

SHORTER NOTES

PINDAR, *O.* 8.53

Christopher Carey, *CQ* 39 (1989), 287ff. sets out to explain the transition in Pindar, *O.* 8.52–5 from the story of the building of the walls of Troy to the praises of the trainer Melesias. ‘The myth of *O.* 8’, he writes, ‘tells of the role of Aiakos in the building of the walls of Troy. It closes with Apollo going off to his favourite haunts while Poseidon drives off to the Isthmus of Corinth, depositing Aiakos at Aigina on the way. The myth is followed by an opaque gnome.’

That gnome is contained in line 53, which follows immediately after the account of Poseidon’s return and his depositing of Aiakos, and it is followed directly by the mention of Melesias. Here is the text of lines 53–9,

τερπνὸν δ' ἐν ἀνθρώποις ἴσον ἔσσεται οὐδέν.
εἰ δ' ἐγὼ Μελησίαι ἐξ ἀγενείων
κῦδος ἀνέδραμον ὕμνῳι,
μὴ βαλέτω με λίθῳι τραχεῖ φθόνος.
καὶ Νεμέαι γὰρ ὁμῶς
ἔρέω ταῦταν χάριν,
τὰν δ' ἔπειτ' ἀνδρῶν μάχας
ἐκ παγκρατίου.

Carey wisely follows P. von der Mühl, *MH* 21 (1964), 54f. = *Kl. Schr.* (1975), p. 222f. in reviving the view of Blass and of W. Christ, *Pindari Carmina prolegomenis et commentariis instructa* (1896), p. 65, already accepted by W. Bischoff, *Gnomon Pindari* (1938), pp. 61f., that the myth has taken the hearer’s mind to the Isthmus, and that καὶ in line 56 emphasises Νεμέαι, so that we must conclude that the victory of Melesias ἐξ ἀγενείων was won at the Isthmian Games. Where I differ from Carey is in his interpretation of what he calls the ‘opaque gnome’, of which he mentions five different explanations.

(1) The most popular explanation has been that given in the scholia (ed. Drachmann, i. 254), which is that the words mean ‘Nothing will be equally pleasing among mankind’, i.e. ‘Nothing pleases everyone’, and so indicates that not everyone will be pleased by the praise of Melesias. Carey quotes Boeckh (1821), Dissen (1830, 1843), Fennell (1893), Farnell (1932) and Nisetich in his translation (1980) as having taken this view; and one might add Benedictus (1620: ‘non omnes homines iisdem rebus et studiis delectantur’), Heyne (1773, last 1824), Thiersch (1820), L. Schmidt (1862), Paley (1868), Th. Fritzsche (*JCP* 125, 1882, 154f.), Fraccaroli (1894, 1914³), Sandys (1915), Puech (1922), P. B. R. Forbes, *CR* 47 (1933), 166, Galiano (1944, 1956) and the translators Conway (1972) and Swanson (1974). Carey very pertinently objects that ‘a word meaning “for everyone” seems called for’; also though ἴσον may be used adverbially, instead of ἴσως, its use in this context would be confusing.

(2) Carey next discusses the view that ἴσον means ‘equally distributed among men’; for this he quotes Lehnus (1981), and we may add Hartung (1855), Gildersleeve, *AJP* 40 (1919), 104f., Lattimore in his translation (1947) and Slater in his lexicon (1969). Carey objects that this ‘neither follows from the myth nor prompts what follows the gnome’. He is right, and one may add that this is not the way in which we should expect this sentiment to be expressed.

(3) Now Carey comes to three interpretations which he finds 'plausible'. The first takes the meaning to be 'No joy among mankind will be equally great (to that of Aiakos, who associated with gods)'. Carey thinks that this 'follows naturally from the myth', though he thinks it less suited to the context than the next view which he discusses. But it is 'opaque' in the extreme, for that no joy is equal to the joy of Aiakos is not indicated, so that it is not surprising that no critic seems to have taken this allegedly 'plausible' view.

(4) Carey next comes to the view which he favours, which is that the words mean 'No joy among mankind will be equally great (to that of the gods)'. This was suggested by L. Schmidt (1862), with the remark that, since even Aiakos knew this from his own experience, the men of Aigina could not complain if Melesias were praised. Mezger (1880) also took this view, see p. 383 of his commentary. But how can one supply with ἴσον the sense of 'to that of the gods'? This explanation is no better than any of the others.

(5) The last interpretation discussed by Carey is that which takes the words to mean 'No joy among men will be the same', i.e. 'will remain unchanged'. For this Carey cites C. A. Whitmore, *North Carolina University Studies in Philology* and Bowra in his translation (1969; cf. his *Pindar* (1964), p. 347); cf. H. Jurenka, *WS* 17 (1895), 200. I have found it first in the commentary of Christ (cited above), who is at least frank about the difficulty. 'Nihil iucundi', he writes, 'hominibus integrum manere, Pindari est familiaris sententia; sed haec quomodo cum iis, quae de muris Troianis interitui destinatis antecedunt, aut cum iis, quae de Melesiae invidiae obnoxio sequuntur, parum apertum est; neque tamen magis probo sententiam hanc: nihil sacris epulis et ludis dulcius esse; immo obscuritatem poetam non fugisse puto, ut viam sibi sterneret redeundi ad ludos. Est sane haec via minime faceta, sed non omnia in Pindaro caeca laudatione admiranda sunt'; and he goes on to read the poet a stern lecture, supported by the citation of 'Longinus' 33.5.

Christ's view that ἴσον ἔσεται can be equivalent to 'integrum manere' was accepted by Schroeder (1900); but Schroeder rejects Christ's rendering of τερπνόν in favour of 'κῦδος, χάρις', and adds 'ἴσον non πᾶσιν, sed ὁμῶς πάντα χρόνον θάλλον, παρμόνιμον'. But Carey is right to say that this way of taking the words 'seems obscure without ἀεί': the truth is that ἴσον cannot by itself be equivalent to παρμόνιμον.

(6) Gildersleeve in his commentary (1885, 1890²) took the words to mean that gods were happy everywhere, but men only in their own place, a view which as we have seen he later abandoned.

One looks to Wilamowitz for an attempt to tackle the problem, but finds only that at *Pindaros* (1922), p. 405 he calls the gnome a 'billige Sentenz'.

All this surely shows that the seemingly innocent and simple sentence presents a very awkward problem. The natural meaning of the words can only be 'And nothing delightful among men will be equal'; but in the context this is totally obscure, and yields no satisfactory sense, so that those who have attempted to explain it have been forced to interpolate notions for which there is no warrant in the text. That is why I propose to do what nobody has done so far, and offer an emendation.

The golden rule in emendation is 'Always start from the sense'. What would we expect the poet to be saying here? Carey has remarked that the last of the five interpretations he discusses 'seems obscure without ἀεί'. I propose to bring in ἀεί by substituting it for ἴσον.

That nothing lasts for ever is a pervasive sentiment in Pindar; in the Third and Eleventh Pythian Odes, for instance, it is a major theme; and it is often mentioned just after the mention of some rare instance of human felicity. It is expressed in many

different ways, but the passage which throws most light on the problem we are discussing is a famous passage of the Eighth Pythian Ode (92f.):

ἐν δ' ὀλίγῳ βροτῶν
τὸ τερπνὸν αὖξεται· οὕτω δὲ καὶ πίτνει χαμαί,
ἀποτρόπῳ γινώμαι ἐσεισμένον.

How did the corruption come about? One cannot hope to know for certain, but I suspect that the scribe who was copying the poem by a common error repeated the two last letters of the word **ΑΝΘΡΩΠΟΙΣ**, and that a later reader, confronted with the unintelligible **ICAE** and assuming that some form of the word **ἵκος** was intended substituted that form of the word which would cohere with **τερπνόν**, the subject of the sentence. One is reminded of *Nem.* 3.44–5 **χερὶ θαμινὰ | βραχυσίδαρον ἄκοντα πάλλων ἵκα τ' ἀνέμοις**, although in that passage there is no dittography; the manuscripts have **ἵκον** (*sic*), but Moschopoulos' conjecture **ἵκα**... is rightly accepted by modern editors. Professor D. E. Gerber draws my attention to *O.* 9.16–17, where **ἀρεταῖσι** *cūn* gave rise to the variant **ἀρεταῖς ἵκον** (*sic*).

Pindar prefers the form **αἰεί**, but has **ἀεί** four times (*N.* 8.22; *I.* 3.13; *Pa.* 2.52; *Pa.* 13a, 1). Hermann's **ἀέ** at *P.* 9.88 is accepted by modern editors, except Turyn; on this form, see Schroeder (1900) ad loc. and B. Forsmann, *Untersuchungen zur Sprache Pindars* (1966), p. 122 n. 5. So it is possible that the poet wrote **ἀέν**, but the correption **ἀεί** is permissible. Although epic correption is avoided in the epitrites of Pindar's dactylo-epitrite, it occurs at all possible places in the hemiepes (see Maas, *Greek Metre* 129 and Braswell on *P.* 4.5 (c)).

If this conjecture is accepted, the 'opaque gnome' serves admirably as a transition from the myth to the praise of Melesias. The walls of Troy did not last for ever; neither did the moment of Aiaikos' special felicity; and, since all human pleasure is evanescent, the praise of Melesias should excite no envy.

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CLYTEMNESTRA'S WEAPON YET ONCE MORE*

A good story bears retelling many times, and an appreciative audience will delight in debating its finer points; each participant is – of course – always convinced that only his memory, his understanding, of what the author said is the correct one.

The *Oresteia* is no exception. In a recent number of *CQ* Malcolm Davies reopened the question, which we all thought had been answered once and for all by Fraenkel, of just what weapon it was that Clytemnestra used to kill her husband in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* – axe or sword.¹ He lists some of the names that have been drawn up on either side of the argument, and is kind enough to mention the debates that he and I have had on the topic. Yet we still stand on opposite sides. He believes she used an axe, I, a confirmed Fraenkelian, am still convinced it was a sword.² Alan Sommerstein

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¹ Malcolm Davies, 'Aeschylus' Clytemnestra; Sword or Axe?', *CQ* 37 (1987), 65–71 (hereafter 'Davies'); E. Fraenkel, *Aeschylus Agamemnon* (Oxford, 1950), 3, Appendix B, pp. 806–9.

² Most of the arguments are set out in chapter 8 of my book *The Oresteia: Iconographic and Narrative Tradition* (Aris and Phillips, Warminster and Bolchazy-Carducci, Chicago, 1985) (hereafter 'Prag'), especially pp. 82–3; but since it was all but strangled at birth by the publishers, and is now only available in a limited number of copies, there may be some justification for rehearsing again something of what I said there.