ΦΑΙΔΙΜΟΣ ΕΚΤΩΡ
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Bacchylides Playing Tragic

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Abstract This paper focuses on features in Bacchylides' poetry that have been mainly associated with the tragic genre: human error, the ignorance of tragic characters, the audience's privileged knowledge at a tragic and lyric performance and its activation, tragic irony, and the audience's participation in the completion of mythological narratives. As evidence of Bacchylides' tragic aura I analyse the figures of Deianeira and Heracles in Odes 5 and 16 in connection with the story in Sophocles' *Trachiniae*; the resemblance of the structure of Ode 18 with encounters with the tragic chorus and how it creates internal and external audiences; questions of closures and narratives endings.

Keywords Tragedy. Lyric poetry. Human error. Audience. Knowledge. Narrative. Tragic irony.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 Character Representation and Human Ignorance. – 3 Levels of Knowledge and Audience Participation. – 4 Conclusions.

1 Introduction

In his commentary on Sophocles' *Trachiniae* J.C. Kamerbeek emphasises the tragicality of Deianeira's depiction in Bacchylides' Ode 16 when he comments that "what strikes the reader most in these lines [Bacchyl. 16.23-35] is the fact that Deianeira's fate is interpreted *more tragico*; the intricacies by which the web of D.'s destiny is woven are represented in the same manner as in *Trach*. 841-850",[1] the second strophe of the play's third stasimon. Kamerbeek

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goes on to comment on how Bacchylides must have been composing for an audience that was aware not only of the myth of Heracles and Deianeira but also of Sophocles' *Trachiniae*, and finally concludes that Bacchylides' allusive treatment of the saga of Heracles and Deianeira and the similarity with the specific passage from the *Trachiniae* suggests that Bacchylides borrowed his subject-matter from Sophocles.[2]

Ode 16 of Bacchylides has indeed been much discussed in connection with the *Trachiniae*. Scholars have drawn attention to the common mythical theme and to the parallels in the depiction of Heracles and Deianeira mainly in an attempt to date both Ode 16 and Sophocles' play and to draw conclusions on the influence between the two poets.[3] Kamerbeek's brief comment on the tragic interpretation of Deianeira's fate in Bacchylides' Ode 16 goes one step further from the simple enumeration of similarities between Sophocles and Bacchylides, and his insistence on the connection between these lines of the *Trachiniae* and Bacchyl. 16.23-35 is instructive. His evaluation *mos tragicus* is obviously used to describe the tone in the specific passage as well as the portrayal of Deianeira in Bacchylides' poem, subtly proposing that features that were further and fully developed in Greek tragedy can also be detected in Bacchylides. The phrase therefore imbues the passage in Ode 16 with traits that were perhaps not expected to be found in a lyric poem, and as a result Kamerbeek sees the aura of tragedy influencing Bacchylides' Ode 16.[4] Nonetheless, the portrayal of Deianeira by Bacchylides in stylistic and ethical terms that are predominantly associated with the tragic genre creates more questions than it answers. One wonders what the characteristics of the tragicality of Deianeira's portrayal in Bacchylides might be and what features would allow us to characterise some of Bacchylides' narratives or characters as tragic.

In this chapter I explore the nature of 'the tragic' in the poetry of Bacchylides with the aim of demonstrating that 'the tragic' was a feature present in poetry other than tragedy.[5] Bacchylides is a good case-study for this undertaking not least because of the pre-existing scholarly discussion on the connection between Sophocles' *Trachiniae*

1 Kamerbeek 1959, 6.

2 Kamerbeek 1959, 7.

3 Generally on the connection between Bacchylides' Ode 16 and Sophocles' *Trachiniae* see, among others, Kenyon 1897, 148-51; Jebb 1906, ad Bacchyl. 16; Snell 1940, 182; Kamerbeek 1959, 4-7; Schwinge 1962, 128-33; March 1987, 62-6; Maehler 1997, ad Bacchyl. 16; Pfeijffer 1999, 51-5; Riemer 2000; Maehler 2004, ad Bacchyl. 16.

4 See Burnett 1985, 123-8 for an analysis of the sense of tragedy in Bacchyl. 16.

5 Rutherford (1982 and 2012, 326-9) demonstrates that a number of key-themes and narrative techniques in Greek tragedy were already present in the Homeric poems.

and his Ode 16 but also, if not predominantly, because of the noticeable dramatic qualities in his poems; his characters are involved in dialogic conversations, and this inevitably associates his poetry with staged tragic drama.[6]

My starting point is the tragic portrayal of Deianeira in Bacchylides' Ode 16 in association with Kamerbeek's *mos tragicus* in order to detect the features that make a character tragic.[7] Deianeira's depiction in Ode 16 is further coupled in the discussion with the figure of Heracles in Bacchylides' fifth epinician, as both Deianeira and Heracles bear typical hallmarks of tragic characterisation and representation. One of the main features that evidently characterises tragic portrayals of characters is their active role in fulfilling their destiny and also their incapability of knowing the (self-)destructive consequences of their actions. As the analysis demonstrates, Bacchylides plays with ignorance and knowledge, and some of his poems create a gulf between the ignorance of the characters and the knowledge of the audience, a gulf similar to the one created on the tragic stage. His narratives generate various levels of knowledge, and an important factor in the analysis is the way in which the role of his audience is comparable to that of the audience of tragedy, a comparability that is built on the attendees' active participation in the narrative both emotionally and intellectually.[8] Their shared emotional and intellectual participation in understanding certain narrative situations, I argue, allows us to appreciate further the two genres.

6 On character speech in Bacchylides' mythological exempla, Fearn 2012, 325-31.

7 Kamerbeek 1959, 5-7; cf. Schwinge 1962, 132 "er, der Lyriker, die Erzählung unter einen tragischen Sicht wählte, in der gerade Sophokles das Ganze sah", who goes on to argue that the manner in which the destruction is depicted in Bacchylides is typically Sophoclean.

8 Bacchylides is obviously not the only lyric poet whose poems bear resemblances with tragedy. Stesichorus' kinship with tragedy has been much discussed both in thematic and technical terms, on which see recently Finglass 2018 with further bibliography; Sappho, as it appears, employs dramatic irony in her fr. 44 V and plays with the audience's knowledge by celebrating the known-to-be-doomed wedding of Hector and Andromache; and Pindar, has been argued, engages with Aeschylus' *Oresteia* in his *Pythian* 11, on which see Kurke 2013.

2 Character Representation and Human Ignorance

I cite below the two passages that become crucial for Kamerbeek's argument: [9]

Bacchyl. 16.23-35

τότ' ἄμαχος δαίμων
Δαϊανείρᾳ πολύδακρυν ὕφανε
—
μῆτιν ἐπίφρον' ἐπεὶ   25
πύθετ' ἀγγελίαν ταλαπενθέα,
Ἰόλαν ὅτι λευκώλενον
Διὸς υἱὸς ἀταρβομάχας
ἄλοχον λιπαρὸ[ν] ποτὶ δόμον πέμ[π]οι.
ἆ δύσμορος, ἆ τάλ[αι]ν', οἷον ἐμήσατ[ο·   30
φθόνος εὐρυβίας νιν ἀπώλεσεν,
δνόφεόν τε κάλυμμα τῶν
ὕστερον ἐρχομένων,
ὅτ' ἐπὶ ῥοδόεντι Λυκόρμᾳ
δέξατο Νέσσου πάρα δαιμόνιον τέρ[ας.   35

At that moment the irresistible *daemon* wove for Deianeira a tear-filled shrewd plan, when she found out the sorrowful news that Zeus' battle-fearless son would send to his bright house white-armed Iole as his wife. Ah, ill-fated, miserable woman, how did you devise such a plan! Mighty envy ruined her, and with the murky veil that conceals the future, at that moment when at the rosy Lycormas she received from Nessus the marvellous sign.

Soph. *Trach*. 841-850

ὧν ἅδ' ἁ τλάμων ἄοκνος
μεγάλαν προσορῶσα δόμοισι
βλάβαν νέων ἀίσσου-
σαν γάμων τὰ μὲν αὐτὰ
προσέβαλεν, τὰ δ' ἀπ' ἀλλόθρου
γνώμας μολόντ' ὀλεθρίαισι συναλλαγαῖς   845
ἦ που ὀλοὰ στένει,
ἦ που ἀδινῶν χλωρὰν
τέγγει δακρύων ἄχναν.

9 The text of Bacchylides is that of Maehler 2003 and of Sophocles that of Lloyd-Jones, Wilson 1990. The translations are those of Campbell 1992 and Lloyd-Jones 1994, with some of my own modifications

> ἁ δ᾽ ἐρχομένα μοῖρα προφαίνει δολίαν
> καὶ μεγάλαν ἄταν.
>
> Of these matters the poor woman had no apprehension, when she saw the great disaster of the new marriage advancing upon the house; she herself carried out the deed, but part came from a stranger's counsel at a fatal meeting; she groans despairingly, she sheds a tender dew of thick tears. And the approaching fate foreshadows a treacherous and great disaster.

Deianeira exits in silence after Hyllus' speech, where Hyllus narrates the last moments of Heracles and blames his mother for his death, and in the third stasimon the chorus reminds us of old prophecies, of Nessus and his deceitful act towards Deianeira, of the deathly effects of Hydra's poison, of Oechalia and the new bride of Heracles, and finally of Aphrodite's agency in the course of events. The second strophe, cited above, focuses on Deianeira, and depicts her as the sole responsible agent for the impending catastrophe; *she* performed the deed. Implicit in lines 843-845, however, is the suggestion that she is not meant to be blamed exclusively for the impending destruction. Her actions were also triggered by external factors (τὰ δέ), and these are clearly uttered in Bacchylides' passage rather than in the excerpt from Sophocles. The phrase οἷον ἐμήσατ[ο (Bacchyl. 16.30) in Bacchylides implies that Deianeira was exclusively responsible for devising the destructive plan, but the *daemon* is presented in Ode 16 as playing a significant role in the weaving of the plan she herself will put to action. The poem ends abruptly in line 35, and turns our attention to those actions of Deianeira that were disastrous; *she* accepted the blood of Nessus (δέξατο). By positioning δέξατο at the beginning of the verse the emphasis falls on her own part in the poisoning of the garment, and the poem concludes by calling attention to her own role in the deed. Although she is still painted as a woman unaware of the fatal consequences of her behaviour, the narrative oscillates between her role in the act and the role of Nessus. The very last line of Ode 16 indeed foregrounds the moral agent of Heracles' death – Nessus – but it similarly suggests that Deianeira is also, if not mainly, to be blamed; she could have chosen otherwise.[10]

The two passages in Bacchylides and Sophocles focus on similar points: Deianeira's role in the act; what she heard that might have led her to her destructive decisions (γνώμας ~ ἀγγελίαν); the tears

10 *Contra* Maehler 1997, ad 30, who concludes that the verb δέξατο does not show any action taken by Deianeira, but a passive reaction; on the other hand Carawan (2000, 190) points out that Bacchylides' Deianeira acted in ignorance when she received the cloak, a conclusion that can only be drawn from the authorial exclamation in Bacchyl. 16.30.

she will shed as a result of her actions (τέγγει δακρύων ἄχναν ~ πολύδακρυν); and her ignorance, which is highlighted by her characterisation as an unfortunate woman (τλάμων ~ δύσμορος). Peter Rieme comments on how Bacchylides borrows vocabulary from Sophocles to characterise Deianeira.[11] The two adjectives – δύσμορος and τάλαν (Bacchyl. 16.30) – characterise both male and female characters in Sophocles, and are often used self-reflectively by the characters themselves. Beyond the visible tragic language the exclamation in Ode 16 becomes all the more significant, as it is one of the few cases where Bacchylides' persona is revealed behind the chorus' voice.[12] Similarly to the restrained Homeric narrative manner, Bacchylides does not tend to disclose his authorial persona in his poems. Arguably, it is a predominantly Homeric tendency to avoid evaluative language or expressions of judgements on the course of the action and on the behaviour of characters. In Homer evaluative language and judgements are restricted in direct speech in the same way that Bacchylides moralises through *gnōmai* in his poems and avoids revealing his authorial persona.[13] In both Homer and Bacchylides the presence of evaluative statements may be detected in the narrative through apostrophes or exclamations, and these instances can be seen as effective devices in infusing the narrative with pathos and in raising the audience's sympathy towards the characters.[14] Although the aim in both authors may indeed be the same – articulating the tragedy of human ignorance – it is only Bacchylides who employs tragic language. In none of the Homeric apostrophes are the characters portrayed in emotional and linguistic terms that emphasise their vulnerability and their pitiful state, and in no case does their portrayal arouse our sympathy. Homer tends to tone down the emotional flavour by mainly using the adjective νήπιος.[15] His aim is to present un-

11 Riemer 2000, 176-7.

12 The other cases are: Bacchyl. 13.156-60 (exclamation), Bacchyl. 13.190 (apostrophe) and Bacchyl. 5.176-9, Bacchyl. 10.51-2 (two cases of extempore composition). On the distinction between persona and voice in Bacchylides, Hadjimichael 2012.

13 On evaluative language in direct speech in Homer, Griffin 1986, 36-41.

14 Griffin 1976, 162. On apostrophes in Homer, see Richardson 1990, 170-4 with fnn. 5-6 at 237-8 for examples in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

15 See Griffin 1986, 40. One should note, though, that the adjectives δύσμορος and τάλαν are found in the Homeric epics, more often in the *Odyssey* than in the *Iliad*, and they usually characterise Odysseus. They are also exclusively found in direct speech: τάλαν – *Od.* 18.327 and *Od.* 19.68 Melantho addresses the disguised Odysseus; δύσμορος/δυσάμμορος – *Od.* 1.49-50 Athena talking to Poseidon and calling Odysseus Ὀδυσῆι δυσμόρῳ; *Od.* 7.269-270 Odysseus characterises himself (μοι δυσμόρῳ) while conversing with Arete; *Od.* 16.138-139 Eumaeus in conversation with Telemachus, where the adjective is used for Laertes (Λαέρτῃ δυσμόρῳ); *Od.* 20.194 Philoetius addressing the disguised Odysseus; *Od.* 24.289-290 Laertes conversing with the disguised Odysseus and using the epithet for his son (σὸν ξεῖνον δύστηνον, ἐμὸν παῖδ', εἴ

favourably a character's deluded behaviour and only in retrospect to hint at its potential negative outcome.[16]

Bacchylides' characterisation of Deianeira as δύσμορος and τάλαν (Bacchyl. 16.30) reveals her tragicality and sums up Kamerbeek's *mors tragicus*: Deianeira commits an error without being in a position to foresee the destructive consequences of her behaviour. Although, as mentioned above, the divine is presented as playing a role in the change of fortune, the poem states emphatically Deianeira's erring involvement in her own suffering. In all probability therefore Kamerbeek's *mors tragicus* refers specifically to how Deianeira is unaware of the fatal consequences of her actions. The phrase could also implicitly carry a broader meaning and denote the vicissitudes of human life and "the gulf between human deliberation and divine foreknowledge",[17] both of which are features present at the core of the tragic genre. These same features can be detected throughout the poem's mythological narrative; Ode 16 reflects the spirit that tragedy employs on stage, especially with regards to the manner in which human responsibility, divine predetermination, and also knowledge and ignorance are dramatised on the tragic stage.[18]

Heracles, who is implicitly presented as the victim of Deianeira's error in Ode 16, is himself exceptionally portrayed *more tragico* in Bacchylides' Ode 5. The main mythological paradigm in Ode 5 portrays the encounter between Heracles and Meleager and concerns specifically the death of Meleager that was brought upon him by his mother. Bacchylides, however, chooses to end the narrative by introducing a new figure – Deianeira.

Bacchyl. 5.165-175

"ἦρά τις ἐν μεγάροις 165
Οἰνῆος ἀρηϊφίλου
ἔστιν ἀδμήτα θυγάτρων,
σοὶ φυὰν ἀλιγκία;

ποτ' ἔην γε, δύσμορον); *Od*. 24.311 Odysseus disguised as a beggar in conversation with Laertes and calling himself δύσμορος; *Il*. 19.315 Achilles addressing the dead Patroclus σύ, δυσάμμορε; *Il*. 22.60 Priam calls himself δύσμορος in his appeal to Hector not to take on Achilles; *Il*. 22.428 in Priam's lament for Hector calling Hecuba δυσάμμορος; *Il*. 22.481 in Andromache's lament the epithet is used for herself; *Il*. 22.485 and *Il*. 22.727 Andromache laments for Hector and uses the epithet to characterise both herself and Hector (πάϊς, ὅν τέκομεν σὺ τ'ἐγώ τε δυσάμμοροι).

16 Griffin 1986, 40.

17 Rutherford 1982, 146.

18 Cf. Burnett 1985, 116 who argues that the tragic potential in Bacchylides' poetry resides in the way he plays with ignorance and knowledge.

> τάν κεν λιπαρὰν <ἐ>θέλων θείμαν ἄκοιτιν."
> τὸν δὲ μενεπτολέμου 170
> ψυχὰ προσέφα Μελεά-
> γρου· "λίπον χλωραύχενα
> ἐν δώμασι Δαϊάνειραν,
> νῆϊν ἔτι χρυσέας
> Κύπριδος θελξιμβρότου." 175

> Is there in the palace of Oeneus, who is dear to Ares, an unmarried daughter, like you in her stature? I would willingly take her as my radiant wife". The soul of Meleager that was steadfast at war addressed him, "I left at home slim-necked Deianira, still ignorant of golden Aphrodite, who enchants mortals".

The name of Deianeira is delayed and underscored by alliteration, and its position at the end of the verse, coupled with the abrupt ending of the myth, turn her into the centre of attention.[19] On the surface the lines are transparent; the sister of Meleager who is named Deianeira is unmarried at her father's house. When they are interpreted within the context of the entire poem, however, the connotations become ominous; cross-references within the myth suggest that Deianeira may be as destructive as the other female figures.[20] Yet, Deianeira is characterised as ignorant (νῆϊν), a characterisation that encompasses the essence of the entire mythical narrative, and her ignorance of the gifts of Aphrodite is coupled with Heracles' failure to know that his request to marry Meleager's sister will be fatal. By emphasising the limits of human knowledge the poem foregrounds the responsibility that humans bear for their sufferings: in Meleager's case his killing of his uncles (Bacchyl. 5.132), albeit accidental, led to the burning of the log that symbolised his life (Bacchyl. 5.129-144); in the case of Deianeira her erroneous decisions will prove themselves disastrous when she finally becomes aware of Aphrodite; in the case of Heracles his request to marry Meleager's sister will eventually bring destruction upon himself. Obviously, the moral of the myth is that a mortal cannot achieve complete happiness mainly because of divine interference (Bacchyl. 5.53-55), but Heracles' request reveals that humans bear the responsibility for their own suffering, too.

If taken together, both Odes 5 and 16 mirror Sophocles' *Trachiniae*, and this mirroring goes beyond thematic links and similarities in the

19 On the metatext of the myth marked by the name Deianeira, Goldhill 1983, 77-8; on the deliberate suspense in the word-order in these lines, Lefkowitz 1969, 86-7.

20 On the connection between beasts, the female, and death, Burnett 1985, 142-4; on cross-references in the myth and the intense presence of the elements of darkness and destruction, Brannan 1972, 239-42 and 270-7; on the imagery of the poem, Stern 1967.

portrayal of characters. Their affinity is also reflected structurally, as the two poems recall the structure of Sophocles' *Trachiniae*. In both poems, especially in Ode 5, the narrative draws our attention away from Heracles and directs it towards Deianeira, and the inclusion of her name opens up a new story, related to the story of Heracles but simultaneously distinct from it. Equally relevant to this slow zoom-in on Deianeira's figure in Ode 5 is her portrayal in Ode 16. We know already that her actions will affect Heracles' fate and that the two stories in the two poems are indeed interconnected. Yet, the narrative keeps Heracles and Deianeira apart. The tale in which Deianeira will be involved begins at the closure of the myth on Heracles and Meleager in Ode 5, and the weaving of her plan in Ode 16 is portrayed as distant from Heracles not only in narrative terms but also geographically and temporally. Her pitiful representation in line 30 of Ode 16 ultimately has the same effect with the closing of the mythical narrative in Ode 5; our gaze and attention are once more directed towards Deianeira. Bacchylides follows Sophocles in this technique. The *Trachiniae* is almost intentionally composed in such a way so that the first part is dominated by Deianeira and the second by Heracles. It is also staged in such a way so that Deianeira and Heracles never encounter each other on stage. We may experience the outcome of Deianeira's decision in the second part of the play, where Heracles is physically present on stage, and Heracles may also be constantly mentioned and brought to mind while Deianeira is preparing the cloak for him in the first part of the play, but the two are never presented physically together on stage. Similarly, Heracles and Deianeira are kept apart in both poems of Bacchylides. Their stories never meet, but both narratives imply that they coexist and will thus affect each other.[21]

3 Levels of Knowledge and Audience Participation

The dramatisation of human ignorance on the tragic stage becomes more striking when contrasted with the knowledge the audience possesses, and this dynamic is also at play in Bacchylides' Ode 16. In an attempt to decode the nature of the dramatic and the tragic in Ode 16 Ilja Pfeijffer focuses on tragic irony.[22] Tragic irony for Pfeijffer is the gulf between the information the audience is given through the narrative of the poem and the information the characters possess.[23] Undeni-

21 On the structural division in Sophocles' *Trachiniae*, see Kitzinger 2012 with further bibliography.

22 Pfeijffer 1999, 53.

23 Pfeijffer 1999, 53; Rutherford (2012, 324) employs the term 'irony of situation' in order to signify how the ignorance of the characters is exploited to elicit *pathos* while the

ably, Ode 16 dramatises both the ignorance and the mortal blindness of Deianeira.[24] I would question, however, the definition of tragic irony as offered by Pfeijffer. The distance between audience and characters activates the privileged knowledge of the audience with regards to the course of the story, while at the same time this equation works in reverse: the audience enjoys privileged knowledge mainly because of their remove and distance from both the characters and the events narrated in the poem.[25] Beyond doubt, this gulf between the two levels of knowledge endows Ode 16 with dramatic irony, but it is difficult to see how the allusiveness that runs through the poem offers the audience any information the characters may lack. It rather asks the audience to activate independently the knowledge that they already possess and that is relevant to the story. This independent activation does not deprive them of their privileged position of possessing this knowledge nor does it make the dramatisation of human limitation less effective. It shows, though, that Bacchylides' audience is expected to be as active as the audience of a tragic drama in order to recall previously acquired knowledge and to interpret hints in the course of the narrative. It is merely in their capability to recognise and to explicate these cues that their superior knowledge is activated.

The dramatisation of human error contributes essentially to the creation of this very gap between audience and characters and between knowledge and ignorance. Unlike Ode 16, where previously acquired knowledge is triggered and activated by narrative cues, the audience of Ode 5 is forced to develop new knowledge. By naming Deianeira at the very end of the mythical narrative without elaborating on her figure Ode 5 asks the audience to relate independently two myths which are not usually associated, to make the appropriate connections between Heracles and Deianeira, and also to narrate silently the tragic end of their love. Only with presupposed knowledge and recognition of the hidden mythical intertexts would the ending gain force, as only under these conditions would the narrative be successful. The name of Deianeira would be suggestive of a larger story known to at least the majority of Bacchylides' audience. Just like Ode 16, the narrative of Ode 5 manipulates the audience's privileged knowledge, a procedure which suggests that this very question at the end of the myth has the potential of operating on two levels: the internal level of the narrative itself and the external level of the audience. The swift break-off of the myth and the return to the ode's occasion also marks this division and distance. The myth concludes

audience anticipates the true situation. See also Rutherford 2012, 324-5 for a description of the hierarchy of knowledge in tragedy and a distinction of levels of knowledge.

24 See especially Platter 1994.

25 Carey 1999, 26.

with a surprising reference to Deianeira, and this reference potentially launches a new story for the historical audience.[26]

All these characteristics are admittedly features that can also be detected in the Homeric epics.[27] Unquestionably, audiences at a Homeric performance would have known the story of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* in advance, and this advance knowledge would have created the kind of irony that has been predominantly identified as one of the indispensable features of tragedy. Nevertheless, the dynamics created at performance between audience and narrative story are not the same in epic and tragedy, and the difference is centred on immediacy, as that is created by the performative conditions. The tragic plot progresses and is enacted on stage by actors who embody and are turned into the characters, whereas in epic an external voice, which at times assumes the role of the characters, directs the audience. Homer's persona might be absent from his epic poems, but Homer the narrator is present as a voice within and through his story. It is the narrator's voice that drives the course of the narrative, and this voice often comments on the action, on the characters' behaviour, and on their feelings. The narrative voice inevitably guides the audience on how to perceive the plot, and compels them to share the narrator's view. It also affects their so-called superior status. While it confirms the audience's knowledge and their distance from the ignorant characters, it reminds them that they do not recall this knowledge independently; they may possess it in advance, but it is brought to mind through the narrator's remarks.

In the case of both tragedy and Bacchylides the absence of a narrator who would comment on the action and would thus direct the audience gives the spectators freedom of judgment. It also requires them to activate their pre-existing knowledge independently. As Richard Rutherford points out, the audience's "awareness of events offstage is restricted to what is stated or implied by the actors".[28] The actors usually do not dwell on their error and do not hint at their misconception or ignorance, and as a result the irony is not identified nor is it emphasised within the narrative. It is rather exposed through narrative hints, meaningful ambiguities, and developments in the plot, which the audience would have to identify and decode independently.

The game between levels of knowledge is literally dramatised in Bacchylides' Ode 18 whose narrative operates on two different levels and also addresses two different audiences. The story focuses on a young hero, whose identity is never revealed but whose deeds are

26 On the tragic irony which is created at the end of the mythological narrative, Rengakos 2000, 104-5.

27 See Lowe 1996, 523-5 and 530-1.

28 Rutherford 2012, 324-5.

described in detail in the poem. The characters cannot identify this hero, and the narrative plays with their ignorance. The information given in the poem is interpreted differently within and outside the poetic narrative; although the interlocutors in the poem obviously cannot identify the hero, the Athenian audience would in all probability have been in a position to recognise the youth as Theseus.[29] Bacchylides requests once more the participation of his audience, but in this case he employs a more efficient technique to dramatise the audience's distance from the mythological narrative of the ode. To this contributes the form of the poem.

The peculiar dramatic structure of the poem has been well commented upon, especially in connection with questions of performance.[30] Its dialogic form and the distribution of parts of the narrative to the chorus, which is presumably divided in two semi-choruses or has a leading figure, inevitably bring to mind the tragic chorus and its role in tragedy.[31] Additionally, the role of the chorus in the poetic narrative of Ode 18 contributes to this assimilation. As the interlocutor the chorus is simultaneously the first audience of Aegeus, and like the tragic chorus this internal audience has no presupposed knowledge, and receives and interprets Aegeus' information unfiltered. The definition of tragic irony as given by Pfeijffer can be applied solely in this case. The information the audience acquires through the narrative of the poem is certainly different from that which the characters acquire. This is of course not because the information *per se* is different; it is rather the interpretation of this information that differs. Each audience – internal (chorus) and external/historical (audience) – interprets it differently, since their understanding and interpretation are affected by and based on other relevant information they might possess.[32] In this case, dramatic irony in

29 The mythological tradition surrounding Theseus and his deeds was well known in fifth-century Athens. Shapiro (1989, 144-5) argues that a *Theseid* was probably composed in the period 510-490 BC and narrated chronologically part of Theseus' career. A number of Attic vases, among the earliest of which are E36 at the British Museum (ca. 510 BC) and 91456 in Florence (ca. 470 BC), show that the heroic deeds that Theseus performed in his journey from Troizen to Athens were popular in this period. See also the discussion in Maehler 1997, 216-19 and Shapiro 1994, 111-17 with figs 76-80.

30 Jebb (1906, 233-4) claims that the ode is an exchange between the *koryphaios* and Aegeus, whereas Burnett (1985, 117) assumes that the dialogue was between a single dancer and the chorus; Fearn (2007, 207 fn. 153) argues that the *koryphaios* at the performance holds the role of Aegeus.

31 Then again, Kirkwood (1966, 109-10) argues that Ode 17 is the poem that illustrates Bacchylides' ability to compose a dithyramb in a dramatic structure mainly because of the combination of rapid narrative, descriptive force, and dramatic dialogue.

32 Goldhill (2009, 46) points out that the device of putting an audience on stage distances the audience "from a direct emotional absorption as it enables it to see itself watching". His comment is made with reference to Sophocles' technique of dramatising an audience on stage and of providing "a mirror to the audience of its own process-

Ode 18 has the exact same effect as the irony achieved on the tragic stage. The knowledge the attending audience possesses, a kind of knowledge they have obtained in advance and outside the poetic narrative, places them in a position superior to the audience that exists solely within the poetic narrative.

The active participation of the external audience reinforces the illusion created at performance in both Bacchylides and tragic plays. The medium of performance, the assignment of roles to actors and to the chorus, and the immediacy achieved through dialogic conversations create the illusion of a temporality which gradually unfolds in the temporal and spatial conditions of the historical audience, in spite of it being grounded in the mythological past. While this may be true, the world created in the mythological narratives of Bacchylides and in the tragic plays is also presented at a space removed from the world of the audience. This distance is mainly achieved not solely through the audience's awareness that these stories do not belong to their historical present but also, if not mainly, through their superiority which is centred on the spectators' pre-existing knowledge of the events and on their ability to apply this knowledge to any gaps at the performance.

Subtle distinctions of the notions of 'knowledge' and 'narrative information' lurk behind the above discussion, and they are essential for understanding the concept of dramatic irony in the poems discussed.[33] To be sure, tragic irony is centred on a distinction between the characters and the audience which is ultimately generated by the privileged knowledge of the audience in contrast to the characters' ignorance or lack of understanding. Surely this is created by the narrative itself, but it is often achieved in varied ways. Knowledge can be offered to the audience, as in Ode 18, but still interpreted differently by the audience, as the interpretation would be based on their privileged knowledge which exists outside the narrative. It can also be activating, as in Ode 16, where narrative hints activate a different kind of information which relies exclusively on privileged knowledge and which exists outside and beyond the poetic narrative. In both of these poems the audience relies on the narrative story for the details it receives, but their superior knowledge is still required for its full understanding. On the contrary, in Ode 5 knowledge is activated independently mainly because it should be developed only partially in association with the main mythological account of the poem.

es of reaction". This conclusion could equally apply to Bacchylides' Ode 18 and to poems such as Ode 5 where Bacchylides includes internal audiences within his mythological narrative (e.g. Heracles to Meleager's story).

33 On the question of knowledge and the levels and types of irony that can be identified in tragedy, Rutherford 2012, 323-6.

Bacchylides' audience should connect the dots of often unrelated stories, and they should bring to mind information that is missing from the narrated story, or they should interpret the given information in a way that requires them to bring in details unassisted.[34] It is vital that they become actively involved within the interpretative process in order for the poetic narrative to be effective.[35]

The question of what is stated in Bacchylides' poems and how it is interpreted in performance is also relevant to questions of closures and narrative endings.[36] I have so far analysed how the spectators are asked to contribute to the completion of the mythological narrative only after its end. That is at least the case with the secondary myth about Heracles and Deianeira in Ode 5 and with both Odes 16 and 18. The tragic ending of the relationship between Heracles and Deianeira is meant to be narrated as the narrative conclusion of Odes 5 and 16, but that should be done beyond the end of the mythological narrative and only mentally by the audience. In the same way the recognition of the hero approaching Athens in Ode 18 and of the importance of his future role in the definition of Athenian identity exist outside the narrative and are details that the audience needs to apply independently for the completion of the story. Both Odes 16 and 18 could be seen as the introductory exposition to the events that are expected to follow. They exclusively build up the atmosphere without, however, fulfilling the expectations their narrative creates. The reversal of the fate of Deianeira and Heracles, the ending of their stories, and the recognition of Theseus never take place in the course of the narrative. Ode 16, for example, whose narrative centres on questions of error, limitation, and ignorance, describes events and actions that would have as a result the death of Heracles and the suffering of Deianeira. The tragic end is left unspoken, however; it only takes place in the mind of the spectators, and solely if they possess the background knowledge to build on the poem's narrative and

34 I thank Michael Carroll for pointing out the categories of knowledge in Bacchylides' poems.

35 This type of audience-response is similar to the intellectual involvement and response of a tragic audience, especially in those cases where the spectators at a tragic performance often need to make sense of a number of things for themselves. See Lada 1996, who argues that Greek tragedy implies both an emotional and an intellectual audience response.

36 Endings and closures do not need to be identical. I take 'closure' to mean the conclusion of a literary work, and I follow Roberts 1988, 177 who defines closure as "the sense of conclusiveness or finality at the end of a work of literature". I take 'ending' to refer to the conclusion of a narrative story. In certain poems the ending of the story coincides with the closure of the poem, e.g. Bacchylides' Ode 16. The essential point in understanding and distinguishing ending and closure is the difference between 'closed' and 'open', be that a poem's closure or a narrative's ending. On closures and endings, see Fowler 1989 and 1997, and in Greek lyric in particular, Rutherford 1997.

on the given information. Similarly, the principal myth in Ode 5 on the tragic fate of Meleager leads climactically to the poem's secondary myth, but the fatal relationship between Heracles and Deianeira is equally left unspoken. Once again, it is meant to be developed by the audience and beyond the narrative ending.

Ode 18 is a special case. The exchange between Aegeus and the Athenians functions like a tragic prologue; Aegeus fills in the chorus with details that would have been essential both for the understanding of the plot and for the climactic moment that comes with the hero's recognition.[37] The tragic prologue often has a programmatic or authoritative function in the sense that it sets the scene for the tragic action and provides information necessary for its progression. At the same time, it draws the audience's attention to the characters, to the background story, and to the chain of events that will be developed in the plot.[38] Ode 18 could potentially function as a tragic prologue precisely because of its narrative game with knowledge and audiences. The information that Aegeus offers to the chorus looks back to the past while it also looks forward to the arrival of the young man that is not fulfilled within the narrative.

As performance is generally a process of interpretation,[39] Bacchylides' Ode 18 encapsulates the role of the audience as interpreters. In this case specifically the closure of the poem does not mark the end of the narrative story; the question 'who is the figure that approaches Athens?' remains unanswered, and the end is presented in tension with the feeling of continuation.[40] While in tragedy knowledge of the myth could qualify as closure or could reinforce a certain ending,[41] this subtle allusion at the end of Ode 18 opens up a narrative that lies beyond the poem's closure. This of course is far more evident in the case of Ode 5; the aperture of its mythological narrative carries an element of surprise, as the ending evokes a secondary story for which the audience has not been prepared by the narrative. The need to recall another set of information should not be

37 Maehler (2004, 193) associates this poem with the prologue of *OT*. He also sees a resemblance with Aeschylus' *Ag.* 82-103, where the Argive elders ask Clytemnestra to inform them about the news she has received, and enquire about the reason behind the sacrifices she makes. The passage, however, is short and while the chorus poses a number of questions, Clytemnestra is not yet on stage. It is only later in the course of the episode that the chorus is offered the opportunity to question her in person.

38 E.g. Dunn 1992, 6 and 11; Segal 1992; Roberts 2005, 137.

39 Cf. Goldhill 1986, 284.

40 See Fowler 1989, 81 on this point who also identifies five senses of closure (Fowler 1989, 78-9). Relevant to the above discussion are the second and third senses of closure: "The process by which the reader of a work comes to see the end as satisfyingly final" and "the degree to which the questions posed in the work are answered, tensions released, conflicts resolved".

41 Roberts 2005, 145.

interpreted as an ending that disrupts the audience's expectations. Bacchylides might have invented the meeting of Meleager and Heracles, and thus the story possibly has no ending of which the audience should be aware.[42] Its conclusion, however, gestures towards a traditional and well-known story; Heracles' question signals towards a familiar tale that would be narrated at a future beyond the ending of the mythical narrative. Under these circumstances the audience is expected firstly to recognise and secondly to interpret the narrative cue in order to recall the evoked story.

4 Conclusions

The aim of this chapter was to discuss the tragic aura of Bacchylides' poetry, and in the limited space offered here I focused on the erroneous judgement of humans as one of the main characteristics that turns them into tragic characters, on the games the dramatic action and Bacchylides' narratives play with the gap between ignorance and knowledge, and on the active intellectual participation of the audience in filling in narrative gaps and in completing unfinished stories. The latter has been analysed in particular in connection to the open-endedness of some of Bacchylides' mythological narratives, including his Ode 18. As the discussion has shown, subtle narrative hints require the engagement of Bacchylides' audience in a manner similar to the audience of tragedy; emotionally but most importantly intellectually.[43] Their privileged knowledge, which distances them from the ignorant characters in the poem, as well as their emotional and intellectual involvement in a number of Bacchylidean narratives bring them closer to the audience of tragedy. Odes 5 and 16 in particular narrate human decisions and actions that eventually prove to be (self-)destructive, and encapsulate ideas that form the core of Greek tragic drama.

Undeniably, questions related to the fragility of human existence, ignorance and vulnerability, over-determination and divine foreknowledge are relevant to a great amount of Greek literature,

42 Bacchylides' Ode 5 and Pindar's fr. 249a Snell-Maehler seem to be the first attestations of the encounter between Heracles and Meleager in the Underworld. Homer does not mention Meleager when Odysseus meets Heracles in Hades (*Od.* 11.601-627), whereas fr. 280 Merkelbach of the Hesiodic *Catalogue* includes a meeting between Meleager and Theseus in the Underworld. According to the Iliadic scholia (schol. *Il.* 21.194 Erbse), Pindar has Meleager suggesting to Heracles to marry his sister Deianeira, and the story apparently ends with a description of the contest between Heracles and the river Acheloos (cf. Soph. *Trach.* 507-530). See the discussion in Cairns 2010, 84-6.

43 On *pathos* in Bacchylides' narratives and on the emotional participation of his audience, Carey 1999, 22-9.

starting perhaps with Homer, while issues concerning free will, predetermination of human fate, ignorance and foreknowledge are particularly typical of Greek archaic thought.[44] The tragic genre, however, seems to build its plot precisely on the question of human responsibility, while the point at issue becomes the moral and factual chain of causation. Tragedy is indeed motivated by the doing and suffering of human beings, and the dramatic plot centres consistently on questions of (free) agency and human suffering. As a genre it has therefore been explicitly associated with questions of responsibility, and human action and suffering have been seen as its defining features. Consequently, we inevitably interpret Bacchylides through this tragic lens. Nevertheless, the portrayal of Deianeira and Heracles in his two poems suggests that these issues that tragedy elaborated are also present in lyric poetry.

Plausibly, Bacchylides' vision of the world, particularly of the mythical world, was first and foremost tragic, and his skilful employment of techniques and features, which were further developed in Greek drama, could at the very least be interpreted as a literary experiment.[45] Their incorporation in the genre of the epinician and of the dithyramb could denote that these characteristics were not exclusively traits of the tragic genre, but were rather features of the Greek vision of the world. At the very least, Bacchylides' games with tragedy and 'the tragic' are signs of how modern definitions of literary conventions that are framed within strict generic terms may not be as neat and clear-cut as scholarship would like them to be.

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44 See the edited volume by Cairns 2013.

45 On Bacchylides' experimental tendencies, see Hadjimichael 2014.

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