

A Boar in Stesichorus

George Huxley

ACCORDING TO Athenaeus (3.95D), Stesichorus described in his *Syotherai* a boar hiding the front of his snout beneath the ground:

Στησίχορος τέ φησιν ἐν Συοθήραις
κρύψαι δὲ ῥύγχος
ἄκρον γὰς ὑπένερθεν. [fr. 44 Page].

Here Dindorf, with the approval of Snell in his discussion¹ of POxy. 2359, conjectured κρύψε. “Offenbar ist,” wrote Snell, “wie E. Kapp gesehen hat, der Infinitiv dadurch eingedrungen, daß ein Abschreiber Abhängigkeit von φησιν annahm.”

It is the context of the fragment which interests us here. Sir Maurice Bowra has remarked:² “We do not know why the boar does this, and we might conjecture equally that it is preparing for the fight or that it has been wounded and gives it up.” In either circumstance the gesture would be rather odd. Nor can the creature be uprooting trees as the Calydonian boar is said to have done (*Iliad* 9.540–542):

ὄς κακὰ πόλλ’ ἔρδεσκειν ἔθων Οἰνῆος ἄλων
πολλὰ δ’ ὃ γε προθέλυμνα χαμαὶ βάλε δένδρεα μακρὰ
αὐτῆσιν ῥίζησι καὶ αὐτοῖς ἄνθεσι μῆλων,

for uprooting would require a thrust by shoulder or flank above ground. There is another, and more likely, explanation.

Wild boars are specially fond of underground foods, and unearth them with their snouts, just as the domesticated pigs of Périgord sniff out and unearth truffles. In ancient Greece there were many foods suited to boars and pigs which, according to the season, may have foraged for grubs, worms or acorns, for example.³

We may suggest therefore that Stesichorus is here describing a boar nosing a root out of the ground. The fondness of pigs for underground

¹ “Stesichoros’ ΣΥΟΘΗΡΑΙ,” *Hermes* 85 (1957) 250 n.3 = *Gesammelte Schriften* 80 n.3.

² *Greek Lyric Poetry*² (Oxford 1961) 97.

³ Orth, in *RE* 2A, I (1921) 807.19ff s.v. SCHWEIN.

food is noted by Aristotle in *Historia Animalium* 8.6.2: ῥιζοφάγον δὲ μάλιστα ἢ ὅς ἐστι τῶν ζῴων διὰ τὸ εὖ πεφυκέναι τὸ ῥύγχος πρὸς τὴν ἐργασίαν ταύτην.

Meineke's change to ἐν Συοθήρα is to be rejected as needless. Stesichorus, Athenaeus is saying, wrote about *Pigstickers*, not just about a boar hunt. Their quarry was almost certainly the Calydonian boar, and *POxy.* 2359 col. 1 (Stesichorus fr.45 Page) may well be a list of the heroes who took part in the hunt. Perhaps they caught the boar unawares, while his attention was engaged in unearthing a root.

THE QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY OF BELFAST

September, 1966