.), *Syntax and Semantics, Vol. 3, Speech Acts*, New York 1975, pp. 41-58.

Grice 1989: P. Grice, *Studies in the way of words*, Cambridge (MA)-London 1989.

Halliwell 2008: S. Halliwell, *Greek laughter: a study of cultural psychology from Homer to early Christianity*, Cambridge 2008.

Hamilton 2003: J.T. Hamilton, *Soliciting darkness: Pindar, obscurity, and the classical tradition,* Cambridge (MA) 2003.

Hanks 2013: P. Hanks, *Lexical analysis: norms and exploitations*, Cambridge (MA) 2013.

Harrison 2000: T. Harrison, *Divinity and history: the religion of Herodotus*, Oxford 2000.

Herman 1987: G. Herman, *Ritualised friendship and the Greek city*, Cambridge 1987.

Hornblower 2004: S. Hornblower, *Thucydides and Pindar: Historical Narrative and the World of Epinikian Poetry*, Oxford 2004.

Hornblower 2008: S. Hornblower, *A commentary on Thucydides: Volume III: Books 5.25-8.109*, Oxford 2008.

Hornblower - Morgan 2007: S. Hornblower - C. Morgan, *Pindar's poetry, patrons, and festivals: from archaic Greece to the Roman Empire*, Oxford-New York 2007.

Hubbard 1985: Th.K. Hubbard, *The Pindaric Mind*, Leiden 1985.

Hubbard 1985: Th.K. Hubbard, *The subject/object relation in Pindar's Second Pythian and Seventh Nemean*, in *QuadUrbin* n.s. 22 [41] (1986), pp. 53-72.

Huitink - Willi 2021: L. Huitink - A. Willi, *Protagoras and the beginnings of Grammar*, in *The Cambridge Classical Journal* 67, 2021, pp. 1-27.

Hummel 1993: P. Hummel, *La syntaxe de Pindare*, Louvain-Paris 1993.

Jordović 2020: I. Jordović, *On the mirror of tyrants: Xenophon's Hiero and its context(s)*, in *Istraživanja: Journal of Historical Researches* 31, 2020.

Knape 2021: J. Knape, *Seven perspectives of ambiguity and the problem of intentionality*, in V. Martin - F. Therese - F. Stavros (eds.), *Strategies of ambiguity in ancient literature*, 2021, pp. 381-404.

Konstan - Rutter 2003: D. Konstan - N.K. Rutter, *Envy, spite and jealousy: the rivalrous emotions in ancient Greece*, Edinburgh 2003.

Kurke 1991a: L. Kurke, *Fathers and Sons: A Note on Pindaric Ambiguity*, in *AJPh* 112, 1991, pp. 287-300.

Kurke 1991b: L. Kurke, *The traffic in praise: Pindar and the poetics of social economy*, Ithaca 1991.

Laks - Most 2016: A. Laks - G.W. Most, *Early Greek philosophy. Volume 8. Sophists. Part 1*, Cambridge (MA)-London 2016.

Lefkowitz 1963: M.R. Lefkowitz, *ΤΩ ΚΑΙ ΕΓΩ: the first person in Pindar*, in *HarvStClPhil* 67, 1963, pp. 177-253.

Lefkowitz 1976: M.R. Lefkowitz, *The Victory ode: an introduction*, Park Ridge, N.J 1976.

Lefkowitz 1991: M.R. Lefkowitz, *First-person fictions: Pindar's poetic 'I'*, Oxford 1991.

Lefkowitz 1995: M.R. Lefkowitz, *The first person in Pindar reconsidered again*, in *BICS* 40, 1995, pp. 139-150.

LENTINI 2018: G. LENTINI, *(Im)politeness in the Iliad: The Pragmatics of the Homeric Expression* ἀγαθός περ ἐών, in *Trends in Classics* 10, 2018, pp. 255-274.

LIBERMAN 2004: G. LIBERMAN, *Pindare: Pythiques*, Paris 2004.

LLOYD-JONES 1973: H. LLOYD-JONES, *Modern interpretation of Pindar: the Second Pythian and Seventh Nemean Odes*, in *JHS* 93, 1973, pp. 109-137.

LLOYD 2004: M. LLOYD, *The politeness of Achilles: off-record conversation strategies in Homer and the meaning of* kertomia, in *JHS* 124, 2004, pp. 75-89.

LLOYD 2006: M. LLOYD, *Sophocles in the light of face-threat politeness theory*, in I.J.F. DE JONG - A. RIJKSBARON (eds.), *Sophocles and the Greek language: aspects of diction, syntax and pragmatics*, Leiden-Boston 2006, pp. 225-239.

LLOYD 2009: M. LLOYD, *The language of the gods: politeness in the prologue of the Troades*, in J.R.C. COUSLAND - J.R. HUME (eds.), *The play of texts and fragments: essays in honour of Martin Cropp*, Leiden 2009, pp. 183-192.

MAEHLER - SNELL 1971: H. MAEHLER - B. SNELL, *Pindari Carmina cum fragmentis*, Leipzig 1971.

MASLOV 2015: B. MASLOV, *Pindar and the emergence of literature*, Cambridge 2015.

MEDDA 1981: E. MEDDA, *ΗΡΑΤΟ ΤΩΝ ΑΠΕΟΝΤΩΝ. Prosperità e limitatezza umana in una gnome pindarica (Pind, Pyth. III 19 ss.)*, in *Studi in onore di Giorgio Buratti*, Pisa 1981, pp. 295-309.

MEISTER 2019: F.J. MEISTER, *Hieron and Zeus in Pindar*, in *ClPhil* 114, 2019, pp. 366-382.

MEISTER 2020: F.J. MEISTER, *Greek praise poetry and the rhetoric of divinity*, Oxford 2020.

MILLER 1981: A.M. MILLER, *Pindar, Archilochus and Hieron in P. 2.52-56*, in *TransactAmPhilAss* 111, 1981, pp. 135-143.

MITCHELL 1997: L.G. MITCHELL, *Greeks bearing gifts: the public use of private relationships in the Greek world, 435-323 BC*, Cambridge 1997.

MORGAN 2015: K.A. MORGAN, *Pindar and the construction of Syracusan monarchy in the fifth century B.C.*, Oxford 2015.

MOST 1985: G.W. MOST, *The measures of praise: structure and function in Pindar's Second Pythian and Seventh Nemean odes*, Göttingen 1985.

MOST 2003: G.W. MOST, *Epinician envies*, in D. KONSTAN - N.K. RUTTER (eds.), *Envy, Spite and Jealousy*, 2003, pp. 123-142.

NAGY 1990: G. NAGY, *Greek mythology and poetics*, Ithaca-London 1990.

NEER - KURKE 2019: R.T. NEER - L. KURKE, *Pindar, song, and space: towards a lyric archaeology*, Baltimore 2019.

NICHOLSON 2000a: N. NICHOLSON, *Pederastic poets and adult patrons in late archaic lyric*, in *The Classical World* 93, 2000, pp. 235-259.

NICHOLSON 2000b: N. NICHOLSON, *Polysemy and ideology in Pindar Pythian 4.229-230*, in *Phoenix* 54, 2000, pp. 191-202.

OUDEMANS - LARDINOIS 1987: T.C.W. OUDEMANS - A.P.M.H. LARDINOIS, *Tragic ambiguity: anthropology, philosophy and Sophocles' Antigone*, Leiden 1987.

PARK 2013: A. PARK, *Truth and genre in Pindar*, in *ClQ* 63, 2013, pp. 17-36.

PARKS 2018: M.H. PARKS, *If you'll be my bodyguard: Simonides the mercenary in Xenophon's Hieron*, in *ClJ* 113, 2018, pp. 385-410.

PELLICCIA 1987: H. PELLICCIA, *Pindarus Homericus: Pythian 3.1-80*, in *HarvardStClPhil* 91, 1987, pp. 39-63.

PELLICCIA 2009: H. PELLICCIA, *Simonides, Pindar and Bacchylides*, in F. BUDELMANN (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Lyric*, Cambridge 2009, pp. 240-262.

Pelliccia 2017: H. Pelliccia, *The Violation of Wackernagel's Law at Pindar "Pythian" 3.1*, in *HarvardStClPhil* 109, 2017, pp. 63-82.

Pfeijffer 1999: I.L. Pfeijffer, *Three Aeginetan odes of Pindar: a commentary on Nemean V, Nemean III and Pythian VIII*, Leiden 1999.

Pitotto 2014: E. Pitotto, *Invidia, moderazione e "status" sociopolitico del* laudandus. *Note prosopografiche sugli "epinici siracusani" di Pindaro*, in *QuadUrbin* 107, 2014, pp. 45-63.

Potamiti 2015: A. Potamiti, *The theme of hospitality in Pindar's Fourth Pythian*, in *GaR* 62, 2015, pp. 1-11.

Privitera 1982: G.A. Privitera, *Pindaro: Le Istmiche*, Milano 1982.

Rademaker 2013: A. Rademaker, *The most correct account: Protagoras on language*, in J.M. van Ophuijsen - M. van Raalte - P. Stork, *Protagoras of Abdera: the man, His measure*, Leiden 2013, pp. 87-111.

Renehan 1969: R. Renehan, *Conscious Ambiguities in Pindar and Bacchylides*, in *GrRom-ByzSt* 10, 1969, pp. 217-228.

Richardson 1993: N.J. Richardson, *The Iliad: a commentary. Vol. 6: books 21-24*, Cambridge 1993.

Robbins 1990: E. Robbins, *The gifts of the gods: Pindar's third Pythian*, in *ClQ* 40, 1990, pp. 307-318.

Schmid 2014: W. Schmid, *Implied author*, in P. Hühn (ed.), *The living handbook of narratology*, 2014 (https://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/node/58.html).

Sennet 2016: A. Sennet, *Ambiguity*, in E.N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2016 (https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2016/entries/ambiguity/).

Sevieri 2004: R. Sevieri, *The imperfect hero: Xenophon's Hiero as the self-(taming) of the tyrant*, in C. Tuplin (ed.), *Xenophon and his world*, Papers from a conference held in Liverpool in July 1999, Stuttgart 2004, pp. 277-287.

Slater 1969: W.J. Slater, *Lexicon to Pindar*, Berlin 1969.

Slater 1971: W.J. Slater, *Pindar's house*, in *GrRomByzSt* 12, 1971, pp. 141-152.

Slater 1988: W.J. Slater, *Pindar's "Pythian" 3: structure and purpose*, in *QuadUrb* 29, 1988, pp. 51-61.

Sorensen 2018: R. Sorensen, *Vagueness*, in E.N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2018, (https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/vagueness/).

Sotiriou 1998: M. Sotiriou, *Pindarus Homericus: Homer-Rezeption in Pindars Epinikien*, Göttingen 1998.

Stanford 1939: W.B. Stanford, *Ambiguity in Greek literature: studies in theory and practice*, Oxford 1939.

Stoneman 2014: R. Stoneman, *Pindar*, London 2014.

Svarlien 1990: D.A. Svarlien, *Pindar: Olympian Odes, Pythian Odes, Nemean Odes, Isthmian Odes*, Medford (MA) 1990 (http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/collection?collection= Perseus:collection:Greco-Roman).

Swift 2019: L. Swift, *Archilochus: the poems. Introduction, text, translation, and commentary*, Oxford 2019.

Takakjy 2017: L.C. Takakjy, *Xenophon the literary critic: the poetics and politics of praise in Hiero*, in *GrRomByzSt* 57, 2017, pp. 49-73.

Thomas 2012: R. Thomas, *Pindar's 'difficulty' and the performance of epinician poetry: some suggestions from ethnography*, in C. Carey - P. Agócs - R. Rawles (eds.), *Reading the Victory Ode*, Cambridge 2012, pp. 224-246.

Tribulato 2016: O. Tribulato, *La lirica corale*, in A.C. Cassio (ed.) *Storia delle lingue letterarie greche*, Firenze 2016, pp. 230-259.

Vallozza 1989: M. Vallozza, *Il motivo dell'invidia in Pindaro*, in *QuadUrb* 60, 1989, pp. 13-30.

Vernant 1978: J.P. Vernant, *Ambiguity and Reversal: On the Enigmatic Structure of Oedipus Rex*, in *New Literary History* 9, 1978, pp. 475-501.

Vöhler *et al.* 2021: M. Vöhler - T. Fuhrer - S.A. Frangoulidis, *Strategies of ambiguity in ancient literature*, Berlin 2021.

Wells 2009: J.B. Wells, *Pindar's verbal art: an ethnographic study of epinician style*, Washington, (DC)-Cambridge, Mass 2009.

Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 1922: U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Pindaros*, Berlin 1922.

Wilson 2019: P. Wilson, *Dancing for free: Pindar's Kastor song for Hieron*, in *ClAnt* 38, 2019, pp. 298-363.

Young 1968: D.C. Young, *Three odes of Pindar: a literary study of Pythian 11, Pythian 3, and Olympian 7*, Leiden 1968.

Young 1983: D.C. Young, *Pindar Pythians 2 and 3: inscriptional ποτέ and the "poetic epistle"*, in *HarvStClPhil* 87, 1983, pp. 31-48.

Zuolo 2018: F. Zuolo, *'Xenophon's Hiero: hiding Socrates to reform tyranny*, in A. Stavru - C. Moore (eds.), *Socrates and the Socratic dialogue*, Leiden 2018, pp. 564-576.

Abstract

Questo articolo discute il ruolo dell'ambiguità nella *Pitica* 3 di Pindaro. Sostiene che l'ambiguità è una strategia usata da Pindaro per bilanciare differenti pressioni linguistiche, sociali e religiose. L'ambiguità permette a Pindaro di compiere il suo dovere encomiastico (e forse andare anche al di là del suo dovere) di fronte a pressioni contrastanti provenienti dal suo patrono, dalla comunità e dalle norme religiose. L'articolo utilizza concetti tratti dalla *politeness theory* e da altri approcci linguistici per interpretare le narrazioni mitiche e le sezioni gnomiche di Pindaro.