

In this paper, I will argue that Pindar in the opening of the mythical narration of *Pythian* 4 challenges his audience to solve a riddle. This compositional strategy is not recognised in the traditional interpretation of the passage (cf. e.g. Athanassaki 2003.102, Hurst 1983.157-8, Felson-Rubin 1999.17, Braswell 1988). A re-interpretation of this passage with attention to its conceptualisations of divination will enhance our understanding of the ideological framework in which the ode functioned.

In *P.* 4.13-56, Medea prophesises the founding of Cyrene by Battus, forefather of the ode's addressee Arcesilaus. She speaks on Thera (home to the future colonists), to the Argonauts, among whom is Euphamus, Battus' forefather. In the absence of the mentioning of an inducement to speak, Medea's words are commonly understood to be 'inspired' prophecy (e.g. Calame 1990, Segal 1986): she spontaneously reveals knowledge about the future. However, I will argue that Pindar invites his audience to infer, from Medea's own words, what prompted her to speak.

Medea herself claims that she is explaining an event that took place at a previous stage of the expedition, when the Libyan god Eurypylos presented Euphamus with a clod of earth as a guest-gift. She labels this clod an *ornis* (19, 'bird-sign'). Like the oak-riddle in the epilogue of the ode, the riddle in this passage centers upon an *adynaton*: how can a clod of earth be an *ornis*? But unlike the oak-riddle, this one is not marked as such. Instead, Pindar guides his audience's attention towards it by foregrounding the ambiguity of Medea's status and the status of her utterance: is she a goddess revealing divine knowledge, or a mortal interpreting a divine sign? For example, while the phrase ἀπέπνευσ' ἀθανάτου στόματος (11) presents us with an immortal Medea, several aspects of the passage point up Helen's divinatory performance in *Od.* 15 as a subtext.

This ambiguity is bound up with the apparent *adynaton*. In the midst of her account of Euphamus' encounter with Eurypylos, Medea mentions a Zeus-sent thunderclap (23). This disambiguates the status of Medea's utterance: the audience is invited to reconstruct that this thunder sounded not at the encounter in Libya, but immediately preceding Medea's speech on Thera, and that she is in fact interpreting that thunderclap. The solution to the riddle follows from this assumption: Medea turns out to read two events, disparate in time and place, together as one divine sign whose meaning (as in a bird-sign proper) is constituted by its topographical direction - the Libyan clod of earth becomes an *ornis* in conjunction with Zeus' sanctioning thunderclap on Thera. I will conclude my discussion of this passage by showing how this interpretation furthers our understanding of the internal coherence of Medea's speech.

Pindar's development of the theme of riddle-solving in *Pythian* 4 implies an ideology in which this activity plays a central role in establishing and maintaining a healthy society (cf. Dougherty 1993). Arcesilaus is explicitly challenged to solve the oak-riddle in connection with the recalling of the exile Demophilus (263). I argue that Pindar also poses the audience a riddle: mirroring the interpretative activity of Medea, who combines two events to predict the future, the audience has to draw these apart to read and understand their past. Pindar thus ingeniously involves them in constructing their colonial identity.

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