

On the Javelin Simile in Pindar *Nemean* 7.70–73

Nina Almazova

THE ADDRESS in *Nemean* 7 to Sogenes, a boy who won a victory in pentathlon, has rightly been called “the most difficult ‘agonistic’ passage in Pindar.”¹ The poet denies some action, comparing himself to an athlete who competes in javelin-throwing (one of the five events in Sogenes’ discipline). I would like to propose a new interpretation of this simile.

- 70 Εὐξένιδα πάτραθε Σώγενες, ἀπομνύω
μὴ τέρμα προβαίς ἄκονθ’ ὅτε χαλκοπάρρον ὄρσαι
θοᾶν γλῶσσαν, ὃς ἐξέπεμψεν² παλαισμμάτων
αὐχένα καὶ σθένος ἀδιδαντον, αἴθωνι πρὶν ἀλίῳ γυῖον
ἐμπεσεῖν.
εἰ πόνοσ ἦν, τὸ τερπνὸν πλέον πεδέρχεται.
75 ἕα με· νικῶντί γε χάριν, εἴ τι πέραν ἀερθεῖς
ἀνέκραγον, οὐ τραχὺς εἰμι καταθέμεν.

¹ L. R. Farnell, *The Works of Pindar* II (London 1932) 298; cf. A. Setti, “Persona e ‘poetica’ nella VII Nemea,” in *Studia Florentina Alexandro Ronconi sexagenario oblatae* (Rome 1970) 423 n.48; G. Kirkwood, *Selections from Pindar* (Chico 1982) 257. Notwithstanding numerous attempts at explanation (see below), in 1996/7 M. Bernard still does not consider any of them persuasive and gives up further discussion, “da sich ... größere Sicherheit nicht gewinnen läßt”: “Der Dichter und sein Gegenstand – Zu Pindars siebentem Nemeischen Lied,” *WürzJbb* N.F. 21 (1996/7) 117–118.

² For a defense of the reading ἐξέπεμψεν (ἐξέπεμψε **D** against ἐξέπεμψας **B**) see G. Hermann, “De Sogenis Aeginetae victoria quinquertii,” in *Godofredi Hermannii Opuscula* III (Leipzig 1828) 25; C. Carey, *A Commentary on Five Odes of Pindar* (Salem 1981) 165 (the scholia recognize only the text which gives the third person); D. Loscalzo, *La Nemea settima di Pindaro* (Viterbo 2000) 198 (the second person is a *lectio facillior* and can be an emendation).

Sogenes, Euxenid by parentage, I swear that I did not (*or*: not to) come up to the mark and launch my swift tongue like a bronze-cheeked javelin, that sent (*or*: sends) my (*or*: your/one's) strong neck out of wrestling without sweat, before the limbs could be exposed to the burning sun. If there was labour, the greater is the pleasure that follows.³ Give me leave! Even if I cried something out when I lifted too high, I am not harsh at repaying the due tribute to the victor.⁴

In the seventh Nemean ode, Pindar relates the myth of Neoptolemus and speaks at length about poetic art before returning to praise the young winner. Therefore the improper action denied in the oath has been thought to be either Pindar's previous embarrassing treatment of Neoptolemus in *Paeon* 6 (fr. 52f S.-M., where he says that the Aeginetan hero was killed by Apollo as punishment for his slaughter of Priam at an altar)⁵ or

³ Since μετέρχομαι is usually transitive and means "go in quest of," Ch. Segal proposes this understanding: "If there was toil, it (the toil) seeks after joy the more": "Pindar's Seventh *Nemean*," *TAPA* 98 (1967) 436–438, and "Two Agonistic Problems in Pindar, *Nemean* 7.70–74 and *Pythian* 1.42–45," *GRBS* 9 (1968) 44. G. Kirkwood, "*Nemean* 7 and the Theme of Vicissitude in Pindar," in J. Hutton and G. Kirkwood (eds.), *Poetry and Poetics from Ancient Greece to the Renaissance. Studies in honor of James Hutton* (Ithaca 1975) 87 n.44, argues for the meaning "come to," with τὸ τεργνόν as a subject and πόνοσ as an implied direct object. Yet E. D. Floyd, "Pindar's Oath to Sogenes (*Nemean* 7.70–74)," *TAPA* 96 (1965) 148, and Carey, *A Commentary* 170, acknowledge the meaning "follow, come after" as natural enough for this verb, though otherwise unattested. In LSJ s. v. μετέρχομαι III, as well as in a number of works dealing with this passage (e.g. C. M. Bowra, *Pindar* [Oxford 1964] 176; G. W. Most, *The Measures of Praise. Structure and Function in Pindar's Second Pythian and Seventh Nemean Odes* [Göttingen 1985] 196) the meaning "follow, come after" is ascribed to it without discussion.

⁴ Text of B. Snell and H. Maehler, *Pindari carmina cum fragmentis I Epinicia* (Leipzig 1987) 124–125; my translation.

⁵ The 'apology theory' originates in the scholia (schol. Pind. *Nem.* 7.70, p.126.8–10 Dr.; 94a, p.129.1–12; 95b, p.129.23–26; 123a, p.134.6–8; 100a, p.130.24–25; 150a, p.137.3–10; see their interpretation in M. Heath, "Ancient Interpretations of Pindar's *Nemean* 7," *Papers of the Leeds International Latin Seminar* 7 [1993] 169–199); the supposition that in *Nem.* 7 Pindar keeps *Pae.* 6 somewhat in mind is widely accepted by modern scholars (unani-

his neglect of Sogenes⁶ while he was speaking overlong of other matters.⁷ Both explanations are somewhat problematic. It does not seem plausible that Pindar would return again to his handling of the Neoptolemus myth in a direct address to Sogenes: apparently the boy would not seem a suitable participant in a discussion of literary or religious matters. Indeed, as was noted by Wilamowitz and Farnell, lines 70–76 of the victory ode are the first that Sogenes was able to understand.⁸ As for the digression, I cannot but agree with Segal: “It would, in fact, be a patent falsehood for Pindar to say, ‘I swear, Sogenes, that I have not gone off the track and digressed from

mously until 1960s; for the history of the discussion see S. Fogelmark, *Studies in Pindar, with Particular Reference to Pean VI and Nemean VII* [Lund 1972] 41–42 n.13; Loscalzo, *La Nemea settima* 8–21; B. Currie, *Pindar and the Cult of Heroes* [Oxford 2005] 321–333). It is applied to explaining lines 70–73 by E. N. Gardiner, “Throwing the Javelin,” *JHS* 27 (1907) 268–269; U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, *Pindaros* (Berlin 1922) 163, 166; W. Schadewaldt, “Der Aufbau des pindarischen Epinikion,” *Schriften d. Königsberger Gelehrter Gesellsch., Geisteswissenschaftliche Klasse* 5.3 (Halle 1928) 319; Farnell, *Works* II 300; R. Lattimore, “Pindar *Nemean* 7.70–74,” *CP* 40 (1945) 121; G. Norwood, *Pindar* (Berkeley/Los Angeles 1945) 110; G. F. Gianotti, “La *Nemea settima* di Pindaro,” *RivFil* 94 (1966) 103–104; Segal, *TAPA* 98 (1967) 444 n.30; Kirkwood, in *Poetry and Poetics* 86–87, and *Selections* 258, 273.

⁶ Hermann, *Opuscula* 36; J. Jüthner, “Zu Pindar *Nem.* 7, 70 ff.,” *WS* 50 (1932) 170; E. Tugendhat, “Zum Rechtfertigungsproblem in Pindars 7. Nemeischen Gedicht,” *Hermes* 88 (1960) 388; Setti, in *Studia Florentina* 423; Fogelmark, *Studies in Pindar* 108; H. Lloyd-Jones, “Modern Interpretations of Pindar: The Second Pythian and Seventh Nemean Odes,” *JHS* 93 (1973) 135; E. Dönt, “Pindars siebente Nemeische Ode,” *WS* 98 N.F. 19 (1985) 112; T. K. Hubbard, “The Subject/Object Relation in Pindar’s Second *Pythian* and Seventh *Nemean*,” *QUCC* N.S. 22 (1986) 70; J. G. Howie, “Stylistic Enactment in Pindar *Nemean Seven*,” *Hyperboreus* 22 (2016) 66.

⁷ The same two explanations have been proposed for the improper action admitted in lines 75–76 (εἴ τι πέραν ἀερθεῖς ἀνέκπραγον).

⁸ U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, “Pindars siebentes nemeisches Gedicht,” in W. M. Calder III and J. Stern (eds.), *Pindaros und Bakchylides* (Darmstadt 1970 [1908]) 142; Farnell, *Works* II 300. Cf. Wilamowitz, *Pindaros* 166: Sogenes would have enjoyed an agonistic image even if he could not quite understand its significance.

your victory’, when in actuality he has done exactly that, and in a most blatant manner.”⁹ One could at least expect an assurance that the digression was not out of place, but Pindar seldom takes the trouble to beg pardon for such things, which are most typical of his epinikia.¹⁰ According to yet more interpretations of the oath, Pindar swears that his praise of the winner is/was/will be not false,¹¹ or else that he is not a bad

⁹ Segal, *GRBS* 9 (1968) 40.

¹⁰ Of course, there follow the words εἴ τι πέρην ἀερθεῖς ἀνέκραγον (75–76), which is clearly Pindar’s admission that he may have done wrong (on the nature of this statement see Bowra, *Pindar* 334: “His mood has softened, and his earlier refusal to compromise has been replaced by a good-humoured concession that he may not be imprecable”; Most, *The Measures of Praise* 197–198), but two passages back-to-back, one denying, the other confessing to the same fault, still seem unlikely.

¹¹ L. Dissen, *Pindari carmina quae supersunt* II (Gotha/Erfurt 1830) 459; H. Gundert, *Pindar und sein Dichterberuf* (Frankfurt a. M. 1935) 82, 129 n.242; E. Wüst, *Pindar als geschichtschreibender Dichter* (diss. Tübingen 1967) 161; C. O. Pavese, “La settima Nemea di Pindaro. A Sogenes di Egina, nel pentathlon dei ragazzi,” in E. Livrea and G. A. Privitera (eds.), *Studi in onore di Anthos Ardizzoni* II (Rome 1978) 677–678; Carey, *A Commentary* 169–170; D. S. Carne-Ross, *Pindar* (New Haven 1985) 147–148; T. Poiss, *Momente der Einheit. Interpretationen zu Pindars Epinikion and Hölderlins Andenken* (Vienna 1993) 108; Loscalzo, *La Nemea settima* 161, 198, 201; Currie, *Pindar and the Cult of Heroes* 316–317. Cf. schol. *Nem.* 7.103d, p.131.19–22 Dr. To corroborate this understanding, passages have been adduced (Pavese 678; Loscalzo 196–197) in which Pindar uses the metaphor of a missile hitting a target when discussing the truthfulness of his words (as a matter of fact only *Ol.* 13.93–95 and *Nem.* 9.54–55 are relevant, whereas *Pyth.* 1.44–45 and *Isthm.* 2.35–37 contain no references to throwing at a target, but indications of throwing μακρά instead). Such an image cannot be excluded in advance (cf. the metaphor of archery: *Ol.* 2.89–90, *Nem.* 6.27–28), yet it should be noted that here an agonistic metaphor derived from the victor’s discipline (as often in Pindar, cf. *Ol.* 6.22, *Nem.* 1.7, 8.19, *Isthm.* 1.6: Carey 106, 166, 170) is highly probable; meanwhile there were no target competitions at the Great Games—it is established that the javelin event of the pentathlon was throwing for distance: J. Jüthner, *Über antike Turngeräthe* (Vienna 1896) 57–59; Gardiner, *JHS* 27 (1907) 267–268, and *Greek Athletic Sports and Festivals* (London 1910) 354–355; R. Patrucco, *Lo sport nella Grecia antica* (Florence 1972) 178–179; S. G. Miller, *Ancient Greek Athletics* (New Haven 2004) 71.

poet,¹² or both.¹³ One advantage of these versions is that they do not imply excuses for some mistake of Pindar's. However, such an assertion does not seem to fit the context: if understood as an epinician *topos*, "praise for the poet and his art,"¹⁴ it would be a mere repetition of what is said immediately before, which is an even less desirable interpretation, since an asyndetic vocative in line 70 probably indicates the start of a new section.¹⁵

Since Pindar denies that his situation resembles that of a figurative javelin-thrower, and since he is unlikely to deny a situation which reflected well on him, verbal indications of a poor throw have been sought for in the javelin-simile. Such errors an athlete might make in this event, besides the obvious (too short a throw), might be overstepping the initial mark¹⁶ or

¹² Segal, *GRBS* 9 (1968) 40.

¹³ E. Thummer, *Pindar. Die Isthmische Gedichte I* (Heidelberg 1968) 97; H. M. Lee, "The τέρμα and the Javelin in Pindar, Nemean VII 70–3, and Greek Athletics," *JHS* 96 (1976) 71.

¹⁴ "Lob für den Dichter und seine Kunst": Thummer, *Pindar I* 82–102, esp. 94–98.

¹⁵ Wüst, *Pindar als geschichtschreibender Dichter* 160; Setti, in *Studia Florentina* 423; A. Köhnken, *Die Funktion des Mythos bei Pindar* (Berlin/New York 1971) 78–79; Most, *The Measures of Praise* 191; Loscalzo, *La Nemea settima* 70, 195; A. P. Burnett, *Pindar's Songs for Young Athletes of Aegina* (Oxford 2005) 196. Floyd, *TAPA* 96 (1965) 143; Segal, *TAPA* 98 (1967) 439; Lee, *JHS* 96 (1976) 71–72; Bernard, *WürzJbb* N.F. 21 (1996/7) 108 n.4, 116–117, think that lines 70–74 conclude the previous section which contains Pindar's claims defending the quality of his poetry. According to Schadewaldt, *Schriften d. Königsberger Gelehrter Gesellsch.* 321, lines 70–76 represent both the beginning of a new section and the end of the previous one. Cf. Hubbard, *QUCC* N.S. 22 (1986) 70: "The spear-cast in Pindar usually figures the close of a digression and the movement directly to the praise of the victor. So does it here."

¹⁶ Gardiner, *Greek Athletic Sports* 356; Patrucco, *Lo sport* 182; J. Mouratidis, *On the Jump in the Ancient Pentathlon* (Hildesheim 2012) 86, 88; Howie, *Hyperboreus* 22 (2016) 66. Common understanding of the expression τέρμα προβαίνειν as "overpass the barrier" originated in the scholia (schol. *Nem.* 7.103b–d, p.131.12–22 Dr.) and was not questioned until the works of Jüthner (*Über antike Turngeräthe* 56–57; *WS* 50 [1932] 166–170). Despite evi-

failing to keep within the lateral limits.¹⁷

However, semantic analysis of the words *τέρμα προβαίς* shows that they cannot indicate any of these errors: *προβαίνω* does not mean “step over, transgress,” but “go forward to,”¹⁸ and *τέρμα* is applied to the starting/finishing/turning point at the either end of a stadion, but not to the lateral limits.¹⁹

dent progress achieved since then (see below n.18) even the end of the 20th century still witnessed recurrence of the same interpretation “trotz aller Argumente”: Poiss, *Momente der Einheit* 108 n.107; Loscalzo, *La Nemea settima* 183, 196–197.

¹⁷ Cf. Pind. *Pyth.* 1. 42–45; see Gardiner, *Greek Athletic Sports* 356; Farnell, *Works* II 300; R. W. B. Burton, *Pindar's Pythian Odes. Essays in Interpretation* (Oxford 1962) 100–101; Patrucco, *Lo sport nella Grecia antica* 180–182; Lee, *JHS* 96 (1976) 71; Howie, *Hyperboreus* 22 (2016) 67–68. The notion of lateral limits was first applied to *Nem.* 7 by Jüthner, *Über antike Turngeräthe* 57, who later rejected it (*WS* 50 [1932] 168). It has recently been reclaimed by Howie 70–71, who proposed a new understanding of the whole passage (see below).

¹⁸ Hermann, *Opuscula* 32–33; Floyd, *TAPA* 96 (1965) 140–141; Segal, *GRBS* 9 (1968) 33–34; Lee, *JHS* 96 (1976) 72–73, 78; Carey, *A Commentary* 168. The attempt of Kirkwood, *Selections* 273, to interpret “advancing to” as the error of “merely touching” the *τέρμα* is hardly convincing. The only argument in favour of the meaning “overstep” (Kirkwood, in *Poetry and Poetics* 87 n.4) might be the gloss of Hesychius (π 3335 Hansen): *προβάς· ὑπερβάς*. Yet if this gloss deals with the passage under consideration, Hesychius could be following the version of schol. *Nem.* 7.103b–d (as assumed already by Hermann 32 and Dissen, *Pindari carmina* 460, cf. Segal 33–34, Kirkwood, *Selections* 273), and there is no reason to think him more reliable than the scholiast. Otherwise he could adduce these verbs as synonymous in meaning “surpass, outdo, be superior to”: see LSJ s.vv. *προβαίνω* II, *ὑπερβαίνω* II.2. (I do not think that the meaning *ὑπερβάς* fits well with the passages referred to by P. A. Hansen, *Hesychii Alexandrini Lexicon* III [Berlin/New York 2005] 165: *Eur. Or.* 1470 and *Phoen.* 1412.) Besides, the general sense would be unsatisfactory: overstepping the mark is an action of an athlete and not his missile, so in this case it would be hardly possible to shift the blame onto a javelin, saying ἄκονθ’ ... ὃς ἐξέπεμψεν παλαισμάτων: Jüthner, *Über antike Turngeräthe* 57, and *WS* 50 (1932) 167 n.3.

¹⁹ Patrucco, *Lo sport* 182–184; Lee, *JHS* 96 (1976) 74–79; Mouratidis, *On the Jump* 86–87; Howie, *Hyperboreus* 22 (2016) 68–69. Patrucco and Lee, on the basis of both archaeological and literary evidence, convincingly refute

Therefore this expression must literally mean stepping up to the line to throw a javelin, and metaphorically, perhaps moving on to a new theme in an epinikion—or else starting a new enterprise in general, that is, composing and performing an epinikion for Sogenes.

Another possible indication of supposed athletic failure would be the relative clause with ὅς referring to ἄκονθ'.²⁰ The word παλαισμάτων is almost unanimously²¹ interpreted as referring to wrestling (another event in the pentathlon), so I shall begin by addressing this assumption. Thus the javelin in the

the claim of Jüthner, *WS* 50 (1932) 167, accepted by Floyd, *TAPA* 96 (1965) 141, and Segal, *GRBS* 9 (1968) 33, 34 n.6, that τέρμα cannot mean “starting line, from which one throws.” Therefore there is no need for a more difficult interpretation of τέρμα προβαίς proposed by Segal (37–38): “trying to reach the markers set by the javelins of those who have gone before” (cf. Hermann, *Opuscula* 33–34). Still less can τέρμα προβαίνειν mean “miss a target,” *pace* Pavese, in *Studi in onore di Anthos Ardizzone* 677–678, and E. Thummer, “Der Forschungsbericht: Pindaros. 4. Bericht, umfassend die Jahre 1973–1979,” *AAHG* 35 (1982) 157.

²⁰ The punctuation accepted by Wilamowitz, *Pindaros* 163; Schadewaldt, *Schriften d. Königsberger Gelehrter Gesellsch.* 318; Wüst, *Pindar als geschichtschreibender Dichter* 138–139, 161, 165; J. S. Lasso de La Vega, “La séptima Nemea y la unidad de la oda pindárica,” *Estudios clásicos* 79 (1977) 103, and recently Loscalzo, *La Nemea settima* 100, cf. 198–199 (ὅς ἐξέπεμψεν παλαισμάτων αὐχένα καὶ σθένος ἀδίαντον, αἰθῶνι πρὶν ἄλιῳ γυῖον ἐμπεσεῖν, εἰ πόνος ἦν, τὸ τερπνὸν πλέον πεδέρχεται, “For anyone who comes out of the wrestling with neck and strength unbruised before his limbs could succumb to the burning sun, even if it cost some effort, there follows all the greater joy”) suffers from internal contradiction—Pindar would not have praised πόνος immediately after emphasizing the lack of it: Jüthner, *WS* 50 (1932) 166–167; Floyd, *TAPA* 96 (1965) 148–149; Segal, *GRBS* 9 (1968) 35; Setti, in *Studia Florentina* 423 n.48; Howie, *Hyperboreus* 22 (2016) 61. B. Snell accepted the full stop before ὅς in his editions of 1953 and 1955, but abandoned it in 1959.

²¹ Exceptions known to me are schol. *Nem.* 7.106a, p.132.3 Dr. (τῶν τοῦ πεντάθλου ἀγωνισμάτων ἐξέπεμψεν) and the translation of G. Hermann (“iaculum, quod te ne sudantem quidem e certaminibus mature deduxit”) cited and disputed by A. Boeckh, *Pindari opera quae supersunt* I (Leipzig 1811) 542.

simile would have prevented (or would usually prevent, if the aorist ἐξέπεμψεν is gnomic) an athlete from competing in wrestling.²² Unfortunately our sources do not make clear the rules and order of events in the pentathlon contest. Perhaps winning three out of five events would be enough for an overall victory without the need to compete in wrestling (assuming it was the last—or even penultimate—event),²³ and a certain number of failures forced a competitor out of the running.²⁴ In

²² It seems evident, *pace* A. Puech, *Pindare III. Néméennes* (Paris 1923) 91–92, G. Méautis, *Pindare le Dorien* (Neuchâtel 1962) 54, and Poiss, *Momente der Einheit* 108–109 (who read ἐξέπεμψας), that the words ἀδιάντων and αἴθωνι πρὶν ἀλίφ γυῖον ἐμπεσεῖν cannot imply that wrestling had taken place but had not lasted long: even if the victory was obtained most swiftly and easily, a wrestler would nevertheless tolerate the effects of the heat for a while (cf. schol. *Nem.* 7.106b, p.132.7–11 Dr.; he was required to throw his rival three separate times, see Gardiner, *Greek Athletic Sports* 378–380; Miller, *Ancient Greek Athletics* 50), so the πρὶν-clause would make no sense: Jüthner, *WS* 50 (1932) 166; Floyd, *TAPA* 96 (1965) 146–147. With the reading of Snell and Maehler 1987 (= O. Schroeder, *Pindari carmina*³ [Leipzig 1930]; Farnell, *Works* II; C. M. Bowra, *Pindari carmina*² [Oxford 1947]; A. Turyn, *Pindari carmina* [Oxford 1952]) this point becomes indisputable, for the javelin-throw could in no way affect the subsequent duration of wrestling.

²³ There are ancient testimonies that show wrestling as the last event of the pentathlon: see Gardiner, *Greek Athletic Sports* 363; Patrucco, *Lo sport* 197–198. The same is prompted by common sense, cf. Boeckh, *Pindari opera* I 542, and “Über die kritische Behandlung der pindarischen Gedichte,” in *AbhBerlin 1822 u. 1823* (Berlin 1825) 392; P. Gardner, “The Pentathlon of the Greeks,” *JHS* 1 (1880) 214; Gardiner, “The Method of Deciding the Pentathlon,” *JHS* 23 (1903) 58; Farnell, *Works* II 299 (“the wrestling was the only event of the five that could be severely punishing, and a man might easily be incapacitated for a time from any further feat, therefore it must have come last”).

²⁴ See Gardiner, *Greek Athletic Sports* 365–366, 368–369 (victory in three out of five events was sufficient; only those who have qualified in the first four were allowed to compete in wrestling); Gardiner, *Athletics of the Ancient World* (Oxford 1930) 177–180; Farnell, *Works* II 299–300; Carey, *A Commentary* 166–167. According to Hubbard, *QUCC* n.s. 22 (1986) 70 n.67, success in one of the preceding contests (e.g. javelin-throwing) was enough to qualify an athlete for the final event (wrestling). The solution I propose below spares me going into details of the much-debated problem concerning

both cases the javelin-throwing event, if it preceded wrestling, could indeed happen to be a deciding factor in the competition. Yet I would like to emphasize a point insufficiently acknowledged by those who rely on the pentathlon scoring in their interpretations of *Nem.* 7.70–73: there is no backstory, Pindar does not mention all the previous events, and one contest in javelin-throwing, whatever the rules, would by itself neither result in an athlete dropping out of further competition (disqualification for foul play can be excluded on semantic grounds) nor guarantee him absolute victory. Thus the audience could only understand the words ἄκονθ' ... ὃς ἐξέπεμψεν παλαισμάτων etc. if they alluded to the actual circumstances of Sogenes' victory.²⁵

Now Sogenes the winner was not, of course, removed from the competition after one unfortunate match. Neither is it plausible that Sogenes, unlike the figurative athlete, advanced to the wrestling competition only by virtue of his success with the javelin:²⁶ this would imply that he had failed at the previous events, hardly something to mention in a victory ode. It remains to be concluded that Sogenes did not have to compete in wrestling because his javelin-throw resulted in an early outright

the method of deciding victory in the pentathlon; for a survey see Patrucco, *Lo sport* 202–221 with the bibliography on 223; more recent contributions are taken into account in M. Golden, *Sport and Society in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge 1998) 69–73, and Loscalzo, *La Nemea settima* 191–195.

²⁵ Cf. Farnell, *Works* II 299, 300: he denies that the lines 72–73 can refer to the case of Sogenes, and this makes him consider the relative clause unnecessary padding, “a mere otiose addition to the simile,” which “puts as generally true what was only occasionally true.”

²⁶ Cf. a variant discussed by J. B. Bury, *The Nemean Odes of Pindar* (London 1890) 139, accepted by Lattimore, *CP* 40 (1945) 122: javelin-throwing was not a strong point of Sogenes, so his victory was a stroke of good fortune—a superior rival overstepped the mark and was dismissed. On the contrary, according to C. A. M. Fennell, *Pindar. The Nemean and the Isthmian Odes*² (Cambridge 1899) 93, it was Sogenes himself who advanced his foot beyond the line; thus he failed to gain the third victory in javelin-throwing and so had to strive to the utmost in the wrestling.

victory. This means that the javelin which sends one out of wrestling is a positive in the simile, so in this case the ὄς-clause cannot indicate the fault that we seek.

This interpretation raises another issue: why would Pindar deny such a situation? Modesty has never been his strong point when speaking of his art.²⁷ One escape is to assume that the poet means to say that his own competition is not yet over, and he will continue to praise Sogenes.²⁸ G. Most suggests a similar version, refusing to decide if the figurative throw is losing or winning: in any case it is a throw after which no wrestling would have followed, so Pindar is denying that he has composed the first part of epinikion in such a way that the final, decisive part—praising Sogenes—would not follow.²⁹ This is possible,³⁰ but comes with the undesirable implication that the

²⁷ Farnell, *Works* II 298; Carey, *A Commentary* 169; Most, *The Measures of Praise* 192–193. According to C. A. P. Ruck, “The Poet’s Three Words: Nemea 7, 48: εὐώνυμον ἐς δίκην τρία ἔπεα διαρκέσει,” *Hermes* 100 (1972) 151 (who accepts the version of a winning extraordinary throw “beyond the mark,” cf. schol. *Nem.* 7.103 b–d), Pindar asserts, “in a humorous vein,” that he is not able to write an epic poem such as Sogenes would deserve.

²⁸ Floyd, *TAPA* 96 (1965) 142–143; W. H. Race, *Pindar. Nemean Odes, Isthmian Odes, Fragments*. (Cambridge [Mass.]/London 1997) 79. Similarly Dissen, *Pindari carmina* 459: by an extremely long throw (cf. schol. *Nem.* 7.103 b–d) Pindar means not only exaggerated praise, but also a desire to be through with his task as soon as possible; Jüthner, *WS* 50 (1932) 170. Cf. Burnett, *Pindar’s Songs* 197–198: the chorus of boys is speaking; because for boys a victory without participating in a single combat match, though entirely valid, would seem less attractive, they claim that, after meeting such opponents as the poets who blindly follow Homer and the Cycle, they will now “wrestle” with Sogenes himself (I wonder how “combating” with such poets and with the winner can be thought of on equal terms).

²⁹ Most, *The Measures of Praise* 194–195. Lasso de la Vega, *Estudios clásicos* 79 (1977) 105, also thinks of continuing the competition unlike the loser, though he still understands τέρμα προβαίς as “trapasado la linde” (103).

³⁰ Yet cf. Bernard, *WürzJbb* N.F. 21 (1996/7) 117 n.30: “Abgesehen davon, daß das Bild so etwas schief herauskommt, wird man sich fragen, wieso es eines Eidschwurs bedarf, um zu versichern, daß man das, was man gerade tut, auch zu Ende führen will.”

poet, despite having performed two-thirds of his victory ode, cannot be considered a winner.³¹ This does not seem a happy way to declare his intentions, its only merit being an allusion to Sogenes' competition. Would Pindar make such an allusion no matter the cost?

Ch. Segal argues that in fact Sogenes did take part in wrestling, and therefore Pindar is not comparing himself to the winner, but to the losing contestants who were eliminated from continuing on to the wrestling after the javelin-throwing. Thus he swears that he did not lose, which at the literal level must mean "that he is a winning poet and that his victorious skill is a fitting complement—and compliment—to the victory of Sogenes."³² Yet the author himself realizes the shortcomings of such an argument. First, in expressing such an idea the poet would surely refer to the athlete's decisive triumph rather than emphasize a success in one of the intermediate matches, when the victory, despite Segal's claim (43), was far from secured. A description of the final event would be no less exciting, vivid and filled with elaborate details. Second, why should Pindar speak of his victorious status in negative terms, comparing himself to the losers rather than the winner?³³ Third, as argued

³¹ Howie, *Hyperboreus* 22 (2016) 70: "The difficulty with that view is that it makes the poet single out a particular event in the pentathlon only to deny that he has, figuratively, won in it. That is surely an unlikely assertion for a poet to have made about his own work." Pindar's tone is self-assertive in the previous part of the ode, and it is well known that he likes comparing himself to a winning athlete (see e.g. O. Goram, "Pindari translationes et imagines," *Philologus* 14 [1869] 478–485; F. Dornseiff, *Pindars Stil* [Berlin 1921] 58; K. Freeman, "Pindar—The Function and Technique of Poetry," *G&R* 8 [1939] 146, 152–155).

³² Segal, *GRBS* 9 (1968) 39–40, followed by K. Crotty, *Song and Action. The Victory Odes of Pindar* (Baltimore/London 1982) 136.

³³ This would be a unique case: cf. *Nem.* 4.38 δαίμων ὑπέρτεροι; 6.27 σκοποῦ ἅντα τυχεῖν; 9.53 ἀκοντίζων ἀγχιस्ता; *Isthm.* 2.35 μακρὰ δισκήσαις ἀκοντίσσαιμι. The only parallel might be *Pyth.* 1.44–45 μὴ χαλκοπάρων ἄκονθ' ὡσεὶτ' ἀγῶνος βαλεῖν ἔξω παλάμα δονέων, but it is immediately followed by μακρὰ δὲ ῥίψας ἀμεύσασθαι ἀντίους. It is true that Pindar

above, an assertion of Pindar's poetic prowess is somewhat out of place at this point of the ode—adding nothing new to a series of such assertions just made, at the beginning of a new section, during a direct address to the boy. Besides, the simile implies only one victory, whereas Segal seems to suggest an assertion of never losing, or always winning.

G. J. Howie argues that the fault is the athlete's hastiness, referred to by the expression *θοᾶν γλῶσσαν*: "at a literal level the fault would be a *hasty* tongue and at the figurative level a *hasty*, anxious, throw, whether falling too short or falling outside the lateral limits that throws had to fall within."³⁴ But it seems clumsy to characterize an offence that consisted in too *long* and *extensive* a digression (as Howie has it) as launching a "quick tongue" like a javelin. Bacchylides, remarkably, uses the expression *μακρὰν γλῶσσαν* of just this kind of fault.³⁵ Besides, *θοός* has no negative connotations in Pindar;³⁶ moreover, in *Nem.* 10.69 it is applied to the javelin to describe an accurate and well-aimed throw: Polydeuces kills Lynceus ἄκοντι θοῶ. Yet Howie is right in drawing attention to the adjective: indeed, *θοός* referring to a javelin could be nothing more than an *epithetum ornans*, but applied to a tongue it must be significant.

Lastly, the proposal of O. Goram that we see the negative characteristics of the throw in *χαλκοπάρρον* (the tongue should be not heavy like a javelin, but fast like an arrow)³⁷ is com-

tends to use litotes such as οὐ κατελέγγειν = γεραίρειν ("negative Ausdrucksweise," H. Fränkel, *Dichtung und Philosophie des frühen Griechentums*² [Munich 1962] 510 n.18; for examples see Kühner-Gerth, *GG* II 180 §510 n.3; W. J. Slater, "Futures in Pindar," *CQ* 19 [1969] 93), but, as noted by Fogelmark, *Studies in Pindar* 112, such expressions are always easy to understand—unlike the complicated simile under examination. Our case is quite different: μή cannot be taken with *προβαίς*, since *προβαίνω* does not mean "overstep," and μή ὄρσαι is not a litotes, since it has no opposite.

³⁴ Howie, *Hyperboreus* 22 (2016) 70.

³⁵ Bacch. 10.51–52, τί μακρὰν γ[λ]ῶ[σ]σαν ἰθύσας ἐλαύνω / ἐκτὸς ὁδοῦ;

³⁶ See I. Rumpel, *Lexicon Pindaricum* (Leipzig 1883) 214 s.v.; W. J. Slater, *Lexicon to Pindar* (Berlin 1969) 239 s.v.

³⁷ Goram, *Philologus* 14 (1869) 481.

pletely unfounded: the distinguishing feature of an athletic javelin, unlike the weapon used in war and in hunting, was precisely that it was light;³⁸ javelins are typically fast (as in *Nem.* 10.69), and an arrow, which comes from Goram's imagination, would be out of place in an agonistic simile.

Thus I can find no verbal characteristics of the figurative javelin-throw as losing or foul.

Yet another problem arises when interpreting the expression ἀπομνύω μὴ ... ὄρσαι: it may mean either that Pindar swears not to have already done or else not to do something.³⁹ Howie argues for the backward reference: "how can an athlete guarantee in advance on oath how he will fare in a contest?"⁴⁰ Indeed, in such cases Pindar tends to use the optative mood (*Isthm.* 2. 35), ἔλπομαι (*Pyth.* 1. 43, *Nem.* 6. 26), or εὔχομαι (*Nem.* 9. 54) rather than oaths. Yet it is quite possible to swear not to take part in a contest, and to my mind such an understanding suits well the context of the simile.

In lines 74–76 Pindar expresses his wish to pay a tribute of praise to Sogenes, and now that he has finally recommenced talking about the young winner, he will do so at length (note inter alia τὸ τερπνὸν πλέον πεδέρχεται: πλέον can emphasize not only the intensity of pleasure, but also the abundance of praise).⁴¹ I agree with the view⁴² that the oath in 70–73 refers to the same matter, but not because Sogenes' pentathlon victory came extraordinary quickly (though, if this was the case, an allusion to this might lend an additional nuance to the simile). I believe that the poet refers to the natural qualities of javelin-throwing: speed is a feature inherent both in the casting

³⁸ Gardiner, *Greek Athletic Sports* 339; Patrucco, *Lo sport* 172.

³⁹ Dissen, *Pindari carmina* 460; Carey, *A Commentary* 169–170.

⁴⁰ Howie, *Hyperboreus* 22 (2016) 65.

⁴¹ Fennell, *Pindar. The Nemean and the Isthmian Odes* 74.

⁴² See nn.28–29 above. Cf. Dissen, *Pindari carmina* 462: "poetam revera per totum hunc locum non de eo loqui quod fecerit, sed quod facturus sit, mihi quidem e verbis ἔα με liquet."

of a javelin and its resulting journey. Therefore Pindar swears that his tongue will not be quick as a javelin on this occasion.⁴³ No sin against Sogenes is acknowledged by the poet so far, and no excuses are required.

As regards the relative clause, if *παλαισμάτων* means the wrestling match, I see no other possibility than that it refers to the known circumstances of Sogenes' contest: "I shall not make a swift throw like the one that brought you such a swift outright victory without further competition." Yet such an understanding is subject to a strong objection: *ἐκπέμπειν* regularly means "send out from where one currently is," hence it would be inappropriate to use when speaking of the wrestling match, which the athlete never entered.⁴⁴

I think that here we should ascribe a metaphorical sense to *παλαίσματα*, that is, "struggle" and, therefore, "competition."⁴⁵ It is true that in three other cases Pindar uses this word when speaking of wrestling,⁴⁶ and that his subject makes it likely that he use the agonistic term literally; however it does mean "struggle," for instance in tragedy: Aesch. *Ag.* 63 (plur.); *Eum.* 776 (sing.); Soph. *OT* 880 (sing.); Eur. *Suppl.* 550 (plur.). Thus *ἐξέπεμψεν παλαισμάτων* would imply the javelin-contest itself. Unlike wrestling, javelin-throwing takes very little time—in a poetic simile it could even be said that the figurative athlete completes it before exposing his limbs to the burning sun. In this case the aorist tense *ἐξέπεμψεν* has a generalizing meaning, and the relative clause in 72–73 is important: it indicates the point of comparison, that is, velocity (*θοάν* char-

⁴³ *Nem.* 5.19–20 (*μακρά μοι ἀντόθεν ἄλμαθ' ὑποσκαπτοί τις ἔχω γονάτων ὀρμᾶν ἐλαφράν*) can serve as a parallel: an agonistic metaphor is used to express the intention to begin an extensive narration.

⁴⁴ Bury, *The Nemean Odes* 139–140; Schadewaldt, *Schriften d. Königsberger Gelehrter Gesellsch.* 318; Floyd, *TAPA* 96 (1965) 146; Segal, *GRBS* 9 (1968) 34.

⁴⁵ See n.21 above.

⁴⁶ *Ol.* 9.13, *Pyth.* 8.35, *Nem.* 10.22 (all these odes are dedicated to wrestlers); see Rumpel, *Lexicon Pindaricum* 354 s.v.; Slater, *Lexicon to Pindar* 407–408 s.v.

acterizes the tongue in just the same respect as ὃς ἐξέπεμψεν παλαισμμάτων etc. characterizes the javelin).

Underlining the brevity of the javelin-throw does not contradict the clause εἰ πόνος ἦν (74): a swift cast is not tantamount to insufficient labour, and besides there was enough toil in winning all the victories required in the pentathlon,⁴⁷ let alone the prior necessary training.⁴⁸ Pindar praises labour (which can be referred to by other words, such as μόχθος or κάματος) in all his victorious clients, including an aulos-player (*Pyth.* 12.28).⁴⁹

The advantages of my proposal, I believe, are that it does not require a distortion of the regular meaning of Greek words, nor does it rely upon external reference to unknown circumstances.

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Saint Petersburg State University
n.almazova@spbu.ru

⁴⁷ Floyd, *TAPA* 96 (1965) 147–148; Segal, *GRBS* 9 (1968) 34.

⁴⁸ Latimore, *CP* 40 (1945) 122. I do not think that in this phrase Pindar refers both to Sogenes' labour and to his own elaboration of the Neoptolemus myth at the same time (Wilamowitz, in *Pindaros und Bakchylides* 142; Segal, *TAPA* 98 [1967] 439, 444, 462), for continuing this argument would be inappropriate in an address to Sogenes. Rather, I would not exclude the possibility that he refers to his labour of composing the victory ode, since his claim is to spare no effort. Yet I doubt it: note εἴρειν στεφάνου ἐλαφρόν in line 77 (against the interpretation of this line by Norwood, *Pindar* 107, see Setti, in *Studia Florentina* 425).

⁴⁹ πόνος: *Ol.* 5.15, 11.4; *Pyth.* 8.73; *Nem.* 4.1, 6.25, 10.24; *Isthm.* 1.42, 3.176, 5.27, 6.10; cf. πονέω: *Ol.* 6.11; *Pyth.* 9.93; ἄπονος: *Ol.* 10.22. μόχθος: *Ol.* 8.7; *Nem.* 5.48, 7.16; *Isthm.* 1.46. ἔργον: *Pyth.* 9.92. κάματος: *Pyth.* 5.47, 12.28; *Nem.* 8.50; *Isthm.* 8.1.