

The Prooemium of Bacchylides' *Ode 7*

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THE *Seventh Ode*¹ of Bacchylides was composed in honor of Lachon of Ceos, winner of the boys' foot-race at Olympia in 452 B.C.² Due to the severe mutilation of col. 13, critical analysis has been limited for the most part to textual and metrical studies.³ With the help of several fragments and a few letters from the margin of col. 14, however, Blass has been able to reconstruct much of the text of lines 3–11.⁴ Consequently, it is possible to study more closely the train of Bacchylides' poetic thought.

The ode begins with a small hymn marked by an invocation and genealogy (1–2), clauses in apposition enumerating various functions of an apostrophized deity (6–7), repeated personal pronoun (2, 8), and a concluding statement on the deity's activity of immediate concern (8–10).⁵ A similar hymn-opening appears in *Ode 11*, where the address to Nike reflects the joy of victory which has wiped out the shame of Alexidamus' past defeat. Here, however, though the style of the prooemium is clear, the identity of the goddess invoked, λιπαρὰ θύγατερ Χρόνου τε κ[αί] Νυκτός, is uncertain.

As early as 1898, Robinson Ellis suggested that the poet may have intended an allusion to Nike.⁶ The two extant passages in which Bacchylides personifies this goddess, however, show emphatic agreement with the genealogy presented at *Theogony* 383–84:

Στὺξ δ' ἔτεκ' Ὠκεανοῦ θυγάτηρ Πάλλαντι μινγεῖσα
Ζῆλον καὶ Νίκην καλλίσφυρον ἐν μεγάροισιν.

¹ All references to Bacchylides are to the ed. of B. Snell (Leipzig 1961). I agree with Snell, p.42*, Paul Maas, "Kolometrie in den Daktyloepitriten des Bakchylides," *Philologus* 63 (1904) 308f, and Alfred Körte, "Bacchylideia," *Hermes* 53 (1918) 119ff, in taking *Odes 7* and 8 (Snell) as two distinct poems.

² The year and the type of contest are established by the Olympic register (*POxy.* 222).

³ These are summarized succinctly by J. Irigoien, "Prolégomènes à une édition de Bacchylide," *REG* 75 (1962) 51–55.

⁴ *Bacchylidis Carmina*, ed. F. Blass (Leipzig 1904) 66–67.

⁵ On the traditional features of the hymn-form, see E. Norden, *Agnostos Theos* (Leipzig 1913, repr. Stuttgart 1956) 143ff. Cf. R. W. B. Burton, *Pindar's Pythian Odes* (Oxford 1962) 92–93 *et passim*.

⁶ R. Ellis, "Notes on Bacchylides," *CR* 12 (1898) 64.

In *Epigram* 1.1, for instance, Victory is addressed as *κούρα Πάλλαντος πολυώνυμε, πότνια Νίκα*, and in *Ode* 11.9, *κούρα Σ[τυγὸς ὄρ]θοδίκου* has been well-supplemented by Blass. It seems unlikely, then, that Bacchylides would have followed Hesiod on two occasions but have invented a new genealogy for this particular one.

A second suggestion, that of Nemesis, was defended by Crusius in 1898.⁷ By calling Nemesis the descendant of Night, Bacchylides would be in accord with the Hesiodic genealogy (*Theog.* 223). Aside from this, Crusius pointed out that in late antiquity Nemesis had a shrine at Olympia and was worshipped as the patroness of the games.⁸ In particular, her concern with the foot-race—Lachon's athletic speciality—is attested: excavations at Olympia in 1878 uncovered a small marble statue of the goddess in a secret entranceway to the stadium.⁹ Crusius also supported his identification by an explication of lines 8–9 as an etymological pun: *ὦι δὲ σὺ πρεσβύ[τατο]ν νείμηις γέρας | νίκας*. A characteristic feature of Bacchylidean composition is verbal play,¹⁰ and it is quite likely that the poet would have been aware of the derivation of Nemesis from *νέμω*, 'distribute'. Moreover, if Maas' supplement¹¹ is accepted for line 14, *ἐνσεβ[εῖ ν]όμωι*, a further pun is indicated: the root *νεμ-* continues the idea of allotment as a reward for fine achievement.¹²

There is, however, an important argument against admitting Nemesis as the subject of the invocation. It appears that with the exception of her shrine at Rhamnus (where she may have retained part of the original meaning of a deity 'who distributes blessings to her devotees'), she was in fifth-century Greece mainly the personification of retribution or righteous anger.¹³ Thus Pindar speaks of the blessed Hyperboreans who "live without toil and strife, apart from severely just Nemesis" (*Pyth.* 10.43–44), *οἰκέοισι φυγόντες | ὑπέρδικον Νέμεσιν*, and Aeschylus declares that the spirits of the dead are avenged by the actions of mighty Nemesis (fr.266 N.):

⁷ O. Crusius, "Aus den Dichtungen des Bakchylides," *Philologus* 57 (1898) 162.

⁸ See also A. von Premerstein, "Nemesis und ihre Bedeutung für die Agone," *Philologus* 53 (1894) 400–15.

⁹ See von Premerstein, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.8) 404.

¹⁰ See Jacob Stern, "Bestial Imagery in Bacchylides' *Ode* 11," *GRBS* 6 (1965) 282: "his delight is in a literal association, a pun or conceit . . ."

¹¹ Cited by Snell, p.25, n. on line 14. I am unable to locate the source of his citation.

¹² For a full examination of the derivatives of *νεμ-*, see E. Laroche, *Histoire de la racine NEM- en grec ancien* (Paris 1949); ch. 3, pp.89–113, deals especially with the goddess Nemesis.

¹³ Laroche, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.12) 94–98, 104–105.

ἡμῶν γε μέντοι Νέμεσις ἔσθ' ὑπερτέρα
καὶ τοῦ θανόντος ἢ Δίκη πράσσει κότον.

Bacchylides would hardly have disagreed with his contemporaries so radically as to consider Nemesis responsible for making man πολυζή-
[λωτ]ος (10) rather than for punishing mortal *hybris*.

A third suggestion, put forward by Jebb and now generally accepted, is that the poem is addressed to the personified Hemera.¹⁴ The importance of the last day of the Olympian festival, when all the victorious athletes were honored, is clear from the scholia to Pindar's Olympian odes.¹⁵ Nevertheless, there are two arguments against identifying Hemera here. First, while Bacchylides specifically connects his goddess with "judgement for swiftness of feet and strength of limb" (6–7), such a function is nowhere attributed to Hemera. Indeed, her single rôle in antiquity seems to have been that of lightbringer.¹⁶ Thus, Hesiod depicts her as "holding in her hands far-shining φάος" (*Theog.* 755); Aeschylus associates her with the sunrise (*Pers.* 386–87); and Euripides speaks simply of the "φέγγος of white-winged Day" (*Tro.* 848). Secondly, whatever ceremonies may have occurred on the sixteenth, none is recorded to have taken place during the day. Weniger's description of the morning sun shining upon the victors as they stand in the Temple of Zeus to receive their crowns is, by his own admission, hypothetical.¹⁷ The only celebration on the sixteenth of which we have definite knowledge is the public feast in the Prytaneum, which occurred in the evening (*Paus.* 5.15.12).¹⁸ Surely it would be inappropriate to request Hemera, who at sunset was just returning to her home after a long day's journey (*Theog.* 746–57), to preside over such a banquet.

¹⁴ Bacchylides, *The Poems and Fragments*, ed. R. C. Jebb (Cambridge 1905) 296, n. on lines 1–3. Cf. *The Poems of Bacchylides, from a Papyrus in the British Museum*, ed. F. G. Kenyon (London 1897) 64, n. on lines 1 and 3; Blass, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.4) 67; and *Bacchylides Lieder und Fragmente*, ed. Herwig Maehler (Berlin 1968) 140, n. on line 1.

¹⁵ Schol.vet. (Drachmann) *ad* Pindar *Ol.* 3.33: ἐν γὰρ τῇ ἑκκαίδεκάτῃ τῆς σελήνης ὁ Ὀλυμπιακὸς ἀγὼν τελεῖται; 3.35: ἡ καὶ τῇ ἑκκαίδεκάτῃ γίνεται ἡ κρίσις; schol.rec. *ad* *Ol.* 5.8: καὶ ἐτελείτο μέχρι καὶ τῆς ἑκκαίδεκάτης, ἐν ἣι τὰ ἄθλα ἐδίδοτο.

¹⁶ W. Drexler, "Hemera," in Roscher, *Lex.* I.2 (1886–90) col. 2032, remarks that after Hemera the goddess is generally confused with Eos.

¹⁷ Ludwig Weniger, "Das Hochfest des Zeus in Olympia, I. Die Ordnung der Agone," *Beiträge zur alten Geschichte* 4 (1904) 148. The crowning of the victors on the sixteenth rather than after each event is attested only in schol.rec. *ad* Pindar *Ol.* 5.8, and is refuted by Carl Robert, "Olympische Sieger," *Hermes* 35 (1900) 157f, Friedrich Mie, "Die Festordnung der olympischen Spiele," *Philologus* 60 (1901) 170, and E. Norman Gardiner, *Greek Athletic Sports and Festivals* (London 1910) 200f.

¹⁸ Gardiner, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.17) 207.

Another possibility, that the divinity addressed is a moon goddess, deserves serious consideration. In 1898, J. Harrison suggested that the *λιπαρά θυγάτηρ* was Selene.¹⁹ She pointed out that *πεντήκοντα* (2) would be in keeping with the traditional fifty-moon period and noted, in addition, how that number reappears in the myth of Selene's fifty daughters fathered by Endymion. Also supporting Miss Harrison's suggestion is the fact that the full moon was linked with the Olympian Games:²⁰ Pindar related how Heracles established the festival at the time when the mid-month moon was driving her radiant chariot across the sky (*Ol.* 3.19–20):

ἦδη γὰρ αὐτῶι πατρὶ μὲν βωμῶν ἀγισθέντων
διχόμενης ὄλον χρυσάρματος
ἑσπέρας ὀφθαλμὸν ἀντέφλεξε Μήνηα.

Again, in *Ol.* 10.75, he mentions the *σελάνας ἐρατὸν φάος* which highlighted the first Olympian competitions. Moreover, Pausanias (5.1.4) informs us that the myth of Selene and Endymion enjoyed considerable popularity in Elis. Endymion was believed to be the forefather of the Elian clan of Epeios, and his fifty daughters have been connected by Boeckh with the fifty months which separated Olympic festivals.²¹

There are, however, two difficulties in accepting Selene as the goddess invoked in *Ode* 7. First, the genealogy given by Bacchylides is not in keeping with tradition. Generally, Selene's father was recognized as Hyperion and her mother as Theia²² or Basileia²³ or Euryphaëssa.²⁴ Secondly, Selene was in the fifth century an insignificant power. Roscher lists among her various functions crop production, rain, health and childbearing,²⁵ but most of these are influenced by Selene's identification with Artemis and Persephone.²⁶ In any case, she never appears as a deity who judges athletic prowess, as Bacchylides indicates in line 6.

¹⁹ J. Harrison, "Ode VII," *CR* 12 (1898) 140–41. Selene also was suggested in the same year by U. von Wilamowitz in a brief note in his review Kenyon's *ed.princ.*, *GGA* 2 (1898) 130.

²⁰ I am indebted to Professor Mark Naoumides for calling my attention to this passage. ²¹ *Pindari Opera*, ed. August Boeckh, III (Leipzig 1821) 138.

²² Hes. *Theog.* 371ff; Apollod. 1.2.2; Hyg. *Fab. praef.* p.30,1 Bunte.

²³ Diod. 3.57.

²⁴ *Hymn. Hom.* 31.4.

²⁵ W. H. Roscher, *Selene und Verwandtes* (Leipzig 1890) 49–94.

²⁶ See *The Homeric Hymns*, ed. T. W. Allen, W. R. Halliday and E. E. Sikes (Oxford 1936) 432.

In lieu of Selene, therefore, I suggest another lunar goddess, Hekate. As a divinity of the moon, Hekate enjoys the same advantages as Selene (*i.e.* the fifty months, the association with the Olympian festival).²⁷ Unlike Selene, however, her power is not insignificant. At *Theog.* 411–52, she is given an outstanding position among the gods.²⁸ She holds privilege in earth, sea and heaven; she sits with kings in judgement and with demagogues in the assembly; she gives aid to soldiers in battle; and “good is she also when men contend in sport” (*Theog.* 435–38):

ἔσθλη δ' αὖθ' ὀπότε ἄνδρες ἀθλεύωσιν ἀγῶνι
 ἔνθα θεὰ καὶ τοῖς παραγίγνεται ἦδ' ὀνίνησιν
 νικήσας δὲ βίηι καὶ κάρτεϊ καλὸν ἄεθλον
 ῥεῖα φέρει χαίρων τε τοκεῦσι δὲ κῦδος ὀπάζει.

The parallels with Bacchylides' ode are clear. Hekate decides the ἀρισταλκὲς σθένος (7) of the athlete, awards the γέρας νίκας (8–9), brings honor (εὐδοξος, 9) to the victor, and bestows fame on his family name (Ἀρι[στομ]έγ[ει]ον . . . ἐκόσμη[σας, 10–11 *cf.* Blass).

To be sure, Hesiod conceives of her as the daughter of the Titan Perses and Asterie (*Theog.* 411). But this lineage was not fixed, for Musaeus considered her to be the child of Asterie and Zeus²⁹ and Euripides (*Phoen.* 108) makes her the descendant of Leto. More significant is the genealogy attributed to her by Bacchylides in fr.1 B.:

Ἐκάτα [] δαῖδοφόρε
 ταν ἰε[ρ]
 Νυκλιτὸς μεγαλοκόλπου θύγατερ

Here in the setting of a formal hymn the poet identifies Hekate as the “torch-bearing daughter of Night.” The epithet δαῖδοφόρος, derived from her function as goddess of the moon, may be compared with Ἐκάτη λιπαροκρήδεμνος in the *Hom. Hymn to Demeter* 2.25, and with λιπαρὰ θύγατερ in line 1 of the present ode. Finally, while there is no mention in fr.1 B. of a father for Hekate, the connection

²⁷ The two goddesses are, in fact, occasionally confused. See Roscher, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.25) 24f.

²⁸ The genuineness of this passage has been questioned by many scholars. Recently, however, it has been defended as part of the Hesiodic concern with the *τιμαί* of the gods. See Friedrich Solmsen, *Hesiod and Aeschylus* (*CornellStud* 30, Ithaca 1949) 51–52, 73 n.254. Cf. also *Hesiod, Theogony*, ed. M. L. West (Oxford 1966) 276–80.

²⁹ Schol. Ap. Rhod. 3.467. The reference is cited by L. R. Farnell, *The Cults of the Greek States* II (Oxford 1896) 276–80.

with Chronos in *Ode 7* is easily understood. Bacchylides may well have in mind Pindar's *χρόνος ὁ πάντων πατήρ* (*Ol.* 2.17). Certainly, his genealogy serves to draw attention both to the fixed day of the Olympian competition and to the long interval which has elapsed since the last festival.

One point of syntax remains to be considered. If *σέ* (2) is to refer to *θύγατερ* (1), then *ἡμέραν ἑκκαίδεκάταν* (2f) cannot be in apposition to *σέ*, as it is generally construed. Instead, I suggest that the lacuna at the end of line 3 contained an infinitive, e.g. *νέμειν*, of which *σέ* is the subject and *ἡμέραν* the object: "you have charge over this final day." Such a supplement would parallel *κρίνειν τα[χυτάτα* (*cf.* Wackernagel) in line 6, "you judge swiftness." It would also accord with the hymnic tradition of attributing several functions to the apostrophized power.

Bacchylides' delight in the physical world and his appreciation of visual impressions have long been recognized.³⁰ What could be more natural for such a poet than to address his hymn to the divinity of the mid-month moon which highlighted the Olympic festival and was known to have supervision over athletic contests?

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July, 1969

³⁰ See Kenyon, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.14) xlv; L. Mallinger, "Le caractère, la philosophie et l'art de Bacchylide," *MusB* 3 (1899) 25f.