

The Meleager myth in Bacchylides 5 challenges the reader to understand the poet's purpose in building Hieron's ode around the unremittingly grim story of familial slaughter, but a consideration of the immediate historical context reveals the relevance of the myth. Though he was one of the most powerful men in the Greek world, as tyrant of Syracuse Hieron did not enjoy the unquestioning acceptance of the traditional Hellenic aristocracy (Finley 1979). The Deinomenid rise to power outside the sphere of traditional, Hellenic aristocracy (Hdt. 7.153-5) placed the Syracusan ruler in the paradoxical position of needing to assert his legitimate status. In his fifth ode, Bacchylides attempts both to assimilate Hieron to the status of a traditional *basileus* and to convince the assembly of Greek aristocracy to accept the Deinomenids into their ranks: the representation of Hieron himself undertakes the first task while the Meleager myth addresses the second by representing the dangers of strife and instinctive hostility.

Bacchylides employs a complex web of associations to weave Hieron into the symbolic structure of Greek kingship, drawing on Hesiodic resonances and associations of Hieron with the eagle as the servant of Zeus. These references emphasize Hieron's legitimate role in the traditional structure of Greek kingship, a role bound up with administering justice and serving Zeus, not raw access to power. In counterpoint to his emphasis on these themes, Bacchylides conspicuously avoids the use of any leadership title, *tyrannos* and *basileus* alike, instead characterizing Hieron as *strategos* of the Syracusans and thereby focusing attention on his role as military leader, one which well conforms to the image of the *basileus*. The introduction of the Meleager myth instructs the Greeks gathered at Olympia as to how they should receive this overture: with open minds and without undue haste toward hostility – for it is the strife among men after the destruction of the boar, rather than the boar itself, which leads to tragedy.

Bacchylides 5 has long been understood as performed in Syracuse some time after Hieron's return; I argue that the themes are intended for a panhellenic, aristocratic audience and must have been performed at Olympia itself. Multiple features in the ode suggest deictic reference to the monuments of the Olympian precinct, just as the deictic *autou* pivots the setting of the poem from Heracles' incipient quest for Deianeira back to the race at Olympia. The eastward movement of Hieron (in the form of the eagle) and the westward movement of Pherenikes frame the poem, placing Olympia firmly in the center as the location of the action while Syracuse is marginalized as Hieron's home, but not the limit of his sphere of activity. The performance of this dark ode at Olympus, then, renegotiates the relationship between Hieron and the panhellenic aristocracy. Just as Nestor's telling of the Meleager story in *Iliad* 9 was meant to sway the fatally stubborn Achilles from his determined stance, so here it is offered to the Greeks. The dark ode is a warning, but also offers the hope that Hieron's glory may be united with the greater glory of Greece, and the end of the tale averted.