Conscious Ambiguities in Pindar and Bacchylides

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In certain passages of Pindar and Bacchylides, the recognition of the literary device of conscious ambiguity can serve to clarify the poet's meaning. ‘Ambiguity’ is a vague term and wants closer definition: I mean the deliberate selection of one word intended to convey simultaneously several meanings. It is, of course, a commonplace that a poem may admit of a variety of literal, symbolic and allegorical interpretations, some conscious, some not, some real and some imaginary. My concern in this essay is with no such grand theme, rather with but one quite specific, though elusive, poetic device. This device consists in the conscious use of a word that either (a) has itself several legitimate meanings, each of which is suited to a particular context, or (b) suggests at the same time through similarity of sight and sound a second distinct word.

The phenomenon of ambiguity has received more attention from English scholars than from classicists; the best known treatment in English literature is William Empson’s Seven Types of Ambiguity² (London 1947). For the Hellenist W. B. Stanford’s Ambiguity in Greek Literature (Oxford 1939)—a work inspired, in part at least, by Empson’s book—is the standard study. Both works, however, with their intricate analyses, deal with a variety of ambiguities far beyond the scope of this essay; Empson’s third type (p.102) comes closest to my use of the term: “An ambiguity of the third type, considered as a verbal matter, occurs when two ideas, which are connected only by being both relevant in the context, can be given in one word simultaneously. This is often done by reference to derivation.” A single passage will illustrate (Aesch. Ag. 699-701):

'Πλώ δὲ κήδος ὀρθ-
跣υμων τελεσαύρων
μήνας ἠλασεν . . .

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The κῆδος is Helen; the word means here both 'grief' and 'marriage alliance', as the scholiast correctly perceived: τὸ κῆδος σημαίνει καὶ τὴν ἐπιγαμβρίαν καὶ τὸ πένθος. Fraenkel comments "scarcely translatable" and aptly quotes H. Voss's "Eh und Weh."

In the case of Pindar few would still deny the reality of conscious ambiguities, but I may remind the reader that so recently as 1932 Farnell could write (on Ol. 9.80-81): "... The modern commentators mainly agree, and some try to save their consciences by supposing that Pindar uses the word in two senses at once—a sin that Pindar never commits ..." (my italics).

For the passages of Pindar and Bacchylides discussed below I use the Teubner editions of Bruno Snell.1

1. PINDAR, Olympian 8.23-25, 70-71:

... δι τι γὰρ πολύ καὶ πολλὰ δέπη, ὀρθὰ διακρίνας φρενὶ μὴ παρὰ καρόν δυσπαλές... 

πατρὶ δὲ πατρὸς ἐνέπνευσεν μένος γῆρας ἁντίπαλον

LSJ s.v. δυσπαλές give "difficult, c. inf., διακρίνειν (sic)... δυσπαλές [ἔστι] Pi.O.8.25, cf. P.4.273..."; s.v. ἁντίπαλος they state "properly, wrestling against: hence, antagonist, rival... c.gen., μένος γῆρας ἁντίπαλον Pi.O.8.71..." Already in the oldest extant piece of Attic prose, the Old Oligarch,2 ἁντίπαλος occurs in the fully transferred sense of 'enemy' without any reference to the literal meaning. In this ode there can be little doubt that Pindar chose both δυσπαλές and ἁντίπαλον deliberately and intended his audience to understand the words in both literal and metaphorical sense at once: the ode was composed in honor of Alkimedon, the wrestler. Compare Nem. 11.26 δημώντων... ἁντίπαλων, where ἁντίπαλος suggests both 'wrestler' and 'rival' (note πάλος in verse 21). Similar is Isthm. 5.59-61:

αἰνέω καὶ Πυθέαν ἐν γνωδόμαι 

Φυλακίδας πλαγαῖν δρόμον εὐθυπορήσαι, 
χεροὶ δεξίων, νόσῳ ἁντίπαλον.

1 Pindari Carmina cum fragmentis I, II (Leipzig 1964); Bacchylidis Carmina cum fragmentis (Leipzig 1961).

2 2.12. The most recent editor of this treatise, G. W. Bowersock, dates it between 445-441 B.C. (HSCP 71 [1967] 38). Despite Bowersock (pp.34-35) the phrase περὶ τοῦ πολέμου in 3.2, according to normal Greek usage, should refer to a definite war, as Kirchhoff maintained. As Bowersock's arguments for the approximate dating of the work seem to me to have much force, I would refer περὶ τοῦ πολέμου specifically to the Samian Revolt and propose 440-439 as a date.
Sandys in his Loeb edition of Pindar, p.389 n.3, makes the observation that Pindar “... uses metaphors suggested by the particular athletic contest which he is commemorating.” See for example Isthm. 2.2 ἐς δίφρον Μοισάν ἔβαινον; this ode celebrates a victory in the chariot race. So also Ol. 6.22–25 (for a victory with the mule chariot):

ω Φύτις, ἀλλὰ ζεῦξον ἦ-
δη μοι σθένος ἡμιόνων,
ἄ τάχος, ὅφρα κελεύθω τ' ἐν καθαρᾷ
βάσομεν ὅξυον, ἰκώμαι τε πρὸς ἀνδρῶν
καὶ γένος.

Here Fennell comments, “The poet identifies the ἀπήνη of Agesias [the victor] with the Μοισάν δίφρος.” Curiously, Farnell, despite his stricture about the “sin that Pindar never commits,” has the following note to verse 23: “κελεύθω ἐν καθαρᾷ: the epithet may have a double value here, (a) clear of obstacles, unencumbered; (b) unsullied, referring to the ideal path of song.”3 Compare below, verses 72–73 τιμῶντες δ' ἀρετάς ἐς φανερὰν ὄδον ἔρχονται and Isthm. 5.23 κέλευθον ἀν καθαράν.

2. PINDAR, Olympian 1.7–11:

... μηδ' Ὄλυμπιας ἀγώνα φέρτερον αὐθάσομεν.
οὖν οἱ πολύφατοι ὄμοιοι ἀμφιβάλλεται
σοφῶν μητέρεσσι, κελαδεῖν
Κρόνου παιό ἐς ἀφελέαν ἱκομένοις
μάκαραν Ἱέρωνος ἐστίαν ... 

ἀμφιβάλλεται in verse 8 has prompted the most divergent interpretations: LSJ s.v. ἀμφιβάλλω 1.1.c. render “song is cast (like a net) over the minds of poets.” Lattimore’s translation suggests a similar image: “It is thence that the song winds strands in the hearts of the skilled.” Gildersleeve writes “P.'s usage (see O.2,98; 9,5; 13,93 al.) indicates a shower of poetic βέλη or κῆλα whirring about the minds of the bards.” Farnell and others believe the verb to be a “metaphor from folding a cloak round one.” According to Fennell, Cookesley and Mezger

3 Farnell shows a similar inconsistency in his interpretation of ἐπονημλαχ ἄραν νίκας ἐγεράχου at Ol. 11(10).78: “... Pindar may have had two simpler expressions in his mind, ἄραν τῆς νίκης, 'for the sake of the Victory', and ἄραν ἐπικλεῖαν, an accusative in apposition to the verbal action= 'as a victory-tribute (or thanksgiving) we will sing of the thunder' (the scholiasts' doubtful interpretations support the suggestion of a twofold origin of the phrase).”
thought the image to be of a "garland round the head"; in this they were following the lead of one of the scholia on the passage: ἡ μεταφορὰ ἀπὸ τῶν στεφάνων (p.22 Drachmann). Fennell himself pronounced "The verb simply means 'comes about,' 'encompasses', no definite metaphor being intended" (my italics). For Pindar of all poets this is incredible; the image may be compound and vague, but an image there surely is.

These differences of interpretation are all due to ὑμνὸς: Pindar does not seem to have indicated what metaphor he was applying to ὑμνὸς here. Without a knowledge of this we cannot know in what sense poetry "is being thrown round." In fact, Pindar's language reveals exactly what picture he had in mind; the clue is in the adjective πολύφατος. The scholiasts paraphrase πολύφημος, ὑπὸ πολλῶν φημιζόμενος καὶ λεγόμενος, πολυθρύλλητος; for a comparable expression see Ol. 6.91 ἀγαθήγεκτων ὄμοιών. Etymologically, the epithet of course divides into πολυ-φατος (καθ.μι). I suggest that Pindar intended simultaneously a second division πολυ-φατος, as if from υφαίνω. As the scholiast observes on Nem. 7.116 (p.133 Drachmann) ... τὸ ποίημα υφάσματι παρεόικεν, ὡς καὶ αὐτὸς ἐν ἄλλοις (fr.179 Snell)· υφαίνω δ' Ἀμνθανιδίωσιν ποικίλοις ἄνθιμα. The ὑμνὸς here, therefore, is a garment; the "mantle of poesy is thrown round the minds of poets." A glance at LSJ will show that a very common (perhaps, in fact, the most common) usage of ἀμφιβάλλω is specifically with clothing. Supporting evidence for this interpretation, which will undoubtedly strike some as outre, is unusually abundant. Whether correctly or not, in Pindar's day ὑμνὸς was thought to be etymologically connected with υφαίνω; the figura etymologica υφάνας ὑμνον occurs in Bacchyl. 5.9–10. Compare 13(12).223–24, where, if the passage is correctly restored, this same poet wrote ὑμνον τινά τάνδε ν[εοπλοκον δόσν] | φαινω . . .

Even more striking is 19(18).5–10:

ιοβλέφαροι τε ἢ καὶ
φερεστέφανοι Χάριτες
βάλωσιν ἁμφὶ τιμάν
ὑμνοισιν· υφαίνε νυν ἐν
ταῖς πολυθράτοις τι καυνὸν
ἀλβίως Ἀθανάις . . .
(Note βάλωσιν ἄμφι.) In Pindar himself there are numerous parallels for the metaphor: Nem. 4.44-45 ἐξύφαινε . . . μέλος πεφυλημένον; Ol. 6.86-87 πλέκων ποικίλον ἕμων; Nem. 4.94 ῥήματα πλέκων; fr. 179 ὑφαίνω . . . ποικίλον ἔνδημα (compare above). It is perhaps significant that πολύφατος recurs in connection with ἕμων, Nem. 7.81: πολύφατον θρόν ἕμων. There is further confirmation at Ol.1.105 where the poet, in ring fashion, takes up the same metaphor: κλυταῖς . . . ἕμων πτυχαῖς. Despite the doubts of some commentators, πτυχαῖς is surely a figure taken from the folds of a garment; see LSJ s.v. πτύξις I.2 and III. More tenuous as evidence is μητίεσσι in verse 9; this noun is frequently coupled with ὑφαίνω in epic poetry. Bacchylides twice uses μῆτιν as the object of ὑφαίνω, at 16(15).24-25 and 17(16).51. What place such associations may have had in our passage I cannot say.

One final question remains to be considered: is πολύφατος in fact actually cognate with ὑφαίνω rather than with φημί? I do not think so; the resultant compound would normally be *πολυφάτος. In Bacchyl, 13(12).61 πολύφατον occurs (from φαίνω). The termination -άτος, incidentally, is not an insuperable objection. In Ol. 8.16 πρόφατον= πρόφατον (s.v.l.) occurs; in Ol. 6.54 the variant ἀπειράτω (πειραίνω) may be correct; in fr.33c.6 (Snell) the Mss have τηλέφατον (τηλέφατον Bergk). In such compounds -άτος would result from -Ν-τος; scholars are perhaps too quick to emend them away. Pyth. 11.47 ἀγώνων πολυφάτον seems to me to exclude a derivation from ὑφαίνω; compare also Ol. 6.91 ἀγαθέγκτων άοιδῶν (cited above).

3. a. PINDAR, Olympian 2.43–45:

λείψθη δὲ Θέρσανδρος ἐριτέντι Πολυ-
νείκει, νέοι ἐν ἄλθλοις
ἐν μάχαις τε πολέμου
τιμώμενος, 'Αδραστιδᾶν θάλος ἄρωγὸν δόμοις.

b. PINDAR, Olympian 6.67–71:

... εὐτ' ἄν
δὲ θρασμαχάνοις ἑλθών
'Ἡρακλῆς, σεμνὸν θάλος 'Αλκαῖδᾶν, πατρί
ἐορτάν τε κτίσῃ πλειοτόμμμορτον τε-
θμὸν τε μέγιστον ἄθλλων,
Ζηνὸς ἐν' ἀκροτάτω βω-
μῷ τότ' αὐχρηστήριον θέσθαι κέλευεν.
I wish to consider the force of \( \text{OaAos} \) in these two passages; \textit{LSF} s.v. \( \text{thalo} \)s state "prop. = \text{thaLlos}, but only ... in metaph. sense of scion, child." This is simply not true in the case of Pindar. He does use it in the sense of 'scion' at \textit{Parth.} 2.36, but consider \textit{Isthm.} 7.23–24:

\[
\text{fl\'egetai de i\'op\'loko\'oi Mo\'\'sai\'s,}
\]
\[
\text{matr\'i \'o\'m\'o\'n\'o\'m\'o \'de\'d\'u\'ke kou\'\'on \\text{thalo} \ldots}
\]

Farnell's note is as follows: "\'kou\'\'on \text{thalo}, 'a share in his wreath of fame'. Wilamowitz, [\textit{Pindaros}] p.411, \textit{n.} 1, comments on this use of \( \text{thalo} \)s as unique; elsewhere it only = 'scion' of the human family: the word used for 'shoot' or 'bough' is \text{thaLlos}, very frequently in association with \text{stef\'anos}. If \( \text{thalo} \)s was a variant for \text{thaLlos}, it is strange that the metaphorical use of a word should be expressed by such a difference of form. This passage suggests that this distinction between the two forms was not rigidly observed." \( \text{thalo} \)s in the sense of 'wreath' is now fully confirmed for Pindar by a papyrus fragment, \textit{Dith.} 1.14 (Snell):

\[
\text{\'a\'e\'\'e\'t\'e, Mo\'\'\'sai, \\text{thalo} \\text{\'a\'oi\'d} \ldots}
\]

The only other extant example of \( \text{thalo} \)s in Pindar is \textit{Nem.} 1.1–2.

\[
\text{\'a\'m\'\'n\'e\'m\'a \\'se\'m\'\'o\'n \text{'Al\'\'\'e\'o\'i,}}
\]
\[
\text{\'k\'\'l\'e\'\'i\'\'a \text{\'\'u\'r\'a\'k\'o\'s\'\'a\'n \\text{thalo} \text{'O\'r\'\'t\'u\'\'g\'i\'a} \ldots}
\]

Since Ortygia was the original settlement at Syracuse, scholars have been puzzled by the expression \text{\'u\'r\'a\'k\'o\'s\'\'a\'n \text{thalo}}, which they took to mean 'scion of Syracuse'. The evidence cited above shows that there is no need to interpret \( \text{thalo} \)s as 'scion' here; Pindar is calling Ortygia the 'crown of glory' of Syracuse. Some scholars, heeding the demands of context, have understood this: Farnell rendered the phrase "Flowering-branch of famed Syracuse" (?)\; Paley translated \( \text{thalo} \)s 'pride'. Thus, in three of the six occurrences of \( \text{thalo} \)s in Pindar the word is used metaphorically in the sense of 'wreath of glory', despite the lexica.

What is its meaning in the two \textit{Olympian} passages given above? 'Scion' gives an appropriate sense in each place and has always been so interpreted there. Both passages, however, mention specifically athletic contests (\( \text{\'e\'o\'i \en \\text{\'\'e\'b\'l\'o\'i, \\text{\'e\'\'b\'m\'i\'o\'n \\'e\'\'g\'i\'o\'n \\text{\'e\'b\'l\'o\'i} \ldots} \))\; it seems to me not impossible, in the light of Pindar's usage elsewhere, that he
selected θάλος precisely because this word would also suggest the victor’s chaplet.

4. Pindar, Nemean 9.28–32:

\[\text{εἰ δυνατὸν, Κρονίων,}
\text{πείραν μὲν ἀγάνορα Φοινικοστόλων}
\text{ἐγχέων ταῦταν θανάτον πέρι καὶ ζω-}
\text{άς ἀναβάλλομαι ὅς πόροιστα, μοῖραν δ’ εὕνομον}
\text{αιτέω σε παισιν δαρὸν Αἰτναίων ὁπάξειν,}
\text{Ζεῦ πάτερ, ἀγλαίασιν δ’ ἀστυνόμοις ἐπιμεῖξαι}
\text{λαὸν.}

This ode was composed in honor of Chromius of Aetna, probably in 474. Φοινικοστόλων in verse 28 has caused difficulty; LSJ s.v. φοινικοστόλας state “epith. of ἐγχεα, i.e. ἐγχεα τῶν Φοινικῶν στόλων [Pi.] N.9.28.” Farnell’s note reads in part “Φοινικοστόλων ἐγχέων can only mean what the scholiasts and most modern editors have seen in the phrase, ‘spears—i.e. a spear-bearing host—sent by the Punic people’. Mezger was the first to propose the far-fetched and impossible explanation ‘purple-mantled’—‘mit Blut überzogen’ (adopted by Bury and Sandys), as if the last part of the compound were στόλη and not στόλος: that is the case in λινόστολος applied to someone who can wear a στόλη; but a spear cannot . . .” This last objection is not valid; a spear can quite easily be described as “clothed in blood” if the poet so chose to express himself. φοινικοσθέανωv . . . Ὀρμῶν occurs (s.v.l.) in fr.75.14 (Snell); in Epicharmus, fr.45 Porson conjectured φοινικείμονας. For the connotation of ‘bloody’ connected with the root φοινικ- see LSJ s.v. φοινίσσω, where abundant examples are cited; e.g. αἰματόν Ἀρης πόντον φοινίξει Orac. ap. Hdt. 8.77.2. Sandys, following Mezger’s interpretation, translates ‘empurpled spears’ and comments “φοινικοστόλων is an adjective (like λινόστολος, φοινικοείμον, not a proper name, as supposed by the scholiast. But the adjective, while referring primarily to such a sanguinary enterprise as that of the Seven against Thebes above-mentioned, also alludes to the Phoenicians of Carthage, who were continually threatening Sicily.” I myself, contrary to Sandys, have no doubt that the primary reference is to the Carthaginians and that the adjective should be printed with a capital (so Bowra, Turyn, Snell). At the same time it seems to me perfectly apposite that Pindar should choose a word
which also had 'bloody' overtones. There is no need for scholars to decide between the two meanings; both are intended. Eur. Phoen. 818–21 offers a parallel:

ετεκες, ὃ Γαῖ', ἑτεκές ποτε,
βάρβαρον ὡς ἄκοισν ἐδάν ἐδάν ποτ' ἐν οἴκοις,
τὰν ἀπὸ θηροτρόφου φοινικόλοφοι δράκοντος
gένναν ὄδοντοφυῆ, Θήβαις κάλλιστον ὄνειδος.

φοινικόλοφοι in verse 820 certainly means 'purple-crested' (or better 'of blood-red crest'?); the δράκοντα referred to, however, is the one whom Cadmus the Phoenician killed. The speakers are the chorus of Phoenician women, and they refer explicitly to a report which they once heard "at home" (ἐν οἴκοις), that is, in Phoenicia. How much the context determined Euripides' choice of φοινικόλοφοι and whether his audience would make the association I cannot say. In such a case coincidence cannot be excluded—but neither can purposeful selection. Those who would dismiss this example as being certainly nothing but coincidence err in method.

5. Pindar, Isthmian 4.27–31:

ὅσσα δ' ἐπ' ἀνθρώποις ἄρται
μαρτυρία φθιμένων ζωών τε φωτών
ἀπλέτου δόξας, ἐπέσαυ-
σαν κατὰ πᾶν τέλος. ἀνορέας δ' ἐσχάταισιν
οἶκοθεν στάλλασιν ἀπτωθ' Ἡρακλείαις.
καὶ μηκέτι μακροτέραν σπεύδειν ἄρετάν.

In the phrase ἀνορέας ἐσχάταισιν (29) the adjective ἐσχάτος is used in a metaphorical sense, to indicate the highest degree of ἀνορέα (= summus, extremus). In place of it Pindar had to hand a wide selection of alternative epithets, including the approximate synonyms ὑπατος and ἡμιτος. See for instance Pyth. 6.42 . . . ὑπατος . . . πρὸς ἄρετάν. Why did he choose specifically ἐσχάτος? Such questions are more often answered with assurance than certainty. Nevertheless, in some cases the evidence justifies speculation; the present passage comes, I believe, under this category. The 'Pillars of Herakles' represented to Pindar a geographical boundary; they were, in a local sense, quite literally 'furthest'. In Greek the one adjective which specifically denotes furthest geographical limits is ἐσχάτος; apparent synonyms
such as ὑμιστος and ὑστατος have a quite different literal denotation, however similar they may be when used metaphorically. Pindar chose ἐσχάτασιον here for two reasons: to express 'ultimate' virtue and to serve as a suggestive link with στάλασιν . . . Ἡρακλείας. To demonstrate that this interpretation is not so fanciful as it might at first appear, I append for comparison the following passages:

(a) Ol. 3.42-45:

εἰ δὲ ἄριστευεῖ μὲν ὑδωρ, κτεῖναι δὲ χρυσὸς αἰδοείσατας,
νῦν δὲ πρὸς ἐσχατιᾶν
Θήρων ἁρεταίασιν ἱκάνων ἀπτεται
οἴκοθεν Ἡρακλέος
σταλάν. τὸ πόρασ δ' ἐστὶ σοφοῖς ἀβατον
κάσόφοις.

(b) Pyth. 10.27-30:

ὁ χάλκεος οὐρανὸς οὖ ποτ' ἀμβατός αὐτῷ·
δᾶσει δὲ βροτῶν ἐθνὸς ἁγιαίας ἀ-
πτόμεσθα, περαίνει πρὸς ἐσχατὸν
πλόον ναυτὶ δ' οὔτε πεζὸς ίών <κεν> εὐροίς
ἐς 'Υπερβορέων ἁγώνα θαμμαστὰν ὅδον.

6. PINDAR, Paean 6.123-31 (Snell):

ὁνομακλύτα γ' ἔνεσαι Δωριεὶ
μεδέουσα πόντῳ
νάσος, ὦ Δίως Ἐλ-
λανίου φαεννὸν ἄστρον.
οὔνεκεν οὐ σε παιηνῶν
ἀδορπον εὐνάξομεν, ἀλλ' ἄοιδαν
ῥόθια δεκομένα κατερεῖς,
πόθεν ἔλαβες ναυμπύταν
δαιμονα καὶ τὰν θεμίζενον ἁρετάν.

The poet is addressing the island Aegina in these splendid verses; ἄοιδαν ῥόθια in verses 128—29 is rendered "surging songs" by Sandys and "the torrent-flow of our songs" by Farnell. The adjective ῥόθιος
is used especially of waves; *LSJ* define τὰ ῥόθια ‘waves dashing on the beach, breakers, waves’. The whole context of the passage (πόντῳ, νάσας, ναυπρύτανω) shows that Pindar chose his image with the literal meaning of ῥόθια clearly and simultaneously present to him. For a modern parallel to the figure, compare perhaps the familiar lines from Dylan Thomas’ *Fern Hill*—

Time held me green and dying
Though I sang in my chains like the sea.

7. Bacchylides 17(16).86–90:

\[
\begin{align*}
\tauάφεν \ δὲ \ Αἴως \ νίδως \ ἔνδοθεν \\
κέαρ, \ κέλευσέ \ τε \ κατ’ \ οὖ- \\
\rhoον \ ἵσχεν \ εὐδαίδηλον \\
νᾶα. \ μοῖρα \ δ’ \ ἐτέραν \ ἐπόρουν’ \ ὁδόν.
\end{align*}
\]

Is ὁδόν in verse 89 to be taken literally or metaphorically? D. A. Campbell, *Greek Lyric Poetry* (London/New York 1967) p.438, annotates: “ἐτέραν . . . ὁδόν: ‘a different course’ but ὁδόν refers also to the voyage.” A. E. Housman discussed this passage in *CR* 12 (1898) 218: “. . . but fate ordained another course. The Greek word ὁδόν, between the words ἵσχεν νᾶα and ἵπτο δόρυ, means the course of the ship . . .” Notice the ambiguity of Housman’s English, especially the words which I have italicized. It is not clear, at least to me, whether he interpreted ὁδόν in a double sense here; it is not even clear whether he was conscious of the possibility. The Greek is fully as ambiguous as the English and I cite this passage to demonstrate that Bacchylides as well as Pindar affects this device.


\[
\begin{align*}
\& \ δύσμορος, \ & \ τάλαν’, \ & \ οἶνον \ ἐμῆσατο. \\
φθόνος \ εὑρίσκας \ νιν \ ἀπώλεσεν, \\
δυνάφεον \ τε \ κάλυμμα \ τῶν \\
\ντετερον \ ἐρχομένων, \\
& \ οἶ’ \ ἐπὶ \ {ποταμῷ} \ ῥοδόεντι \ Λυκόρμης \\
δέξατο \ Νέασον \ πάρα \ δαιμόνιον \ τέρας.
\end{align*}
\]

These verses, which conclude the dithyramb, refer to Deianeira and the blood-drenched garment with which she killed Herakles.
Kenyon renders δύοφεον τε κάλυμμα τῶν ὠστερον ἐρχομένων “and the dark veil which hid the things to come”; similarly, Edmonds translates “and the murky veil that hid the future.” They seem to be taking κάλυμμα in a metaphorical sense; τῶν ὠστερον ἐρχομένων is, as Kenyon observes, an objective genitive. This interpretation, so far as it goes, seems to me to be correct. κάλυμμα, however, though it usually means specifically ‘head-covering’, ‘veil’, does not invariably do so. Literally, the word means ‘that which covers’ and when applied to clothing is not used exclusively of veils. Thus Aesch. Cho.494 uses it of the garment which Clytaemnestra threw over Agamemnon, and this surely was no mere veil (it is called πλοῦτον ἔματος κακῶν at 1383). Here κάλυμμα seems to be used in a double sense: the “murky concealment of things to come” is soon to stand revealed as the deadly covering, the Νέσσον . . . δαιμόνιον τέρας. Those who would dismiss this reading of the passage as mere fancy must reckon with the words which the poet has set down immediately above (verses 23–25):

\[
\text{τὸ τ' ἀμαχος δαίμων} \\
\text{Δαίανείρας πολύδακρυν ὤφανε} \\
\text{μήτιν ἐπίφρου' . . .}
\]

What is the μῆτις which the irresistible divinity has “woven” for Deianeira? It is the death-bringing garment. ὤφανε here is used with a half-literal, half-metaphorical force. Compare the similar pregnant usage of τολυπεύω in Od. 19.136–40:

\[
\text{ἀλλ' Ὑδυσῆ ποθέουσα φίλον κατατήκοιμι ἦτορ.} \\
\text{oι δὲ γάμον σπεύδουσιν' ἐγὼ δὲ δόλον τολυπεύω.} \\
\text{φάρος μὲν μοι πρῶτον ἐνέπνευσε φρει' δαίμων} \\
\text{στησαμένη μέγαν ἱστὸν ἐνι μεγάροισιν ὤφανειν,} \\
\text{λεπτὸν καὶ περὶμέτρον'.}
\]

Penelope is the speaker. τολυπεύω (137) is the denominative verb to τολύπη, ‘clew’, ‘ball of wool for spinning’, and literally means ‘to make a clew’. LSJ render ‘wind off carded wool into a clew for spinning’; for this meaning see Ar. Lys. 587. Normally, however, the verb is used metaphorically, in two senses: (1) ‘to wind off, achieve, complete’, and (2) ‘to endure’. The Latin exanylco, though the image is different, shows a similar semantic development. Here literal and metaphorical
meaning are both intended, for Penelope’s δόλος is her φάρος, of which she says below (verses 149-50):

ένθα καὶ ἡματίη μὲν ὑφαίνεσκον μέγαν ἱστόν,
νύκτας δὲ ἄλλα ψησκον . . .

The poet chose the verb τολυπεύω deliberately; Penelope “winds off” both wile and wool (compare LSJ s.v.).

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