Impressive and Obscure: Three Christian Sources in Eustathius’ Proem to a Commentary on Pindar

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EUSTATHIUS OF THESSALONICA has received much attention over the past decades. Critics have studied both his scholarly output and his interventions in the religious and political life of his time and in so doing have gained a better understanding of how the different strands of his work intertwine. An important part of this effort has been to identify the sources on which Eustathius drew in his works of classical

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1 For Eustathius’ works of classical scholarship see M. van der Valk, Eustathii archiepiscopi Thessalonicensi Commentarii ad Homeri Iliadem pertinentes (Leiden 1971–1987); A. Kambylis, Eustathios von Thessalonike: Prooimion zum Pindarkommentar (Göttingen 1991), and Eustathios über Pindars Epinikien- und Epinikien-Dichtung: Ein Kapitel der klassischen Philologie in Byzanz (Göttingen 1991); M. Negri, Eustazio di Tessalonica. Introduzione al commentario a Pindaro (Brescia 2000); E. Cullhed, Eustathios of Thessalonike: Commentary on Homer’s Odyssey. Volume I: On Rhapsodies α–β (Uppsala 2016). For his role in the politics and religion of his time see P. Wirth, Eustathii Thessalonicensis Opera minora (Berlin 2000); K. Metzler, Eustathii Thessalonicensis De emendanda vita monachica (Berlin 2006); A. Stone, Eustathios of Thessaloniki. Secular Orations 1167/8 to 1179 (Leiden 2013); G. Karla and K. Metzler, Eustathios von Thessalonike, Kaiserreden (Stuttgart 2016); E. Bourbouhakis, Not Composed in a Chance Manner: The Epitaphios for Manuel I Komnenos by Eustathios of Thessalonike (Uppsala 2017). For Eustathius’ philological work on Byzantine literature see P. Cesaretti and S. Ronchey, Eustathii Thessalonicensis Exegesis in canonem iambicum pentecostalem (Berlin 2014). Eustathius’ letters are published in F. Kolovou, Die Briefe des Eustathios von Thessalonike (Munich 2006). For an attempt to take into view Eustathius’ oeuvre as a whole see F. Pontani et al. (eds.), Reading Eustathios of Thessalonike (Berlin 2017).
scholarship. Great strides have been made in the study of the ancient sources, but the Christian ones have fared less well, partly perhaps because the classically-trained scholars who studied these works were less well equipped to appreciate them and partly because Eustathius himself seemed less interested in citing Christian authors in his works of classical scholarship. As Marchinus van der Valk writes (Commentarii I cxvi):

Eustathius … maluit in Commentario antiquos auctores citare et hac de causa mentionem Byzantinorum evitavit.

Eustathius … preferred in his commentary [sc. on the Iliad] to cite ancient authors and therefore avoided mentioning Byzantine sources.

The assessment offered by van der Valk holds in general, though we now know that it was based on an incomplete set of data: clearly, Eustathius does prefer to work with classical authors in his classical commentaries, yet he also includes Christian sources. The aim of this contribution is to identify some of these sources and investigate what function they serve.

I focus on one of Eustathius’ major works of classical scholar-


4 For the separate question of how Eustathius treats Christian sources in his one major commentary on a Christian text see Cesaretti and Ronchey, Exegesis 128*–129* (Bible) and 138*–162* (church fathers, liturgical texts, Byzantine poetry).
ship, his *Proem to a Commentary on Pindar*, and ask not how it treats Pindar, or ancient scholarship about him, but how and why it quotes three Christian sources. My argument is in two parts. First, I identify the sources in question, a task that has eluded scholars up to now. Then I ask how Eustathius employs them, taking into view three contexts for my interpretation: the immediate passage in which these Christian sources appear; the *Proem to a Commentary on Pindar* more broadly; and, finally, the wider context of Byzantine literary culture. The overall aim is to understand how Eustathius uses his scholarship to intervene in contemporary debates about literary style and, more specifically, why he praises obscurity.

1. The sources

Eustathius wrote at least five major works of classical scholarship: the *Proem to a Commentary on Pindar* is one of them.\(^5\) It seems he wrote it early in life but may have revised it at a later stage.\(^6\) For unknown reasons, the commentary that once formed the bulk of the work was lost early in the process of transmission.\(^7\) The extant proem to the commentary was re-edited and studied in detail by Kambylis in 1991 and by Negri in 2000. Since then, it has attracted further interest for its “precious stylistic observations.”\(^8\) It is this strand of recent research that forms the starting point for the present contribution.

\(^{5}\) The others are commentaries on Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, on Aristophanes, and on the work of Dionysius Periegetes; see Cesaretti and Ronchey, *Exegesis* 18*-26*.


\(^{7}\) For the commentary see Kambylis, *Eustathios über Pindars Epinikiendichtung* 9–22.

In chapters 11–15 of the *Proem* Eustathius discusses what makes Pindar’s style obscure. In this connection, he looks at Pindar’s habit of dropping negative particles (12.1):

> ἔτι δὲ ἄσαφες αὐτῷ σὺν ἄλλοις καὶ τὸ ἐν στοιβῇ ἀποφάσεων μίαν παραλείπειν ὡς νουμένην κατὰ κοινοῦ καὶ αὐτὴν ἐκ τῶν ἐφεξῆς ἐκπεφονημένων.

Moreover, Pindar is obscure among other things by leaving out one negation from a cluster of several, on the ground that it can be understood from those that follow.

For illustration, he adduces three passages from Pindar. He then notes that “later authors” (οἱ ὕστερον) emulated him by dropping negative particles themselves. Again he cites three examples (12.2–3):

> τοῦτο δὲ τὸ σχῆμα καὶ τοῖς ὑστερον ἐξήλωσαί, οἶνον. “ζιφος οὐδὲ πῦρ οὐδ’ αἰκισμοί,” ἤγουν οὐ ζιφος, οὔ πῦρ, οὐκ αἰκίαι· τοιούτων τι καὶ τὸ “βαρουμένη γαστήρ οὐ μονὸν πρὸς δρόμον, ἀλλ’ οὐδὲ πρὸς ὑπνον ἐπιτηδεία.” τὸ γὰρ ἐντελέξ οὐ μονὸν οὔ πρὸς δρόμον ἐπιτηδεία. ἔχου δ’ ἀν οὔτω συμβιβάσασί τις καὶ τὸ “ἐπ’ οὐδενὸς οὖν τῶν ἀπάντων οὐκ ἔστιν, ἐφ’ ὅτι οὐχὶ τῶν ἀπάντων”. ἄρνήσεως γὰρ ἐνδειαν τὸ πρῶτον ἔχειν δόξαν ὃν κόμιμα νουμένης ἀπὸ κοινοῦ ἐκ τῆς κειμένης ἐν τῷ δευτέρῳ.

This figure is also emulated by later authors, as in “sword nor fire nor abuse,” that is, “not sword nor fire nor abuse.” Something similar is also “a heavy stomach is suitable not just for racing but not even for sleeping,” for here the complete sense is “suitable not just not for racing.” In this way one might also consider construing the expression “there is no person at all to whom this does not apply in every case.” For the first half of the phrase appears to lack a negation which is understood from the one in the second.

As Negri notes, these three quotations have, so far, eluded attribution (*fonte ignota*). Let me consider each of them in turn.

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A hymn in praise of Saint Tatiana

Eustathius’ first passage from later authors comes from a hymn (sticheron prosomoion) in praise of Saint Tatiana which forms part of the Orthodox liturgy for 12th January. Here is the passage again:

ξίφος οὐδὲ πῦρ οὐδ’ αἰκισμοί
(not) sword nor fire nor abuse

The corresponding passage in the hymn is:

ξίφος οὐδὲ πῦρ οὐκ αἰκισμοί, θλίψεις οὐ λιμὸς οὐ παντοίας, εἶδος κολάσεως, σοῦ τὸν πρὸς τὸν Κύριον, ἠμβλυνεν ἔρωτα.
(not) sword nor fire, not abuse, (not) torments, not hunger, not every form of punishment diminished your (sc. Tatiana’s) love of the Lord!

There is a small discrepancy between the hymn and the line quoted in the Proem (contrast οὐδ’ αἰκισμοί and οὐκ αἰκισμοί), which does not affect the point under discussion: among the many formulations of the “sword and fire” theme in Byzantine literature this one stands out for being nearly identical to the line that Eustathius quotes. It may come as a surprise that Eustathius detects echoes of Pindar in a relatively obscure piece of Byzantine liturgical poetry. However, he quotes several such texts in his Exegesis in canonem iambicum pentecostalem, and there

12 Relatively close are also Μηναῖα I 352.33–34 (οὐ ξίφος οὐ πῦρ οὐ διωγὸς οὐδὲ μάστιγες, τῆς εὐσεβοῦς περὶ θεὸν γνώμης ἐχώρισον ὕμας) and [Romanos] Cant. 79.5.6–7, On St Ignatius (ξίφος τε καὶ πῦρ καὶ περιστάσεις δεινὰς / οὐδὲν ἤγομαι). Note, however, that neither of these passages features the ellipsis of negative particle that Eustathius’ argument requires. For an early example of such ellipsis in the corpus of Byzantine poetry see Romanos Cant. 7.17.3 (Πέτρον γὰρ ὑπουργῆσαι, ἀλλ’ οὐδὲ Ἰωάννην, οὐκ Ἀνδρέαν νῦν βούλομαι). Note, however, that neither of these passages features the ellipsis of negative particle that Eustathius’ argument requires. For an early example of such ellipsis in the corpus of Byzantine poetry see Romanos Cant. 7.17.3 (Πέτρον γὰρ ὑπουργῆσαι, ἀλλ’ οὐδὲ Ἰωάννην, οὐκ Ἀνδρέαν νῦν βούλομαι).

13 Cesaretti and Ronchey, Exegesis 477, with reference to Exegesis in canonem 63.10–11 (ἐκδηλον δὲ τὸ ῥηθὲν εξ ἐτέρας μελῳδίας; cf. Μηναῖα I 102.7 and II 430.10–12) and several other examples. I owe this reference to Nikolas Churik.
seems no reason, in principle, why he could not also do so in the *Proem to a Commentary on Pindar*.\(^\text{14}\)

*An homily of Basil of Caesarea*

The second phrase that Eustathius quotes to illustrate the practice of later authors reads:

\[
\betaαρουμένη γαστήρ οὐ μόνον πρὸς δρόμον, ἀλλ’ οὔδε πρὸς ὑπὸν ἑπιτηδεία.
\]

A heavy stomach is suitable not just (not) for racing but not even for sleeping.

Kambylis suggests that the phrase echoes the day-to-day speech of Byzantine monks, on the ground that Eustathius quotes it also in his *De emendanda vita monachica* (p.243.6–8 Tafel = ch.120.15–16 Metzler).\(^\text{15}\) However, Metzler has shown that the quotation in *De emendanda vita monachica* is in fact taken from Basil of Caesarea’s second homily on fasting,\(^\text{16}\) and this is where the present passage must also originate (*PG* 31.192A):

\[
σὺ δὲ ἐξεπίτιδες σεαυτὸν καταπιεζεῖς τῷ κόρῳ· τοσοῦτον τῇ γαστριμαργίᾳ καὶ τὰ ἁλογα παρελαύνεις. βαρουμένη γαστήρ οὐχ ὅπως πρὸς δρόμον, ἀλλ’ οὔδε πρὸς ὑπὸν ἑπιτηδεία· διότι, καταθλιβομένη τῷ πλῆθει, οὔδε ἡρεῖ συγχωρεῖται, ἀλλ’ ἀνογκάζεται πολλὰς ποιεῖσθαι τὰς περιστροφὰς ἐφ’ ἑκάτερα.
\]

But you deliberately weigh yourself down with surfeit: that is how far you surpass even dumb beasts with your gluttony. “A heavy stomach is suitable not just (not) for racing but not even for sleeping.” For being afflicted by plenitude it does not even allow you to be still but forces you to toss and turn from one side to the other.

\(^\text{14}\) An interest in the language of Byzantine hymnography seems apt in the *Proem to a Commentary on Pindar*, given its close relationship with Eustathius’ one major work on this type of literature, the *Exegesis in canonem iambicum pentecostalem*; for echoes between the two works see Cesaretti and Ronchey, *Exegesis* 179*–181*.

\(^\text{15}\) Kambylis, *Prooimion zum Pindarkommentar* 12.

\(^\text{16}\) Metzler, *De emendanda vita monachica* 132. Metzler points out that Basil recycled the passage in one of his sermons; see *PG* 32.1328B.
Basil has been castigating his readers for not persevering with what he considers to be the Christian equivalent of athletic training.\textsuperscript{17} To illustrate the dangers of such slackness, he offers what reads like a piece of proverbial wisdom. Eustathius slightly modifies the original, substituting \textit{οὐ μόνον} for \textit{οὐχ ὅπως}. He may be quoting from memory, but there can be little doubt about his source.

\textit{Gregory of Nazianzus’ funeral oration for Basil of Caesarea}

The third passage quoted by Eustathius is from Gregory of Nazianzus:

\begin{quote}
emspir’ οὐδενὸς οὖν τῶν ἁπάντων οὐκ ἔστιν, ἔφ’ ὅτω οὐχί τῶν ἁπάντων.
\end{quote}

There is no person at all to whom this does not apply without fail.

The Greek of the passage is difficult to the point of having been declared corrupt.\textsuperscript{18} There is, however, every reason to consider it sound. It comes from Gregory of Nazianzus’ funeral oration for the same Basil of Caesarea who provided the previous quotation. Gregory opens the speech by reflecting on the scale of Basil’s achievement and the enormity of his own task. He then goes on to say that he must accept the duty of praising him (Or. 43.1.14–24 Bernardi, modified):\textsuperscript{19}

\begin{quote}
oὐκ οἶδα δ’ εἰς ὁ τί ἄλλο χρησάμενος τοῖς λόγοις, μὴ νῦν χρησάμενος, ἢ ὁ τί ποτ’ ἄν μᾶλλον ἢ ἐμαυτῷ χρησάμην ἢ τοῖς ἄρετήσει ἐπαινέταις ἢ τοῖς λόγοις αὐτοῖς, ἢ τὸν ἄνδρα τούτον θεωμάσας. ἔμοι τε γὰρ ἔσται τούτῳ χρέος ἱκανός ἄφωσιωμένον, χρέος δ’ εἴπερ ἄλλο τι τοῖς ἄγαθοις τά τε ἄλλα καὶ περί τοῦ λόγου ὁ λόγος. ἐκεῖνοις θ’ ἁμα μὲν ἠδονὴ γένοιτο καὶ ἁμα παρά-
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{17} PG 31.185B–C: ἔλαιον μὲν γὰρ πιαίνει τῶν ὀθλητήν· νηστεία δὲ τῶν ἁσκητῆν τῆς εὐσεβείας κρατὺν (“oil fattens the athlete but fasting strengthens the practitioner of piety”).

\textsuperscript{18} Kambylis, Prooimion zum Pindarkommentar 82* and 12.

\textsuperscript{19} Bernardi brackets \textit{emspir’ οὐδενὸς … οὐχί τῶν ἁπάντων} but this seems unnecessary. Byzantine readers certainly considered the sentence genuine.
κλῆσις εἰς ἀρετὴν ὁ λόγος. ὡν γὰρ τοὺς ἐπαίνους οἶδα, τούτων σοφῶς καὶ τὰς ἐπιδόσεις· ἐπὶ οὐδενῶς οὖν τῶν ἀπάντων, οὐκ ἔστιν ἐφ’ ὑπὸ οὐχὶ τῶν ἀπάντων.

I do not know for what I would be reserving my eloquence if I did not use it now, nor what greater benefit I could reap either for myself or for the adherents of virtue or indeed for eloquence itself than by expressing my admiration for this man. For me, this will be a properly sanctified obligation, for a speech, if anything, is an obligation to those who have eloquence among their gifts. And for those who admire virtue it will bring pleasure and at the same time act as a summons to virtue. For if I know someone’s praise, I also have a clear understanding of their growth. There is no person at all to whom this does not apply in every case.

Gregory’s speech in honor of Basil is a classic example of Christian oratory. Kennedy (237) calls it “probably the greatest piece of Greek rhetoric since the death of Demosthenes,” and Cameron (144) “a near-perfect panegyric.” Byzantine authors shared the enthusiasm of modern readers: from the ninth century onward Gregory in general, and Oration 43 in particular, set the bar for rhetorical excellence. The scholar known as Basilius Minimus (Βασίλειος ὁ ἐλάχιστος, 10th cent.), an early commentator on the works of Gregory, writes of it:


22 The quotation is taken from R. Cantarella, “Basilio Minimo. II. Scolii
This speech is throughout adorned with every rhetorical technique. For note already in the proem with how many points of excellence it abounds: amplification with parenthetic material, causal constructions, extended clauses (which they say is a characteristic of proems), and the doubling of clauses and words.

Basilius singles out *Oration* 43 as an exemplary speech and within it draws particular attention to the proem. He later devotes a lengthy discussion to the phrase ἐπ’ οὐδενὸς οὖν τῶν ἀπάντων…, which is part of the proem, praising its beauty and paving the way for its reuse in other works of scholarship.

Gaëlle Rioual has recently traced the process whereby Gregory’s work entered Byzantine rhetorical theory and education. In this connection, she discusses the habit of mining his speeches for model passages that could rival the pagan sources cited by Hermogenes and other classical authorities. One such passage was ἐπ’ οὐδενὸς οὖν τῶν ἀπάντων…

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23 Cantarella prints ἄθρει but an imperative is plainly required.

24 The terms of his assessment are lifted from Hermogenes; see especially *Inv.* 1.5.15–31.


27 It found its way even into edifying texts like the *Life of St Nicholas Studites* (*PG* 105.873c), but it was surely the specialized grammatical literature that was at the back of Eustathius’ mind. Two representative examples: John Sikeliotes (fl. ca. 1000), who stuffed his commentary on Hermogenes’ *On Types of Style* with passages from Gregory of Nazianzus (cf. T. M. Conley, “Demosthenes Dethroned: Gregory Nazianzus in Sikeliotes’ Scholia on
2. *The significance of Eustathius’ sources*

Identifying the sources Eustathius quotes in ch. 12 of his *Proem* represents some progress in relation to previous scholarship, but the more rewarding question is what these sources reveal in terms of Eustathius’ broader concerns. In what follows, I consider them in context—in the passage where we find them; in Eustathius’ discussion of Pindar’s style; and, finally, in their relationship to Byzantine debates about literary style and Eustathius’ own stylistic practice.

*Detailed observations on Pindar’s obscurity*

Eustathius introduces his three Christian sources when discussing Pindar’s deliberately obscure style. The ancient lyric poet, according to Eustathius, *wants* to be obscure (10.2 καὶ οὕτω μὲν ἐν ἄλλοις οὖν τὸν Ἑρμογένης περὶ ἑδέων, "ICS 27/28 [2002/2003] 145–152; P. Roilos, "Ancient Greek Rhetorical Theory and Byzantine Discursive Politics: John Sikeliotes on Hermogenes," in T. Shawcross et al. [eds.], *Reading in the Byzantine Empire and Beyond* [Cambridge 2018] 159–184), quotes ἐπ’ οὐδενός ὁὖν τῶν ἅπαντων… no fewer than four times to illustrate a range of stylistic features, including the so-called “round figure,” στρογγύλον σχῆμα (VI 138.22–24 Walz, where ἐφ’ ὅτω should be read, and 313.2–5); the apophatic statement (219.30–220.2); and the use of two negatives to make a positive statement (344.14–19). Later in the eleventh century Michael Psellos devotes an entire work to the interpretation of ἐπ’ οὐδενός ὁὖν τῶν ἅπαντων… and the preceding sentence in Gregory’s speech (*Theol.* I 98 Gautier). I return to it at 364 below.

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Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies 61 (2021) 344–367
that Eustathius structures his discussion of obscure language in Pindar specifically around his treatment of negative particles.

Several considerations confirm this initial impression. Section 1, on unusual word order and *pars pro toto*, introduces the language that Eustathius will use to frame his discussion of later emulation in section 2 (ζηλόω, οἱ ὑστερον). Lycophron, we learn, emulated Pindaric *pars pro toto*, but Eustathius cites no specific examples: the commentary, we are told, will provide further details.28 Section 3 rounds off the discussion with several quick-fire comments that add little more than an elaborate *et cetera*. Again Eustathius refers us to the commentary: there is more to say, but no urgency to say it right now, in the Proem. We might describe the process as one of zooming in (section 1) until the issue that most interests Eustathius comes into focus (section 2) —after which we quickly zoom back out again (section 3).

The same technique can be observed within the chapter on particle ellipsis itself. Eustathius devotes just under seven lines, in Negri’s edition, to introducing the theme of particle ellipsis and illustrating it with examples from Pindar. He then adds just over seven lines with examples from later authors; and two and a half lines to discuss the ellipsis of prepositions. This perfunctory concluding section (12.4), abruptly introduced by Πινδάρικον δὲ καί, serves no apparent purpose other than returning us to Pindar. The opening section introduces Pindar’s habit of dropping the first negative particle from a cluster of several (ἐν στοιβῇ ἀποφάσεων), and of inviting us to supply it on the basis of those that follow (ἐκ τῶν ἐφεξῆς ἐκπεφωνημένων). The three illustrations from Pindar (ἀδίκον οὔτε ὑπέροπλον ὑβριν δρέπων,29 Pyth. 6.48; ναυσὶ δ’ οὔτε πεζὸς ἐὼν εὐροις / ἐς ὑπερβορέους ὀδόν,30

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28 See Kambylis, *Eustathios über Pindars Epinikidiichtung* 47–48; Neumann-Hartmann, in *The Reception of Greek Lyric Poetry* 537. Eustathius instead cites six examples of Pindar inverting the expected order of words.

29 Snell/Maehler: ἀδίκον οὔθ’ ὑπέροπλον ὑβριν δρέπων.

30 Snell/Maehler: … ιὸν <κεφ> εὐροις / ἐς ὑπερβορέους θαυμαστὰν ὀδόν.
Pyth. 10.29–30; νόσοι οὔτε γήρας οὐλόμενον κέκραται / γενεᾶ. Eustathius makes it clear that they are interchangeable: οἷον..., καὶ πάλιν..., καὶ ἕτεροθε δέ. He then notes that later authors emulated this technique (τούτο δὲ τὸ σχῆμα καὶ τοῖς ὑστερον ἐξήλωσα) and again offers three passages to illustrate the point. However, these passages do not work equally well, and Eustathius acknowledges as much in the way he frames them: οἷον...; τοιοῦτόν τι καὶ τὸ...; ἔχοι δ’ οὖν οὕτω συμβιβάσαι τις καὶ τὸ... Note the progressively more detailed, and more guarded, nature of Eustathius’ comments. He moves from more to less plausible examples of Pindaric ellipsis, and from one mode of analysis, where the point is simply to exemplify an established phenomenon (οἷον), to another, which explores new connections between phenomena that may or may not be related (ἔχοι δ’ οὖν ... συμβιβάσαι τις).

The way Eustathius arranges his quotations from later authors may seem puzzling at first, but it makes sense if we accept that he builds deliberately and systematically toward the third quotation, from Gregory of Nazianzus. Unlike Pindar, but like Eustathius himself, Gregory is Christian and writes prose rather than poetry. The hymn to Tatiana, whose poetic style naturally lends itself to comparison with Pindar, bridges the first of these divides. Its use of negative particles in a Christian context matches that of Pindar, and Eustathius indicates as much by framing it in the same way he used earlier to introduce his first quotation from Pindar (οἷον). Basil takes us

31 Snell/Maehler: νόσοι δ’ οὔτε... κέκραται / ιερᾶ γενεᾶ.

32 As a sticheron prosomoion modeled on the popular Ὄτε ἐκ τοῦ ξύλου σε νεκρόν, the hymn is bound to a rhythm that discourages οὗ in verse-opening position; contrast οὗ ἵφος οὗ πῦρ... in Μηναία I 352.33, which follows a different rhythm. Eustathius was keenly aware of the strictures that rhythm placed on the use of language in Byzantine liturgical poetry. In his commentary on the iambic canon for Pentecost he notes on Ode 4 (95.7–8:}

Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies 61 (2021) 344–367
from poetry to prose. Eustathius is aware of this being a significant step, since elsewhere in his work he reflects on the different stylistic regimes that are appropriate to poetry and prose and repeatedly warns against the misplaced transfer of features from one to the other. In fact, Basil in the passage cited above does not display the harsh up-front ellipsis that Eustathius notes in Pindar and the hymn: leaving out the second οὐ in the phrase οὐ μόνον οὐ is arguably a different matter, and indeed Eustathius introduces it differently (τοιούτον τι καὶ...).

From Basil we move on to the funeral oration that Gregory of Nazianzus composed in his honor. This personal connection notwithstanding, Eustathius’ final example of particle ellipsis diverts from the topic under discussion since it does little to illustrate Pindaric practice. Eustathius himself is aware of the fact: “in this way,” he writes, “one might also consider constructing the expression…” (ἐξει δ’ ἄν οὕτω συμβιβάσαι τις καὶ το...). “One might also consider” is not much of a claim and Eustathius remains guarded also after delivering the quotation. As Negri notes (69), he fails to offer a paraphrase with the missing particle restored, in contrast with all five preceding examples. Instead he observes, rather vaguely, that “the first half of the phrase appears to lack a negation” (ἀρνήσεως γὰρ ἐνδεια τὸ πρῶτον ἔχειν δόξαι ἄν κόμμα). Eustathius is right to be cautious: on any plausible reading, ἐπ’ οὐδενὸς οὖν τὸν ἄπαντων does not

Cesaretti and Ronchey, Exegesis 112): “In the opening two lines the poet tightly compacts (στρυφνοῖ) his expression since the meter does not allow him to expand in the interest of clarity (σωφήνεα).” For further discussion of poetic στρυφνήτης see 361 below.

33 See especially Comm. Od. II 128.15–16 Stallbaum (τὸ δὲ ῥᾴπτειν φόνον ποιητῇ μὲν χρήσιμον, κακόζηλον δὲ ἐν λόγῳ πεζῷ); also Comm. Il. I 327.24–26, III 162.19–21, 761.6–8, IV 431.24–432.2 van der Valk; Comm. Od. II 132.28–29, 230.42–45, 254.8–10 Stallbaum.

34 Cf. Negri, Eustazio 69 n.2.
fit the pattern of Pindaric ellipsis especially well. The question arises of why he adduces this example at all.

**Eustathius on Pindar’s style**

Eustathius’ *Proem to a Commentary on Pindar* can be read as a sustained defense of the “solemn style” (τὸ σεμνόν, σεμνότης) and the “obscurity” (ἀσάφεια) that it entails. Already Dionysius of Halicarnassus judged Pindar worthy of emulation (ζηλωτός) for the solemn character (σεμνότης) of his writing; and already the Pindar scholia comment extensively on its obscurity. How-

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35 The difficulties were first noted by F. G. Schneidewin, *Eustathii Prooemium Commentariorum Pindaricorum* (Göttingen 1837) 6. Schneidewin deletes οὐκ but Kambylis, *Prooimion zum Pindarkommentar* 82*, is right to say that this solves nothing. Negri, *Eustazio* 68–70, argues that Eustathius thought of οὐδενός and οὐκ as cancelling each other out. If that is correct, it would result in a positive first half of the sentence and hence explain why Eustathius thinks a negation (ἀρνησις rather than ἀπόφασις, as Negri rightly points out) may be missing.


37 Dion. Hal. *De imit.* 31.2.5 (VI 204.19–205.6 Usener/Radermacher): ζηλωτός δὲ καὶ Πίνδαρος ὀνομάτων καὶ νοημάτων εἶνεκα, καὶ μεγαλοπρεπείας καὶ τόνου καὶ περιουσίας κατασκευῆς καὶ δυνάμεως, καὶ πικρίας μετὰ ἑδονῆς: καὶ πυκνότητος καὶ σεμνότης, καὶ γνωμολογίας καὶ ἐναρείας, καὶ σχηματισμῶν καὶ ἡθοποιίας καὶ συζήσεως καὶ δεινόσεως (“Pindar too is worthy of emulation on account of his language and thought, and his grand manner and forcefulness and the impressiveness of his poetic apparatus and his power, and for his bitterness tempered with pleasure, and his compactness and solemnity, and his maxims and vividness, and his novel formations and character portrayals and amplifications and emotional impact”).

38 Schol. Pind. *Ol.* 2.152c, 3.1b, 10.67b, *Nem.* 4.112b, *Isthm.* 1.60, 4.120b. A standard hermeneutic gambit in the scholia is to “clarify” Pindar’s obscure formulations (τὸ δὲ σαφὲς οὕτως ἔχει vel sim.): schol. *Ol.* 1.9c, 44a, 2.15d, 3.75a, 7.79d, 98g, 8.33c, 10.83a, *Nem.* 6.14b, *Isthm.* 3.26b, 4.33c, 52c, 5.2c; cf. also the pithy ο δὲ νοοῖς: … (“This means: …”) in schol. *Ol.* 1.1c and often elsewhere. The habit of glossing Pindar in this way was traced back to earlier readers and even to Pindar himself: schol. *Ol.* 2.15a (καὶ τούτο ἐξ αὐτοῦ Πινδάρου σαφηνίζεται, ὡς καὶ Τίμαιος φησι), 5.19a.

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*Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 61 (2021) 344–367
ever, it is Eustathius in the *Proem* who works these themes into a coherent account of Pindaric style.\(^{39}\) The opening section on music sets the terms for the discussion and acts as a limit case: Pythagoras may once have brought music “solemnly” from heaven down to earth (καταγαγεῖν ἐσεµνύντο) but since then the art has all but died of obscurity and neglect (τὸ ... ἀτριβὲς καὶ ἐκ μακροῦ ἀδιασάφητον καὶ σεσιγημένον τῶν μεθόδων, ὅθεν ἡ τέχνη κατέδυς ὅς οἶα καὶ τεθηκυῖα, 1.5). It is well-nigh impossible to recover it now (1.4), but the connoisseurs of Pindar (οἱ σεµνολογοῦντες, 2.1) can still appreciate the “solemn robe” (πέπλον σεµνόν) in which he dresses his poetry, and the “solemn chamber” (σεµνὴ γυναικωνῖτις) into which he invites his readers. As these images suggest, Pindaric poetry is successful where music failed (3.1):

αὐχοῦσι δὲ ὁµως καὶ ἐν τοῖς τοιούτοις πολλὰ τὸ σεµνὸν ὅσοι τοῦ κατὰ τὴν τοιαύτην ποίησιν σκοποῦν πρὸς εὐστοχίαν κατάτοξα-ζονται, ὅν ὑπέρκειται Πίνδαρος “πολλὰ” μέν, ὃς γε αὐτός ἂν εἴποι, “βέλεα φωνεύντα ὕπ’ ἀγκώνος” φέρων, οὐδὲν δὲ τὶ τῶν τόσων βελῶν εἰς μάτην ἐποφιεῖς.

Nonetheless, those who take careful aim and hit the mark in this kind of poetry lay claim to a great deal of solemnity despite these problems. Their master is Pindar. He carries “many missiles of the voice under his elbow,” as he himself would say, and, numerous as they are, shoots none of them in vain.

Achieving “much solemnity,” πολλὰ τὸ σεµνόν, is the ultimate aim of lyric poetry, and Pindar is the best at hitting the mark. However, with solemnity comes obscurity, which is what killed ancient music: measures must be taken to keep obscurity within manageable limits. Pindar shows how this is done: we learn

\(^{39}\) Kambylis emphasizes the originality of Eustathius’ discussion: *Eustathios über Pindars Epinikiedichtung* 96–104.
that he embraces the σαφήνεια of Atticism, “so as not to create lifeless texts” (ίνα μὴ ἄψυχα γράφῃ, 8.2). We have here the same metaphorical nexus between obscurity and death that Eustathius had introduced at the start of the Proem, when discussing ancient music. Pindar avoids the level of obscurity that killed music, yet he remains only a fleeting visitor in the realm of σαφήνεια (βραχέα τοῖς τοιούτοις ἐντρέχον ταχύ μεταπεδῆ, 8.2). His sympathies, Eustathius goes on to emphasize, lie with the strange dialectic forms that make his poetry idiosyncratic (διαλέκτοις … φίλαις αὐτῷ ἱδιάζων τοὺς λόγους, 8.2). Pindar does occasionally “force himself” toward clarity, but only to a limited extent: ὅτε δὲ θαυμαστῶς γνωμολογεῖν δεήσει καὶ ἄλλως δὲ εἰπεῖν τι ἄστειον, τότε δὴ βιάζεται πῶς εἰς τὰ πολλὰ ἥρεμα πρὸς σαφήνειαν ἑαυτῶν (10.2). With πῶς “somehow,” εἰς τὰ πολλὰ “on the whole,” and ἥρεμα “gently, a little,” Eustathius interposes no fewer than three qualifications between βιάζεται and ἑαυτῶν: he barely brings himself to concede that Pindar sometimes pursues clarity. That is as far as he will go. Eustathius never discusses the details of Pindaric σαφήνεια. Instead he takes us down the path of obscurity, ἀσάφεια.

Eustathius devotes five chapters of the Proem (11–15) to explaining how Pindar makes himself obscure. It is precisely in these chapters that he celebrates him as a stylistic model for later authors: the language of ζήλος, “emulation,” occurs only here in the Proem. Pindaric ἀσάφεια, it would seem, offers the most immediate lesson to the style-conscious reader of the Proem. In laying out the details, Eustathius suggests how others might put the lesson into practice. Paradoxically, it is here that he makes his own most explicit commitment to σαφήνεια: before taking us into the maze of Pindar’s poetry he must “bring to greater clarity” (εἰς τε σαφήνειαν πλείονα, 9.5) some salient points. It is time to ask why the clarification is necessary and what the quotations from Christian texts contribute to Eustathius’ point.
The lure of obscurity in Middle Byzantium

Clarity of expression was a cardinal virtue in ancient rhetoric and continued to be prized in Middle Byzantium. And yet it was also a contested issue. George Kustas has traced the history of debates on σαφήνεια and its opposite, ἀσάφεια, from Aristotle’s Rhetoric to the Byzantine commentators and grammarians whose outlook directly influenced Eustathius’ own.40 His discussion is especially valuable for explaining how obscurity came to be considered a stylistic virtue in Middle Byzantium. Already Arethas (9th/10th century) defended himself against the charge of obscurity by citing the precedent of Gregory of Nazianzus and his convoluted style.41 A generation or so later, John Geometres (later 10th century) declared that obscurity could be stylistically effective.42 His younger contemporary John Sikeliotes (fl. ca. 1000) showed in detail how obscure phrasing (εἰ δὲ … καὶ ἀσαφῶς φρασθῇ) contributes to the “impressiveness” (δεινότης) of a piece of writing.43 By the time Eustathius came to write about it, obscurity had become, in the words of Kustas, “a touchstone of rhetoric” in its own right.44 The drawbacks of not making oneself understood were, nevertheless, still visible to all: Pindar, for one, had created a poetic labyrinth that was, in Eustathius’ own words, “impenetrable to the majority of people” (τοῖς πολλοῖς ἀδιόδευτον, 9.3). To explain why his style was worth emulating despite this, Eustathius introduced another concept that not only featured prominently

41 Scripta Minora 17 (I 186–188 Westerink).
44 Kustas, Studies in Byzantine Rhetoric 93.
in contemporary debates about style but was also important to him personally: στρυφνότης ("compactness, intricacy").

Pindar, Eustathius explains in the *Proem*, can please us by making his poetry comprehensible (οἷς καὶ συνετὰ λαλεῖ, 9.4) but at other times astonishes and perplexes us "by intricately compacting his language in manifold ways" (οἷς καὶ τὴν φράσιν κατὰ πολυτροπίαν στρυφνοῖ ἔτέρωθι, 9.4). The verb that I have translated "intricately compacting" is στρυφνόω—a buzzword of Byzantine stylistic theory and crucial for understanding Eustathius' own rhetorical practice, as Emmanuel Bourbouhakis has shown.45 Here is the heading of Eustathius' *Epitaphios* for the emperor Manuel Komnenos as given in the only extant manuscript (Bourbouhakis 2):

τοῦ αὐτοῦ τὸ γραφὲν εἰς τὸν ἀοίδιον ἐν ἀγίοις βασιλεύσι κύριν Μανουὴλ τὸν Κοµνηνόν. ὅπερ ὅτι οὐ τυχόντως μεθώδευται, ὁ πεπαιδευμένος διακρίνει. πολλῶν γὰρ ἄλλως γραψάντων, ἐστρυφνώθη πρὸς διαφορὰν ὁ παρὼν ἐπιτάφιος.

A speech written by the same author about the lord Manuel Komnenos, who is celebrated among the holy kings. The educated will discern that it was composed with care. For while many have written differently, the present oration stands out for being intricately compacted.

We do not know whether Eustathius himself added this heading and, if so, what exactly he meant by ἐστρυφνώθη πρὸς διαφορὰν.46 However, it seems clear that he conceived the speech in praise of his favorite emperor as a demonstration of his own favorite style. Eustathius explains the nature of that style when praising the rhetorical prowess of one of his contemporaries, Michael Hagiotheodorites. Among other strengths that Hagiotheodorites possesses, Eustathius admiringly mentions (*Or*. 145.54–56 Wirth):

45 Bourbouhakis, *Not Composed in a Chance Manner* 83*–103*. The following discussion of στρυφνότης is indebted to him.

the solemnity of your utterance, and not only that but also its compactness and the fact that it is wrapped up as though into a tightly fitting belt (εἰς σφίγμα στρυφνόν), as well as being otherwise beautiful and sweetened with the honey of pleasure.

“Solemnity” (τὸ σεμνὸν) provides the context in which Hagiotheodorites’ στρυφνός style becomes effective. Eustathius describes that style as “compact” (πυκνός) and “wrapped up” (συνεστραμμένος) as if into a tightly fitting “belt” (σφίγμα), an image which recalls the “belted” (σφιγκτός) dress of Pindaric poetry in Proem 2.1. Indeed, Eustathius sees not only Pindar but also Homer as a model for στρυφνότης. Consider the following passage from his Iliad commentary (I 155.23–26 van der Valk):

One could paraphrase the expression and transpose it from its poetic intricacy (στρυφνότης) into a statement that has clarity (σαφήνεια) along the following lines: “you who surpass everyone in counsel and also surpass them with your prowess in war.”

Eustathius contrasts what he calls “poetic στρυφνότης” with the clarity, σαφήνεια, that results from paraphrasing poetry into prose.\(^ {47} \) This gives an important role to poetry as a model of the στρυφνός style but also raises the question whether that style was appropriate in prose. Crucially, those who thought it was could point to the precedent of the church fathers, chief among them Gregory of Nazianzus. I have already mentioned that Arethas invokes him as a model for his own allegedly obscure writing. Here is what he has to say about Gregory’s style (Scripta Minora 17, I 187.1–12 Westerink):

\(^ {47} \) Further passages and discussion in van der Valk, Commentarii II lxi.
But they (sc. Arethas’ detractors) will put forward the divine fathers who, they say, trace a smooth path in their writing and one that is accessible to all. If they mean the path that leads to moral improvement they have a point and I accept it, since I know all about it from my own experience with such material. But even there, one can see Gregory, the divine trumpet, embellish his argument with complicated thoughts and difficult writing as he often does elsewhere, not least in his moral speech for the feast of dedication, sowing into his discourse a very large and, to the dull, unacceptable amount of obscurity (ἀσάφεια), creating extremely rapid clauses and covering up the point of his thinking (τὸ σαφὲς) by virtue of his concision and drive.

The church fathers, it is alleged, “trace a smooth path in their writing and one that is accessible to all.” If true, that would set a damaging precedent for self-confessed obscurantists like Arethas, but the detractors turn out to be mistaken: Arethas shows that Gregory too chose to be obscure. He concludes (I 188.3–5):

οὐκ οὖν ἀδόκιμον οὐδὲ τοῖς θείοις πατράσι τὸ τοῦ λόγου συνεστραμμένον τε καὶ στριφνόν καὶ πρὸς σεμνότητα διαιρόμενον.

To the divine fathers too was not at all unacceptable a tightly wrapped (συνεστραμμένον) and intricate (στριφνόν) style of speech, and one that is elevated to a certain level of solemnity (πρὸς σεμνότητα διαιρόμενον).

Note the conjunction of familiar glosses: τὸ συνεστραμμένον, στριφνόν (a variant of στρυφνόν), πρὸς σεμνότητα διαιρόμενον: all
these are positive qualities that church fathers like Gregory achieve by affecting an obscure style (τὴν ἁσάφειαν ἐγκαταστείρας). We encounter a similar cluster of features in Michael Psellos’ discussion of the very passage from Gregory’s Or. 43 that Eustathius quotes in the Proem to a Commentary on Pindar (Theol. I 98.109–116 Gautier):48

48 The passage is discussed and paraphrased in P. Gautier (ed.), Michaelis Pselli Theologica I (Leipzig 1989) 381.

The thought (sc. in ἐπ’ οὐδενὸς οὖν τῶν ἁπάντων…) is perfect in its power and rhetorical drive and altogether wrapped up in the manner of Aristides, though it is phrased elliptically and therefore seemingly confused or rather mutilated or cut in half. This kind of thing is highly intellectual, in the vein of the philosophers, and very Platonic in the way it condenses the thoughts, just as more fully unfolded thought is more concrete and expansive. Therefore, Plato is broad and accessible in the Gorgias but in the Parmenides extremely tight (στρυφνὸς ἄγαν) and wrapped up in himself.

Psellos was fascinated with the style of Gregory of Nazianzus. As well as writing a major discourse about it for his friend Pothos,49 he returned to it on several other occasions, including, and at length, in Theol. I 98 Gautier quoted above. In that discussion, Psellos sees ἐπ’ οὐδενὸς οὖν τῶν ἁπάντων… as representative of Gregory’s style, a style he characterizes as

49 Papaioannou, Michael Psellos 63–87; for Psellos’ special interest in Or. 43 see Papaioannou 339 s.v. “Gregory of Nazianzos.”
“wrapped up” (συνεστραµµένη), “elliptic” (ἐλλείπουσα τοῖς λέξεσι), and “extremely tight” (στρυφνός ἄγαν). Although he associates these qualities with the more philosophical registers of Plato (the Parmenides, not the Gorgias) he also calls them “Aristidean” (Ἀριστείδειος), thus granting them broader applicability. Such a style, he submits, is perfect in its own way, despite giving the impression of being confused, overly compressed, and even mutilated (συγκεχύσθαι δοκοῦσα, μᾶλλον δὲ συγκεκόφθαι καὶ ἡµίτοµος φαίνεσθαι). It will be apparent that this reading of our passage from Gregory echoes in condensed form Arethas’ more general assessment of that author’s style; and that it foreshadows what Eustathius will have to say about Pindar—and, as I hope to have demonstrated, Gregory. Indeed, the echoes in the Proem are striking. Did Eustathius read Psellos and take from him the idea of quoting ἐπ’ οὐδενὸς ὅν τῶν ἀπάντων…? We cannot ultimately know who or what inspired him. What we can say is that, in his Proem to a Commentary on Pindar, and especially in 11–15 on Pindaric ἀσάφεια, he joined a conversation about style in which ἐπ’ οὐδενὸς ὅν τῶν ἀπάντων… had taken on special significance.

Conclusion

Pindar’s penchant for idiosyncrasy (τὸ ἵδιον), which Eustathius concedes is a defining feature of his art, put him in danger of going the way of ancient music, which perished of its own obscurity. Whether Pindar could survive as a viable model of style depended not on abstract claims about the beauty of his poetry, or on assurances that he never wrote “soulless things,” ἄψυχα (Proem 8.2), but on whether style-conscious Komnenian readers could be won over to his use of language. At issue, in other words, was not Pindar himself but Pindar as a model for the στρυφνός style that Eustathius himself promoted in his speeches and other writings.\(^\text{50}\) Eustathius worked hard to make

\(^{50}\) If Eustathius revised the Proem late in life (n.6 above) this may suggest a
the case: Pindar was admittedly obscure, but his obscurity had positive value and lent itself to successful emulation. At the center of this argument, wrapped in layers of scholarly apparatus, Eustathius planted a quotation from Gregory of Nazianzus. It is only one line, and Gregory is only one author, but this one line by this one author had iconic significance in twelfth-century Byzantium: if Gregory could be seen to emulate Pindar, even just as a passing thought, then Eustathius’ case for the style that Pindar represented was effectively made.

To be persuasive, Gregory’s appearance in the discussion had to be carefully managed. Eustathius quotes just one famous passage from one of his most famous speeches—to illustrate his use of particle ellipsis, an acknowledged feature of Pindar’s style. Psellos had called ἐπ’ οὐδενὸς οὖν τῶν ἁπάντων… “elliptic” not because a particle was missing but because we lack an explanation of what exactly is meant by ἁπάντων (Theol. 1.98.107–108). Compared with this rather attractive reading offered by Psellos, Eustathius’ suggestion of particle ellipsis may seem far-fetched, but it fits the technical mold of the Proem and slots naturally into long-standing debates about this phrase: already Basilius Minimus and John Sikeliotes had commented on its treatment of multiple negatives, though with different results.51 Framed in this way, Eustathius could make his genealogy of ἀσάφεια seem reassuringly familiar. And in order to reinforce that impression, he introduced Gregory in the company of a Byzantine hymnographer and Basil of Caesarea. Less central to debates about prose style than their famously eloquent colleague, they helped lead the reader down a path of associations growing interest, on the part of the aging scholar, in an impressive and obscure style; cf. his Exegesis in canonem iambicum pentecostalem, another work written in old age and conceived, it would seem, as a counterpart to the commentary on Pindar.

51 Basilius Minimus in Cantarella, ByzZeit 26 (1926) 22; John Sikeliotes in Walz VI 344.14–19.
at the end of which awaited Gregory himself—but which originated with Pindar, and therefore justified the study of this ancient, obscure, and impressive poet.\textsuperscript{52}

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