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# IN BETWEEN POETRY AND RITUAL: THE HYMN TO DIONYSUS IN SOPHOCLES' *ANTIGONE* (1115–54)

It may be said that the ideal of reciprocity between gods and mortals underlies ancient Greek religious practice and permeates most of its hymns. And an ideal it is indeed, for a number of rhetorical strategies employed by the hymnic poet are in fact an attempt at transforming an unequal relationship, in which humans are subordinated to gods, into a relationship of coordination, characterized by the mutual exchange of essential goods: in the case of hymns, praises in the form of word and song are exchanged for divine favours and gifts. One creates, as it were, a fictitious scenario in which there exists between deity and worshipper a link of reciprocal benefit by means of the offered hymn.[1]

In the hymnic diction, it is not unusual for the poet to ask the deity whether he or she could lend his or her favour to the hymn he is singing, the present object of his devotion, and, by means of this very object, he counts himself devoutly fit to worship the godhead whose help he is requesting. In so far as the worshipper focusses on his own hymn and devotion for better propitiating the deity,[2] many hymns are characterized by a clear progression from the universal to the particular, from the timeless to the here and now, from myth to performance in the dynamics of their composition. Let's see how this works in a hymn of great refinement, the hymn to Dionysus corresponding to the fifth stasimon of Sophocles' *Antigone*.

[1] On the idea of reciprocity in Greek religion and in its hymns, see R. Parker, 'Pleasing thighs: reciprocity in Greek religion', in C. Gill, N. Postlethwaite and R. Seaford (edd.), *Reciprocity in Ancient Greece* (Oxford, 1998), 105–25; J.M. Bremer, 'The reciprocity of giving and thanks-giving in Greek worship', in ibid., 127–37; and C. Calame, 'Variations énonciatives, relations avec les dieux et fonctions poétiques dans les Hymnes homériques', *MH* 52 (1995), 2–19, at 11–12 ('Contrats de réciprocité'). See also R.L. Hunter, *Theocritus and the Archaeology of Greek Poetry* (Cambridge, 1996), 73: 'Power, particularly when it is power over us, is an uncomfortable poetic subject, because praise of the powerful can never be *simply* praise – it always contains a recognition of our vulnerability and an attempt to protect that vulnerability by "buying off" the powerful with praise.'

[2] A few words on the distinction between hymn and prayer might not be unsuitable here. The divide between them is admittedly fluid, but one may say, as does S. Pulleyn, *Prayer in Greek Religion* (Oxford, 1997), 43–55, that prayers spoken or sung by individuals are petitions addressed to a deity that refer to a libation, a votive object or a sacrifice offered in the present or the past, or else to be offered in the future, whereas hymns are offerings that carry in themselves the ability to generate χάρις, serving as a sort of negotiable commodity in the hope of obtaining some future favour, or as a thanksgiving for some past benefit. The distinction, in sum, is best sought in terms of function, not external characteristics such as music, metrics or length: a prayer is a request that offers a further act of devotion (sacrifice, etc.), whereas the very content of a hymn sung by a community – its carefully wrought language, music and dance – is a means of gaining the god's goodwill, offering laudatory words in place of sacrifice. On the verbal strategies of hymnic poets, see W.H. Race, 'Aspects of rhetoric and form in Greek hymns', *GRBS* 23 (1982), 5–14; W.D. Furley, 'Praise and persuasion in Greek hymns', *JHS* 115 (1995), 29–46; W.D. Furley and J.M. Bremer, *Greek Hymns* (Tübingen, 2001), *passim*.

Creon, having being severely reprimanded by Tiresias, has just departed from the scene, firmly intent on making up for the injustice he committed by preventing Polynices' burial and arresting Antigone. Precisely at this point the chorus sings an ode to Dionysus:[3]

πολυώνυμε, Καδμείας στρ. α
νύμφας ἄγαλμα 1116
καὶ Διὸς βαρυβρεμέτα
γένος, κλυτὰν ὃς ἀμφέπεις
Ἰταλίαν, μέδεις δὲ
παγκοίνοις Ἐλευσινίας 1120
Δηοῦς ἐν κόλποις, ὦ Βακχεῦ,
Βακχᾶν ματρόπολιν Θήβαν
ναιετῶν παρ' ὑγρὸν
Ἰσμηνοῦ ῥέεθρον, ἀγρίου τ'
ἐπὶ σπορᾷ δράκοντος. 1125

σὲ δ' ὑπὲρ διλόφου πέτρας ἀντ. α
στέροψ ὄπωπε
λιγνύς, ἔνθα Κωρύκιαι
στείχουσι Νύμφαι Βακχίδες,
Κασταλίας τε νᾶμα. 1130
καί σε Νυσαίων ὀρέων
κισσήρεις ὄχθαι χλωρά τ' ἀ-
κτὰ πολυστάφυλος πέμπει
ἀμβρότων ἐπέων
εὐαζόντων Θηβαΐας 1135
ἐπισκοποῦντ' ἀγυιάς.

τὰν ἐκ πασᾶν τιμᾶς στρ. β
ὑπερτάταν πόλεων
ματρὶ σὺν κεραυνίᾳ·
νῦν δ', ὡς βιαίας ἔχεται 1140
πάνδαμος πόλις ἐπὶ νόσου,
μολεῖν καθαρσίῳ ποδὶ Παρνασίαν
ὑπὲρ κλειτὺν ἢ στονόεντα πορθμόν. 1145

ἰὼ πῦρ πνεόντων ἀντ. β
χοράγ' ἄστρων, νυχίων
φθεγμάτων ἐπίσκοπε,
Ζηνὸς γένεθλον, προφάνηθ',
ὦναξ, σαῖς ἅμα περιπόλοις 1150
Θυίασιν, αἵ σε μαινόμεναι πάννυχοι
χορεύουσι τὸν ταμίαν Ἴακχον.

You of many names, glory of the Cadmean bride and offspring of deep-thundering Zeus, you who care for famous Italy and rule in the hospitable recesses of Eleusinian Deo, O Bacchus, dwelling in Thebes, the mother-city of the Bacchants, by the watery flow of Ismenus and over the seed of the savage dragon;

You the flashing, smoky flame saw over the twin-crested rock, where the Corycian Bacchic nymphs come, and the Castalian stream (saw you), and you the ivy-covered slopes of the

[3] Text according to H. Lloyd-Jones and N.G. Wilson, *Sophoclis Fabulae* (Oxford, 1990).

Nysaean mountains and the green shore of many grape-clusters send, while immortal cries of *euai* are heard, a supervisor of the ways of Thebes,

Which of all cities you, together with your mother whom the lightning killed, honour most. So now, since the whole city is in the grip of a violent sickness, come with cathartic foot over the Parnassian slope or the groaning strait.

Hail, chorus-leader of the fire-breathing stars, master of the voices of the night, child born of Zeus, appear O king with your attendant Thyiads, who in their frenzy dance through the night for you, the steward Iacchus.[4]

The hymn maintains from the dialogue that precedes it the high emotive tension and translates it into the pious hope that, once Dionysus is present, the imminent catastrophe will be prevented at last. The poet's strategy lies in making Dionysus' universal power, as revealed at his different sites of devotion, flow to one and the same point, Thebes, where the deity's cosmic nature becomes transparent in this one place – his chosen city.

It is under the sign of multiplicity that the hymn opens up with the invocation: πολυώνυμε. But what comes next is far from being a sequence of epithets, as for instance in Philodamus' paean to Dionysus, another hymn in which the god appears as a healing deity and which begins with an outpouring of epithets and cultic titles: 'Lord Dithyrambus, Bacchus, god of cries, Bull, with ivy in your hair, Roarer' (Διθύραμβε, Βάκχ' ε[ὔιε, Ταῦρε κ]ισσοχαῖτα, Βρόμιε). In fact, nowhere is Dionysus addressed or referred to by his own name; the poet's point is to divulge the geographical comprehensiveness of his power. After a brief genealogical mention of his parents, Semele and Zeus,[5] there follows a catalogue of sites that the god keeps under his authority (Italy, Eleusis, Thebes) in an ascending sequence culminating in the chorus's native city.[6] During this crescendo, which is a rhetorical

[4] Translation by S. Scullion, 'Dionysos and katharsis in *Antigone*', *CA* 17 (1998), 96–122, at 97–8, with slight modifications.

[5] The opening line (πολυώνυμε, Καδμείας) puts in a nutshell, in two contiguous words, the pattern by which the whole hymn will abide: from the multiple to the specific, from the many names to one name only, Cadmus, who apart from being Semele's father is eponymous of Thebes' citizens, οἱ Καδμεῖοι. The hymn starts with the sequence ⏑–––––, but πολυώνυμε, Καδμείας νύμφας ἄγαλμα is, according to A. M. Dale, *The Lyric Metres of Greek Drama* (Cambridge, 1968), 191, n. 3, 'a dicolon ⏑–––––––|–|–––|⏑ in which one double-short has contracted to accommodate the proper name'. Thereby Καδμείας receives a mild stress, with its three longs contrasting with the anapaestic opening.

[6] A number of conjectures have been put forward to replace Ἰταλίαν 1119. R.D. Dawe, *Studies on the Text of Sophocles* (Leiden, 1978), 116, declares himself surprised that 'Italy should be named alongside Thebes (1115), Eleusis (1120), Thebes again (1122), the river Ismenus (1124), a cave on Mt. Parnassus (1127), a stream at Delphi (1130), Nysa in Euboea (1131), and lastly Thebes again (1135)'. He thus suggests Οἰχαλίαν, arguing that 'since Euboean sites are only mentioned once in the list, that area ought perhaps to be strengthened'. See also K. Förstel, *Untersuchungen zum homerischen Apollonhymnos* (Bochum, 1979), 396, n. 394, for whom the description 'gains autonomy' halfway through the catalogue: 'Nachdem in der konventionellen Form der relativischen Anknüpfung Dionysos Walter über Italien, Gebieter von Eleusis und Bewohner von Theben genannt ist, verselbstständigt sich die Darstellung, und es werden die Höhe des Parnass und die nysäischen Berge als die vom Gott bevorzugten Orte backischer Feiern andeutend beschrieben'; and J. Jouanna, 'L'hymne chez Sophocle', in Y. Lehmann (ed.), *L'hymne antique et son public* (Turnhout, 2007), 109–32, at 122, n. 27, and 129, who regards the catalogue as a means of honouring the god by displaying the extent of his power, or even as 'une invitation au voyage pour le spectateur'. Recently H. Cullyer, 'A wind that blows from Thrace: Dionysus in the fifth stasimon of Sophocles' *Antigone*', *CW* 99 (2005), 3–20, has claimed that

device fairly widespread in Pindar's victory odes,[7] the relevance of its constituents is reflected in (and gauged by) the number of syllables that each element acquires in the stanza. The first one, referring to Italy, amounts to only ten syllables, and just one adjective (*κλυτάν*) qualifies the location, the remotest from Thebes. Eleusis though, which lies nearer, is spread over sixteen syllables endowed with somewhat more density, not only as they contain the name of a goddess (Deo) but also by virtue of the epithet suggesting a wider scope (*παγκοίνοις*). Then finally we arrive at Thebes, which with its twenty-two syllables overflows four whole verses, not without first undergoing a subtle transition that puts the god once and for all in contact with his city. Between Eleusis and Thebes the chorus inserts at the end of the line the vocative *ὦ Βακχεῦ*, which, on the one hand, resumes the direct form of address at the head of the hymn and, on the other, attaches the divine epiclesis to the name of those who celebrate him, whose mother-city is Thebes.

*#πολυώνυμε …*
*… ὦ Βακχεῦ || Βακχᾶν ματρόπολιν Θήβαν ναιετῶν …*

The very change of finite verbs (*ἀμφέπεις*, *μέδεις*) to the participial form (*ναιετῶν*)[8] betrays a greater proximity of the god: he protects Italy and reigns over Eleusis, but he does so *dwelling* in Thebes, where he finds himself really at home.

In antistrophe *α* we are faced once more with the flow that leads from other localities to the centre of the dramatic action in Thebes. Yet now the contrast is not between far away and close by but between high and low. From the heights of Delphi's sanctuary, marked by the Phaedriades (the rock with a double crest) and the Corycian Cave, we head down the mountain following the current that emerges at Castalia's fountain. And from the summit of Mount Nysa we go down its ravines as far as the Euboean coast, replete with vines, which escorts the god to his final destination, the avenues of Thebes. Both localities, Delphi and Euboea,[9] evince the presence of the god through their natural settings, either by the Bacchic nymphs dancing on the mountain or by the ivy that covers its slopes and the coastal

the Nysean mountains of line 1131 are probably a reference to Thrace rather than Euboea. In what follows I try to explain the reason why the site names appear in that specific order.

[7] See W.H. Race, *Style and Rhetoric in Pindar's Odes* (Atlanta, GA, 1990), 9–40. One example of the geographical approach expressed in increasing members: *Λύκιε | καὶ Δάλοι' ἀνάσσων Φοῖβε | Παρνασσοῦ τε κράναν Κασταλίαν φιλέων* (Pind. *Pyth*. 1.39). Here Lycia and Delos, Apollo's cultic centres, articulate the crescendo that culminates on Mount Parnassus (Delphi), where the poet's actual interest resides, as he in fact celebrates a *Pythian* victory.

[8] Cf. H. Rohdich, *Antigone: Beitrag einer Theorie des sophokleischen Helden* (Heidelberg, 1980), 209, who nevertheless refers only to the 'Besonderheit Thebens' revealed in the switch of verb forms.

[9] Cullyer (n. 6) argues that lines 1131–3 are a reference to the Thracian, not the Euboean, Nysa. I am not particularly convinced by her arguments; the reasons listed by her (at p. 7) in support of an alleged Euboean location seems to me to carry more weight: scholiast's comments; epithet *polustaphulos* (1133) used in Homer's *Iliad* (2.537) to describe an Euboean city; site consistent with the geographical scope of the god in this ode, having resonance both for the Theban elders and for the Athenian audience; fragment of Sophocles' *Thyestes* mentioning a magical Euboean vine. But it may well be that the vagueness of lines 1131–3 and 1145 is intentional on Sophocles' part. As far as I can see, the elders of the chorus have a definite location in mind, Euboea, yet Sophocles is conceivably harbouring a simultaneous allusion to Thrace, thus combining some threads (and here I agree with Cullyer) alluded to in the parodos and in the second and fourth stasima of the play in order to stress Dionysus' healing powers as well as his potential destructiveness.

vines, both of them attributes of Dionysus. It is nevertheless in Thebes that the god shows himself as an active agent who is concerned with the avenues echoing with the immortal poetry and his festive shouts. Until then he had been little more than an object: it is the smoky flame that sees him, as well as the waters flowing from the Castalian stream; it is the slopes of Mount Nysa that escort him, as well as the Euboean coast. At regular intervals, made the more prominent by standing first in line, the god is referred to in the accusative:

1126 σὲ δέ …
1131 καί σε …
1136 ἐπισκοποῦντα …

In the first two cases he suffers the external action;[10] in the third, though still object, the god is simultaneously subject of another action, whose object is none other than Thebes itself. Previously he was seen (ὄπωπε) by flames and current; now he is escorted to Thebes to inspect (ἐπισκοποῦντα) the ways that echo with poetry in his praise. Thus the circle described by strophe and antistrophe comes to a close: every road leads to Thebes, either in the horizontal thrust of the strophe (from Italy to Thebes, going over Eleusis) or in the vertical, downhill path of the antistrophe (from Delphi to Thebes, going over the Euboean Nysa and its coast). Both adopt a similar procedure, from remoteness to proximity, and in Thebes both arrive at their destiny. Twice over Thebes is brought to the fore at the end of strophe and antistrophe,[11] but it is only at the beginning of strophe β that Thebes reaches the spotlight for good, standing first in line as an anaphoric pronoun (τάν 1137).

Sophocles is at pains to weld together the first three stanzas, at the same time giving away the chorus's excitement as reflected in the syntax: the first strophe, filled with the invocation, is driven forward at the beginning of the antistrophe by an inserted anacoluthic δέ and by a relative pronoun at the head of the second strophe.[12] The lack of an exact agreement between τάν (which is singular) and its antecedent Θηβαΐας … ἀγυιάς (which is plural) emphasizes the break, heightening what follows.[13] Now it is possible to dispense with the contrast offered by other sites; Thebes, says the chorus, is the city most honoured by Dionysus, along with his mother. All the ways trodden until then contribute to narrowing the focus for the *hic et nunc* of the prayer (νῦν δ' 1140, μολεῖν 1142)[14] in this cletic hymn:[15] let Dionysus come with cathartic foot – that is, with dancing step (as Scullion

[10] See Jouanna (n. 6), 123: 'alors que le dieu était sujet dans la strophe, il devient maintenant objet dans l'antistrophe; et les lieux géographiques, objets dans la strophe, deviennent sujets dans l'antistrophe'.

[11] See ibid., 123–4.

[12] See W. Kranz, *Stasimon: Untersuchungen zu Form und Gehalt der griechischen Tragödie* (Berlin, 1933), 178: 'so reißt die Erregung … über die Strophenabsätze hinweg, freilich so, daß die Gedankengliederung immer ganz durchsichtig bleibt'.

[13] See S.N. Taragna, 'Lingua e stile dell'inno tragico in Sofocle, *Ant.* 1115–1152', *RFIC* 107 (1979), 131–41, at 136.

[14] νῦν δ' is the reading suggested by Lloyd-Jones and Wilson; codices show καὶ νῦν. See also H. Lloyd-Jones and N.G. Wilson, *Sophocles: Second Thoughts* (Göttingen, 1997), 83. As noted by G. Müller, *Antigone* (Heidelberg, 1967), 244, μολεῖν is the first main clause verb of the song.

[15] On this type of hymn, whose function is to summon the deity to appear at the celebration in his honour, see D.A. Russel and N.G. Wilson (edd.), *Menander Rhetor* (Oxford, 1981), 333–5, and Furley and Bremer (n. 2), 61, and *passim*.

suggests[16]) – to liberate the city, whose helpless situation, in the grip of a violent disease, is emphasized by the hyperbaton of *βιαίας* and *νόσου* framing the subject *πάνδαμος πόλις*. The *nosos*, according to Scott Scullion, is the 'civic sickness', the political strife that tears apart the royal family and undermines the whole body of citizens.[17] Dionysus Bacchius' loosening power is variously attested in the Eleusinian and Orphic context,[18] and indeed Eleusis figures prominently both at the beginning (*Ἐλευσινίας Δηοῦς* 1120–1) and at the end (*Ἴακχον* 1152) of our hymn – Iacchus being Dionysus' name in Eleusis. His foot is said to be *katharos*, which may endorse the etymological relation with Sanskrit *śithirá* – 'loose', revived by Martin Peters[19] – a hypothesis not even mentioned by Frisk or Chantraine.

Apart from the practice of Corybantic and Dionysiac dancing as a cure for mental distress referred to by Scullion,[20] the cathartic or loosening dance that the god is called upon to perform may bear some connection as well with Antigone being kept in the confinement of her rocky enclosure and being close – the audience knows[21] – to Hades, the god 'who binds'.[22] Sophocles is not so much hinting at 'the Eleusinian answer to man's mortality' so as to nurture Antigone's hope (as suggested by Albert Henrichs)[23] as he is using myth, not cult, to create the literary effect of boosting the audience's expectation, which would be all the more encouraged to believe in her prompt release by associating her with Persephone.[24]

So the god is to come dancing from the heights of Parnassus or across the resounding strait. 'Parnassus' and 'strait' both refer to non-Boeotian sites mentioned in antistrophe *α* (the Euripus divides Euboea from Boeotia). This double reference frames and fences in the double reference made to Thebes at the end of the antistrophe and the beginning of the next strophe, in a chiastic pattern ABBA:

A 1126–33 (Delphi and Euboea)
B 1134–6 (Thebes)

[16] See Scullion (n. 4), esp. 110–14, on this expression. The author argues that *καθαρσίῳ ποδί* suggests some ecstatic Dionysiac dancing, conceived of as a homeopathic cure for madness and mental disorders in several fifth- and fourth-century texts.

[17] Ibid., 114–19. On the various meanings of *nosos*, see G.E.R. Lloyd, *In the Grip of Disease: Studies in the Greek Imagination* (Oxford, 2003), 12, n. 2, with references. For a new etymological analysis of *nosos* as a possessive compound meaning 'not having well-being (resulting from divine favour)', see A. Willi, '*νόσος* and *ὁσίη*: etymological and sociocultural observations on the concepts of disease and divine (dis)favour in ancient Greece', *JHS* 128 (2008), 153–71.

[18] See E. Krummen, 'Ritual und Katastrophe: rituelle Handlung und Bildersprache bei Sophokles und Euripides', in F. Graf (ed.), *Ansichten griechischer Rituale: Geburtstagssymposium für Walter Burkert, Castelen bei Basel, 15. bis 18. März 1996* (Stuttgart, 1998), 296–325.

[19] M. Peters, 'Beiträge zur griechischen Etymologie', in L. Isebaert (ed.), *Miscellanea Linguistica Graeco-Latina* (Namur, 1993), 85–113.

[20] Scullion (n. 4), 106–14.

[21] Antigone longs for death (*θανεῖν ἐρᾷ* 220) and calls herself 'bride of Hades' (816).

[22] For the etymology of Hades as 'the one who binds', see M. Janda, *Eleusis: Das indogermanische Erbe der Mysterien* (Innsbruck, 2000), 114–17.

[23] A. Henrichs, 'Between country and city: cultic dimensions of Dionysus in Athens and Attica', in M. Griffith and D.J. Mastronarde (edd.), *Cabinet of the Muses: Essays of Classical and Comparative Literature in Honor of Thomas G. Rosenmeyer* (Atlanta, GA, 1990), 257–77, at 267.

[24] Cf. R. Seaford, *Reciprocity and Ritual: Homer and Tragedy in the Developing City-state* (Oxford, 1994), 381–2: 'Perhaps … the invocation of Dionysos to come as the torch-bearing Iakchos of the mysteries implies an analogy between the joyful release of Antigone and of Kore, each from her dark bridal chamber in Hades'.

B 1137–42 (Thebes)
A 1143–5 (Delphi and Euboea)

Thebes stands in the very middle of the composition, and in addition to being a geographical centre it is also a temporal centre: it is now (*νῦν δ'*) that the chorus requests the god's advent with his cathartic dance to the city into which he is escorted (*πέμπει* 1133, the present of a verb of action, as against *ὄπωπε* 1127, a gnomic perfect of a verb of perception[25]) in order to care for the avenues that now echo with immortal verse. But what kind of immortal verses are they? One need look no further than the poem itself: the immortal poetry is none other than the poem sung by the chorus, or rather the very hymn whose lines we are now hearing. This expression, immortal verses, is used by Pindar at the end of *Pythian* 4 as a way of alluding to himself and to this very epinician celebrating Arkesilas:

*καὶ κε μυθήσαιθ', ὁποίαν, Ἀρκεσίλα,*
*εὗρε παγὰν ἀμβροσίων ἐπέων,*
*πρόσφατον Θήβᾳ ξενωθείς* (Sn.–M. 296–9).

And he would tell, Arkesilas, what a spring of ambrosial verses he found, when he was recently a guest at Thebes. (trans. William Race)

The whole progression up to this point had been in the direction of the city of Thebes (the word *polis* is repeated three times through the course of the hymn, always alluding to Thebes and in three different cases: 1122, 1138 and 1141). In antistrophe *β* this tendency undergoes a clear-cut switch, underlined by the renewal of direct address found at the beginning, in a circular movement.[26] What was local assumes a cosmic trait. The Theban avenues for which the god cares (*ἐπισκοποῦντ'* 1136) are the very same he is called upon to guard or supervise (*ἐπίσκοπε* 1148) as chorus-leader of the fire-breathing stars (the divine counterpart of the torches used in Dionysiac rituals). There is a certain advance from local to universal when Semele and Zeus are mentioned in strophe (*ματρὶ σὺν κεραυνίᾳ* 1139) and antistrophe (*Ζηνὸς γένεθλον* 1149) respectively, resuming the divine lineage with which the hymn had begun. The Theban bride or nymph acts as a symbol of the city, and Zeus of the cosmos. Yet the frontiers are blurred when we notice that Dionysus is here and there *ἐπίσκοπος*; when the verse with which Theban avenues resound is said to be 'immortal'; when the simple mention of the shouts of 'euai!' uttered by the chorus (*εὐαζόντων* 1135) find a telling parallel in the nocturnal cries (*νυχίων φθεγμάτων* 1147–8) of the Thyiads, who dance (in praise of) Iacchus[27] – a name that comes from *ἰαχή* 'shout'. And Iacchus is granted

[25] *ὄπωπε* may well be present in sense, but is better understood, with R.C. Jebb, *Sophocles: The Plays and Fragments:* Antigone (Cambridge, 1888), 201, as a gnomic perfect: 'hath (oft) seen thee'. See also Taragna (n. 13), 134.

[26] See Taragna (n. 13), 138, and Kranz (n. 12), 197: 'die gedankliche Gliederung des Chorliedes von zwei Strophenpaaren in die Form *αἀβ* : *β'*, also eine gewisse Zerteilung des zweiten Paares und die gedankliche Lösung der Antistrophe vom Vorangehenden, die sich davon durch Kontrastierung … abhebt'. See also Jouanna (n. 6), 120–1 and 127: 'L'antistrophe constitue à elle seule un hymne en miniature'. As Dale (n. 5), 141, notes, *ὑπὲρ κλειτὺν ἢ στονόεντα πορθμόν* is an aeolo-choriambic hendecasyllable with a very rare (----------) 'dragged close': a metrical device, one might say, that focuses the attention on the antistrophe that follows.

[27] *χορεύω* has here an accusative as complement. According to Furley and Bremer (n. 2), 2.279, this may mean both that the Thyiads honour Dionysus through dance (*obiectum affec-*

the steward (*ταμίαν*) epithet because of his salutary powers, whose efficiency is intimately connected to the activities that the chorus itself deploys at that very moment: it is through his dance, with cathartic foot, that the god shall heal the infirmity, as *ταμίας κώμων*, master of ceremonies of the celebration that at this point takes place as a token of worship.[28]

Thus the chorus attains a maximum of efficacy in its song by mimicking the process by which Dionysus is aptly guided through his cultic centres until reaching the site where the choral dance takes place, transforming it thereupon into the stage of a cosmic celebration whose focal point is the very song they are singing.[29] Thebes, final destination of the divine path meticulously traced by the poem, turns in the end into Athens itself, where the chorus, on the stage built up to pay homage to him, celebrates Dionysus in the context of a tragic competition in his honour.[30] The city where the god's wanderings come to a halt, Thebes, celebrates him in songs (of which our hymn is a mouthpiece) whose magnitude is matched only by the cosmic dance of the stars. In this dance, Thebes itself is the scenery and in it are gathered together universal and local features: stars are brought near, constellations and worshippers intermingle in one and the same festivity, in which only the long-awaited guest is wanting – Dionysus.[31]

*tum*) and also that they incite his epiphany by means of it (*obiectum effectum*). The chorus's dance would then have as its counterpart the cathartic dance of the god; its movements would be mirrored by his attendants, *περίπολοι*, whose name, in turn, may well allude to the revolutions of the stars. See Taragna (n. 13), 140: 'Le Tiadi che danzano in onore del dio riproducono lo stesso movimento circolare delle stelle che ruotano intorno al *χοραγός*; come il movimento degli astri è tramutato in danza rituale, cosí la danza delle Tiadi è tradotta in immagine del movimento stellare'.

[28] *ταμίας κώμων* is the phrase used by Pindar at *Isth.* 6.57. It is mainly in this condition, as steward or supervisor (*ταμίαν, ἐπισκοποῦντα*) of the laudatory ode, that Dionysus is invoked by this cletic hymn to make his epiphany. Through his dance the god heals the infirmity, recognisant of the praise that is conveyed to him through the chorus's dance. J.C. Kamerbeek, *The Plays of Sophocles:* Antigone (Leiden, 1978), 190, alludes to the Pindaric passage, without further comments; Furley and Bremer (n. 2), 2.279, suggest that Iacchus 'the steward is a reference to the double function of dispensing the fruits of earth and guiding the initiates to a kind of happiness in Hades'.

[29] See C. Segal, *Tragedy and Civilization: An Interpretation of Sophocles* (Cambridge, 1981), 205: 'The Dionysus who leads the remote "fire-breathing stars" in the last ode is also the Dionysus celebrated by the performance itself', and U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Herakles: Euripides* (Berlin, 1895), 3.149: 'das Dionysoslied der Antigone is nur so erklärlich'. Contra: K.-D. Dorsch, *Götterhymnen in den Chorliedern der griechischen Tragiker* (Münster, 1983), 221, n. 120.

[30] On the relation between Thebes and Athens in Attic tragedy, see F.I. Zeitlin, 'Thebes: theater of self and society in Athenian drama', in J.J. Winkler and F.I. Zeitlin (edd.), *Nothing to Do with Dionysos? Athenian Drama in its Social Context* (Princeton, NJ, 1990), 130–67, esp. 144–5. On the 'Athenian connection' of our ode, see P. Vicaire, 'Place et figure de Dionysos dans la tragédie de Sophocle', *REG* 81 (1968), 351–71, esp. 358–65; A.F. Bierl, 'Was hat die Tragödie mit Dionysos zu tun?', *Würzburger Jahrbücher* 15 (1989), 43–57, at 51–2; A.F. Bierl, *Dionysos und die griechische Tragödie: Politische und 'metatheatralische' Aspekte im Text* (Tübingen, 1991), esp. 131–3; Henrichs (n. 23), 266–8. For Furley and Bremer (n. 2), 2.279, 'the poet contrives a sort of ring composition, in so far as the identification of the Eleusinian Iakchos with Dionysus here corresponds to the juxtaposition of Dionysus with Eleusinian Deo in the opening stanza'.

[31] Cf. A. Henrichs, *'Warum soll ich denn tanzen?' Dionysisches im Chor der griechischen Tragödie* (Stuttgart and Leipzig, 1996), 46: 'Wie so oft, wenn das rituelle Rollenverhalten seiner Verehrer auf den Gott übertragen wird, erscheint Dionysos auch hier in doppelter Funktion: als aktiver Mittänzer, aber auch als göttlicher Rezipient des Tanzes, dem zu Ehren das kultische Tanzen stattfindet und der sozusagen "betanzt" wird.'

It may well be that tragedy has nothing to do with Dionysus, and I am inclined to agree with those who claim that the chorus has no ever-present ritual identity and that the choristers' role as participants in a Dionysiac ritual does not fundamentally determine the interpretation of the odes.[32] In the specific case of this ode, however, it seems to me that the cultic context of the festival, far from being irrelevant, was taken into account by the author precisely to stress the ironic function that he usually assigns to these ecstatic odes (traditionally called 'hyporchemes') in other plays (*Oedipus Tyrannus* 1086–97, *Ajax* 693–705, *Women of Trachis* 205–21). Hardly is our hymn over than there follows the news of Haemon's and Antigone's deaths; the contrast of the chorus's deluded hopes and its euphoric celebration[33] is all the more stressed by the impression of ritual normality that the ode creates, blending the cosmic order with mythical Thebes and bringing it down to the very choral performance in Athens. I am not attributing real ritual power to the ritual action performed by the chorus; the ritual retains its metaphorical character, continuing to be part of the dramatic fiction, but Sophocles exploits the actual ritual for the sake of artistic effect.[34] In this one case it would be right to say with Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood that there is 'a certain permeability' between the world of the play and the here and now of the tragic performance, or rather a 'double identity' of the hymn sung by the chorus.[35] The audience's expectations are thereby bolstered; the tragic dramatization of the ritual performance produces a sense of cultic reality precisely for the benefit of a literary effect, amplifying the impact of the appalling news brought by the messenger. Dionysus' presence, so much sought for, reveals itself as absolute absence. Yet Sophocles insists on keeping the ambiguity alive as to the divine presence or absence; the catastrophe that brings the play to an end, one

[32] See S. Scullion, '"Nothing to do with Dionysus": tragedy misconceived as ritual', *CQ* 52 (2002), 102–37, esp. at 118, 121 and 134; W.D. Furley, 'Hymns in Euripidean tragedy', *ICS* 24–25 (1999–2000), 183–97, at 186–7: 'I do not believe these moments of self-referentiality in choral odes represent any kind of break with the dramatic illusion. … I believe that choric self-referentiality in tragedy mirrors the self-referentiality of such cult hymns, and in no way reminds the audience that the chorus is dancing for Dionysus, rather than the purpose required by the play.' Contra, for example: A. Henrichs '"Why should I dance?": choral self-referentiality in Greek tragedy', *Arion* 3 (1994–5), 56–111; idem, 'Dancing in Athens, dancing in Delos: some patterns of choral projection in Euripides', *Philologus* 140 (1996), 48–62; idem (n. 23); and C. Sourvinou-Inwood, *Tragedy and Athenian Religion* (Lanham, MD, and Oxford, 2003), 52: 'If tragic choruses were indeed perceived, albeit not as dominantly, as choruses for Dionysos in the present, it follows that in the fifth century tragic performances were not perceived as ritual only in the sense that they were part of the festival of Dionysos and were framed by ritual; the tragedies themselves were shot through by ritual, not only insofar as ritual acts were important in the action in the other world enacted by the tragedy, but also, and more importantly, it was shot through by ritual performed in the present; so tragedy itself could not have been perceived as other than fundamentally religious.' On the relation between ritual and drama, see R. Parker, *Polytheism and Society at Athens* (Oxford, 2005), ch. 7, 136–52; Krummen (n. 18); R. Friedrich, 'Everything to do with Dionysos? Ritualism, the Dionysiac, and the tragic', in M.S. Silk (ed.), *Tragedy and the Tragic* (Oxford, 1996), 257–83, esp. 269; and P.E. Easterling, 'Tragedy and ritual', in R. Scodel (ed.), *Theatre and Society in the Classical World* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1993), 7–23.

[33] See Kranz (n. 12), 213: 'ist es [das hoffnungsfreudige Lied] verklungen, so öffnet sich ein Abgrund'. See also E. Stehle, 'Choral prayers in Greek tragedy: euphemia or aischrologia?', in P. Murray and P. Wilson (edd.), *Music and the Muses* (Oxford, 2004), 121–55, at 150, commenting on Euripides' *Ion*: 'the more intense a spectator's identification with the choral "I", the more sharply the outburst of violence at the end would intrude on the illusion'.

[34] See Friedrich (n. 32), 269.

[35] Sourvinou-Inwood (n. 32), 51, n. 126, and 52.

might argue, is perhaps plotted voluntarily by the god – his presence in the events is more striking than ever, even though it ironically frustrates the chorus's deepest desires.[36] Whether Sophocles 'viewed orgiastic cult with a certain ironic distance', as Scullion suggests,[37] must none the less remain an open question. However, it is reasonable to think, as Burton does, that 'a prayer addressed by Theban citizens to the Theban god would awake a quick response from the Athenians who sat in the theatre of this same god Dionysus to watch plays performed as part of the worship due to him'.[38]

The ode inextricably unites the present moment of celebration (the historical Athens of the City Dionysia), the mythical past (Antigone's and Creon's Thebes) and the cosmic universe of celestial entities – all of them imbued with divine presence. Theban events are broadened so as to be viewed in their cosmic context[39] and simultaneously narrowed down in the hymn sung by an Athenian chorus. Availing itself of narrowing devices so common in the hymnic genre, where they are employed to focus the godhead's attention on the hymn being sung, the chorus entices Dionysus into coming to Thebes from his furthest cult sites in order to cure the city through his dance, and does so by offering in exchange the dance-song that they, as a collective of dancers on the orchestra, are performing. Thebes is intertwined with Athens, and both are subsumed under the cosmic order.[40]

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[36] See R.P. Winnington-Ingram, *Sophocles: An Interpretation* (Cambridge, 1980), 115; Bierl 1989 (n. 30), 43–58; idem 1991 (n. 30), 227; Cullyer (n. 6), 18.

[37] Scullion (n. 32), 136. For the 'ironical' interpretation of another ode, a hymeneal in Euripides' *Phaethon* 227–44, see Furley (n. 32), 194.

[38] R.W. Burton, *The Chorus in Sophocles' Tragedies* (Oxford, 1980), 134.

[39] See Rohdich (n. 8), 211–12: 'Das Lied stellt das menschliche Leben in den Rahmen des kosmischen …; diesselbe Kraft, die den Kosmos erhält, wird auch die Polis bewahren'.

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