Light and Vision in Pindar's *Olympian Odes*: Interplays of Imagination and Performance*

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In archaic Greece light and vision were understood to operate on a similar basis, namely the emission of fire-rays, which might be strong or smooth, focused or diffused. The generic Greek term φάος ('light') and its cognates, such as φαίνω ('bring to light'), φαίνομαι ('come to light'), φαεινός ('bright, splendid'), φαίδιμος ('shining, radiant'), belong to various intricate metaphorical systems and play a major role in Pindar's poetics and pragmatics of imaginary and spectacular vision (as defined below). These terms associate human and divine sights with the glare of the sun, shaping out positive concepts such as excellence, glory, success, wealth, beauty, truth, harmony, etc. In this paper I focus on the *Olympian Odes* and analyse two aspects: the visual images that cluster in mythological narratives, especially in *Olympian* 2 (the island of the blessed), *Olympian* 6 (Iamos' birth), and *Olympian* 7 (the emergence of Rhodes), and the pragmatics of light and vision that appear in the melic frame, especially in *Olympian* 1 (the initial priamel), *Olympian* 9 (the third triad), and *Olympian* 10. The efficiency of the light imagery, however, ultimately depends on echoes and reverberations between the two components of the odes, between the diffused daylight images and other kinds of light and vision, and between the metaphors and other textual and musical effects in the audience's imagination and reception.

First, however, I will have to make some preliminary remarks about light and vision and about the hybrid nature of Pindar's victory odes. Sight and vision were a dynamic activity for the archaic and early classical Greeks. They saw the emission of light as fiery radiation:¹ the ancient Greek vocabulary of light (which can be diffuse, radiant, whirling, diffracted, or vibrating) is organized in a group of metaphorical matrices by which the actions of seeing, gleaming, burning, and showing have similar qualities and may represent each other. Thus, the lights of stars and gods are made of fire, like the blazes from human

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1 Cf. Simon (2003), especially ch. 1 ('L'optique antique et la représentation du visible').

and animal eyes; stars are eyes, and vice versa.² More significantly, both in poetic and rhetorical works, as well as in technical, scientific, and philosophical texts, there are numerous analogical (and especially metaphorical) transfers between the fields of sight, hearing, touch, and smell, in synaesthetic evocations in which light and glare figuratively represent, for instance, the strength of voices or the suavity of fragrances.³

Aristotle argues that 'unless one perceived things one would not learn or understand anything',⁴ while modern cognitivist philosophers, such as Lakoff and Johnson,⁵ speak about metaphorical thinking and 'philosophy in the flesh'. For the ancient Greeks as for most of us visual images are not bare ornaments but, like sensations, ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving, indistinctly.⁶ And because the words of light and colour are sung during the epinician performances, the conceptual field of light participates in building up and shaping other fields typical of praise poetry, like those of glory, wealth, excellence, and harmony, while constantly contrasting with fields of dark or violently shining opposites, like shame, dissimulation or excess.⁷

Visual images can be found in the mythological component of the odes (both narrative and descriptive) which, when referring to ancient times, is

2 Cf. Briand (2003b) and (2005b). Light and vision in Greek science, language, poetry, and aesthetics, are crucial anthropological issues; they are discussed in, e.g., Bremer (1976), Ciani (1974), and Frontisi-Ducroux and Vernant (1989).

3 Some of these metaphorical matrices play a significant role in other papers in this volume: see especially Katerina Ladianou's contribution (discourse / fragrance/ seeing).

4 Arist. *De An.* 432a 8 (transl. D.W. Hamlyn).

5 Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and (1999), and Lakoff (1987). I here refer to cognitive poetics, especially to notions like conceptual metaphor, interaction of figures and grounds, mental spaces, or literature as parable, as presented by Stockwell (2002) and exemplified in Gavins and Steen (eds) (2003), especially in the chapters by R. Tsur ('Deixis and abstractions: adventures in space and time', 41–54), P. Crisp ('Conceptual metaphor and its expressions', 99–111), and M. Burke ('Literature as parable', 115–128). Cf. also Semino and Culpeper (eds) (2002), e.g. the chapter by Y. Shen ('Cognitive constraints on verbal creativity: The use of figurative language in poetic discourse', 211–230, esp. on zeugma, synaesthesia and oxymoron).

6 The structure and the sensorial, ethical, religious, or cognitive efficiency of visual poetry are at the core of important Pindaric studies: cf. Duchemin (1952) and (1954), Bernard (1963), Hubbard (1985), Nünlist (1998), Wersinger (2008), and Calame (2008). This is obvious for archaic times, when poetry and philosophy were similar activities: cf. Most (1999). In this respect, *enargeia* has aesthetic and logical effects: cf. Calame (1991), and Lévy and Pernot (eds) (1997). For a philosophical/stylistic perspective, with a comparison between Pindar and Theocritus, see Otto (2009).

7 Cf. Briand (2003a).

the quasi-epic nucleus of *epinikia*.⁸ Here, on the illocutionary level, the poetic performance intends to produce images and ideas in the audience's minds. These visual and acoustical images appeal to *phantasia* and their efficiency relies upon the joined effects of *ἐνάργεια* (vividness), *ποικιλία* (variedness), and *σαφήνεια* (clarity).⁹ In this case, I shall speak of imaginary vision. Other visual images help structure the melic frame of the odes, which is mostly encomiastic.¹⁰ They are directly related to the ritual performance, including the poetic enunciation itself, and to the contemporary reception of the human and divine audience. This audience is sensitive to the aesthetic and deictic effects¹¹ of musical harmony, which comprise an active association of dance,¹² music, song, and lyrics. In this case I shall speak of spectacular vision.¹³

8 Cf. Koehnken (1971) and Mann (1994). The mythical narrative modifies the enunciative frame of the epinicians, as in hymnic poetry: cf. Calame (1995).

9 Cf. Briand (2006). For Pindar I here refer above all to Steiner (1986). Before presenting my paper at the Delphi conference and writing this article, I was not aware of Patten (2009), which is illuminating on the relations between poetics, rhetoric and philosophy (in post-modern theory as well as in Pindar), and the figurality of deep meaning, necessary for any immanent conception of interpretation. All that might seem not to be directly connected to the 'visual aspects of performance as inscribed and embodied in the poems themselves' (to quote an item from the brief of the Delphi conference), but in fact I think it is, on a metapoetic level. Cf. Patten (2009) 238: 'If the theoretical project can be seen as the attempt to view viewing, then the moments at which the methodological presuppositions of close reading subvert themselves will be a part of this necessary *theoria*—an abyss, perhaps, but one from which classical literary studies should no longer draw back'.

10 This kind of visual images makes Pindar's poetry a crucial part of the religious, social, and economic system with which it interacts: cf. Gentili (1988), Kurke (1991), Dougherty and Kurke (eds) (1998), and Kowalzig (2007).

11 On *deixis* see e.g. Danielewicz (1990), D'Alessio (1994), and the contributions in Felson (ed.) (2004), especially those of G.B. D'Alessio ('Past future and present past: temporal deixis in Greek archaic lyric', 267–294), N. Felson ('The poetic effects of deixis in Pindar's Ninth Pythian ode', 365–389), L. Athanassaki ('Deixis, performance, and poetics in Pindar's *First Olympian Ode*', 317–341), A. Bonifazi ('Communication in Pindar's deictic acts', 391–414), and C. Calame ('Deictic ambiguity and auto-referentiality: some examples from Greek poetics', 415–443). For epinician poetry as a combination of ritual and discursive performing art cf. Bonifazi (2001).

12 On dance in melic poetry, in a ritualistic, aesthetic, and philosophical perspective, cf. Calame (1977), Mullen (1982), Miller (1986), Lonsdale (1993), and Naerebout (1997), of special interest for methodological issues.

13 For the dialectics of ritual and performance (esp. theatre) cf. Schechner (2003) and Turner (1986). For another spectacular genre of choral poetry see e.g. the essays in Kraus, Goldhill, Foley, and Elsner (eds) (2007) by R. Martin ('Outer limits, choral space', 35–62) and

These two discursive genres, quasi-epic and melic,¹⁴ act together, with the help of two complementary kinds of visible effects, imaginary and spectacular ones, on which the social and religious usages of the odes are grounded.¹⁵ The echoes, especially visual, between the melic and mythological components of the odes build up the cohesion and the coherence of the praise that is justified by the correspondence between past and present excellence.¹⁶ Gnostic assertions occur in both these components of the odes and appeal to ritual and imaginary vision. In the same way myths are sung by a chorus which strengthens their visual evocations with spectacular processes, while the melic frames may provoke, when sung, the audience's *phantasia*.

In what follows I examine firstly some mythological statements in the *Olympian Odes* in which visual images help to structure narratives, descriptions, and *gnômai*; secondly, some encomiastic utterances, based on strong spectacular effects; and finally the dialectics of those two types of vision at the core of epinician poetics.¹⁷

L. Kurke ('Visualizing the choral: Poetry, performance, and elite negotiation in fifth-century Thebes', 63–101). For the relations between spectacular and imaginary vision see now Briand (2013).

14 I here refer to 'melic', rather than 'lyric', poetry: the category of 'lyric' might be considered a post-classical construction, and 'melic' is useful because it expresses in one term the different performative, ritual, and political aspects of epinician poetry. Cf. Calame (2000), ch. 1 ('Poésie épique et mélrique: la projection du *je* et de son discours oral dans l'instance divine', 49–86), Calame (2006), Briand (2008a), (2008b), and (2010). For an history of the notions of 'lyric' and 'lyrism' cf. Guerrero (1998).

15 Cf. Bernardini (1983).

16 The structural cohesion of the epinician poems relies both on the thematic and pragmatic correspondence of the myth and its melic frame (cf. Wüst [1967], Hornblower [2004], Krummen [1990], Currie [2005]), and upon the dynamic and tense coherence which Pindar's severe style produces (cf. Cole [1988], Race [1990], and Hummel [1993], on 'la valeur cohésive de la disjonction' and its 'harmonie paradoxale'). See Briand (2005a). In this respect, metaphor, on a paradigmatic level, and metonymy, on a syntagmatic one, build up an efficacious, though harsh, cooperation, typical of Pindaric style and thought: cf. Stoneman (1981). All this might become a particular way to deconstruct and actualize the question of unity: cf. Young (1964).

17 Throughout the text and translation of Pindar is from Race (1997). The critical frame to which I most adhere is a kind of 'bricolage', in Levi-Straussian terms, as developed in Budelmann (ed.) (2009), especially by C. Carey ('Genre, occasion and performance', 21–38), S. Hornblower ('Greek lyric and the politics and sociologies of archaic and classical Greek communities', 39–57), G.B. D'Alessio ('Language and pragmatics', 114–129), and H. Pelliccia ('Simonides, Pindar and Bacchylides', 240–262).

Constructing Visual Images in the Mythological Discourse: The Manifold Plays of *enargeia*

The first passage I would like to discuss is Pindar's description of the Isle of the Blessed in *Olympian* 2.53–74:

ὁ μὲν πλοῦτος ἀρεταῖς δεδαιδαλμένος
φέρει τῶν τε καὶ τῶν
καιρὸν βαθεῖαν ὑπέχων μέριμναν †ἀγροτέραν,

ἀστήρ ἀρίζηλος, ἐτυμώτατον
ἀνδρὶ φέγγος· εἰ δέ νιν ἔχων τις οἶδεν τὸ μέλλον,
ὅτι θανόντων μὲν ἐν-
θάδ' αὐτίκ' ἀπάλαμνοι φρένες
ποινὰς ἔτεισαν—τὰ δ' ἐν τᾷδε Διὸς ἀρχᾷ
ἀλιτρά κατὰ γᾶς δικάζει τις ἔχθρᾳ
λόγον φράσαις ἀνάγκᾳ·

ἴσαις δὲ νύκτεσσιν αἰεῖ,
ἴσαις δ' ἀμέραις ἄλιον ἔχοντες, ἀπονέστερον
ἐσλοὶ δέκονται βίοντον, οὐ χθόνα τα-
ράσσοντες ἐν χερὸς ἀκμᾷ
οὐδὲ πόντιον ὕδωρ
κεινὰν παρὰ δίαίταν, ἀλλὰ παρὰ μὲν τιμίαις
θεῶν οἵτινες ἔχαιρον εὐορκίαις
ἄδακρυν νέμονται
αἰῶνα, τοὶ δ' ἀπροσόρατον ὀκχέοντι πόνον.

ὅσοι δ' ἐτόλμασαν ἐστρίς
ἐκατέρωθι μείναντες ἀπὸ πάμπαν ἀδίκων ἔχειν
ψυχὰν, ἔτειλαν Διὸς ὁδὸν παρὰ Κρό-
νον τύρσιν· ἔνθα μακάρων
νάσον ὠκεανίδες
αὔραι περιπνέουσιν· ἀνθεμα δὲ χρυσοῦ φλέγει,
τὰ μὲν χερσόθεν ἀπ' ἀγλαῶν δενδρέων,
ὑδωρ δ' ἄλλα φέρβει,
ὄρμοισι τῶν χέρας ἀναπλέκοντι καὶ στεφάνους

... Truly, wealth embellished with virtues /
provides fit occasion for various achievements
// by supporting a profound and questing
ambition;

it is a **conspicuous lodestar**, the truest // **light**
for a man. If one has it and knows the future,
// that the helpless spirits / of those who
have died on earth immediately // pay the
penalty—and upon sins committed here // in
Zeus' realm, a judge beneath the earth //
pronounces sentence with hateful necessity;

but forever having **sunshine** in equal nights //
and in **equal days**, good men // receive a life of
less toil, / for they do not vex the earth // or the
water of the sea with the strength of their
hands // to earn a paltry living. No, in company
with the honored // gods, those who joyfully
kept their oaths / spend a tearless // existence,
whereas the others endure pain too terrible to
behold.

But those with the courage to have lived //
three times in either realm, while keeping their
souls // free from all unjust deeds, travel the
road of Zeus / to the tower of Kronos, where
ocean breezes // blow round // the Isle of the
Blessed, and **flowers of gold are ablaze**, //
some **from radiant trees** on land, while the
water / nurtures others; with these they weave
// garlands for their hands and crown for their
heads, ...

In this passage visual imagery comes to the support of rhetorical argumentation. In lines 55–56 a descriptive maxim metaphorically describes wealth (πλοῦτος) as a ‘conspicuous lodestar’ (ἀστήρ ἀρίζηλος), emphatically placed at the beginning of the third epode. It brings together the semantic features of truth and light, both aesthetic and ethical, and connects these with ‘the truest light for a man’ (ἐτυμώτατον ἀνδρὶ φέγγος). The general maxim, the efficiency of which relies upon the poetic performance, resorts to strong visual images to make the audience reflect on ethical issues. It arouses feelings and invites them to experience the illocutionary strength of a more-injunctive-than-affirmative discourse, thanks to the *enargeia* complementing rhythm, melody, and dance.¹⁸ Finally it asks them to internalise the praise of wealth, in which they are directly involved. This *gnômê* is expanded by the description of the Isle of the Blessed in the fourth strophe and antistrophe.¹⁹ It stands between lines 61–62 (on the spring equinox steeping this paradise for good men with propitious sunshine ‘in equal days’) and lines 72–73, in which wealth, the topic of the visual maxim in 53–56, is exemplified in a vivid *ekphrasis*: flowers are made of fire—they are ‘ablaze’ (φλέγει, at end of the verse)—and metal (shining gold, i.e. wealth and immortality), and trees are ‘radiant’ (ἀγλαῶν). These visual images mainly aim at helping the audience’s imagination conceive of another world, a wonderful one, in which the social and moral values that were praised in the *gnômê* materialize through their senses. These values are in turn reinforced by those visual pictures.²⁰ Here imaginary vision supports mystical and moral persuasion.

Visual images can also support the narration of primary mythological events, as is the case in *Olympian* 6.39–58.²¹ This episode describes the epiphanic birth of Iamos, divine seer and ancestor of Hagesias of Syracuse, the ode’s *laudandus*:

18 On the visual aspects of choral dance and poetry, see Carruesco’s contribution to this volume.

19 About the religious overtones of this myth, cf. Hampe (1952), Lloyd-Jones (1984), Bollack (1963), and Defradas (1971). The light imagery of the poem (and its analogy with some Orphic-Pythagorean documents) plays a crucial role in its mystical or mysteric interpretations through the notions of revelation, epiphany, metempsychosis, and happy after-life.

20 On the cultural aspects of visuality and the poetic interplay of *phantasia* and *enargeia* see the contribution of Kantzios to this volume and, more generally, Webb (2009).

21 Cf. Felson (2008). See the paper presented at the *Look of Lyric* conference by Z. Stamatopoulou, ‘Visual Perception and Re-performance in *Olympian* 6’, now published as Stamatopoulou (2014). The whole poem, comparable to a variegated and cohesive tapestry, is structured by this light-, colour-, and matter-imagery: cf. Carne-Ross (1976).

ἀ δὲ φοινικόχροκον ζώναν καταθηκαμένα
 κάλπιδά τ' ἀργυρέαν λόχμας ὑπὸ κυανέας
 τίκτε θεόφρονα κοῦρον. τᾷ μὲν ὁ χρυσοκόμας
 πρᾶυμητίν τ' Ἑλεΐθιαν παρέστασ' ἔν τε Μοίρας·

ἦλθεν δ' ὑπὸ σπλάγχων ὑπ' ὤ-
 δίνεσσ' ἐραταῖς Ἴαμος
 ἐς φάος αὐτίκα. τὸν μὲν κνιζομένα
 λείπε χαμαί· δύο δὲ γλαυκῶπες αὐτόν
 δαϊμόνων βουλαῖσιν ἐθρέ-
 ψαντο δράκοντες ἀμεμφεῖ
 ἰῶ μελισσᾶν καδόμενοι. βασιλεὺς δ' ἐπεὶ
 πετραέσσας ἐλαύνων ἵκετ' ἐκ Πυ-
 θῶνος, ἅπαντας ἐν οἴκῳ
 εἴρετο παῖδα, τὸν Εὐά-
 δνα τέκοι· Φοίβου γὰρ αὐτὸν φᾶ γεγάκειν

πατρός, περὶ θνατῶν δ' ἔσσεσθαι μάντιν ἐπιχθονίοις
 ἔξοχον, οὐδὲ ποτ' ἐκλείψειν γενεάν.
 ὥς ἄρα μάνυε. τοῖ δ' οὐτ' ὦν ἀκοῦσαι
 οὔτ' ἰδεῖν εὖχοντο πεμπταί-
 ον γεγενημένον. ἀλλ' ἐν
 κέκρυπτο γὰρ σχοίνῳ βατιάξ τ' ἐν ἀπειρίτῳ,
 ἴων ξανθαῖσι καὶ παμπορφύροις ἅ-
 κτίσι βεβρεγμένος ἀβρόν
 σῶμα· τὸ καὶ κατεφάμι-
 ξεν καλεῖσθαι νιν χρόνῳ σύμπαντι μάτηρ

τοῦτ' ὄνυμ' ἀθάνατον.

She, though, laid down her **crimson** girdle //
 and silver pitcher **under a dark thicket** and
 began to bear // a divinely inspired boy.
 To aid her, the **golden-haired** // god sent
 gentle-counseling Eleithuia and the Fates,

and from her womb amid the welcome / birth
 pains Iamos // came immediately **into the**
light. In her distress // she had to leave him on
 the ground, but two **gray-eyed** // **serpents**
 tended him through the god's designs / and
 nourished him with the blameless / **venom** of
 bees. But when the king // arrived after driving
 from rocky Pytho, / he questioned everyone in
 the house // about the child whom Euadne /
 bore, for Phoebus, he said, was his

father, and he would become foremost of
 mortals // as a seer for mankind, and his
 lineage would never fail. // Such did he declare
 to them, but they vowed // not to have **seen** or
 heard of him, / although it was the fifth day
 since his birth. But in fact, // **he had been**
hidden in a bed of reeds within a vast thicket,
 // while his tender body was bathed / **by the**
golden and purple rays // **of violets**. That was
 why his mother declared / that for all time he
 would be called

by that immortal name.

First, at the end of the second epode (39–41) some striking features, set in a *clair-obscur*, oppose Euadne's 'crimson girdle' (φοινικόχροκον) and Apollo's 'golden-haired' figure (χρυσόκομας) to the 'dark thicket' (λόχμας ὑπὸ κυανέας), where she is about to give birth. Next, the formula ἐς φάος, meaning both visually 'into the light' and existentially 'coming into life' here, is emphatically placed at the beginning of line 44 and introduces the description of the two caretakers who nurse the young infant: 'serpents' (δράκοντες), whose very name is associated with 'to see, to gleam', and who are described as 'radiant-eyed'

(γλαυκῶπες, rather than the 'grey-eyed' found in Race's translation). Finally, as the imaginary *enargeia* of the whole story increases, the concealment of the child ('they vowed not to have seen (ἰδεῖν) or heard of him', 53; and the first word of line 54: κέκρυπτο, 'he had been hidden') is in sharp contrast to its tender body, which was 'bathed by the golden and purple rays of violets' (ἰων ξανθαῖσι καὶ παμπορφύροις ἀκτῖσι, 55). As elsewhere, the visual glare, particularly when coloured, conjoining nature and art (flowers, purple and gold), is fiery and the vivid splendour of the violets (maybe purple and yellow wallflowers, French *giroflées*) is described as the radiance of a real sun. These visual images, which help to stimulate the audience's imagination, are an epideictic argument but this time in a less obvious encomiastic setting. They are reinforced by the plays of sounds and the paronomasy of the Greek names of 'violets' (ἰων, 55) and 'venom' (ἰὼ, 47, used for 'honey'), which support the myth's coherence and bring it to an end with the reference to the 'immortal name' of Iamos at the first verse of the third epode.

In the mythological parts of the odes visual images may also be used to evoke aetiological events, as is the case in *Olympian* 7.54–71. Here the emergence of the island of Rhodes, the city of the *laudandus* Diagoras and property of the sun god Helios, is reminiscent of a rose blooming in the sunshine:²²

φαντί δ' ἀνθρώπων παλαιαί
ρήσεις, οὐπω, ὅτε χθό-
να δατέοντο Ζεύς τε καὶ ἀθάνατοι,
φανερὰν ἐν πελάγει Ῥόδον ἔμμεν ποντίῳ,
ἀλμυροῖς δ' ἐν βένθεσιν νᾶσον κεκρύφθαι.

ἀπεόντος δ' οὐτις ἔνδειξεν λάχος Ἀελίου·
καὶ ῥά νιν χώρας ἀκλάρωτον λίπον,
ἀγνὸν θεόν.
μνασθέντι δὲ Ζεὺς ἄμπαλον μέλ-

λεν θέμεν. ἀλλὰ νιν οὐκ εἶασεν· ἐπεὶ πολιᾶς
εἰπέ τιν' αὐτὸς ὄραν ἔν-

δον θαλάσσης αὐξομένην πεδόθεν
πολύβοσκον γαῖαν ἀνθρώποισι καὶ εὖφρονα μῆλοις.

... The ancient reports of men // tell that when
Zeus and the immortals / were apportioning
the earth, // Rhodes had not yet **appeared** in
the expanse of the sea, // but the island lay
hidden in the salty depths.

Since he was absent, no one designated a lot
for Helios, // and thus they left him with no
portion of land, // although he was a holy god.
// And when he spoke of it, Zeus was about to
recast/ the lots for him, but he would not allow
it, because // he said that he himself could see
a land / rising **from the floor of the gray sea** //
that would be bountiful for men and favorable
for flocks.

22 Cf. Bernardini (1983). See also Lawall (1961) and Norwood (1945), esp. 138–145.

ἐκέλευσεν δ' αὐτίκα χρυσάμπυκα μὲν Λάχεσιν
 χεῖρας ἀντεῖναι, θεῶν δ' ὄρκον μέγαν
 μὴ παρφάμεν,
 ἀλλὰ Κρόνου σὺν παιδὶ νεῦσαι,
 φαεννὸν ἐς αἰθέρα μιν πεμφθεῖσαν ἔῃ
 κεφαλᾷ
 ἔξοπισω γέρας ἔσσε-
 σθαι. τελευτάθεν δὲ λόγων κορυφαί
 ἐν ἀλαθείᾳ πετοῖσαι· βλάστε μὲν ἐξ ἀλὸς ὑγρᾶς

νάσος, ἔχει τέ μιν ὀξεῖ-
 ἄν ὁ γενέθλιος ἀκτίνων πατήρ,
 πῦρ πνεόντων ἀρχὸς ἵππων·

He immediately ordered Lachesis **of the golden headband** // to raise her hands and not to forswear // the mighty oath of the gods, // but to consent with Kronos' son / that once it had arisen **into the bright air**// it would henceforth remain a possession of honor / for himself. The essential points of these words // fell in with truth and were fulfilled. The island grew

from the watery sea and belongs to the father / who engenders **the piercing sunbeams**, // the master of the **fire-breathing** horses ...

The beginning of the narrative is emphasized by a *clair-obscur* (54–57), opposing the adjective φαεννὸν ('visible, radiant, shining', first word of line 56) and the verb κεκρύφθαι ('to be hidden', last word of line 57). The visual space presented to the audience's imagination is vertically organized between the moving 'gray sea' (πολιᾶς ... ἔνδον θαλάσσης, 61–62) and the sun, the 'father who engenders the piercing sunbeams' (ὀξειᾶν ὁ γενέθλιος ἀκτίνων πατήρ) and 'master of the fire-breathing horses' (πῦρ πνεόντων ἀρχὸς ἵππων), at the beginning of the fourth epode (70–71). In between we find two complementary movements: the gaze of the sun, which, both as eye and star, burns, gleams and sees (ὄραν, 62), and the birth of the island, which rises up 'into the bright air' (φαεννὸν ἐς αἰθέρα, 66). This doubly luminous phrase is reinforced by the evocation of 'Lachesis of the golden headband' (64), and connects the adjective φαεννὸν (56) with the sharp radiance in line 70. The ascension by which Rhodes/Rose has access to life and to light, reminiscent of Iamos' birth, is more directly related to the epinician celebration, whose ritual and cosmic dimension is infused through these images. Not only is the epiphanic triumph of the *laudandus* increased, both visually and ethically, by the *enargeia* and the *poikilia* which characterize this mythical discourse, but the universal celebration of the island, on which the melic festival takes place, is based on effects similar to those by which the epinician chorus celebrates the victorious athlete and his city. Instead of competing with the spectacular vision, the visual imagination to which these mythological evocations give shape reinforces it. In the following section I will further examine the way in which imagination and performance interact in the odes.

Melic Praise as Spectacular Action: Interplays of Ethics and Aesthetics

The overture of an epinician ode is necessary to its spectacular efficiency. It is based upon the conjunction of visual images, as developed in the melic component of the poem (direct praise of the *laudandus*, the sponsor, their family, city, and gods; prayers, warnings and maxims), with the musical and choreographic qualities of the performance, which is revealed to the audience by the poetic action itself. So, in the famous priamel of the first *Olympian Ode* (1–11) the festive celebration depends on the successful interplay between gnomic imagination, conjuring up vivid visual effects which support the audience's *phantasia*, and the ritual scenography, which is more difficult to establish and has to be reconstructed, for example, from deictic marks occurring in the text:²³

Ἄριστον μὲν ὕδωρ, ὃ δὲ χρυσὸς αἰθόμενον πῦρ
 ἄτε διαπρέπει νυκτὶ μεγάνορος ἔξοχα πλούτου·
 εἰ δ' ἄεθλα γαρούεν
 ἔλδεαι, φίλον ἦτορ,
 μηκέτ' ἀελίου σκόπει
 ἄλλο θαλπνότερον ἐν ἀμέρᾳ φαιεν-
 νὸν ἄστρον ἐρήμας δι' αἰθέρος,
 μηδ' Ὀλυμπίας ἀγῶνα φέρτερον αὐδάσομεν·
 ὅθεν ὁ πολύφατος ὕμνος ἀμφιβάλλεται
 σοφῶν μητίεσσι, κελαδεῖν
 Κρόνου παῖδ' ἐς ἀφνεῶν ἱκομένους
 μάκαιραν Ἰέρωνος ἐστίαν

Best is water, while gold, like fire blazing // in
 the night, shines preeminent amid lordly
 wealth. // But if you wish to sing // of athletic
 games, my heart, // look no further than the
 sun // for another star shining more warmly
 by day / through the empty sky, // nor let us
 proclaim a contest greater than Olympia. //
 From there comes the famous hymn that
 encompasses // the thoughts of wise men, who
 have come // in celebration of Kronos' son to
 the rich // and blessed hearth of Hieron, ...

After a quick and surprising start ('Best is water'), the first two lines lay stress on the semantic isotopy of golden gleam, blazing fire, efficient warmth, and contrastive light. They are linked together by a run-on line that bridges the term to be compared, 'fire' (πῦρ), emphatically placed at the end of the line, and the conjunction that introduces the comparison (ἄτε). As the priamel reaches its climax, the third element, the highest of its kind, that is the Olympic Games, is celebrated with the same set of visual images that express excellence, light, heat, glory, and elevation (5–6). For a full understanding, one should

23 Cf. the general study by Gerber (1982) and, on this particular passage, Race (1981), (1982), and (1992).

also try to express the rhythmical effects, which were reinforced by dance movements, as in the enjambment of lines 5 and 6: the verb *σκόπει*, placed at the end of line 5 and followed in the next line by its object (*ἄλλο θαλπνότερον .. ἄστρον*), straddling the adjective *φαιεννόν* ('shining, gleaming, splendid'), and the complement *ἐρήμας δι' αἰθέρος* at the end of the line. A more accurate translation would be 'more than sun, don't look, shining more warmly, by day, another star, through the empty sky'.

Melic poetry can also represent the epinician ritual itself through a significant *mise en abyme*, as in *Olympian* 9.89–99:²⁴

οἶον δ' ἐν Μαραθῶνι συλαθείς ἀγενεῖων
 μένεον ἀγῶνα πρεσβυτέρων ἀμφ' ἀργυρίδεσσιν·
 φῶτας δ' ὀξυρεπεί δόλῳ
 ἀπτωτὶ δαμάσσαις
 διήρχετο κύκλον ὅσσα βοᾶ,
 ὥραϊος ἑὼν καὶ καλὸς κάλλιστά τε ῥέξαις.

And what a contest he endured at Marathon
 against older men // for the **silver cups**, when
 wrested from the beardless class: // with deftly
 shifting feints // he subdued the men without
 falling once, // and passed through the ring of
 spectators to such great shouting, // **being**
young and fair and performing the fairest
deeds.

τὰ δὲ Παρρασίῳ στρατῶ
 θαυμαστοῦς ἑὼν φάνη
 Ζηγὸς ἀμφὶ πανάγυριν Λυκαίου,
 καὶ ψυχρᾶν ὅπῳτ' εὐδιανὸν φάρμακον αὐρᾶν
 Πελλάνῃ φέρε· σύνδικος δ' αὐτῷ Ἰολάου
 τύμβος ἐνναλίᾳ τ' Ἐλευσίς ἀγλαῖταισιν.

Then too **he made a marvelous appearance** //
 among the Parrhasian host / at the festival of
 Lykaian Zeus, // and at Pellana, when he
 carried off the warming remedy // for chill
 winds. Witnesses to **his splendid successes** //
 are Iolaos' tomb and Eleusis by the sea.

Here the poetic celebration stages, with *enargeia*, the triumph of the *laudandus*, Epharmostos of Opous. He was honoured by the audience's gaze, which is inserted in the description as if to recall the audience of the choral performance itself. After a swift visual start in line 90 with the 'silver cups' (*ἀργυρίδεσσιν*) he won as his prize, a stylized outline of the victor and his triumph is presented: 'being young and fair and performing the fairest deeds' (94). This occurs at the end of the fourth strophe, just before the real epiphany at the beginning of the antistrophe. In line 96, the verb *φαίνομαι* carries its full visual meaning, that is 'shine, appear', in relation to the admiring amazement (*θαῦμα*) of the audience, which saw him at the games of Lykaian Zeus in Arcadia: *θαυμαστός ἑὼν φάνη* ('he made a marvellous appearance'). The word which sums up this

24 Cf. Miller (1993).

harmonious alliance of perception and thought, shining light, success, wealth, splendour and feast, is the last word in line 99: ἀγλαΐαισιν, literally meaning 'by his splendours'. It refers simultaneously to the winner's athletic achievement, his outstanding presence, and the melic festival, full of light and splendour, which celebrates him. The epinician performance, by praising the victors and their mythical paradigms, also celebrates itself as a spectacular action that is brilliant and successful.²⁵

This is also the case in *Olympian* 10.20–25, where the polysemous word φάος ('light') appears at the end of line 23:²⁶

θάξαις δέ κε φύντ' ἀρετᾷ ποτί
πελώριον ὀρμάσαι κλέος ἄ-
νήρ θεοῦ σὺν παλάμαις.

... By honing someone born for excellence // a
man may, with divine help, / urge him on to
prodigious fame;

ἄπονον δ' ἔλαβον χάρμα παῦροί τινες,
ἔργων πρὸ πάντων βιότῳ φάος.
ἀγῶνα δ' ἐξαίρετον ἀεῖσαι θέμιτες ὦρσαν
Διός, δὴν ἀρχαίῳ σάματι παρ Πέλοπος
βωμῶν ἐξάριθμον ἐκτίσσαντο,

and few have won without effort that joy //
which is a **light** for life above all deeds. But the
ordinances of Zeus have prompted me to sing /
of the choice contest, which Herakles founded
// with its six altars by the ancient tombs of
Pelops ...

In these gnomic verses, in a simple yet strong way, the visual image of diffused and powerful daylight, while appealing both to the audience's *phantasia* and deictically referring to the present celebration, metaphorizes a whole chain of interrelated ideas, particularly the 'prodigious fame' (πελώριον ... κλέος, 21) of the winner, Hagesidamos of Western Lokroi, and the splendour of the first Olympic games, founded by Heracles (24). This maxim about the extreme scarcity of deeds without labour ends with the word 'light' and so establishes a transition between the encomiastic frame of the ode and the inserted myth, that is between the most spectacular parts of the poem, ritual and present, and the most imaginary ones, narrative or descriptive. Here, φάος links together performance (spectacle) and imagination (description), the celebration of the present and the praise of the past, both near (the celebrated victory) and far (the first Olympic Games, in heroic times).

25 The poetic performance is successful both when relating imaginary and spectacular vision with past and present, and mediating the tension between the agonistic dynamics of rituals and the community they intend to construct. See Carey (1980).

26 Cf. Nassen (1975) and Briand (1994).

Conclusion

We have noticed the important role played by φάος and its cognates in the text of the *Olympian Odes* and in its staging. It refers to daylight, both diffused and strong, and weaves structural webs, both formal and semantic, through the whole poem, completed by references to other kinds of light, like the ἀγλαόν ('splendid, bright') or the ποικίλον ('many-coloured, varied'), and to flames of fire, rays of the sun, or the splendour of gold. The prototypical epinician light, which builds and represents collective values like excellence, glory, harmony, is φάος, both when it is described or narrated in the mythological parts of the poem to stimulate the audience's imagination, and when, in the directly epidictic frame of the poem, it increases and justifies the spectacular effects of the epinician ritual. As a spectacle and a polygeneric mimesis (epic and hymnic, textual, musical and choreographic), Pindar's epinician odes work as a visual piece of art, in which the sung text, employing visual figures, plays a major role. Through their language the odes stimulate the audience's *phantasia* and contribute to the performance, or, more exactly, intertwine these two kinds of poetic action.

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