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Mythical inversions and history in Bacchylides 5

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Abstract: The purpose of this paper is first to suggest that the mythical section of Bacchylides 5 is governed by a certain literary strategy, namely the inversion of social and literary norms pertaining to gender as well as the heroic ideal. Second, by looking at the historical context of the ode I venture to demonstrate that, as presented in the mythical section, the key inversion of external into internal war might have had a concrete meaning for the *laudandus*, Hieron of Syracuse.

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1. Introduction

The present paper is concerned with Bacchylides' *Ode 5*, and ventures to read it with an eye to its literary and cultural as well as its historical context. The consideration of these contexts opens up certain interpretational possibilities: In the case of the literary and cultural context, by investigating (to the extent possible) what the 'cultural norm' in the Greek imaginary was, as reflected in extant literature, we will be able to ascertain how "marked" certain poetic choices in *Ode 5* are. By subsequently turning to the historical context, on the other hand, certain such poetic choices will be shown to have a particular meaning for the individuals and the community involved in the original performance—especially Hieron himself.¹

As is typical in epinician poetry, two universes are situated side by side in the ode: the present universe of athletic victory and that of myth, which, in the case of *Ode 5*, is remote not only in terms of time but also of space, as it is set in Hades. As far as the mythical section is concerned, two central elements that have been recognized by many scholars will constitute the springboard for my reading; both of them are related to the more general theme of the frailty of human existence at play. The first one is quite straightforward: this is a myth where male heroes are pursued and eventually defeated by female entities.² When Heracles meets Meleager in Hades, Meleager narrates his end at the hands of a woman—his mother—and Heracles, in a display of tragic irony, brings a similar fate upon himself.³ The other theme is that of de-heroization: Meleager in his narrative presents his final battle and subsequent death in a way that is anything but self-glorifying.⁴ These themes, I will go on to argue, participate in a wider pattern that governs the mythical narrative: What takes place in Hades as well as what is narrated there produce the image of an 'other' universe where the values and norms of the world above have been inverted.

One concept that, I will try to show, figures prominently in this inverted world is the 'exchange of qualities' between the masculine and the

¹ On the issue of the original performance, the theory that *Ode 5* was not commissioned by Hieron, but sent by Bacchylides as a poetic epistle (e.g. Steffen 1961), is well refuted in Schmidt 1987 and usually not accepted anymore. See also Cairns on 10-11.

² Lefkowitz 1969: 73; 80; Péron 1978: 323-4; Segal 1990 *passim*; Cairns 1997: 47-8; Stenger 2004: 126. Cf. Svarlien 1995: 36 (primarily concerned with natural imagery).

³ See e.g. Stern 1965: 138-9; Rengakos 2000: 105.

⁴ Lefkowitz 1969: 77; 1976: 63; Brannan 1972: 242; Burnett 1985: 144, 148.

feminine, to borrow a phrase that Nicole Loraux had used in her readings of other texts.⁵ I understand this concept as the process during which a male and a female, as involved in an action that affects both, demonstrate the loss of one or more of the fundamental qualities of their sex (qualities that are normally imagined as belonging essentially to it) and/ or the appropriation of one or more of the opposite sex's qualities.⁶ As far as the masculine ideal is concerned, it is closely and primarily linked to the ideal of the warrior. In the Greek imaginary of this period, manlike coincides with warlike.⁷ The equation of man and warrior applies ideally to *Ode 5*; in the opening, the tyrant ruler Hieron is saluted in his capacity as a στραταγός, which makes him the foremost individual of his community.⁸ In the mythical narrative, two heroes meet, introduced in their capacity as extraordinary warriors, only to present us with an inverted image of the traditional ideal of the man/ warrior/ hero.

Turning to the world of the *laudandus* and the *laudator*, the persisting question is how the mythical exemplum of this ode fits in with the praise of the tyrant Hieron. It has often been suggested that this pessimistic myth constitutes a foil to Hieron's success.⁹ In this context, quite a few studies have focused on the reversal of imagery between mythical example and praise proper.¹⁰ Others postulate Heracles' eventual deification as implied by the poem, thus seeing hope in it; the lesson is that the ones who enjoy the favour of Zeus, like Heracles or Hieron, will be saved in the end.¹¹ It is hard to pass a judgment on the latter view, since the ode itself does not explicitly hint at Heracles' apotheosis, but, on the other hand, this was surely a prominent

⁵ This concept is introduced in Loraux 1995: 6.

⁶ Cf. Loraux 1995: 122, 'What the myths give us... is a systematic disruption of the "normal" distribution of the characteristics of man and woman, expressing the experience of the feminine lived out by man, or the terrifying conquest of the masculine by woman.'

⁷ This may be tested in many ways. In terms of vocabulary, valour, courage, is the essence of man and only man possesses valor (ἀνὴρ - ἀνδρεία), see Loraux 1995: 88-9; 119; also Cartledge 1998: 54, with bibliography. In terms of the history of the Greek *polis*, as Aristotle had already stated (*Pol.* 1279b3; see further Ste. Croix 1972: 69-80), the right to exert political power is defined by the ability to defend the *polis* in war, i.e. man equals warrior equals citizen. On the hoplite reform and politics see Cartledge 1977: 23-4, 27. On the emergence of democracy and naval warfare see Ober 2007; Raaflaub 2007. Notably, στρατός means both 'army' and 'people' (i.e. 'decision-making citizenry') in Pindar's *Pythian* 2.87; see Hornblower 2006: 152; Raaflaub 2007: 112.

⁸ The word probably has no technical meaning and is usually translated 'warlord', see Jebb's discussion (1905: 465-7), which is usually accepted (cf. Maehler ad loc.).

⁹ Lefkowitz 1969: 92; Péron 1978: 323-4; Svarlien 1995: 43. Brannan 1972: 277-8, following Wind: 1964: 44-5.

¹⁰ Péron 1978: 314-22; Tarkow 1978; Goldhill 1983: 80; Svarlien 1995; Resinski 2000: 8.

¹¹ Goldhill 1983; Burnett 1985: 145; Stenger 2004: 156-7; Cairns on 56-7.

element of the tradition.¹² It is thus up to the audience to approach Bacchylides' narrative within its limits and focus on its dramatic and tragic irony, or associate it with the entire story of Heracles (or both, of course). Be that as it may, I will argue that by interpreting the strife between the Aetolians and the Curetes that takes place within Meleager's narrative as the inversion of external war, that is, as civil strife, and by taking into account recent research on the historical context (especially Luraghi 1994), we will be able to see that the mythical narrative of *Ode 5* might have had a particular meaning for Hieron for more concrete reasons.

2. The sons of Deinomenes

Before discussing the mythical section of the ode, I would like to draw attention to a peculiarity of lines 31-6, which are addressed collectively to the sons of Deinomenes, one of whom was, of course, Hieron.¹³

τὼς νῦν καὶ <ἐ>μοὶ μυρία πάντα κέλευθος
 ὑμετέραν ἀρετάν
 ὑμνεῖν, κυανοπλοκάμου θ' ἑκατι Νίκας
 χαλκεοστέρονου τ' Ἄρηος,
 Δεινομένευσ ἀγέρωχοι
 παῖδες· εὖ ἔρδων δὲ μὴ κάμοι θεός.

So now for me, too, there are thousands of ways to every direction
 In order to praise your valour, by grace of dark-haired Victory
 And bronze-breasted Ares, o noble sons of Deinomenes.
 And may god never get tired of doing good <to you>.¹⁴ (5.31-6)

¹² A prominent element of the tradition: see Cairns, introduction 3.4. Perhaps, however, it was not indispensable: Fr. 25 Merkelbach – West = 22 Most of the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* is a case in point. Heracles is mentioned as going to Hades when he died (25.25). Lines 26-33, which describe his deification, are obelized in P.Oxy. 2075, and indeed line 25 can be seen as provide adequate closure. Be that as it may, it is interesting that at least the ancient scholar behind the editorial choice in the papyrus just mentioned could accept a narrative that did not include the deification. These lines follow precisely the narration of Meleager's death—by Apollo in this version.

¹³ Péron 1978: 312 noted this as an interesting peculiarity.

¹⁴ Bacchylides' text as in Maehler; all translations are mine.

The poet praises the sons of Deinomenes for both their athletic (Νίκας) and martial (Ἄρμος) feats, and the collective martial feat that naturally comes to mind in 476—the most probable date of *Ode 5*—¹⁵is the victory at Himera in 480, when the Greek forces defeated the Carthaginians.¹⁶ Back then the greater part of Sicily united under the military leadership of the then two most powerful men on the island, Hieron’s brother Gelon on the one hand and Theron of Acragas on the other.¹⁷ Gelon died two years later, in 478, and his brother Hieron succeeded him as the ruler of Syracuse. This seems to have made another brother, Polyzalos, unhappy. Approximately two more years later, that is, around the date of *Ode 5*, strife erupted in some form between Hieron and Theron of Acragas, and we know that Theron had Polyzalos on his side at that point; Theron may in fact have been prompted to declare enmity by Hieron’s brother. Unfortunately, the particulars of this conflict have been lost for us; we do not know when enmity was openly declared, and it is not even certain whether fighting actually took place. In any case, the crisis ended at some point in the year 476/5 with the reconciliation of Polyzalos and Hieron.¹⁸ In fact, it was said in antiquity that peace was restored thanks to an intervention by Bacchylides’ uncle Simonides.¹⁹ Whatever happened in reality, in *Ode 5* Bacchylides envisions the sons of Deinomenes in unity, which probably—but not conclusively—places the date of the ode either shortly before the crisis started or shortly after it ended. The historical context thus shows that Bacchylides’ mention of the sons of Deinomenes must be loaded at this point, since their unity was not a moot point; I will return to this element after the discussion of the mythical section of the ode.

3. Inversion of norms and ideals in the mythical narrative

3.1. The setup of normative expectations

¹⁵ See Cairns, introduction 3.1 for the fullest account of the arguments in favor of this date.

¹⁶ See Cairns ad loc; Maehler ad loc.

¹⁷ On the battle of Himera see Luraghi 1994: 304-21. The traditional view that Gelon was the single chief commander of Sicilians in this battle has long been refuted, and its existence is attributed to propaganda that originated with Gelon and Hieron; see Luraghi 1994: 324 nn. 215-16.

¹⁸ Luraghi maintains that the entire crisis belongs to the year 476/5 and that no combats were fought, but it is evident that certainty is unattainable (1994: 260-1, 328-30); see also Berve 1967: i.148; Hofer 2000: 97-101.

¹⁹ See Jebb 1905: 191. The information on the historical context that Jebb offers is now dated.

The mythical narrative begins in line 56 with the introduction of the protagonist of the myth, Heracles, in all his glory.

τ[ὸν γὰρ π]οτ' ἐρειψιπύλαν
παῖδ' ἀνίκατον λέγουσιν
δῦναι Διὸς] ἀργικεράυ-
νου δώματα Φερσεφόνας τανισφύρου...

For they say that the gate-wrecker,
The invincible son of Zeus of the bright thunder
Once descended into the chambers of slender-ankled Persephone... (5.56-59)

Heracles is qualified by two heroic epithets that denote his prowess in war: ἐρειψιπύλαν and ἀνίκατον. As Heracles meets with the dead in Hades, one of them catches his eye—Meleager (71).

ταῖσιν δὲ μετέπρεπεν εἶδω-
λον θρασυμέμνονος ἐγ-
χεσπάλου Πορθανίδα·
τὸν δ' ὡς ἶδεν Ἀλκμή<ν>ιος θαυμαστός ἦρως τ[ε]ύχεσι λαμπόμενον...

And among them the ghost of the steadfast,
Spear-wielding son of Porthaon was conspicuous.
So as soon as the amazing hero, son of Alkmene,
Saw him shining in his armour... (5.69-72)

Meleager's prominence is due to his warlike exterior: he is θρασυμέμων, ἐγχέσπαλος and τεύχεσιν λαμπόμενος.²⁰ An impressive warrior is what Heracles knows to admire and also to defend himself against. He thus prepares to shoot an arrow against Meleager, that is, he reacts in the way he is accustomed to. At this point an important breach takes place. Contrary to expectations, which are informed by the introduction of both heroes as magnificent warriors and the detailed description of Heracles' preparation to shoot (74-5), this is not the time for battle; Meleager assures him that he is safe and thus Heracles finds the time to ponder. In astonishment, he enquires after

²⁰ Even more so, if we agree with Lefkowitz 1969: 68 that τεύχεσι λαμπόμενον is sufficient to evoke the Iliadic Achilles before the Trojans.

Meleager's identity. Words will follow instead of actions; this is a crucial moment, however, because Meleager froze not only Heracles' action, but also, as we will find out, the heroic tenor of the narration.²¹

The precise way that Heracles asks his questions conveys irony, as it unknowingly foreshadows the issues that will define this encounter.

... τις ἀθανάτων
ἢ βροτῶν τοιοῦτον ἔργος
θρέψεν ἐν ποίᾳ χθονί;
Τίς δ' ἔκτανεν; ...

Who among immortals
Or mortals brought up such a flower?
In which land? And who killed him? (5.86-9)

Heracles' question is formulated on the base of what is the norm in the world of heroes; he expects the killer to be a man (κεῖνον, 90);²² presumably, he would not find it difficult to expect a beast or a god, but certainly not a mortal woman. Also, he cannot expect that both questions have one and the same answer: she who nurtured (θρέψεν) Meleager is the one who killed him (ἔκτανεν).²³ Heracles subsequently guesses that Hera will send this powerful warrior against him (89-91), which is ironically true in a way, since he, too, will die by a woman.²⁴ Then the hero conveys that his own life is currently very much dependent on female entities: Hera, his nemesis, and Athena, his patroness (89-92). He does not—and surely he cannot yet—realize that there is a striking coincidence there. Importantly, Heracles' words contribute to the staging of this other world, as they decisively bring the issue of control to the foreground: he wishes to know which the determining factors in Meleager's

²¹ Wind 1964: 28-9 also stresses the pivotal role of this moment. On the poetics of continuous motion, which is curtailed only at climactic points of *Ode 5*, see Stern 1967: 38-40; cf. Péron 1978: 309-14.

²² Both Maehler and Cairns ad loc.

²³ The actual audience of the ode would perhaps be unsure of the answer, too, since two versions of Meleager's death were at large, according to one of which the hero fell by the arrow of Apollo. That version is known to us through the Hesiodic corpus (see also n.12 above). According to Segal 1990: 20, '[t]he alternative version of this story, death at the hands of Apollo (Hesiod, frags 25.10ff. and 280.1ff. M-W), is perhaps an attempt to recast his myth in a more positive light'. On the other hand, the torch-version cannot be proven to have appeared earlier than the sixth century either, see Bremmer 1988: 46-7.

²⁴ See Cairns ad loc.

life were, and presents his own. We are thus about to see that neither hero possesses control over his destiny, and that the factors that over-determine them are feminine. This is a fundamental inversion in cultural terms, as control is normally the prerogative of the male side.

3.2. Inversions of heroic scripts

Both protagonists of the mythical section of *Ode 5* will demonstrate features that are precluded by the ideal of the heroic male warrior and are normally associated with feminine nature, and Meleager is the first one to do so. In lines 94-5 he embarks on his narration in tears. Meleager's tears in *Ode 5* are the first token of the exchange of qualities between masculine and feminine affecting the masculine side, as he can be said to be demonstrating a feminine feature. It should be noted that the tears of the hero, as well as the tears of men as opposed to those of women in general, have quite an interesting history in Greek literature. As is well known, Homeric heroes cry and indeed may cry excessively. Still, outside Homer crying came to be normatively associated with the 'weaker sex' and to be contrasted sharply with the ideal of masculinity (see, for example, *γυναικεῖον πένθος ἀπώσάμενοι* in Archilochus 13.10 West).²⁵ We cannot legitimately disregard either intertext, which makes this a complicated case. The fact that Heracles is later in *Ode 5* presented as a hero who never shed a tear in his life except during this encounter (155-6) as well as the thematic value that tears, as we will see, acquire in this ode suggest that we are in a world where the tears of the hero are a marked element.²⁶ They may thus be interpreted at least as a deviation from the male heroic code and at most as the performance of a feminine trait. The narrative inside the narrative that Meleager will deploy further manifests this exchange of qualities in effacing the (masculine) ideal of the hero from a war-narrative—importantly, however, we will see that this de-heroization does not take place in just any kind of war.

What is at stake in Meleager's narrative in *Ode 5* may be better understood through comparison with Phoenix's speech in *Iliad 9*. Among the numerous Homeric passages that *Ode 5*, according to one scholar or the other, evokes, this one has as good a case for authority as possible, although it has

²⁵ On ancient Greek tears see Van Wees 1998.

²⁶ See Cairns, introduction 3.2 for the placement of tears within the structure of the ode.

thus far escaped scholarly attention.²⁷ This passage from *Iliad* 9 is also naturally evoked since it too precedes the narration of Meleager's story. I cite first the passage from *Ode* 5 and then the Iliadic excerpt; words that appear in both passages are in bold and underlined, whereas corresponding ideas that are not expressed in the same words are underlined only:

... «χαλεπόν
θεῶν παρατρέψαι νόον
ἄνδρεσσιν ἐπιχθονίοις.
καὶ γὰρ ἂν πλάξιππος Οἰνεύς
παῦσεν καλυκοστεφάνου
σεμνᾶς χόλον Ἀρτέμιδος λευκωλένου
λίσσόμενος πολέων
τ' αἰγῶν θυσίαισι πατήρ
καὶ βοῶν φοινικονώτων·
ἀλλ' ἀνίκατον θεά
ἔσχεν χόλον· ...

... 'It is difficult for mortal men
To change the mind of the gods.
For horseman Oineus too would have been able
To stop the anger of bud-crowned solemn Artemis white-armed
As he beseeched her, my father, and sacrificed many goats
And oxen with dark-red backs;
But the goddess' anger was invincible. (5.94-104)

ἀλλ' Ἀχιλεῦ, δάμασον θυμὸν μέγαν· οὐδέ τί σε χορή
νηλεὲς ἦτορ ἔχειν· στρεπτοὶ δέ τε καὶ θεοὶ αὐτοί,
τῶν περ καὶ μείζων ἀρετὴ τιμὴ τε βίη τε.
καὶ μὲν τοὺς θυέεσσι καὶ εὐχολῆς ἀγανῆσι
λοιβῆ τε κνίσση τε παρατροπῶσ' ἄνθρωποι
λίσσόμενοι, ὅτε κέν τις ὑπερβήῃ καὶ ἀμάρτη.

But, Achilles, tame your great anger; you need not in any way
have a merciless heart; for the gods themselves can be made to change
Their mind,

²⁷ Lefkowitz 1969: 73 briefly mentions the contrast between Bacch. 5.94-6 and *Il.* 9.497, without taking the context of these lines into account. Maehler ad loc. regards *Odyssey* 3.143-7 of the *Odyssey* as the primary parallel, which does have similar wording and conveys a similar idea, but adds little to the interpretation of Bacchylides' ode.

Whose virtue and honour and power are greater.
Yet those are made to change their mind with sacrifices
And gentle prayers and libations and burnt-offerings by beseeching men,
When someone happens to do something in excess and fall in error.
(*Il.*9.496-501)

Meleager introduces his narrative with a gnomic statement, 'it is difficult for mortal men to change the mind of the gods' (94-6). This markedly contrasts with the *gnōmē* that Phoenix expresses in *Iliad* 9, according to which 'even the gods themselves can be made to change their mind' (9.497). In Bacchylides, king Oineus did exactly as prescribed in the *Iliad*; he prayed (λίσσόμενος) and made abundant sacrifices. But Artemis, we are told, had an ἀνίκατον χόλον, that neither sacrifices nor prayers, nor even revenge would quench.²⁸ As opposed to the *Iliad*, the cause of her anger is not explicated here, nor hinted at.²⁹ The audience would probably be able to supply it,³⁰ but the immediate effect in the poem is to present Artemis' anger as irrational and inscrutable; there is simply no way of defending oneself against such will. My point is that this intertextual contrast (στρεπτοί vs. χαλεπόν... παρατρέψαι) constitutes a meaningful statement. The background of the *Iliad* has been established and inverted, and in choosing to introduce Meleager's speech this way Bacchylides exemplifies the idea that 'this is *not* the kind of story you have heard before', that is, this narrative, even if consisting in traditional elements, stresses the concept of inversion of what is traditionally assumed. Here in particular, this inversion of the Homeric parallel programmatically indicates is a shift in the prevailing order: in Bacchylides, unlike the Homeric passage, control is no longer presented as being in the hands of male heroes, but it is a female deity who motivates the action, possesses control, and refuses it stubbornly to the mortal king—note how the adjective ἀνίκατον, used in the introduction for Heracles, the hero, is now appropriated by her.

There soon follows an instance of further contrast between the narrative at hand and the Iliadic one, or, presumably, any other account of Meleager's myth: in his description of the hunt Meleager denies himself any sense of prominence.

²⁸ This is an extreme version of the typical role of Artemis in myth, on which see Blundell 1995: 29-30; Cole 1998: 30-2.

²⁹ In *Il.* 9.534-7 and later accounts, Oineus neglects to sacrifice to Artemis and so causes her wrath; see Lefkowitz 1969: 73; Stenger 2004: 143.

³⁰ See Cairns ad loc.

τῶ δὲ στυγερὰν δῆριν Ἑλλάνων ἄριστοι
στασάμεθ' ἐνδυκέως
ἔξ ἅματα συνεχέως· ἐπεὶ δὲ δαίμων
κάρτος Αἰτωλοῖς ὄρεξεν, ...

And we, the best of the Greeks, put up
Hateful battle against him (i.e. the boar) steadfastly,
Six days without a break; and when the god
Offered the upper hand to the Aetolians... (5.111-14)

Only the first person plural in στασάμεθα and μαρνάμεθα reveals that Meleager is one of the 'first men of Greece' engaged in the hunt (110-11), and victory is granted (a.) 'by the daimon', (b.) 'to the Aetolians' (113-14); however, we know that he was *the* best among the Greeks and that *he* killed the boar.³¹ In fact, if there is one entity that is heroized in the battle in terms of ability and efficiency, it is the boar itself—and this happens throughout the passage 104-22.³² The boar can even be considered as hyper-masculine in his disrespect for mercy in war (ἀναιδομάχαν 105 with Cairns ad loc.) and his overwhelming βίη (104, 117). As far as Meleager as a narrator is concerned, the minimum view of these lines has been to call him 'modest', whereas the maximum view has been to see here a deliberate rejection of the heroic ideal.³³ I maintain that both these interpretations are valid, and that there is more to it. Meleager has indeed no intention of bragging, as his account of the successful part of the battle is apparently informed by his awareness of what happened next, that is, the collapse of the alliance between the Aetolian peoples of Calydon on the one hand and of Pleuron on the other. This alliance was not limited to the hunt, but also Oineus, the king of the Calydonians and Meleager's father, was married to Althaea, the daughter of Thestius, king of the Curetes. Meleager, I argue, is presented as declining the opportunity to turn this story into a narration of his personal accomplishment. The reason for this is the shame that accompanies the strife that ensued after the killing of the boar. It has occasionally been suggested that there is something wrong

³¹ Cf. Cairns on 113-14.

³² See Maehler on 104-5; Cairns on 105.

³³ Maehler on 113-14 (modesty); Lefkowitz 1969: 73-6; Burnett 1985: 142 (de-heroization).

with this battle, not only in terms of its outcome, but in principle.³⁴ I argue that, more specifically, what is wrong is that this is civil strife: not only factually, but also it is presented as such. First, the close relation of the two peoples is proven by the fact that they are referred to by the single name ‘Aetolians’ (114), and Meleager’s use of this name along with his assertion that this was the collection of the best men of Greece (111) are a tribute to what they forfeited.³⁵ A second indicator is the paradox of the following passage—this is part of Meleager’s subsequent narration of this conflict:

ἔνθ’ ἐγὼ πολλοῖς σὺν ἄλλοις
 Ἴφικλον κατέκτανον
 ἐσθλόν τ’ Ἀφάρητα, θοοὺς μάτρωας· οὐ γὰρ
 καρτερόθυμος Ἄρης
 κρίνει φίλον ἐν πολέμῳ,
 τυφλὰ δ’ ἐκ χειρῶν βέλη
 ψυχαῖς ἔπι δυσμενέων φοι-
 τᾶ θάνατόν τε φέρει
 τοῖσιν ἄν δαίμων θέλη.

There I killed, among many,
 Iphiclus and brave Aphares,
 Speedy brothers of my mother;
 For staunch-hearted Ares

³⁴ Burnett 1985: 148 and Segal 1990: 16 have argued that the farmer-warriors turning against each other violate *aidōs*.

³⁵ Although it is admittedly hard to be absolutely certain, it is more plausible that by ‘Aetolians’ Bacchylides implies both the Curetes and his Calydonians in unity, as opposed to just the Calydonians of Meleager. This is supported by the fact that he says that ‘god bestowed victory on the Aetolians’ (113-14) with no separate mention of the Curetes who took part in the hunt. The name of the Curetes does not appear until line 126, when the alliance is broken and the fight over the boar’s hide begins. Factually, the neighbouring cities of Pleuron and Calydon were both geographically situated in Aetolia (see Hirschfeld 1893: 1114-15). According to one tradition, Aetolus had two sons, Calydon and Pleuron, who were the founders of each city (see van der Kolf 1951); according to another, Cures and Calydon were brothers and founders of the cities (Schwenn 1922: 2203). Therefore, the two peoples were often thought of as being closely related and ‘Aetolian’ was the umbrella-name that included both of them. The question is only complicated by *Il.* 9.529-32, where the people of Calydon alone are referred to as ‘Aetolians’ and are opposed to the Curetes of Pleuron. The Iliadic version, however, can be considered as a deliberate deviation from the norm in its presentation of the two peoples as unrelated and its use of the name ‘Aetolian’ to designate the Calydonians only. The reason is that presenting the two peoples as related under a single name would not fit the parallel Phoenix is drawing between that battle and the war between the Achaeans and the Trojans.

Does not discern a *philos* in war,
But shoots blind arrows from our hands
Against the lives of our enemies
And brings death
To whom god wishes. (5.127-35)

In war only the bond between those fighting on the same side exists, and it supersedes all others, including the familial bond. The point is that these two bonds should not clash, and this is indeed avoided in wars against an external enemy, as exemplified in this story's boar-hunt. But when the two Aetolian peoples turn against each other, a paradox appears: there are φίλοι among the δυσμενέες. In fact, if we consider that Meleager's maternal uncles are in fact the sons of king Thestius and princes of Pleuron, in killing them Meleager has killed the leaders of the Curetes and excelled in battle.³⁶ But Meleager, instead of claiming this credit, expresses a dark *gnōmē* on the nature of war (129-35), which might be conveying the character's need to justify his actions. Finally, it is worth noting that this part of the conflict is blamed on Artemis' ongoing irrational anger (122-4), thus uniting the two main images of inversion at play, that is, the feminine entity that possesses control and civil strife.

What started out as a fight for the defense of the community turned into internal strife of greed over the hide of the dead animal. The Aetolians, as soon as they have neutralized the boar, replace it in causing casualties among them, and this is not only ironic, but it also presents the audience with a very explicit image of inversion, as in this case we witness both the ideal situation (external war) and its inversion, and more specifically perversion, into civil strife.

3.3. Althaea as a transgressive female

To recapitulate what we have seen thus far: Heracles' original prompt set up the expectation of a heroic narrative, but war has been described in a way that suppresses the role of its protagonist. We have thus witnessed the inversion of the ideal of war as a heroic enterprise, and what will follow is the inversion of the ideal of the warrior's 'glorious death'. In correspondence to

³⁶ The Homeric version is vague in all counts in comparison to Bacchylides 5 (cf. March 1987: 43); Meleager is said to have killed one of his mother's κασίγνητοι, whose allegiance is not mentioned (9.567).

Artemis' agency in instigating civil strife in the first place, female intervention will produce this inversion, too. Its agent is Althaea, the hero's mother.

The character of Althaea is of particular interest to this study; I will go on to show that her conduct transgresses the boundaries set to her gender in multiple ways.³⁷ Firstly, be it the secluded woman of the Athenian elite or the much freer Spartan woman, her foremost purpose in life, what after all makes her complete in terms of the society she lives in, is to give birth to male offspring. This means the perpetuation of the *oikos*, while, as far as the *polis* is concerned, it means producing the future defenders of the city.³⁸ Because of the circumstances of Meleager's death, I will insist on the latter aspect. The mother whose son has proven himself a valiant warrior is considered most fortunate, and Althaea should, therefore, consider herself εὐδαίμων thanks to her son's achievements. He is her extension not only in terms of the personal bond that may unite mother and son, but also because he validates her existence in society.³⁹ It is, therefore, only reasonable that she should guard the torch that can put an end to his life, as she is the last person who would want to see the hero die – again, not only as her son in the context of the *oikos*, but also in the context of the *polis*.

This is the background that renders Althaea such a horrifying female presence. Her action earns her a long series of qualifications:

ταῦτ' οὐκ ἐπιλεξαμένα
Θεοτίου κούρα δαΐφρων
μάτηρ κακόποτμος ἐμοί
βούλευσεν ὄλεθρον ἀτάρβακτος γύνα,
...

³⁷ In the Iliadic account as well Althaea's curse figures as the reason for the hero's wrath and his withdrawal from battle. This element had allowed quite a few scholars to detect a relic of a matriarchal or matrilineal society, where the woman's former *oikos* is more important than the *oikos* that she marries into, but recent research has dismissed this concept due to lack of concrete evidence. (On the matriarchal society theory see Kakridis 1949: 11-42; Butterworth 1966 [51-2 on Meleager's myth]; for a recent insight into the importance of the maternal uncle see Bremmer 1983, esp. 182-4).

³⁸ See e.g. Loraux 1995: 23-30. Loraux investigates the relation between death in battle and death in labour, which is not pertinent to my argument, but she adduces ample attestations of the concept that the function of women in society is giving birth to warriors.

³⁹ Slater 1968 postulated a psychologically more complex bond between mother and son; according to his theory, the mother may use her son both to satisfy her need for a protective, potent male figure and give an outlet to her neurosis, inflicted to her by a male-dominated society. See Blundell 1995: 43-4 for a critique.

Without considering these things,
 Thestius' war-minded daughter,
 Mother ill-fated for me,
 Decreed death, the fearless woman,
 ... (5.136-9)

It has been noted that in three lines Althaea is climactically called first a daughter, then a mother, and finally a woman.⁴⁰ First, as daughter of Thestius, she is presented in her original state, the one that a woman is supposed to leave behind for ever when she marries into a new *oikos*. In her preference for her brothers over her son, she in fact regresses to that former state.⁴¹ δαῖφρων progressively acquires thematic value in this ode. It has designated Artemis in 122 and the root δαῖ- will appear again in the patronymic of the hero Meleager despoils when death falls upon him, and in the name of Deianeira.⁴² Clearly, the etymology that conveys hostility and is often used of warriors rather than the one associated with cognitive ability is evoked,⁴³ and in its application to Althaea it conveys the first of many paradoxes: she intervenes in what is the exclusively male domain of war. As Hector tells Andromache in the *Iliad* 6.490-4:

ἀλλ' εἰς οἶκον ἰοῦσα τὰ σ' αὐτῆς ἔργα κόμιζε
 ἰστόν τ' ἠλακάτην τε, καὶ ἀμφιπόλοισι κέλευε
 ἔργον ἐποίχεσθαι· πόλεμος δ' ἄνδρεςσι μελήσει
 πᾶσιν, ἐμοὶ δὲ μάλιστα, τοῖ Ἰλίῳ ἐγγεγάασιν.

But go back into the house and take care of your own duties,
 The loom and the distaff, and order the (female) servants
 To hurry to work; war shall be the care of all men
 Of Troy, and especially me. (Il. 6.490-4)

Hector draws a clear-cut line between the domains of men and women, conveying what was the Greek norm.⁴⁴ Accordingly, Meleager mentions that

⁴⁰ Brannan 1972: 245; cf. Lefkowitz 1969: 80.

⁴¹ Cf. Cairns ad loc.; Segal 1990: 13, 'She thereby rejects a fundamental principle of patriarchal differentiation. She also rejects the distinction that the (male) political realm makes between the categories of enmity'.

⁴² Burnett 1985: 143-4; cf. Brannan 1972: 244.

⁴³ Cf. Cairns on 122.

⁴⁴ See Seaford 1993: 115-17.

his mother did not reflect on how war works (ταῦτ' οὐκ ἐπιλεξαμένα), but, still, she acted.⁴⁵

The phrase μάτηρ κακόποτμος ἐμοί conveys a further inherent contradiction, of a mother bringing death to her child. But it is in the third line of qualifications, I tend to think, that the terror this image encompasses for the male imaginary cashes out. The phrase βούλευσεν ὄλεθρον portrays her action as the outcome of deliberation, as a decision. And the ἀτάρβακτος γύνα constitutes an additional paradox, and a fundamental one at that: a fearless woman—although it is men that are ideally courageous (ἀνδρεῖοι). In this respect Althaea joins the ranks of mythical women like Clytaemnestra, women who can make decisions and who possess courage. Althaea is, in fact, engaged in an action even more unthinkable than that of Clytaemnestra, who chose a different male to be her companion and killed her lawful spouse (or consented to his death while Aegisthus wielded the axe). In most versions of the myth, Clytaemnestra, although it may be reported that she originally intended Orestes to be killed, or she may be presented as taking relief in his death, nevertheless does not take action to make sure he dies. Althaea can thus be seen as breaking the ultimate taboo that male society has imposed when she kills her son precisely at the moment when he makes the enemy flee away, that is, in the moment of fulfillment of his role as warrior and her role as the mother of the warrior. Althaea is thus a multiply transgressive female in terms of the boundaries that women are supposed to observe.

3.4. Inversion of the glorious death

That said about the agent of this action, let us return to the victim, Meleager. In ancient war ethics, glory awaited both those who would survive the battle victorious and those who perished on the battlefield. This ideology made fighting into a win-win situation: as long as one did not retreat in the face of the enemy, he would earn distinction, dead or alive.⁴⁶ Naturally, the winner's glory is greater, as the city needs fighters who are not afraid to die if they have to, but also are not suicidal. If victory proves impossible, one should like to be remembered as falling in the hands of a superior enemy, whose prowess will serve as a measure of his own. This is precisely what

⁴⁵ See Segal 1990: 13.

⁴⁶ Ideals aside, of course, pragmatism was always a factor, and the option of concerted retreat or surrender certainly existed, see Loraux 1995: 63-74.

Heracles has in mind when he poses the question to Meleager: he expects that if such a magnificent warrior is now in Hades, there exists on the face of the earth an even more magnificent opponent. Meleager, however, suffers, for he was deprived not only of a glorious final battle but also of a glorious death; to make things worse, he was very close to achieving the more desirable of the two possible goals, victory, that is.

Meleager died just when the Curetes were retreating into the walls of their city, as he was despoiling a fallen enemy (144-51). His death is deprived of honour, as it is caused by a woman and not a man; it originates in his own household and not the enemy's camp;⁴⁷ and it does not involve confrontation, but it is brought about from a distance—like dying from an arrow.⁴⁸ The hero has no way of defending himself, he is helpless.⁴⁹ In Meleager's narration, the movement that leads to his death 'is expressed in participles which depend upon chance', τύχων... κιχήσας (144-8):⁵⁰ 'I happened to be despoiling the vigorous, impeccable body of Klymenos, son of Daipylos, in front of the walls'. It is extremely rare, perhaps unique, that the death of a hero should be presented in terms which transform what is normally a climactic moment in the narrative to an unmarked one. Of course, for the audience this moment is marked in its unexpected 'unmarkedness'. Unlike the hero whose death is the climactic moment of the action, Meleager's moment of death is surprisingly random.

3.5. The effect on Heracles

As Meleager realizes that he is passing away, he weeps (153) like his epic forebears, Hector or Patroclus. This hero's emotions, however, are presented in contrast with his mother's cruelty (ἀτάρβακτος), as she is causing his sudden death from a distance. Once more this inversion of roles: the female part exerts control and demonstrates cruelty, and the formerly powerful male sheds tears in helplessness. So tears mark the beginning and

⁴⁷ See Segal 1990: 11.

⁴⁸ On the superiority of close combat to using the bow cf. *Il.* 11.385-95; Tyrt. fr. 11.27-34; death by arrow, Thuc. 4.40.2.

⁴⁹ A moment of heroic triumph is transformed into a moment of vanity, according to Lefkowitz 1969: 81.

⁵⁰ Burnett 1985: 144; cf. Brannan 1972: 246 who holds that τύχων conveys irrationality.

end of Meleager's narration and, in response, Heracles sheds what is said to be his first tear ever (155-8).⁵¹

φασὶν ἀδεισιβόαν
Ἀμφιτρώωνος παῖδα μῶνον δὴ τότε
τέγξαι βλέφαρον, ταλαπενθέος
πότμον οἰκτίροντα φωτός·

They say that only then did the fearless
Son of Amphitryon
Wet his eye, pitying
The fate of this man, enduring in his woe.

This instance conclusively signals the importance of tears in the narrative. Meleager has communicated his sorrow to Heracles and made him feel sympathy deeper than what he has felt before.⁵² In this story, female entities have appeared as incapable of understanding and yielding (Artemis' ἀνίκατος χόλος; Althaea as οὐκ ἐπιλεξαμένα), much like Achilles in the larger part of the *Iliad* for instance.⁵³ Men, renowned warrior-heroes, are presented as emotionally capable and eager to share a larger point of view. At the same time, the female is in control of the action while the male is a passive recipient. Heracles, however, will venture to bring things back to order (159-69):

καί νιν ἀμειβόμενος
τᾶδ' ἔφα· «θνατοῖσι μὴ φῦναι φέριστον
μῆδ' ἀελίου προσιδεῖν
φέγγος· ἀλλ' οὐ γάρ τις ἔστιν
πρᾶξις τάδε μυρομένοις·
χρὴ κείνο λέγειν ὅτι καὶ μέλλει τελεῖν.
ἦρα τις ἐν μεγάροις
Οἰνήρος ἀρηϊφίλου
ἔστιν ἀδμήτα θυγάτρων,

⁵¹ This is the first known instance of a literary tradition, i.e. the theme of Heracles crying for the first time, also in Sophocles, *Tr.* 1070-4 and Euripides, *HF* 1353-6. In Homer, on the other hand, Heracles is mentioned as 'crying often', in synch with the heroes of those poems (*Il.* 8.364).

⁵² Cf. Cairns ad loc.; Brannan 1972: 251.

⁵³ On the de-legitimization of female anger in Greek literature see Harris 2001: 264-75; 2003: 130-9; Allen 2000: 112-16.

σοὶ φῦάν ἀλιγκία;
τάν κεν λιπαρὰν <ἐ>θέλων θείμαν ἄκοιτιν.»

Then he replied to him and spoke thus:
'The best thing for mortals is
To never be born, nor see the light of sun;
But there is no avail in crying over this;
One should say what one will accomplish.
Is there, by any chance, in the halls
Of warlord Oineus
A virgin daughter,
Equivalent to you in stature?
For I would be willing to take her as my shining wife.

Heracles accepts the limitations of mortal existence which may render it insufferable, but also asserts that there is no way of changing the fact that we are alive and present in this world: we have therefore no better choice than to act.⁵⁴ The *gnōmē* of 160-2 is an altered version of a traditional one, which normally states that the best thing is to never have been born, the second best to die as young as possible.⁵⁵ Although in commenting on this alteration, several scholars indicated that they were not impressed with Bacchylides' use of it,⁵⁶ it is quite clear that we needed an optimistic stepping stone toward the ensuing irony, instead of the traditional pessimistic *gnōmē*.⁵⁷ Heracles utters the only optimistic statement in the mythical narrative, only to seal his fate. I said that he attempts to put things back to order, because the action he envisions affirms the 'normative' relation of masculine and feminine and agrees with his own experience.⁵⁸ He, as the male, takes the initiative and asks Meleager as brother of a potential bride to take his sister's (if one is available) hand in matrimony. His proposal, therefore, posits the normative subordination of the female to the male.

However, there is something different here from what Heracles has experienced in the past. He is spurred to marry Meleager's sister by the emotions that the story stirred up in him and erotic attraction toward the

⁵⁴ See Stenger 2004: 154.

⁵⁵ See Maehler ad loc.; Stenger 2004: 150 with n.311.

⁵⁶ See esp. Jebb ad loc.

⁵⁷ Also, with Maehler ad loc., Meleager *did* die young.

⁵⁸ Note that Heracles has a notable tendency to acquire wives (he is 'compulsively matrimonial' according to Loraux 1995: 120).

dead hero seems to underlie Heracles' urge.⁵⁹ Meleager's presence and words have left their mark on the hero's heart, and it is instructive to compare this with his initial reaction, when he reached for his bow and arrows—he has gone from making war to making love.

Heracles, the supermale, has thus succumbed to homoerotic attraction. I would not think that he does not in any way express that directly to the dead hero only because the latter is, well, dead. It is rather more to the point to consider that any explicit mention of Heracles' attraction is avoided because non-paederastic homoerotic sentiments were highly improper.⁶⁰ Heracles, therefore, lets out these emotions by transforming them into a socially acceptable wish to marry Meleager's sister. What I am driving at is that, at this particular point, the ἀνίκτος hero has been defeated. Erotic attraction has got the better of his judgment, and he proceeds to marry into an *oikos* where the mother has already killed her son.⁶¹ This instance of the exchange of qualities between the sexes, as Heracles in a sense takes up the role of the female opposite Meleager and then artificially converts it to a male role, is the instance that defines his end.⁶²

The change that Heracles underwent through Meleager's narration, therefore, underlies his attempt to act according to the decorum of the male order. Meleager replies and two fatal female names come up to close the mythical narrative of *Ode 5*:

... «λίπον χλωραύχενα
ἐν δώμασι Δαϊάνειραν,
νήϊν ἔτι χρυσέας
Κύπριδος θελξιμβρότου.»

... 'I left tender-necked
Deianeira home,
Still ignorant of
Golden Aphrodite, the beguiler of mortals.' (5.172-5)

⁵⁹ See Burnett 1985: 146-7; Maehler on 168 calls it a 'discreetly erotic compliment'.

⁶⁰ To be precise, erotic relations between men of the same status as well as a man undertaking a passive role were considered disgraceful, see Dover 1978: 84 and *passim*; also Blundell 1995: 102; Skinner 2005: 55-8 and *passim*; also Loraux 1995: 128, referring to Heracles in particular.

⁶¹ Cf. Segal 1990: 11, '... by marrying Meleager's sister, Heracles physically conveys his doom from Meleager's house to his own.'

⁶² Several scholars have been interested in the traditions that present with Heracles on the verge of effeminacy or further; see Burkert 1985: 210; Loraux 1995: 116-39.

Lines 174-5 constitute an extensive synonym of ἀδμήτα in Heracles' question (167), one that includes a reference to Aphrodite. The two females mentioned here will be the immediate and intermediate agents of Heracles' death. This is the other face of female threat as perceived by the male imaginary; not the straightforward threat we have encountered so far in Althaea or Artemis, openly hostile and cruel, but the disguised threat that is associated with female sexuality, female desire and attractiveness.⁶³

4. The mythical narrative and Hieron

I maintain that the preceding analysis has a value in its own right, as it highlights the meaning of certain poetic choices in the mythical narrative of *Ode 5* and suggests how the form a pattern. However, after appreciating the story in itself, we can still ask whether more can be said about its meaning in the historical setting of its performance, and I will go on to argue that there indeed exists a line that connects the mythical universe and that of Hieron. When we turn from Hades to Syracuse, the theme of exchange of qualities between masculine and feminine is left behind;⁶⁴ the instances of inversion we have witnessed, however, took place under specific conditions; they were related to this specific kind of war that is internal war, civil strife—the inversion of normal, external war—and this one element may have a more concrete meaning for Hieron.⁶⁵

In line 176, Bacchylides abruptly ends the mythical narrative, as if one can only take so much of this inverted universe, and, in fact, need not take any more, as the implications of Meleager's concluding response are easily

⁶³ On Aphrodite as a threat see Blundell 1995: 36-8; on female sexuality as a threat see Carson 1990: 136-45; cf. Ehrenreich 1997: 97-114. Since *Ode 5* does not explicate how Deianeira will kill Heracles, the audience may think of at least two versions—the Nessus story, where she kills in ignorance while still in love, and the version we know from the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* (fr. 25 Merkelbach – West = 22 Most): Nessus is absent and Deianeira kills Heracles in rage (20-1). The Nessus-version is not attested in literature before Sophocles, but is evidently alluded to in Bacchylides 16 and depicted in a much older shred of pottery, see Brannan 1972: 256-9; Cairns on 173.

⁶⁴ Or is abnegated—cf. Burnett 1985: 147, 'With Aphrodite still in the air, the chorus turns self-consciously back to Zeus, Olympia, Alpheus, Pisa, Phoenicis, Syracuse, and Hieron (178-86), as if these masculine names were a counterspell that could ward off her power.' (Pisa is, of course, feminine).

⁶⁵ In fact, Loraux 1995: 235-40 suggests a connection between civil strife and women—this is one of her boldest points. She argues convincingly, however, that in tragedy the disruption of cohesion in the community is very often related to an anomaly in the demeanor of women.

understood.⁶⁶ 'With Aphrodite still in the air, the chorus turns self-consciously back to Zeus, Olympia, Alpheus, Pisa, Phoenician, Syracuse, and Hieron (178-86), as if these masculine names were a counterspell that could ward off her power.'⁶⁷ This is how Bacchylides welcomes his audience back to the present world of Hieron's glory. This world appears to be unaffected by the inversions that took place in that other world. How pertinent, then, to the poet's and patron's reality are the underworld images? Although I would not like to force the literary text into displaying a perfect parallel to historical reality, the analogies between Hieron's and Meleager's stories are tempting.

For one thing, Bacchylides set out in *Ode 5* by fashioning Hieron as the στραταγός of the Syracusans, not unlike Meleager, the champion of the Aetolians. Both Hieron and Meleager repelled an external enemy—the Carthaginians in the case of the former (lines 32-6 allude to this victory) and Artemis' boar in the case of the latter—by being part of an alliance which included their neighbors. On both occasions, internal conflict followed after the victory. In both conflicts, each found a relative in the opposite camp—Meleager killed his maternal uncles and Hieron faced his brother Polyzalos.⁶⁸ On both occasions, marriages between members of the now opposing royal families had taken place, which originally aimed at consolidating the alliances in question.⁶⁹

Even if his uncle Simonides was not in fact the one who reconciled Hieron and Theron, Bacchylides could hardly have been unaware of some of the specifics of the Sicilian strife, if it had indeed taken place and ended before *Ode 5* was composed. If, on the other hand, conflict was brooding at the time of composition, it is again likely that Bacchylides would have some

⁶⁶ On the closure of the mythical narrative see Roberts: 259-62; Cairns ad loc.

⁶⁷ Burnett 1985: 147 (Pisa is, of course, a feminine name).

⁶⁸ An implicit comparison between Hieron and the heroes of myth also appears probable, if one thinks of how the Sicilian tyrants of that time fashioned their rule. To quote Finley 1979: 55, '[t]he intensely personal and individual quality of the tyrant's actions cannot be stressed too heavily. There was something self-consciously archaic, even "heroic" about them, and more than a touch of megalomania.' Finley goes on to mention these tyrants' polygamous tendencies, unusual as they were by Greek standards; this could be seen as a point of affinity between them and the mythical Heracles.

⁶⁹ The family ties between the opposite sides in the Sicilian conflict of Theron and Hieron were indeed complex; Gelon and Theron initiated these, in order to build an alliance between their houses, when the former took the latter's daughter Damareta as his wife. When Gelon died, she was passed on to Polyzalos as his wife. Later Hieron got married to Theron's niece and Theron to one of Polyzalos' daughters; these last two marriages probably took place on the occasion of the reconciliation of 476, i.e. they belong to the same period as *Ode 5*; see Luraghi 1994: 260-1; also Finley 1979: 46-7.

information on it, as we know that it would already have been brooding for quite some time. In any case, the story Bacchylides offers can be moving and provocative as such, but as a miniature tragedy of a hero lost in the turmoil of internal war it is also especially relevant for Hieron. The wish that concludes the poem, that the tyrant should rule, if Zeus permits it, ἐν εἰρήνῃ (200), fits into this reading.⁷⁰ Maehler ad loc. comments that in his wishing for peace, Bacchylides' 'is a lone voice' and it is true that the wish of the *ego* at the end of *Ode 5* by no means constitutes a *topos*.⁷¹ Bacchylides' choice to construct Hieron as a warlord who rules in safety, justice and, eventually, peace is therefore not merely generic, but loaded historically if read against the background of the (imminent or averted) conflict.⁷²

Hieron's true story at the time of *Ode 5* is parallel to the fictional story of Meleager, but his had a happy outcome, without causing further evils, unlike the curse of Meleager's house which was passed on to Heracles. In *Ode 5*, Hieron is seen as occupying that high place that these heroes fell from, he is the absolute champion of his people, and he exerts his power to wise effect. On top of this it could be added that, in terms of religious connotations, Hieron need not fear this threatening Hades that encompasses an inversion of ideals, as he was an hierophant of chthonian divinities and therefore 'on good terms' with the kingdom of the underworld.⁷³ At the same time, as Cairns has recently shown, Heracles' wish to unite his generation with that of Meleager might have been sealed his mortal fate, which is a prominent point in the narrative of *Ode 5*, but at the same time it meant the conception of Hyllus and the beginning of the line of the Heraclidae, which Hieron presented as his own lineage.⁷⁴ In this sense too, Heracles' subtle attraction to Meleager is problematic but beneficial, since the unison of these two heroes has produced the optimal offspring. From the point of view of the Syracusans, then, to view Heracles as subtly suggesting the vicarious consummation of his attraction to Meleager enforces the idea that this people stems from the unison of two heroes.

⁷⁰ Wind 1964: 48 had already briefly noted a connection between the concluding wish, the theme of 'death at the hands of a relative', and the conflict between Hieron and Polyzalos.

⁷¹ A necessary qualification here is that Pindar's ἡσυχία in *Pythian 8* probably has a similar meaning (meaning 'peace' as opposed to 'war', and not just 'respite'), see Pfeijffer 1995.

⁷² On the extraordinary position that Hieron is awarded in *Ode 5*, which can be seen as opening with hymnic invocation of the tyrant, see Cairns on 1.

⁷³ See Luraghi 1994: 327 with n.228.

⁷⁴ Cairns on 167-8; introduction, 3.4.

5. Conclusion

If indeed the crisis between Hieron, Theron and Polyzalos had not yet been realized at the time of the composition of *Ode 5*, we can see in it a well-informed and highly prescient poet at work (or otherwise impressively premonitory), wishing for the perpetuation of his patron's bliss—importantly, he chooses to fashion him not as ruling through destroying his potential enemies, but as enjoying the blessing of avoiding war altogether. If, on the other hand, the crisis was over, Hieron would be able to listen to the song and smile at the fact that in his universe the 'right' order prevailed, and that he has thus far been proven to be enjoying the favour of Zeus.⁷⁵ Obviously, it is only my subjective judgment, as well as the lack of contrary evidence, that suggest that *Ode 5* must have been composed and performed either before or after the strife. One cannot conclusively rule out that the ode was composed and performed while the strife was current, especially if this strife did not include actual warfare, but only open declaration of enmity of some sort. The possibility thus remains for one to argue that Bacchylides offered this ode during the strife, in which case it would have made a statement in favor of the reconciliation. Such a theory would in a way revive the ancient tradition that associated Bacchylides' family (that is, Simonides) with the eventual reconciliation.

In any case, the historical background of the ode and the connotations of its myth demonstrate its special importance for Hieron and suggest that Bacchylides might have made a meaningful statement in saying:

γνώση μὲν [i]όστεφάνων
Μοισᾶν γλυκύδωρον ἄγαλμα, τῶν γε νῦν
αἴ τις ἐπιχθονίων
ὀρθῶς·

If any mortal among those living today,
It is you who will understand correctly
The sweet gift of the violet-crowned Muses' (5.3-6)

That is, we perhaps need not stretch the meaning of γνώση in line 3 and translate it as 'appreciate'; according to the present reading, the poem did not

⁷⁵ This would also have been the case in the less likely event that *Ode 5* was composed after a victory in the 472 (not 476) Olympics.

only offer aesthetic pleasure, but could also have appealed to Hieron's cognitive capacity as informed by his personal experience.

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