

The fourth dithyramb of Bacchylides (*ode 18 maehler*): an anti-platonic dithyramb

Smaro Nikolaidou-Arampatzi

Δημοκρίτειο Πανεπιστήμιο Θράκης

Being the only choral ode directly associated with the cult of Dionysus¹, the Dithyramb has been considered -already by Aristotle (*Poetics* 1449a 10-11)- as the lyric genre which gave birth to Attic tragedy². At Athens, the Dithyramb was firstly introduced by Lasos of Hermione probably at the City Dionysia, some decades after the establishment of tragedy³; and although the innovations by Arion in an earlier phase (in the sixth century) of the genre are the most famous, the only surviving dithyrambic texts belong to the fifth century phase, and are odes composed in parallel to contemporary tragedy in Athens⁴. Both Pindar and Bacchylides, the authors of the extant dithyrambs⁵, composed some of these odes for Athenian audiences⁶, and we

¹ The association of Dithyramb with Dionysus is first attested literally in Archilochus fr. 120 West *ὡς Διώνυσου ἀνακτος καλὸν ἐξάρξει μέλος/οἶδα διθύραμβον οἴνω συγκεραυνωθεὶς φρένας*; cf. Proclus *Chr.* 42 320a25. The possibility of Dithyramb being performed not only at the festivals of Dionysus cannot be confirmed by clear evidence; see A. W. Pickard-Cambridge, *Dithyramb, Tragedy and Comedy* (Oxford 1962²) 3-5.

² The present work is not interested in the much discussed problem of the origins of ancient Greek tragedy, for which see recently the essays in E. Csapo-M. C. Miller (eds), *The Origins of Theater in Ancient Greece and Beyond: From Ritual to Drama*, Cambridge 2007.

³ The evidence comes from *Suda* (s.v. Lasos: καὶ διθύραμβον εἰς ἀγῶνα εἰσήγαγε) and Aristophanes *Wasps* 1410 (Λάσος ποτ' ἀντεδίδασκε καὶ Σιμωνίδης), which certainly imply a dithyrambic contest. The date appears to have been 509/8 BC, according to the Parian Marble (Epoch 46) which gives the name of the archon as Lysagoras. On the controversy among scholars about the name of the archon and the exact date of the contest, see Pickard-Cambridge (n.1) 15 n.2; J. Herington, *Poetry into Drama: Early Tragedy and the Greek Poetic Tradition* (Berkeley-Los Angeles-London 1985) 250 nn.66, 67. It is hardly unlikely that the festival to which the contest was attached was the Great Dionysia, because the dithyrambic contests at the Great Dionysia were most important throughout the classical period. Dithyrambs may also have been performed at other Athenian festivals, at the Thargelia (*Lysias* 21.1), at the Lesser Panathenaia (*Lysias* 21.2) and probably at the Promethia and Hephaestia (cf. Ps. Xenophon *Ath. Pol.* 3.4), but the relevant evidence is rather slight; for the dithyrambic ('circle') choruses of these festivals, see Pickard-Cambridge (ibid.) 31-8. The presence of dithyrambic choruses in the Anthesteria has been proposed by G. T. W. Hooker, "Pindar and the Athenian Festivals of Dionysus", *PCA* 54 (1957) 35-6; but Herington (ibid.) 251 n.70 is very cautious.

⁴ The Athenian dithyrambic contests were so famous that prominent foreign poets competed in the city: Hypodikos of Chalkis, the first winner (Parian Marble, Epoch 46); Melanippides of Melos, victor in 494/3 BC (Parian Marble, Epoch 47); Simonides of Keos, for whom Herington (n.3) 251 n.72 concludes that he must have won a total of 56 dithyrambic victories, some of them at Athens as late as 477/6 BC (Parian Marble, Epoch 54) and some elsewhere in Greece; and of course Pindar and Bacchylides, for whom see below (n.6).

⁵ For the text of the extant dithyrambs, H. Maehler, *Pindarus II*, Leipzig 1989; id. *Bacchylides*, Leipzig 1992.

⁶ Of Pindar's dithyrambs, fr. 74a-77 Maehler, and possibly fr. 78 were intended for Athenian contests, in which the Theban poet was victorious in 497/6 BC (*P. Oxy.* 2438). Bacchylides also competed in Athens on at least two occasions: with *Odes* 18 and 19 Maehler. As no documentary evidence exists,

may suppose that, even when they created some other dithyrambic odes for performance outside Athens⁷, they were not exempt from the festivity atmosphere of the Athenian City Dionysia, where the dithyrambic performances were separate from the dramatic ones. That is, the coexistence of drama and Dithyramb in the program of the same festival made the poets especially aware of the difference between lyric and dramatic genres.

So, in the fourth century BC Plato (*Rep.* 3.394c) distinguishes drama from dithyramb by observing that drama works ‘only through imitation’ while dithyramb employs ‘the recital of the poet himself’⁸: ... τῆς ποιήσεώς τε καὶ μυθολογίας ἡ μὲν διὰ μιμήσεως ὅλη ἐστίν, ὡσπερ σὺ λέγεις, τραγῳδία τε καὶ κωμῳδία, ἡ δὲ δι’ ἀπαγγελίας αὐτοῦ τοῦ ποιητοῦ -εὐροις δ’ ἂν αὐτὴν μάλιστα που ἐν διθυράμβοις- ἡ δ’ αὖ δι’ ἀμφοτέρων ἐν τε τῇ τῶν ἐπῶν ποιήσει, πολλαχοῦ δὲ καὶ ἄλλοθι, εἴ μοι μανθάνεις [... there is one kind of poetry and tale-telling which works wholly through imitation, as you remarked, tragedy and comedy; and another which employs the recital of the poet himself, best exemplified, I presume, in the dithyramb; and there is again that which employs both, in epic poetry and in many other places, if you apprehend me’ (the translation by P. Shorey, in *Plato: The Republic*. Books I-V, Cambridge Ma. 1994)].

We should make clear that by ‘recital’ Plato probably means the style of lyric narrative, employed in choral poetry from the early seventh century BC on. Titles such as *Iliou Persis*, *Nostoi*, and *Oresteia* are preserved for Stesichorus (7th/6th cent.), whilst Athenaeus (4.172d) finds it difficult to decide between Stesichorus’ or Ibycus’ (6th cent.) *Athla epi Pelia*. From the Latin Coentilianus (10.1.62, *Stesichorum ... epici carminis onera lyra sustinentem*) we understand that the lyric narrative was a form of lyric *synthesis* for which epic themes were preferable, although the epic genre itself had no choral destination. Perhaps, in Western Greece (where both Stesichorus and Ibycus come from) epic tradition was not strong enough to make the archaic lyric poets hesitant in using epic-like-style in odes destined for choral performance (singing as well as dancing)⁹.

Hence, it is of special interest that of all the extant dithyrambic fragments only in one, the fourth dithyramb of Bacchylides (*Ode* 18 Maehler), entitled *Theseus*

Henrrington (n.3) 251 n.70 finds it safer to suppose, at least as regards Pindar, that the poet would have performed his dithyramps at the most prestigious of Athenian contests. For Bacchylides and Athens, see A. Severyns, *Bacchylide. Essai biographique* (Paris 1933) 56-69.

⁷ Outside Athens dithyramps were performed usually at Delphi and Delos, the sacred places of Apollo, but it is not certain that Dionysus was not the honoured god; see Pickard-Cambridge (n.1) 3.

⁸ The dithyramps of Bacchylides, especially, were classified as narrative already from antiquity (Schol. Bacch. *Ode* 23: μύθου σύστημα κοινόν ἐστι τοῦ διθυράμβου, *P. Oxy.* 2368).

⁹ In the ancient sources that save Stesichorus’ and Ibycus’ fragments, both the poets are characterized as *melopoioi* (‘composers of songs’, *LGS* Stesichorus fr. 96, 105; Ibycus fr. 265); meanwhile, the verb *historein* (‘telling a story’) is frequently used for them (*LGS* Stesichorus fr. 95, 99; Ibycus fr. 284, 286). Only in one occasion the genre of the poem is precisely mentioned as dithyramb (in Schol. Eur. *Andr.* 631); it is Ibycus’ fr. 273 *LGS* (296 *PMGF*), narrating the encounter between Menelaus and Helen in Troy. Although no one Alexandrian edition of Ibycus’ *Dithyramps* is known, we may suppose that in the seven books in which the poet was collected according to Suda (s.v. Ἴβυκος: ἔστι δὲ αὐτοῦ τὰ βιβλία ζ’ τῇ Δωριδί διαλέκτῳ), some of his poems –probably in narrative style– were considered as dithyramps. On the other hand, the name Stesichorus seems to imply professionalism (*didaskalos Chorou*), since the real name of the poet was Teisias (Suda, s.v. Σησιχορος).

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(*Θησεύς <Αθηναίους>*), are choral elements entirely absent and only dramatic acting is prominent. F. G. Kenyon, who first edited the papyrus of Bacchylides, characterized *Ode 18* as lyric drama, the only one extant in lyric poetry¹⁰.

A' <ΧΟΡΟΣ>	<p>Βασιλεῦ τᾶν ἱερᾶν Ἀθανᾶν, τῶν ἀβροβίων ἄναξ Ἰώνων, τί νέον ἐκλαγε χαλκοκώδων σάλπιγξ πολεμητᾶν αἰοιδάν; 5 ἦ τις ἀμετέρας χθονὸς δυσμενῆς ὄρι' ἀμφιβάλλει στραταγέτας ἀνήρ; ἢ ληισταὶ κακομάχανοι ποιμένων ἀέκατι μῆλων 10 σεύοντ' ἀγέλας βίαι; ἢ τί τοι κραδίαν ἀμύσσει; φθέγγευ' δοκέω γάρ εἴ τι βροτῶν ἀλκίμων ἐπικουρίαν καὶ τιν ἔμμεναι νέων, 15 ὦ Πανδίοδος υἱὲ καὶ Κρεούσας.</p>
B' <ΑΙΓΕΥΣ>	<p>Νέον ἦλθε<ν> δολιχὰν ἀμείψας κᾶρυξ ποσὶν Ἰσθμίαν κέλευθον' ἄφατα δ' ἔργα λέγει κραταιοῦ φωτός· τὸν ὑπέρβιον τ' ἔπεφνεν 20 Σίνιν, ὃς ἰσχυρὶ φέρτατος θνατῶν ἦν, Κρονίδα Λυταίου σεισίχθονος τέκος· σὺν τ' ἀνδροκτόνον ἐν νάπαις Κρεμμυῶνος ἀτάσθαλόν τε 25 Σκίρωνα κατέκτανεν' τάν τε Κερκυόνος παλαίστραν ἔσχεν, Πολυπήμονός τε καρτεράν σφῦραν ἐξέβαλεν Προκό- πτας, ἀρείονος τυχῶν 30 φωτός. ταῦτα δέδοιχ' ὅπαι τελεῖται. Τίνα δ' ἔμμεν πόθεν ἄνδρα τοῦτον λέγει, τίνα τε στολὰν ἔχοντα; πότερα σὺν πολεμητῆσι ὄ- πλοισι στρατιάν ἄγοντα πολλάν; 35 ἢ μόνον σὺν ὀπάοισιν στείχειν ἔμπορον οἷ' ἀλάταν ἐπ' ἄλλοδαμίαν, ἰσχυρόν τε καὶ ἄλκιμον ὦδε καὶ θρασύν, ὃς τ<οσ>ούτων 40 ἀνδρῶν κρατερόν σθένος</p>
Γ' <ΧΟ.>	<p>Τίνα δ' ἔμμεν πόθεν ἄνδρα τοῦτον λέγει, τίνα τε στολὰν ἔχοντα; πότερα σὺν πολεμητῆσι ὄ- πλοισι στρατιάν ἄγοντα πολλάν; 35 ἢ μόνον σὺν ὀπάοισιν στείχειν ἔμπορον οἷ' ἀλάταν ἐπ' ἄλλοδαμίαν, ἰσχυρόν τε καὶ ἄλκιμον ὦδε καὶ θρασύν, ὃς τ<οσ>ούτων 40 ἀνδρῶν κρατερόν σθένος</p>

¹⁰ N. G. Kenyon, *The Poems of Bacchylides* (London 1897) 175.

ἔσχεν; ἢ θεὸς αὐτὸν ὀρμαῖ,
 δίκας ἀδίκοισιν ὄφρα μῆσεται
 οὐ γὰρ ράϊδιον αἰὲν ἔρ-
 δοντα μὴ ἔντυχεῖν κακῶι.
 45 πάντ' ἐν τῶι δολιχῶι χρόνῳι τελεῖται.
 Δ' <AIG.> Δύο οἱ φῶτε μόνους ἀμαρτεῖν
 λέγει, περὶ φαιδίμοισι δ' ὤμοις
 ξίφος ἔχειν <υυ-υ- ->
 ξεστοῦς δὲ δὴ ἐν χέρεσσ' ἄκοντας
 50 κηῦτυκτον κυνέαν Λάκαι-
 ναν κρατὸς πέρι πυρσοχαίτου
 χιτῶνα πορφύρεον
 στέρνοις τ' ἀμφί, καὶ οὐλιον
 Θεσσαλὰν χλαμύδ' ὀμμάτων δὲ
 55 στύλβειν ἀπο Λαμνίαν
 φοίνισσαν φλόγα παῖδα δ' ἔμμεν
 πρῶθηβον, ἀρηῖων δ' ἀθυρμάτων
 μεμῶσθαι πολέμου τε καὶ
 χαλκεοκτύπου μάχας
 60 δίξησθαι δὲ φιλαγλάους Ἀθήνας.

[*Chorus of Athenians*: King of our sacred Athens,/Elegant Ionians' lord,/Why this splitting warsong/Blared from the brass horns?/Does a marshal press/His enemy raiders/Around our borders?/Or treacherous bandits/Wrest the flocks/From the shepherds/And drive them off?/Or worry tear your heart?/Speak: you are the one,/O Pandion's son and Creousa's,/Backed by matchless young allies. *King Aegeus*: Fresh from his heat/On the Corinth road,/A runner tells out/Unbelievable acts/Of a mighty man:/He's brought down Sinis/The Bender of Pines,/A son of Looser Poseidon/Who wracks the earth;/He's killed the boar/That devoured men/In the woods of Cremmyon,/Put an end/To the reckless Sciron,/Shut the wresting ring/Of Cercyon, and snapped/Polypemon's club from the Butcher/who met with a better man./I dread where his works will end. *Chorus*: What's his name? /His land? His equipment? /Does he head up an army/Massing along/In heavy gear?/Or trek alone/With his henchmen,/A wanderer out/For exotic lands?/Iron in heart/This invincible one/Who checks the strength/Of immense opponents;/A god is behind him,/Forging these laws/For a dragon-ridden land./Outrage mounting on outrage/Always meets its retribution./All ends in the drift of time. *Aegeus*: Only two keep his pace./Over glistening shoulders/He slings a sword/With an ivory hilt,/Two sanded lances/Ride his grip,/A stitched Laconian/Skincap binds/His burnished locks,/Hugging his chest/A seablue tunic/And horseman's wooly cape;/From eyes like the Lemnos-fire/Leaps flaring flame,/And but a boy in the bud of youth,/Yet bent on the grim delights of war/And the din of bronze on bronze,/He strides on to illustrious Athens!

(trans. by R. Eagles, *Bacchylides: Complete Poems*, New Haven-London 1961, pp. 57-60)].

As the preserved text of the dithyramb is, obviously, a dialogue between two persons, it is entirely reasonable to assume that the one is the *koryphaios* of the

dithyrambic chorus; precisely, he represents the Athenian citizens, and is in dialogue with a person who is identified as the Athenian king Aegeus¹¹ by the invocation ὦ Πανδίου υἱὲ καὶ Κρεούσας (15)¹². Because the trumpet had ‘sounded a war-note from its bell of bronze’¹³ (ἔκλαγε χαλκοκόδων/ σάλπιγξ πολεμητῶν αἰοδάν, 3-4), the agonized citizens ask their king if Athens is threatened by enemies (5-7) or ‘robbers, devisers of evil’ (8-10). Aegeus announces the news brought to him by a messenger (16-30), who narrated the miraculous deeds of a powerful man (ἄφατα δ’ ἔργα...κραταιοῦ/ φωτός, 18-19) in Isthmos: the defeat of Sinis, Skiron, and Kerkyon, all the criminals who murdered men on the road between Corinth and Megara, as well as the defeat of the ‘man-killing’ sow. But, in spite of the beneficial consequences of the event, Aegeus cannot be glad, because he does not know where the vigour of the unknown young man will stop (ταῦτα δέδοιχ’ ὄπῃ τελεῖται, 30). The chorus wants to know whether the man is a warrior, leading perhaps an army (31-4), or if he is ‘a wayfarer’ wandering in foreign lands with his servants, ‘vigorous’ and ‘valiant’ (35-40); at heart, the chorus is optimistic¹⁴, thinking that a god may have sent the man, helping him to defeat the invincible opponents (41-5). The king answers that the young man has only two companions and complete war equipment, weapons as well as clothes (46-56); despite still being a child, (παῖδα δ’ ἔμ<μ>εν/ πρώθηβον, 56-7), he thinks only of ‘warfare and the clangour of battle’ (57-9). This man now is seeking splendour-loving Athens (δίζησθαι δὲ φιλαγλάους Ἀθάνας, 60).

Although Theseus’ name is not referred to, the narration of his familiar deeds is indicative, and creates the appropriate mythical frame validating the tributes to some noble persons with the deeds of the glorious king of Athens. H. Maehler thinks that the attributes κυνέαν Λάκαιναν for Theseus’ hat (50-1), as well as the οὔλιον Θεσσαλάν for his mantle (53-4), may be considered allusions to the names of Kimon’s three sons, Lakedaimonios, Oulios, and Thessalos (Plut. *Kimon* 16.1)¹⁵. In his view, the three sons of Kimon were the honoured persons¹⁶, who might be –all three– among the victorious youths who returned from Isthmos, after they, together with the veterans, defeated the Corinthians at Geraneia, the mountain ridge between the Isthmos and Megara (cf. Thuc. 1.105-106; in particular 1.105.4: τῶν δ’ ἐκ τῆς

¹¹ Kenyon (n.10) 186 suggested that the interlocutors are Aegeus and Medea; but, the ἀμετέρας χθονός (line 5) indicates an Athenian citizen; see A. P. Burnett, *The Art of Bacchylides* (Cambridge MA 1985) 192 n.6.

¹² Bacchylides is the only poet who presents Creousa as Aegeus’ mother, the wife of Pandion, who probably was the youngest of the two homonymous mythical kings of Athens; in Eur. *Ion* (57-8 and 1589-1600), Creousa is the wife of Xouthos and mother (by Apollo) of Ion.

¹³ The (prose) translation used in this paragraph is by R. C. Jebb, *Bacchylides. The Poems and Fragments*, Cambridge 1905.

¹⁴ H. Maehler, *Bacchylides. A Selection* (Cambridge 2004) 195 observes that there is a remarkable “descending order of urgency” in the climax of the three questions of the chorus (1-11); in the last –and most important– thesis of the *trikōlon* what mentioned is the least upsetting possibility (ἦ τί τοι κραδίαν ἀμύσσει; 11). For the chorus’ attitude, see also D. Arnould, “Le mythe de Thésée dans l’oeuvre de Bacchylide”, in J. Jouanna-J. Leclant (eds), *La poésie grecque antique* (Paris 2003) 124-27.

¹⁵ Maehler (n.14) 189-91. For the identity of the ephebes, what also provides a clue is the reference to the red colour of the hero’s hair (κρατὸς πέρι πυρσοχαίτου, 51), a pointer to the Thracian Kimon’s mother Hegysipyle; see especially the commentary by Maehler (n.14) on v. 51 πυρσοχαίτου (p. 202).

¹⁶ For elements implying that in *Ode 18* the deeper meaning lies in the parallelization between Theseus and Kimon, see J. P. Barron, “Bacchylides, Theseus and a woolly cloak”, *BICS* 27 (1980) 1-8.

πόλεως ὑπολοίπων οἱ τε πρεσβύτατοι καὶ οἱ νεώτατοι ἀφικνοῦνται εἰς τὰ Μέγαρα Μυρωνίδου στρατηγούντος). In this case, *Ode* 18 may have been performed at the Panatheneia of 458 BC, in late August¹⁷.

The uniqueness of the dramatic character of this dithyramb should be explained by comparison with the character of dramatization in other choral odes. We start with the third dithyramb of Bacchylides (*Ode* 17 Maehler), entitled *The Noble Youths or Theseus*, too (*Ἡθῆοι ἢ Θησεύς*). The ode is mostly narrative (and consequently 'Platonic'), recounting Theseus' voyage to Crete with fourteen Athenian youths, whom the polis sent as an annual tribute to King Minos. But the emphasis is on a special episode: Minos' erotic attack on the maiden Eriboia, before the Athenian ship landed on Crete; this event is fitted with great dramatic effect into the body of the main narration, making the controversial dialogue between the young Theseus and the violent Minos (20-46, 50-57) the impressive element of *Ode* 17¹⁸. However, the dramatic elements are all given in the narrative account of the poem, and the mimesis in it is not that of acting persons. Moreover, keeping its cultic role, the chorus of the *Ἡθῆοι* becomes obviously self-referential at the end of the ode, declaring its real identity (a chorus from the island Keos) and the honoured god (Delian Apollo): Δάλιε, χοροῖσι Κηϊῶν/ φρένα ἰανθείς/ ὄπαζε θεόπομπον ἐσθλῶν τύχαν (130-32) [God of Delos, may the choruses of the Ceans be pleasing to thy soul; and mayest thou give us blessings for our portion, wafted by the power divine! (trans. by Jebb, above n.13)].

In *Ode* 18 there is no narrator telling us which person is speaking in the dialogue, or describing movements, actions and events. Instead, there are two persons who, while talking, perform dramatic roles: the one impersonates the king of Athens, agonizingly announcing the news about the deeds of the unknown young man; the other represents the gathering of citizens, answering the anguished questions of the king. However, the role of the second person should be different, because he ought to lead the dithyrambic chorus in the ritual atmosphere of the dionysiac festival; instead of this, the chorus has taken on the dramatic persona of Athenian citizens, and the leader (or 'exarhōn'?) of the ritual group has become its representative (*koryphaios*), speaking in the name of all them, at the same moment as the king is 'acting' in the orchestra¹⁹. Wearing thus the mask of the Athenian citizen, the chorus of the fourth dithyramb removes its ritual character and acts as a dramatic hero in tragedy. From this aspect, it is remarkable that self-referential elements are entirely absent; the only

¹⁷ Maehler (n.14) 191; C. Calame, *Thésée et l' Imaginaire Athénien*, (Lausanne 1996) 153-56 thinks that the ode was composed earlier, about 475 BC, for the establishment of the Theseia festival, simultaneously with the foundation of the Theseus' temple (the Theseion); previously (in 476/5) Kimon had proposed the removal of Theseus' relics to Athens. A possible obstacle to Maehler's opinion is Theseus' ostracism from Athens at 461 BC for ten years; even if Kimon returned to Athens in 457 (Plut. *Kim.* 17, *Per.* 10), he was not likely to be honoured before the end of the decade; for this argument, see L. Athanassaki, *Οἱ χορικές παραστάσεις καὶ τὸ κοινὸ τοῦς* [*Choral Performances and their audience*] (Herakleion 2009) 88-9.

¹⁸ For the conflict between Theseus and Minos, G. W. Pieper, "Conflict of Character in Bacchylides' *Ode* 17", *TAPA* 103 (1972) 395-404.

¹⁹ In fact, the conditions of the real performance (whether the dialogue is between the two semichoruses or the chorus and an actor) remain unknown; see Burnett (n.11) 117, and B. Zimmermann, *Dithyrambos. Die Geschichte einer Gattung* (Göttingen 1992) 96.

allusions to the worship performed can be sought in the attributes for the polis of Athens at the beginning and the end of the ode: ἱερᾶν Ἀθηνᾶν ('sacred Athens', 1), and φιλαγλάουος Ἀθάνας ('brilliant Athens', 60).

The dramatic character of the fourth dithyramb of Bacchylides is also different from *lyric dramatization* observed by J. Herington for odes such as the *Partheneia*, when "a chorus begins to sing to itself and about itself"²⁰. In Alcman's *Partheneion* (fr. 1 PMG)²¹, for instance, the chorus of the *parthenoi*, after a mythical narrative referring to the defeat of Hippocoon by Heracles, suddenly on line 39 begins to sing about itself with extraordinary vividness: about the very beautiful Agido and her rival(?), the chorus leader (*chorāgus*, 44 and *chorostatis*, 84) Hagesichora. Nor do they omit to mention the number (*dekas*, 99) of the chorus members as well as their ceremonial duty of making offerings to the forthcoming Dawn (*Aōtis*, 87). Of exceptional prominence is their recognition of a contest between themselves and another group²², possibly equivalent to the constellation *Pelēades* (60-3). The splendid beauty of the second (imaginary?) chorus and their fine adornments are described in precise detail (64-9), and many names of famous girl-dancers, who might offer their help, are automatically recalled (70-6). But, besides its anxiety, the chorus declares its confidence in its own leader Hagesichora (76-101).

In Pindar's *Partheneion*²³ (fr. 94b Maehler), too, the chorus shows exceptional clarity in the presentation of itself. Using the first person, the young maidens describe their choral performance, starting from their finery: the sacred costumes, the branches of laurel in their hands, the flourishing garlands on their heads (6-12). Having from the first fragmentary lines (1-5) indicated their ritual role (bearing a laurel branch to Apollo's shrine as *daphnēphoroi*), they deliberately characterize their ode as a siren-like song of praise and stress the manner of the performance: it is accompanied by a flute (13-14); at the same time, they precisely define the subjects of the encomiastic song: the young man Agasicles (38) and his glorious (*pandoxos*, 8) paternal line -his father Pagondas and grandfather Aioladas (9-10). In addition, they describe their chorus' leader Damaena in some detail (66-70), even mentioning by name her mother Andaesistrotā, so far as the extant text permits us to understand (71-2).

It is obvious that both Alcman's and Pindar's *parthenoi* directly refer to their *khoreia* as if they want to call attention to themselves; moreover, far from claiming to be anyone other than themselves, they are themselves. So, the *lyric dramatization*

²⁰ See Herington, (n.3) 20-25, and 40.

²¹ For Alcman's *Partheneion*, see C. Calame, *Les Choeurs de Jeunes Filles en Grèce Archaique*, Roma 1977 [= *Choruses of Young Women in Ancient Greece: Their Morphology, Religious Role, and Social Function*, transl. by D. Collins and J. Orion, Oxford 2001]; id. *Alcman: Fragmenta*, Roma 1983. For a recent reinterpretation of the ode, revealing its astral symbolism, see G. Ferrari, *Alcman and the Cosmos of Sparta*, Chicago 2008.

²² It is also probable that in Alcman's *Partheneion* the implied choral competition is between the members of the same chorus of the *parthenoi*; see A. Henrichs, " 'Why Should I Dance?': Choral Self-Referentiality in Greek Tragedy", *Arion* 3 (1994-5) 83.

²³ It has been suggested that in fr. 94b Pindar consciously follows Alcman's *Partheneion*; see C. M. Bowra, *Pindar* (Oxford 1964) 363-64, and M. Lefkowitz, *First-Person Fictions: Pindar's Poetic 'I'* (Oxford 1991) 15-20.

mentioned by Herington concerns the very 'role' of a *khoreutēs*, and has no connection with any dramatic role in the sense of playing the other²⁴.

Most scholars think that the dramatic character of the fourth dithyramb of Bacchylides is the effect of the prominence of tragedy in the dramatic festivals of Athens²⁵. Evidently, not only does the chorus act as a dramatic person but a striking, tragic irony is also created by the antithesis between the knowledge of the audience and the ignorance of the heroes. From the herald's account, narrated by Aegeus, the audience immediately acknowledges who the foreign man is, because Theseus' deeds were well known to the real audience of the Athenians²⁶. But, on the dramatic level, the Athenian king is kept on tenterhooks as the young hero's identity remains unknown till the end of the ode; furthermore, Aegeus' evident fretfulness increases the irony, because the unknown young man is his own son, who was destined to become the Athenian hero precisely because of these deeds²⁷. It is therefore noteworthy how the five deeds of Theseus are presented: together with the name of each defeated enemy, the most authentic features of his actions are recalled, too, so that the identity of the fearless man should be clearly understood by the audience. The lucidity, also, with which Aegeus describes the military bearing of the young man, is notable (46-59); moreover, the king 'forgets' the herald of the deeds (16-17) and becomes a herald himself, narrating the events with the vividness of an eyewitness.

The details, in particular, of Aegeus' descriptions have led critics to assume further dramatic events for the lost lines of the ode. Specifically, it has been suggested that the dramatic dialogue between Aegeus and the chorus might be followed by Theseus' entrance with two companions; in an extremely festive way, his arrival would remind the spectators of the quite recent victory of the Athenians in the Corinthian region²⁸. But even without the supplementary scene, the fourth dithyramb of Bacchylides remains representative of the dramatic role of the chorus, who here assumes the characteristics of a dramatic hero: it enquires about the events, comments on them and intends to shape the opinion of his interlocutor, intervening in the progress of the dramatic myth. These elements, however, change the ritual role of the chorus into a

²⁴ Cf. Athanassaki (n.17) 91-2.

²⁵ According to Zimmermann (n.19) 96-7, similarities of the dithyramb with tragedy may be investigated in Aeschylus' *Persae*, *Septem*, and *Agamemnon*; if, particularly, Maehler's date is true, Bacchylides might have seen Aeschylus' *Oresteia* at the City Dionysia, five months earlier. See Maehler (n.14) 193. For the tragic elements of the ode, Burnett (n.11) 117-23.

²⁶ Theseus' deeds are the dearest subject of the vase-painters during the last decades of the sixth century (*LIMC* VII 922-34 nos. 33-53), perhaps because Peisistratos and his sons intended to elevate Theseus to a par with the Dorian Heracles; see Maehler, (n.14) 191-93. Moreover, the defeat of Sinis, Skiron, Kerkyon, and Proktoustes is the theme of the first four of the nine metopes on the north side of the Athenian Treasury in Delphi, according to the reconstruction by P. de La Coste-Messelière, *Sculptures du Trésor des Athéniens* (Paris 1957) 37-81. See also Athanassaki (n.17) 309-16 for an interpretation of the dramatic character of the ode (as a symbol of the φιλαγλάουος Ἀθήνας) in accordance to the sculptures of the Athenian Treasury and the Theseus' metopes of the Hyphaesteion in Athens.

²⁷ Cf. T. Gelzer, "Bacchylide, *Dithyrambe* 18 (*Thésée*)", *REL* 67 (1989) 20-6.

²⁸ The suggestion is by Maehler (n.14) 189-90, and 205, based on a previous idea of R. Merkelbach, "Der Theseus des Bakchylides", *ZPE* 12 (1973) 56-62 (also suggesting entry of the Athenian ephebes from the Isthmos; with the difference that the ephebic guards suggested are those of Megara); cf. G. Ieranò, "Osservazioni sul Tesco di Bacchilide", *Acme* 40 (1987) 87-103.

The fourth dithyramb of Bacchylides (*ode 18* maehler): an anti-platonic dithyramb

dramatic one, making the chorus 'one of the actors'²⁹; it is characteristic that even the most traditional features of the ritual *khoreia*, such as praise or invocation to a god, are absent from *Ode 18* of Bacchylides.

Being the only extant paradigm of a chorus acting as a hero, Bacchylides' fourth dithyramb seems to be the exception. However, its dramatic character forecasts the problem of the chorus' ritual function in at least the City Dionysia where the dramatic elements became gradually the most prevalent. Obviously anti-Platonic, this dithyramb blurs the distinction drawn by the philosopher between dramatic and dithyrambic genre.

²⁹ The characterization is by Aristotle *Poetics* (1456a 25-30) and concerns the tragic chorus.