

The Classical Review

<http://journals.cambridge.org/CAR>

Additional services for *The Classical Review*:

Email alerts: [Click here](#)

Subscriptions: [Click here](#)

Commercial reprints: [Click here](#)

Terms of use : [Click here](#)



Pindar, *Pythian* II. 90 FF

J. T. Sheppard

The Classical Review / Volume 29 / Issue 08 / December 2015, pp 230 - 233

DOI: 10.1017/S0009840X00049180, Published online: 27 October 2009

Link to this article: http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0009840X00049180

How to cite this article:

J. T. Sheppard (2015). Pindar, *Pythian* II. 90 FF. The Classical Review, 29, pp 230-233
doi:10.1017/S0009840X00049180

Request Permissions : [Click here](#)

PINDAR, PYTHIAN II. 90 FF.

στάθμας δέ τινος ἐλκόμενοι
περισσᾶς ἐνέπαξαν ἔλκος ὀδυναρὸν ἐὰ
πρόσθε καρδία
πρὶν ὅσα φροντίδι μητιῶνται τυχεῖν.

It is not necessary to discuss in detail the many and fantastic interpretations which have been offered. That task has been performed by Professor Norwood in *Class. Quart.* ix. 1, January, 1915. Mr. R. G. Bury, in *Class. Rev.* xxix. 3, May, 1915, having adequately disposed of Mr. Norwood's own 'excessively long sword,' has presented Pindar with a 'long chariot-pole' for which there is no lexicographical evidence. I venture, in turn, to offer a very small emendation.

Editors have complained that the pun ἐλκόμενοι ἔλκος is frigid. So it is if ἐλκόμενοι introduces a new and unexpected metaphor; but not, I think, if it is already a commonplace for Pindar's audience that persons who are φθονεροί are persons who always ἔλκονται. Well, a commonplace it is:

Theognis 30—

πέπνυσο, μηδ' αἰσχροῖσιν ἐπ' ἔργμασι
μηδ' ἀδίκοις
τιμὰς μηδ' ἀρετὰς ἔλκεο μηδ' ἄφενος.

Euripides *fr.* 419 N—

βία νυν ἔλκετ', ὦ κακοί, τιμὰς, βροτοί,
καὶ κτᾶσθε πλοῦτον, παντόθεν θηρώμενοι,
σύμμικτα μὴ δίκαια καὶ δίκαι' ὁμοῦ.
ἔπειτ' ἀμᾶσθε τῶνδε δύστηνον θέρος.

That is from a speech which is probably concerned with a tyrant's rise and fall (see *fr.* 420 N).

Plato, *Rep.* v. 464 B. Communism makes our guardians μὴ διασπᾶν τὴν πόλιν . . . τὸν μὲν εἰς τὴν ἑαυτοῦ οἰκίαν ἔλκοντα ὃ τι ἂν δύνηται χωρὶς τῶν ἄλλων κτήσασθαι . . .

For the idea, which is specially applied to the grasping ambitions of kings or of those who plot against kings, see my note on Eur. *H. F.* 773 ff. in *Class. Rev.*, May, 1915. The use of ἔλκομαι, in the sense 'I drag to myself . . .', 'I am on the make . . .', lies behind Hesiod's τῆς δὲ δίκης ῥόθος ἐλκομένης ἢ κ' ἄνδρες ἄγωσι δωρόφαγοι (*Op.* 220),

which Headlam rightly quotes when he reads, in *Eum.* 555, τὰ πόλλ' ἄγοντα παντόφυρτ' ἄνευ δίκας βιαίως. So Pindar's scandalous νόμος, which ἄγει δικαίων τὸ βιαιότατον, is, for Callicles and men like him, Nature's law. See Thompson's note on *Gorgias* 484B, and notice especially 488 B, ἄγειν βία . . . καὶ ἄρχειν καὶ πλέον ἔχειν . . . It is worth noticing that in Callimachus *h. Ap.* 109 Φθόνος is appropriately rebuked by an allusion to his own characteristic method of grab: the great river τὰ πολλὰ . . . ἔλκει, including rubbish. Remember also Hesiod, *Op.* 37, ἀλλὰ τὰ πολλὰ ἀρπάζων ἐφόρεις, and notice that the traditional notion of the greedy usurper or plotter has its roots in Homeric human nature, *Il.* ii. 122, 149, 170, 231. The suspicions of Creon and of Oedipus are derived from the same stock of ideas (*Soph. Ant.* 312, 326; *O.T.* 382, 388, and the much misunderstood chorus, 873, 889).

Now, the scholiast saw that this was the notion. He had our text before him, and valiantly tried to interpret it. Editors do him less than justice when they curtly dismiss him with: 'he thinks of a measuring-line,' or 'he speaks of land and measuring.' Still more unjust is the innuendo that he thought of so odd a performance, with so odd a line, and so curiously περισσᾶς (stretched over more space than it ought to cover), as Professor Gildersleeve has invented. The scholiast sees that ἐλκόμενοι must be something that the envious normally do, that the phrase must refer to the frustrated designs, and that περισσᾶς must somehow imply that the φθονεροί try to get too much . . . they come to grief before they get ὅσα φροντίδι μητιῶνται. So he boldly asserts: τὸ δὲ στάθμας φροντίδος, and proceeds: σταθμώμενοι, φησί, καὶ περιγράφοντες μεγάλην τινα μέλλοντα ἔσεσθαι αὐτοῖς, προωδυνήθησαν πρὶν τυχεῖν ὧν ἐπιζητοῦσι καὶ ἐλπίζουσιν.

With the text as it stands nothing better has been suggested. Let us be just to the scholiast. He knows that στάθμη is a line of some sort, not

a chariot-pole, nor a halter, nor a ram, nor a balance, nor a weight; he knows that *περισσᾶς στάθμας* does not mean 'a line stretched too tight,' or 'a mark too far off,' but *an excessive line*: and I think he knows that *ἐλκόμενοι* means 'grabbing their gain.' His word *περιγράφοντες* should inform us that he is not just vaguely 'thinking of a measuring line,' nor vaguely 'speaking of land and measuring.' You put a line round land to mark it off as your own, staking out, as we say, a claim. If you went, as spectator or as merchant, to a Panegyris, you appropriated, with due formality, a plot for your tent or your stall: see Aristophanes, *Pax* 879, with the scholiast's explanation. When a mad king said, 'I give you the sun for your pay,' an astute boy cried, 'We accept your gift, O king!' then drew a line round the patch of sunshine on the floor, thereby claiming as his own, not the sun, but the hearth and home upon which it shone (Hdt. viii. 137). Such a line Heracles drew when he appropriated (for Zeus) the Altis at Olympia, making the measure of it, I suspect, the extent of the ground covered by the booty he had won from Augeas and his nephews: that is the truth which in *Ol.* x. 47-65 Time and Pindar reveal! The reading, Ἄλιν, though it was quite rightly rejected by Aristodemus and his friends, may help dim eyes to see that, according to Pindar, Heracles called the precinct Altis, instead of Alsos, because the word recalled his triumph over Ἄλιν: a theory, we may be sure, that the Eleians would not trouble to keep alive. But *περιγράφοντες* is creditable to the scholiast for another reason too. Out of the notion of 'marking off' a piece of land, there grew the metaphorical use 'to limit,' 'to circumscribe,' and the association with that 'Due Measure' which the *φθονεροί* always ignore. Follow this word from Thuc. vii. 49 to Xen. *Mem.* i. 4, 12, and Aristotle, *Metaphys.* x. 7, 1, and Diodor. iii. 16 (the Ichthyophagoi, who eat οὐ πρὸς μέτρον ἢ σταθμόν . . . ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὴν ἰδίαν ἐκάστου βούλησιν, τὴν φυσικὴν ὀρεξίν ἔχοντες τῆς ἀπολαύσεως περιγραφῇ), and Polyb. 21. 11, 4. Notice that in Plat. *Leg.* 768C *περιγραφῇ* means,

not merely 'an outline sketch,' but 'a line, including and excluding': τὰ μὲν εἶρηκε, τὰ δὲ ἀπολείπει σχῆδον.

The scholiast, then, treats the phrase as a lyrical variant for παντόθεν ἐλκόμενοι, ἐξ ἀπάντος κερδαίνοντες. The genitive is what Professor Gildersleeve calls a 'whence-case': *στάθμας* means 'a measured line': *περισσᾶς* means 'too long,' and therefore 'enclosing too large an area': the effect, to those who are familiar with *στάθμη* as the Just Line, the Line of Right, is a sort of *oxymoron*, for which *τινος* apologises ('what I may call an excessive limit-line'). The phrase means something like 'trying to grab their gain from too wide a field.' The *φθονερός* treats the world as his oyster.

As compared with the imaginations of modern learning, this interpretation is simple and sensible. But I doubt whether it can stand. *στάθμας* is not exactly *περιγραφῇ*, and the notion of 'drawing one's gain from a given area' is not naturally expressed in a phrase which substitutes the line for the space enclosed: above all, we need an object for *ἐλκόμενοι*. I therefore suggest—

*στάθμας δέ τινες ἐλκόμενοι
περίσσ' αἰὲν ἔπαξαν.*

I suggest that *τινες* became *τινος* and *περισσαί* became *περισσᾶς*. The meaning now is perfectly clear. And the whole poem gains in effect.

Hiero is a fortunate prince: of course he must be duly reminded of the limitations of his mortality. But Pindar is able to wrap up that safe, conventional, and expected moral, in verses which denounce the enemies and rivals of the prince. It is worth while to notice how he achieves this end:

- 15 ff. Cinyras, a king and favourite of Aphrodite and Apollo, is celebrated by grateful Cyprians:
18. So Hiero, friend of Ares, Artemis, Hermes, Poseidon, is sung by grateful Epizephyrian maidens:
- 21 ff. And gratitude is the lesson Ixion had to learn and teach.
- 25 ff. He was admitted to the society of the gods, and his head was turned:
30. His crimes were the shedding of kindred blood—not with-

out treacherous craft, and the attempt on the bride of the All-Highest. He did not observe the Mean in his desires. (Surely there is no doubt of the political application here?)

39. But Zeus outwitted the crafty, with fatal results to him and his offspring!

49. God accomplishes all according to his intent and expectation . . . he brings down the proud and gives glory to others. My business, however, is to avoid evil-speaking, which, as Archilochus found, does not pay. To be rich—given material good-luck—in Wisdom, is the best.

See how skilfully the theme of human limitations is introduced. Ostensibly it illustrates the fate of men like Hiero's rivals. But, for an audience which knows the lyrical method, it is the reminder also to the prince that the gods alone are always happy, strong, and safe. That is why the poet insists that he is no evil-speaker. And he sums up, for the moment, the delicate and flattering warning with his praise of Wisdom and Good Fortune. We need not analyse the next passage, but should notice that the evil-speakers of l. 61 who 'wrestle but achieve nothing, fools and empty-minded,' like Ixion, (26) are duly contrasted with the gods (49).

When the praise of Hiero has been performed, we pass to the famous attack upon false friends and evil-plotters. Hiero is advised to 'be his own good self, having been informed' by the poet how much that means! He is also to prefer the candid truthfulness of Pindar to the flattery of those who, behind his back, will slander him and plot against him. In effect, of course, Pindar is the most egregious flatterer of them all; but this is how he wraps his flattery in a cloak of candour:

72. Now I have told you what you are: your task is to be yourself! Like Rhadamanthus, be an honest man, preferring honesty like mine to the monkey-tricks that children admire, the cunning that the whispering plotters practice when they fawn.

76. The slanderer's whisper hurts himself as well as his victim. Oh, yes, of course, he's as crafty as a fox . . . but does it really pay?

79. No, nothing comes of it. Honest I ride the waves like a cork! And crafty persons really lose all influence—with excellent rulers like yourself. Though, of course, they go on fawning and twisting and plotting.

84. I am not so brazen and so rash. I am one that would really love my friends . . . reserving my cunning for enemies, whom I shall pursue as relentlessly as a wolf,¹ and cunningly too. Such straightforward candour as mine is the road to true success in every kind of city.

Notice that the common objection to the morality of 84 ff. arises partly from a failure to appreciate the poem as a whole. The backbiters and plotters here in question are ungrateful people who, like Ixion-Polyzelus, have the privilege of admission to the society of the great, pretend to be friends, flatter, and yet bite. When Professor Gildersleeve asserts that 'Requital in full is antique; crooked ways of requital are not Pindaric,' he seems to imply a curious mistranslation of *πάν ἔρδοντα*, which he has just quoted (*Isth.* iii. 66). The Greek view, and the Pindaric view, is well expressed by Xen. *Ages.* xi. 4: *τοὺς μὲν ὑπὸ φίλων ἐξαπατωμένους οὐκ ἔψεγε, τοὺς δὲ ὑπὸ πολεμίων πάνπαν κατεμέμφετο. καὶ τὸ μὲν ἀπιστοῦντας ἐξαπατᾶν, σοφὸν ἔκρινε, τὸ δὲ πιστεύοντας ἀνόσιον.*

This brings us to our final *epode*: Candour is best policy, to speak truth, without flattery, without slander. 'And one should not strive against the god who to-day holds high the fortunes of one set of mortals, to-morrow gives to others great honour.' We have heard that before, at ll. 49-52, and there also this gentle reminder of human limita-

¹ The fox is treacherous; the wolf, though savage and cunning, is an open enemy, Aristotle *H.A.* I, I, 32 *γενναία καὶ ἀγρία καὶ ἐπιβουλα*, Artemidorus II. 12, p. 69 *πανούργον καὶ ἐκ τοῦ φανεροῦ ὁμῶσε χωροῦντα*, the characteristic in which he differs from the fox.

tions was coupled with the plea that Pindar is an honest friend, no slanderer. Was my interpretation there at fault? Well, what do you make of the next remark? 'But not even this makes the jealous less embittered.' Not even what? Surely, the thought that even princes are human, exposed to human vicissitude like themselves. 'Still, though they are so implacable, there are some people I could name who, because they are always trying to grab more than is right' (this recalls 34 μέτρον ὀρᾶν) 'hurt themselves before they get the great things for which they

scheme.' Then, finally, we repeat the old moral, suggested first in 49-52, repeated for Hiero and Pindar in 38, now clearly meaning that Pindar and all wise men, unlike the φθονεροί, will treat the prince as the prince himself will treat the gods; for, as Ixion was admitted to the high society of the gods, and proved ungrateful, so Pindar 'in his intercourse with the good' prays that he may have the grace to please them.

J. T. SHEPPARD.

King's College, Cambridge.

PLUTARCHI MORALIA.

(Continued from Vol. XXVII., p. 262.)

385 C. ἐπεὶ δὲ τοῦ φιλοσοφεῖν, ἔφη, τὸ ζητεῖν, τὸ θαυμάζειν καὶ ἀπορεῖν. Read τοῦ φιλοσοφεῖν, ἔφη, καὶ (or καὶ τοῦ) ζητεῖν <ἀρχή> (or <αἴτιον>) τὸ θαυμάζειν καὶ ἀπορεῖν.

387 C. εἰ τόδ' ἔστι, τότε προηγείται. Rather προήγεται.

388 F. ὀνομάζεται δὴ? Had it not been for hiatus, the δὴ would probably have followed κόσμος.

392 D. Write καὶ for ἢ before μισοῦμεν.

395 C. ὦν (gold, silver, and bronze) συγχυθέντων καὶ συντακέντων ὄνομα τοῦ χαλκοῦ τῷ μείζονι τὸ πλῆθος παρέσχευ.

τῷ μείζονι is unintelligible, for it certainly cannot mean 'the whole mass' nor (Bernardakis) 'by its predominance.' Write τῷ ἁμείνονι. The better metal was called by the name of the predominant: its own name (or names) did not appear. For the correction compare my *Aristophanes and Others*, p. 233. With τοῦ χαλκοῦ we might rather expect τὸ ὄνομα than ὄνομα.

397 B. ἡδονὴν γὰρ οὐ προσίεται τὸ ἀπαθὲς καὶ ἀγνόν, ἀλλ' ἐνταῦθα (on earth) μετὰ τῆς αὐτῆς ἐρρίφη καὶ τὸ πλείστον αὐτῆς καὶ ὡς ἔοικεν εἰς τὰ ὅτα τῶν ἀνθρώπων συνερρήκεν, and again a few lines below λόγου περὶ αὐτῆς τῆς ἡδονῆς ἀπολαύσας.

In this passage, which relates to music and singing, μετὰ τῆς αὐτῆς and in a less degree περὶ αὐτῆς τῆς ἡδονῆς have been found very obscure. Stepha-

nus conjectured μετὰ τῆς ᾠδῆς. Bernardakis reads μετὰ τῆς ἄτης, which seems (Wytttenbach) to have slight authority; and again below λόγου περὶ ἄτης καὶ ἡδονῆς from Duebner's conjecture. ἄτη is however grotesquely out of place in this context. αὐτῆς is nothing in the world but a corruption of λύπης. Pleasure and pain were excluded from higher and purer regions and exist only on earth. The same corruption occurs elsewhere. In *Ar. Eth.* 9. 9. 1170^a 25 K^b has αὐτῆς for λύπης (Bywater, *Textual Crit.* p. 14). Dio Chrys. *de Concord.* 10 φέρει αὐτὴν καὶ φθόνον has been corrected by Wilamowitz to φέρει λύπην. Galen, quoting Posidonius, has ἄτης, *de Hipp. et Plat. plac.* 4. 7. p. 416, where, as many scholars have seen, λύπης must be restored. Read then μετὰ τῆς λύπης and περὶ λύπης καὶ ἡδονῆς.

401 F. συναγαγόντες ὅσον ἀργύριον.

The suggested ὅσιον ἀργύριον (Madvig) or ὅσον ἢ ὅσιον ἀργύριον would be a misuse of ὅσιον, for in such a case it means *profane*, the exact contrary of *sacred*. But it is likely enough that after the last letters of ἀργύριον the word ἱερόν has been lost, though it can hardly have stood alone without εἶχον or ἦν αὐτοῖς, or something similar.

404 C. δύνασθαι for δυναμένη?

407 D. πραγμάτων must have had some epithet or defining word attached