

Recent discussions on Bacchylides' Fifth Epinician Ode propose that the poet's *Nekyia* follows an earlier, well-established epic tradition which featured the descent of Herakles into the Underworld. Oxyrhynchus Papyrus fragment 2622, attributed to Pindar, likely preserves one account of this tradition and here there exists an early account of the meeting of Herakles with the hero Meleager (Burnett 1985, 198; Lloyd-Jones 1967, 206). Literary *Nekyia* motifs were quite common by the time of Bacchylides and this literary tradition inspired *Nekyia* as an artistic motif. Common in this tradition is the hero Meleager.

That Meleager is not found in Homer's *Nekyia*, yet is prominent in Bacchylides' Ode and the fragment attributed to Pindar, not to mention dramas attributed to Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Phrynichos, is likely indicative of the hero's rise in importance during the fifth century.

One such example of this growth in popularity is found in the contemporary wall painting of a *Nekyia* by Polygnotos in the Lesche of the Knidians at Delphi. Pausanias, describing this painting, makes specific mention of the hero Meleager. This, coupled with Meleager's presence in Bacchylides' Ode, illustrates that not only was the hero an important figure in fifth century literature, but that he was also important to any depiction of the Underworld.

One new additional example of Meleager in artistic depictions of the Underworld, I argue, can be found on the Niobid Krater in the Louvre, dating to the second quarter of the fifth century. In 1919, the vase was identified as a depiction of Herakles in the Underworld (Six 1919), yet recent interpretations have sought to connect the vase to episodes in Athenian history (Boardman 2005; Barron 1972; Harrison 1972; Simon 1963). I propose a more complete return to Six's interpretation, especially to his too-quick dismissal of the vase's central pair as a meeting of Herakles and Meleager in the Underworld. This is appropriate, for there is a direct connection between this vase and Bacchylides' Ode. I further propose that the scene depicted on the Niobid Krater may have been influenced by Bacchylides, for both the vase, with a slaughter of the Niobids on the reverse, and the Ode juxtapose a *Nekyia* motif with the pathos of unmerited death due to hostility at the hands of Artemis. Connecting the vase's two sides in this manner creates an artistic parallel to Bacchylides' message and, like the Ode, serves as an exemplum to victors.

A combination of a *Nekyia* and avenging Artemis can also be found on another fifth century Athenian vase. The *Nekyia* Krater in New York juxtaposes Herakles, Meleager, and other heroes in the Underworld with a depiction of Apollo and Artemis attacking Tityos. This vase, unlike the Niobid Krater, has its figures labeled.