

## THE PERFORMANCE OF BACCHYLIDES ODE 5

The consensus of modern opinion on the performance of this ode is that it was not a properly commissioned epinicion, but was sent spontaneously by Bacchylides in an attempt to introduce himself to Hieron. Gzella, for one, argues that many so-called epinicia were sent from poet to patron in order to impress and win commissions. Hence one finds, or so he claims, the terms ἄμισθος ἀοιδά and ἀκέλευστος ἀοιδά, though, to be sure, commissioned epinicia were far more common.<sup>1</sup> One could be misled here into believing that these were terms used by Pindar and Bacchylides themselves. Not only do they never mention such terms, but the words Gzella uses occur only in a single line of Aeschylus, *Ag.* 979, where the point is, as Fraenkel explains, that these were *unknown* practices, to emphasise the spontaneity of this ‘song of fear’.<sup>2</sup>

Just as the song of horror of the Erinyes (*Eum.* 333) is ἀφόρμικτος, so here the song which they inspire in the heart (992) is not only ἄνευ λύρας (990), but is altogether different from the song which is sung at meal-times or on some festal occasion. A professional singer sings neither unbidden nor unrewarded.

So an ἄμισθος ἀοιδά is a grimly tragic song that Aeschylus never imagined as existing outside his drama. One might well ask what are the reasons behind attributing ode 5 to such an undocumented genre.

The most influential article on this subject has been Steffen’s of 1961, in which he sees this ode as an introductory letter to Hieron. He calls the προοίμιον ‘a kind of *propempticon*’.<sup>3</sup> But a ‘*propempticon*’ was a poem of farewell. Cinna, for instance, wrote a *propempticon* to Asinius Pollio for his departure to Greece in c. 56 B.C. and Menander Rhetor talks of a προπεμπτικός λόγος as an address to departing persons. The beginning of ode 5, on the other hand, is clearly no song of farewell whatsoever.<sup>4</sup> Though Steffen’s conclusions have been accepted by virtually everyone since 1962,<sup>5</sup> there are firm reasons for arguing that Bacchylides *was* commissioned in 476 to produce this ode, just as Pindar was for *Olympian* 1. It need cause no difficulty that Hieron thus saw fit to celebrate his victory twice, for whatever reason. He was a rich man, and perhaps there were two occasions for celebration, one at Syracuse and one at Olympia; the real reason may never be known. But one cannot seriously doubt this possibility, for although only three epinician poets are known to have left substantial remains of their performances, nevertheless a number of their odes overlap: Simonides *fr.* 513 records two epinicia for Xenokrates which coincide with *Pythian* 6 and *Isthmian* 2 of Pindar.<sup>6</sup> Bacchylides 13 coincides with Pindar, *Nemean* 5; and both of these, which

<sup>1</sup> S. Gzella, ‘Problem of the Fee in Greek Choral Lyric’, *Eos* 59 (1971), 191.

<sup>2</sup> *Agamemnon* (Oxford, 1958), 2, p. 444.

<sup>3</sup> W. Steffen, ‘Bacchylides’ Fifth Ode’, *Eos* 51 (1961), 12.

<sup>4</sup> Cinna, *fr.* 1 (M), Menander Rhetor p. 395, cf. 333 and 336 S. On the *propempticon* see Nisbett and Hubbard, *A Commentary on Horace Odes 1* (Oxford, 1970), pp. 40ff. and F. Cairns, *Generic Composition* (Edinburgh, 1972), pp. 6ff.

<sup>5</sup> E.g. H. Maehler, *Bacchylides* (Leiden, 1982) Kommentar, p. 84, n. 15 (though only in reference to the prooemium); P. Brannan, ‘Bacchylides Fifth Ode’, *CF* 26.2 (1972), 201ff.; M. R. Lefkowitz, ‘Bacchylides Ode Five, Imitation and Originality’, *HSCPh* 73 (1969), 49; et al., though B. Gentili, *Bacchilide, Studi* (Urbino, 1958), p. 14 and A. Burnett, *The Art of Bacchylides* (Harvard, 1985), p. 197, n. 1 are exceptions.

<sup>6</sup> It is true that *Isthmian* 2 is thought not to be a proper epinicion either (so Wilamowitz, *Pindaros*, pp. 311–12, though see Carey, *Five Odes of Pindar* [New York, 1981], p. 23), but not *Pythian* 6.

are major odes, appear to have been commissioned. Apart from the present instance there is also the minor case of Bacchylides 4 and *Pythian* 1. There is no doubt that it could and did happen.

It will be instructive if I examine Steffen's arguments one by one.

1. The reverential allocutional formula *Εὖμοιρε Συρακοσίων ἱπποδινήτων στρατηγέ* could be used only by a man who was not yet in touch with the ruler of Syracuse. (p. 12)

This is totally untrue, for Pindar calls Hieron in *Olympian* 1, a poem commissioned for the same victory: *δεσπόταν, Συρακόσιον ἱπποχάρμαν βασιλῆα* (22–3). A more perfect synonym for Bacchylides' expression would be hard to find.

2. He argues that this ode is singular among epinicia in that it begins with an address to his patron rather than with the traditional invocation of the Muses, or some gnomic statement, etc.<sup>7</sup> But Pindar and Bacchylides often strove to begin their epinicia in novel ways. For example, the beginning of *Olympian* 6 does not easily fit into any of Brannan's categories 'invocation', 'gnomic statement' or 'reference to the games', and in any case contains an invocation of the victor in line 12 of the *προοίμιον*. Such addresses to the victor tended to occur somewhat later in the introduction of Pindar's odes; in Bacchylides they occur in the first line in two odes out of 13 (5 and 6).<sup>8</sup> In Pindar's odes, in fact, the patron is addressed at the beginning of *Isthmians* 2 and 4, if 3 and 4 are not one ode, and in *Olympian* 10 and *Pythian* 9, though not in the vocative. And personal addresses elsewhere in epinicia are common: e.g. Bacchylides 3.92–8, 13.68, etc. It is pedantic to clutch at straws and insist there are few perfect parallels; surely it redounds to Bacchylides' credit that he has found an inventive beginning.

3. It is clear that such a flattering appreciation of Hieron's literary taste aimed undoubtedly at winning his friendship... (p. 12)

This refers to vs. 3–6: *γνώσῃ μὲν [ἰ]οστεφάνων | Μοισᾶν γλυκ[ύ]δωρον ἄγαλμα, τῶν γε νῦν | αἵ τις ἐπιχθονίων, | ὀρθῶς*; yet this is a perfectly standard epinician topos, and in fact Pindar uses it several times of Hieron himself.<sup>9</sup>

4. Steffen argues that the words *ξένος* (11) and *πέμπει* (12, 197) signify that Bacchylides is unknown to Hieron and 'sends' his ode to Syracuse, rather than 'brings' or 'presents' it. *ξένος* can mean either 'guest-friend' or 'stranger', but the latter meaning, I think, is rendered improbable by line 49, where Hieron is again described as *φιλοξένωι*. There the meaning of *-ξένωι* is clearly 'guest-friend,' and there is no reason why it cannot also bear that meaning in verse 11. In Pindar *πέμπω* may signify 'bring' or 'present', as it does in other lyric poets, for example in Terpanther *fr.* 698: *Ζεῦ σοὶ πέμπω ταύταν ὕμνων ἀρχάν*, where the meaning clearly cannot be 'send'.<sup>10</sup> In every case where the object of *πέμπω* is the poet's song in Pindar, the poet is also stated to be present (*Ol.* 4.2; 7.8; *P.* 2.67–8; *N.* 3.77). Whether he is actually present is disputed,<sup>11</sup> but since no one disputes that *Olympian* 7 is a commissioned ode, and since in vs. 8 the song is said to be 'sent', whatever the meaning of this word, it is clear that *πέμπω* may be used of a commissioned epinicion. Perhaps

<sup>7</sup> For a discussion of the various types of opening see Brannan, *op. cit.* (n. 5), 201–2.

<sup>8</sup> E.g. Pindar, *P.* 5.5 (after introductory gnome), *Ol.* 6.12; 8.15. Note also that *Pythian* 12 begins with an invocation of Acragas.

<sup>9</sup> *Ol.* 1.13–17, *P.* 1.90–1. Note the similarity with Pindar's expression in *P.* 3.80: *εἰ δὲ λόγων συνέμεν κορυφάν, Ἰέρων, ὀρθὰν ἐπίσταται...*

<sup>10</sup> L. Bornemann, 'Pindar und Bakchylides' in *JAW* 216 (1928), 153, gives examples of *πέμπω* used in this sense in Pindar.

<sup>11</sup> Wilamowitz, *Pindaros*, pp. 276, 293. Cf. E. Gaspar, *Essai de chronologie Pindarique* (Brussels, 1900), pp. 60, 146.

the solution here is not to search too deeply into the text for historical arguments: the work was a poem, and therefore any part of it could be influenced by poetic licence. Carey and Bornemann see *πέμπω* and *ξένος* as part of the 'oral subterfuge' in Pindar,<sup>12</sup> where the poet makes such incongruous statements as saying that the chorus 'is waiting on the Asopus to sing of your praise...' (*N.* 3.4), when they are obviously already doing so, and that the poet is coming to land (*Ol.* 7.13) and travelling in a ship or getting ready to sing his song, when he is already singing it.<sup>13</sup> 'This oral subterfuge' says Carey (p. 5) 'by easing openings, transitions and finales, allows the poet to treat themes at a greater or lesser length according to his aims... (and) deceives only the philologist.' It is probably part of this subterfuge, and not some historical fact, that is being alluded to in *πέμπω*. One cannot say, therefore, as Steffen does, that *πέμπω* must mean 'send' because the destination and origin of the ode are mentioned at the same time. Further, if Hieron knew Bacchylides personally before 476, he would have no need to send a poem to introduce himself to Hieron. Steffen unreasonably brushes aside this possibility:

The theories of an early contact between Bacchylides and Hieron established by means of an intermediary assistance of his uncle Simonides of Ceos are hypotheses without any documentation. (p. 12)

Perhaps he was thinking of the wild theories of Severyns, which were never intended to be taken so seriously, as Severyns himself explains.<sup>14</sup> However, there is abundant evidence to prove that Simonides visited Syracuse and stayed with Hieron some time between 478 and 476,<sup>15</sup> so it is a definite possibility that Hieron had met Bacchylides, Simonides' nephew, before 476. Aelian, in fact, practically says this, though he uses an expression too vague to be of much use: *ῥωσθεῖς* (i.e. after recovering from illness)... *συνῆν Σιμωνίδῃ τῷ Κείῳ καὶ Πινδάρῳ τῷ Θηβαίῳ καὶ Βακχylίδῃ τῷ Ἰουλίῃ*.<sup>16</sup> This probably only means that *some time* before or after Hieron came to power he associated with the three poets. But there is a difference between knowing Bacchylides and knowing of Bacchylides. That Hieron did not know *of* Bacchylides before 476 is very hard to believe; and that is all that he would have needed, under the recommendation of his uncle Simonides, to commission an extra poet for his Olympic victory.

5. Steffen's argument that the inclusion in the opening verses of the poet's 'motive to the addressee', a 'request to pay attention' and the 'author's introduction of himself' shows that this is an introductory letter, is refuted by clear parallels from Pindar's epinicia. For his motive is merely *ἐθέλει αἰνεῖν* – the same as for every epinicion: cf. Pindar, *P.* 9.1ff.: *ἐθέλω χαλκάσπιδα Πυθιονίκαν... Τελαικράτη... γεγωνεῖν*. The request to pay attention is found as an epinicion opening in Pindar, *P.* 6.1: *ἀκούσατ'*, as here, and in *Ol.* 11.11. Such a call to pay attention is a *variatio* on the striking-up theme, where the poet asks the Muses for attention, as in *Ol.* 14.5: *κλῦτ' ἐπεὶ εὐχομαι*, or vs. 15: *ἐπακοῦίτε νῦν*. The author introduces himself, but only as the *θεράπων Μουσῶν*, which is a standard *topos* in Pindar. It signifies the poet's credentials for singing of the victor, cf. *P. Ol.* 3.3–6; 4.2–5; 7.7–10.

<sup>12</sup> Carey, op. cit. (n. 6), p. 5; Bornemann, loc. cit.

<sup>13</sup> Becker, 'Das Bild des Weges', *Hermes Einzelschriften* 4 (1937), 71 collects examples of this ship-subterfuge in Pindar.

<sup>14</sup> Severyns, *Bacchylide* (Liège, 1933), p. 78.

<sup>15</sup> Chamaeleon apud Athen. 656d; Aelian, *Var. Hist.* 4.15, 9.1, 12.25; Xenophon, *Hiero*; Timaeos F93 (566 Jacoby); etc.

<sup>16</sup> Aelian, *Var. Hist.* 4.15.

Finally, the evidence of fragment 20C has been used by Körte to support the idea that ode 5 is a poetic epistle.<sup>17</sup> In this fragment, to all appearances an encomion, Hieron is presented (vs. 6: *π[έμπειν?]*) with a poem at Aetna. It is not right to argue, as Körte does, that Bacchylides still did not know Hieron personally, on the grounds that the poem is misdirected, since Hieron had appointed Chromius as governor of Aetna while he himself resided at Syracuse. On the contrary, the precise specification of place of performance in both odes indicates that Bacchylides knew his whereabouts in detail. Hieron may have been present at Aetna to participate in the celebrations for the founding of the city, as the poem mentions a celebration and the presence of several people (*συνπόταις ἀνδρεσσι*). This would accord with the performance by Aeschylus of his *Aetnae* for the founding of the city at Hieron's request.<sup>18</sup> In addition, the words *εἰ | κ[αὶ πρ]όσθεν ὑμνήσας τὸν . . . πο]σσὶ λαυψ[η]ρο[ῖ]ς Φερ[ένικον] ἐπ' Ἀλφείῳ τε ν[ί]καν* (vs. 8ff.) virtually amount to a description of ode 5 as an *ἐπινίκιον*: 'Having previously sung of Pherenikos and his victory at Olympia'. Thus ode 5 was not a general flattering letter that simply happened to include a reference to his victory in 476, but was a duly commissioned epinicion.<sup>19</sup>

*St John's College, Cambridge*

D. A. SCHMIDT

<sup>17</sup> Körte, 'Bacchylidea', *Hermes* 53 (1918), 133–4; Severyns, op. cit. (n. 14), pp. 89–90.

<sup>18</sup> *Vit. Aesch.* p. 332.13 (Page).

<sup>19</sup> Contrast in particular Brannan, op. cit. (n. 5), 203–4, who carries Steffen's arguments to their logical extreme and sees no specific victory mentioned in ode 5. For the date see Beazley in *RPh* 24 (1900), 61–5, on *P. Oxy.* 222.