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# STUDI E MATERIALI DI STORIA DELLE RELIGIONI

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*Loca Haereticorum*

La geografia dell'eresia  
nel Mediterraneo tardoantico

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# Ocean's Child

## Worshipping Nemesis in Ancient Rhamnous\*

### *Introduction*

Two traditions were circulating in antiquity about the Rhamnousian Nemesis. The first is to be found in the *Naturalis Historia*, an encyclopaedic work written by Pliny the Elder in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD and dedicated to Emperor Titus. He writes of a competition between two pupils of Phidias: the Athenian Alcamenes and Agoracritos of Paros. They contended with one another to make the best sculpture of a Venus. The Athenians were asked to judge the work, and assigned the victory to Alcamenes, because they preferred to award their fellow citizen rather than a foreigner (*peregrinus*). Therefore, Agoracritos sold his statue, ensuring that it would not remain in Athens, and called it Nemesis. The statue was placed in Rhamnous and later earned the appreciation of the Roman antiquarian Varro, who esteemed it above all others<sup>1</sup>.

Some time later Pausanias in his *Periegesis of Greece* proposes a different and more articulated version of the story. His account is the result of an autoptic visit of the Rhamnousian shrine in Attica's northeast, on the Euboean coastline, where he also reports what he knows about the goddess. Pausanias defines Nemesis as «the most implacable goddess against the *anthropoi hybristai*». He visited the Rhamnousian shrine of the goddess, reporting that it was located inland, not too far from the sea. Furthermore, he adds: «it is thought (*dokei*) that the wrath (*menima*) of the goddess fell also upon the Barbarians who landed at Marathon<sup>2</sup>». Convinced that nothing would hinder (*meden empodon*) the conquest of Athens, the Persians brought along a piece of Parian marble to build a trophy which would celebrate their

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<sup>1</sup> Plin., *Nat. Hist.* xxxvi, 17. I do not treat Pliny's passage in detail here, as it would take me too far from the topic of this paper.

<sup>2</sup> Paus. i, 33, 2. The translations of the Pausanias passages, even if sometimes slightly modified, are from *Pausanias Description of Greece* with an English Translation by W.H.S. Jones - H.A. Ormerod, 4 vols., Harvard University Press - William Heinemann Ltd., Cambridge (MA) - London 1918.

victory. From this piece of marble, the Athenian sculptor Phidias made the statue of Nemesis, which Pausanias describes in great detail. The *agalma* – whose iconography I will explore further – wore a crown on its head with deer and small statues of Nike; Nemesis held an apple branch in her left hand and a *phiale* on which Aethiopians were depicted in her right hand. Pausanias is not able to give a reason for the representation of the Aethiopians, but he points out that he does not accept the explanation of those who say that they live near the river Ocean, who is Nemesis' father. He then continues with an excursus in the Herodotean manner in order to demonstrate that the Aethiopians never dwelled by a river called Ocean, and adds that this is not a river in any case, but rather the extreme part of the sea navigated by men, where Iberians and Celts dwell. *Ocean* – as Pausanias points out – «surrounds the island of Bretons». After this long excursus, specifying that neither this statue nor the archaic ones have wings<sup>3</sup>, he finally comes to the description of the scene on the pedestal, stating that, according to the Greeks, although Nemesis was Helen's mother, Helen was nursed by Leda, while her father was none other than Zeus. Helen was depicted on the pedestal as being introduced to Nemesis by Leda. She was also accompanied by Tyndareus and his sons, probably the Dioskouroi, a man called Hippeus with a horse, Agamemnon, Menelaos, Neoptolemos Pyrrhos, son of Achilles, and his wife Hermione, daughter of Helen, who is mentioned by Pausanias and probably also depicted. Then there were also two young men, Epochos and Neanias, of whom Pausanias knows only that they were brothers of Oenoe, who gave his name to the Attic deme<sup>4</sup>.

Pausanias specifies that on the pedestal Orestes, Agamemnon's son, is not represented at all because of the crime against his mother Clytemnestra, but he explains that Hermione was always by his side and even bore him a child. The Periegete seems to be using a sort of *argumentum e silentio* in his interpretation, in order to clarify the hero's absence<sup>5</sup>.

Neither the information about the statue and the punishment of the barbarian *hybris* by Nemesis, which in Pausanias' account constitutes quite an *aition* for the foundation of the shrine<sup>6</sup>, nor the claim about Ocean as Nem-

<sup>3</sup> He explains that only the most recent sculptors represent Nemesis with wings, like Eros, because they wish to demonstrate the goddess' involvement in love affairs (Paus. 1, 33, 7).

<sup>4</sup> On Epochos and Neanias as Attic local heroes, cf. E. Kearns, *The Heroes of Attica*, in «Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies» Suppl. 57, London 1989. About the differences between Pausanias' account and the reconstruction proposed by the archaeologists of the pedestal, see *infra*.

<sup>5</sup> He is perhaps thinking of the antagonism with Neoptolemos, which arises from Attic tragedy, and in particular from the *Andromache* of Euripides.

<sup>6</sup> On the questions related to Pausanias' account, cf. M. Haake, *Antigonos II. Gonatas und der Nemestempel in Rhannous. Zur Semantik göttlicher Ehren für einen hellenistischen König an einem athenischen 'lieu de Mémoire'*, in M. Haake - M. Jung (eds.), *Griechische Heiligtümer als Erinnerungsorte: Von der Archaik bis in den Hellenismus. Erträge einer internationalen Tagung in Münster, 20.-21. Januar 2006. Alte Geschichte*, Franz Steiner Verlag, Stuttgart 2011, pp. 109-128, and K.W. Arafat, *Marathon in Art*, in C. Carey - M. Edwards (eds.), *Marathon - 2,500 Years*, in «Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies», Suppl. 124 (2013), pp. 80-81, who observes that even in the case of the statue of Athena, called *Promachos*, only one source agrees with Pausanias (1 28, 2)



esis' father, is to be found in other sources from the Archaic and Classical age. The former piece of information is known from only three epigrams of the *Anthologia Palatina*<sup>7</sup>, of which the oldest is from the 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C.E., while the latter has not been offered by anyone apart from Pausanias<sup>8</sup>, who nevertheless seems to be reporting an Athenian tradition and repeats it in the 7<sup>th</sup> Book. There, speaking about a shrine in Smyrna in Lydia, he specifies that the locals believe there are two Nemeseis and that Night is their mother. The Athenians, on the other hand, declare that the Rhamnusia goddess has Ocean as her father<sup>9</sup>. Consequently, one might conclude that the Smyrnaians follow the tradition reported in Hesiod's *Theogony*, where Nemesis is included among the children that were asexually generated by Night<sup>10</sup>. Pausanias demonstrates that he also knows this tradition<sup>11</sup>.

Returning to the statue, the only certain element is that, at the time it was made, according to archaeologists between 430-420 B.C.E.<sup>12</sup>, during the Peloponnesian war, it commemorated the consequences of a similarly violent war: the Trojan. The *agalma* with its pedestal spoke of Helen and her family after their return from Troy, significantly placing this episode in a local Attic context.

This fact will be the point of departure for my analysis, which aims, first of all, to understand how Nemesis is connected with the sea-world and especially with Ocean; secondly, to explain how the Athenian local tradition reported by Pausanias, which refers to Nemesis as Ocean's child, might have developed; finally, to assess whether this tradition is connected with Nemesis' sanctioning power, since, according to Pausanias, she helped the Athenians against the barbarian *hybris* at Marathon.

### *Nemesis at the limits of the earth in the Cypria*

The lineage of Helen from Zeus and Nemesis is confirmed by other sources. In a passage quoted by Athenaeus from the lost epic poem *Cypria*, of the late 7<sup>th</sup> century, Helen is the third child of the couple<sup>13</sup>, born as a

in relating the work to the Marathon battle, and four others refer generally to the Persian Wars. The remaining ones do not establish any connections with the victory over the Persians.

<sup>7</sup> Parmenion, *Anth. Pal.* xvi, 222 and *Anth. Pal.* xvi, 221 and 263.

<sup>8</sup> Only Tzetzes in his *Schol. to Lycophr.* 88 states that Nemesis was Ocean's daughter.

<sup>9</sup> Paus. vii, 5, 3.

<sup>10</sup> Hes., *Theog.* 211-225.

<sup>11</sup> The sole coincidence between the two accounts is, then, that they both give Nemesis just one parent. She has a mother according to the Hesiodic and Smyrnaian account, and a father according to the Athenian one.

<sup>12</sup> See M.M. Miles, *A Reconstruction of the temple of Nemesis at Rhamnous*, in «Hesperia» 59 (1989), pp. 133-249, and B. Petrakos, *Ο ΔΗΜΟΣ ΤΟΥ ΡΑΜΝΟΥΝΤΟΣ. Ι. ΤΟΠΟΓΡΑΦΙΑ* (Βιβλιοθήκη της ἐν Αθήναις Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας 181), Athens 1999.

<sup>13</sup> τὸς δὲ μετὰ τριτάτην Ἑλένην τέκε, θαῦμα βροτοῖσι: / τὴν ποτε καλλίκομος νέμεσις φιλόττη μιγεῖσα / ζηνὶ θεῶν βασιλῆι τέκεν κρατερῆς ὑπ' ἀνάγκης. / φεῦγε γὰρ οὐδ' ἔθελεν μιχθῆμεναι ἐν φιλόττηι / πατρὶ διὲ κρονίωνι: ἐτείρετο γὰρ φρένας αἰδοῖ / καὶ νεμέσει: κατὰ γῆν δὲ καὶ ἀτρύγετον μέλαν ὕδωρ / φεῦγεν, ζεὺς δ' ἔδωκε: λαβεῖν δ' ἔλλαίετο θυμῷ / ἄλ-

consequence of rape. Athenaëus introduces the account, within a long digression about the different varieties of fish, telling how Nemesis transformed herself into a fish in order to escape the *philotes* with the father of gods. The *Cypria* verses narrate a marvellous pursuit between the goddess and Zeus, where even the landscape seems to change in order to emphasize the metamorphosis of the victim, who is consumed by strong emotions such as *aidos* and *nemesis*. While trying to escape, Nemesis throws herself into the «barren dark water», hoping to find rescue like other rape victims<sup>14</sup> in a sort of *katapontismos*. As observed by M.-C. Beaulieu, a leap into the sea indicates «a radical change [...] the passage away from the ordinary world to another state of consciousness»<sup>15</sup>. Unlike mortal *parthenoi* for whom the sea, the rivers, and springs represent dangerous places favoured by deities to rape their objects of desire, for Nemesis waters are a sort of natural element, as her transformation into a fish might confirm<sup>16</sup>. The leap into the sea, which for mortal maidens symbolizes their refusal of marriage and the consequent exclusion from the social community, is in the case of Nemesis just a stage allowing her to carry on her escape, but also a step towards the next intercourse with Zeus, which is established by necessity (κρατερῆς ὑπ' ἀνάγκης). The water she jumps into is not “sterile” by coincidence, but nonetheless her refusal of sexuality does not last long. She thus arrives at the river Ocean and «at the limits of the Earth (πείρατα γαίης)» and finally, changing her form again, «comes to fertile land transforming herself into all the fearsome creatures that the land nurtures». It is evident that the goddess has the ability to change her form like many other sea creatures do, such as Metis, also one of Ocean's daughters,

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λοτε μὲν κατὰ κῦμα πολυφλοίσβοιο θαλάσσης / ἰχθὺι εἰδομένην, πόντον πολλὸν ἐξορόθουεν, / ἄλλοτ' ἂν Ὠκεανὸν ποταμὸν καὶ πείρατα γαίης, / ἄλλοτ' ἂν ἤπειρον πολυβόλακα. γίγνετο δ' αἰεὶ / θηρὶ ὅς ἤπειρος αἰνὰ τρέφει, ὄφρα φύγοι νιν. «Third after them she (he?) gave birth to Helen, a wonder to mortals; whom lovely-haired Nemesis once bore, united in love to Zeus the king of the gods, under harsh compulsion. For she ran away, not wanting to unite in love with father Zeus the son of Kronos, tormented by inhibition and misgiving: across land and the dark, barren water she ran, and Zeus pursued, eager to catch her; sometimes in the noisy sea's wave, where she had the form of a fish, as he stirred up the mighty deep; sometimes along Ocean's stream and the ends of the earth; sometimes on the loam-rich land; and she kept changing into all the fearsome creatures that the land nurtures, so as to escape him» (Ath. viii 10, 12 [= *Cypria* Fr. 10 West]; transl. by C. Burton Gulick, Harvard University Press, Cambridge [Ma] 1969).

<sup>14</sup> G. Gallini, *Katapontismos*, in «Studi e Materiali di Storia delle Religioni» 34 (1963), pp. 61-90, and R. Koch Piettre, *Précipitations sacrificielles en Grèce ancienne*, in S. Georgoudi - R. Koch Piettre - F. Schmidt (eds.), *La cuisine et l'autel. Les sacrifices en questions dans les sociétés de la Méditerranée ancienne*, Brepols, Turnhout 2005 (“Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études, Sciences religieuses”, 124), pp. 77-100.

<sup>15</sup> M.-C. Beaulieu, *The Sea in the Greek Imagination*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia 2016, pp. 144 and 147.

<sup>16</sup> For comparison with the other rape victims of deities linked to the water realm, such as Pasiphae and Poseidon, Amymon and Poseidon, Enypeus and Tyro, and Triton and the maidens of Tanagra, see E.D. Karakantza, *Literary rapes revisited: A study in literary conventions and political ideology*, in «Mêtis. Anthropologie des mondes grecs anciens» n.s. 2 (2004), pp. 32-36. On the typical localizations of divine rapes, A. Motte, *Prairies et jardins. De la religion à la philosophie*, Académie royale de Belgique, Bruxelles 1973.

and Thetis, one of Nereus' children<sup>17</sup>. Nevertheless, metamorphosis into a fish is not very frequent: the only other example – as far as I know – comes from a very late testimony about Thetis, who transformed herself into a cuttlefish and in this form was seized by Peleus<sup>18</sup>. As opposed to Thetis' case, however, Nemesis' transformation into a fish allows her to prolong her flight and escape the fury of her pursuer. It also attests to the amphibious power of the goddess stretching over land and sea to the limits of the world<sup>19</sup>.

But in spite of these differences, Metis, Thetis, and Nemesis do share some features. They are all primordial gods, belonging to a phase of the cosmogony prior to the divine *kosmos* established by Zeus, before the division by lot of the different spheres of supremacy – of heaven to Zeus, of the sea to Poseidon, and of the underworld to Hades<sup>20</sup>. So these gods operate in an extremely fluid and still chaotic universe<sup>21</sup>, whose parts are not yet clearly differentiated or firmly assigned to the control of a divine force.

Another similarity is that they are all essential for the establishment of the *kosmos*. Metis is Zeus' first wife. According to Apollodoros, she helps Zeus against Kronos, giving him a *pharmakos* to induce him to vomit both the stone and the children that he has previously swallowed. Zeus forces her to have sexual intercourse, even though she tries to avoid it by metamorphosing many times<sup>22</sup>. Knowing the force of her cunning, he swallows Metis in order to ensure that his supremacy cannot be threatened.

Thetis also participates in Zeus' projects, although in a later phase. In agreement with Themis, the father of gods starts the Trojan War in order to lighten the Earth from the weight of the humans<sup>23</sup>. The marriage between Peleus and Thetis, from which Achilles is born, should be understood within this framework. Thetis tries to avoid intercourse with Peleus and changes her form in order to escape from him, but she is finally forced to surrender and thereby becomes the sole goddess to marry a mortal<sup>24</sup>. Both Metis and Thetis represent a danger for Zeus' *kosmos*: according to prophecies, from both would be born children more powerful than their fathers<sup>25</sup>.

What about Nemesis? In the Hesiodic works, she is a sort of double-faced goddess. As I tried to demonstrate in a previous paper, in the *Theogony* she

<sup>17</sup> M. Detienne - J.-P. Vernant, *La ruse de l'intelligence – la mêtis des Grecs*, Flammarion, Paris 1974; F. Frontisi, *L'homme-cerf et la femme araignée*, Gallimard, Paris 2003; R. Buxton, *Forms of Astonishment*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2009.

<sup>18</sup> *Schol. Lycophr., Alex.* 175.

<sup>19</sup> Also the Telchines, whose mother was Nemesis according one tradition (Bacch., Fr. 55 Jebb = Tzetzes, *Theog.* 81), had an amphibious hybrid form, half flying animal and half fish. On the Telchines, see D. Musti, *I Telchini e le sirene. Immaginario mediterraneo e letteratura da Omero a Callimaco al romanticismo europeo*, Istituti Editoriali e Poligrafici Internazionali, Pisa - Roma 1999.

<sup>20</sup> *Hom., Il.* xv, 187-193.

<sup>21</sup> J. Rudhardt, *Le thème de l'eau primordiale dans la mythologie grecque*, Francke, Bern 1971, p. 116.

<sup>22</sup> *Apollod.* i, 2, 1 and i, 3, 6.

<sup>23</sup> *Schol. Il.* i 5; *Procl., Crest.* 80; *Cypria* i, 1-7; *Eur., Hel.* 36-41; *Eur., Or.* 1639-42.

<sup>24</sup> *Apollod.* iii, 13, 5 and *Hom., Il.* xviii, 427-435.

<sup>25</sup> *Apollod.* i, 3, 6 and iii, 13, 5.

is a dark goddess who participates with the children of Night in a sort of “theology of limits”, specifically constructed by the poet to give a sense of limits to mortals within which they must carry on their lives<sup>26</sup>. The passage with the genealogy of Night speaks of spatial and temporal limits, but also of the particular areas reserved for the temporary overstepping of these limits.

In *Works and Days*, Nemesis and Aidos are involved in a sort of prophecy that the humans of the Iron Age<sup>27</sup> will be destroyed by Zeus when a series of social upheavals will have taken place<sup>28</sup>. When they abandon the earth to join the Olympian gods, their flight marks the last event of the existence of this race of mortals. But up to that moment, Aidos and Nemesis had been forces that still operated within human social life.

Expressing subjective shame on the one hand and a sense of social disapproval on the other, the presence of Aidos and Nemesis among mortals is a guarantee for the proper functioning of social relationships. *Nemesis* also frequently appears as an emotion in the Homeric epics, where rather than being explicitly shown it is often a reaction to be prevented in others. Here it is a form of social disapproval trotted out in a wide range of situations, elicited by inappropriate behaviour or words.

The fear of provoking *nemesis* in the other members of a group operates as a sort of external limit that disciplines human social behaviour. The manifestation of *nemesis* in Homer is generally reserved for the following categories of action: the violation of the heroic code in war, the inversion of hierarchical roles, and the infringement of the rules of hospitality and the social group. The effects are made evident, for example, in the slaughter of the suitors, who in Odysseus' words had not at all been cognizant of the *nemesis anthropon*. The risk of being the target of this kind of emotion triggers a form of self-censorship in the Homeric heroes that defines what is socially acceptable and what is not, and confines individual impulses and deviant behaviour within pre-established boundaries<sup>29</sup>.

<sup>26</sup> D. Bonanno, *Figlia di Notte e compagna di Aidos: Nemesis, Dike e il senso del limite in Esiodo*, in D. Bonanno - P. Funke - M. Haake (eds.), *Rechtliche Verfahren und religiöse Sanktionierung in der griechisch-römischen Antike*, Franz Steiner Verlag, Stuttgart 2016, pp. 103-114.

<sup>27</sup> C. Calame, *Succession des âges et pragmatique poétique de la justice: le récit hésiodique des cinq espèces humaines*, in Id., *Pratiques poétiques de la mémoire: représentations de l'espace-temps en Grèce ancienne*, La Découverte, Paris 2006, pp. 85-142.

<sup>28</sup> «And Zeus will destroy this race of mortal men also when they come to have grey hair on the temples at their birth. The father will not agree with his children, nor the children with their father, nor guest with his host, nor comrade with comrade; nor will brother be dear to brother as afore time. [...] And then Aidos and Nemesis, with their sweet forms wrapped in white robes, will go from the wide-pathed earth and forsake mankind to join the company of the deathless gods: and bitter sorrows will be left for mortal men, and there will be no help against evil». Hes., *Op.*, 180-201 (Transl. by H.G. Evelyn-White, *Works and Days*, Harvard University Press - William Heinemann Ltd., Cambridge [MA] - London 1914).

<sup>29</sup> See D. Bonanno, *Coltivare e prevenire l'indignazione. Espressioni umane della nemesis nei poemi omerici*, in N. Cusumano - D. Motta (eds.), *Xenia. Studi in onore di Lia Marino*, Salvatore Sciascia Editore, Caltanissetta - Roma 2013, pp. 13-37; D. Bonanno, 'She shuddered on her throne and made high Olympus quake'. *Causes, effects and meanings of the divine nemesis in Homer*, in «Mythos» 8 (2014), pp. 93-111.

This sense of *nemesis*, which stems from the Homeric epics, together with a comparative reading of the Hesiodic passages, could perhaps allow us to interpret the passage of the *Cypria*. In Hesiod, Nemesis is presented, on the one hand, as a force of limitation, coming from a mother who marks the extreme borders of the universe<sup>30</sup>, and, on the other, as a deity who should stay among the mortals, even if there is always the danger that she might abandon the earth. In the *Cypria*, Nemesis is an escaping goddess, pursued by Zeus, able to pass from the sea to the extreme limits of the earth where she is safe. The dark barren water and the river Ocean are a sort of natural refuge for her who is always ready to run or fly away. Water and earth, as well as the limits between them, until the very edges of the *oikoumene*, represent the large area she covers<sup>31</sup>. The birth of Helen might have been a guarantee that Nemesis would remain among mortals, where she must stay in order to prevent their destruction, as the *Works and Days* verses discussed above suggest. However, the number of mortals on earth should not exceed the allowed limits, as showed by the decision taken by Zeus and Themis mentioned above.

The tradition of the *Cypria* is partly recalled in a fragment written by the Athenian playwright Cratinos (5<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E.), quoted by Ps.-Eratosthenes in *Katasterismoi*<sup>32</sup>. The fragment of the comedy entitled *Nemesis* narrates how Zeus fell for the goddess and transformed himself into a swan in order to rape her. It also tells of the many metamorphoses of the goddess to protect her virginity (ἐπεὶ αὐτὴ πᾶσαν ἤμειβε μορφῆν, ἵνα τὴν παρθενίαν φυλάξῃ). According to P.M.C. Forbes Irving, Nemesis, like many other sea divinities, such as Proteus, Nereus, Metis, Thetis etc., belongs to a particular class of creatures called “shape-shifters”<sup>33</sup>, whose ability to continuously change their form is a way to react to their inner weakness<sup>34</sup>. Old men (Proteus and Nereus) and women (Metis, Thetis, and Nemesis) are both part of the social order. Women are essential for the survival of the species and old men are fundamental because of their experience and knowledge. However, either of them could represent a threat to the established order: The first ones are dangerous because of their potential resistance to sexual intercourse and

<sup>30</sup> According to Hesiod, the Night dwelling places are at the borders of the Earth, Tartarus, the barren sea, and heaven (*Theog.* 736-750).

<sup>31</sup> Cf. in this respect, W. Ehrhardt, *Versuch einer Deutung des Kultbildes der Nemesis von Rhamnus*, in «Antike Kunst» 40, 1 (1997), pp. 34.

<sup>32</sup> Ps.-Erat., *Cat.* 25. The rape of Nemesis is also narrated by Apoll. III, 10, 7. Regarding this passage, cf. also the philological re-reading of the text proposed by W. Luppe, on the basis of a fragment of Philodemus' work *Peri eusebeias*: W. Luppe, *Zeus und Nemesis in den Kyprien. Die Verwandlungssage nach Pseudo-Apollodor und Philodem*, in «Philologus» 118 (1974), pp. 193-202 and Id., *Nochmals zur Nemesis bei Philodem*, in «Philologus» 119 (1975), pp. 143-144.

<sup>33</sup> *Contra* R. Buxton, *Metamorphosis of Gods into Animals and Humans*, in J.N. Bremmer - A. Erskine (eds.), *The Gods of Ancient Greece. Identities and Transformations*, Cambridge University Press, Edinburgh 2010, pp. 84-85, who does not see any reason to identify these deities as a particular class.

<sup>34</sup> P.M.C. Forbes Irving, *Metamorphosis in Greek Myths*, Clarendon Paperbacks, Oxford 1990, pp. 171-194; *Contra* R. Buxton, *Forms of Astonishment*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2009, pp. 168-175.

because of the children they might give birth to; the second ones because they could refuse to share their knowledge. These two groups – both of them pre-Olympian entities, not coincidentally – are at the same time marginal as well as central figures of the *kosmos* established by Zeus. Their relationship with the sea is also the expression of prophetic knowledge connected to the administration of an ordalic justice<sup>35</sup>.

The series of changes by Nemesis could be read as the manifestation of her resistance to participate in this new order and the danger she would represent to it, like Metis and Thetis, although with some fundamental differences: their children are, according to the prophecies, a threat for Zeus' *kosmos*; Helen as Nemesis' child is a key pawn in the strategic realization of his plan for the mortals. Furthermore, the justice Nemesis administers seems, at first glance, to have nothing to do with prophetic knowledge, as in the case of other sea deities. But a rereading of a passage from the 1<sup>st</sup> book of Herodotus suggests that we should revise this assumption. The historian from Halicarnassus accounts that the Lydian king Croesus was struck by «the great *nemesis* of the gods (ἐκ θεοῦ νέμεσις μεγάλη)», for having thought himself the happiest of men, and adds that the vicissitudes that shook the Lydian dynasty were announced to the king by a dream showing the truth (*aletheia*) about the calamities that were about to befall his son<sup>36</sup>. Because of its historiographical complexity and conceptual density, this passage would require a deeper analysis, which I prefer to defer to another time, but it is worth noting that the text allows us to isolate at least two elements in *nemesis*' mode of action: her intervention is announced by a premonition, and her effects, even if not immediate, are clearly visible to the one directly responsible for the transgression. If we cannot speak of an ordalic justice, then perhaps of an ostensive justice, which reveals the consequences of a transgression in front of an entire generation of men, thus ensuring, with its deterrent character, social control and cohesion. Consequently, Zeus' pertinacity in the pursuit of Nemesis could be interpreted as an indicator of her importance for the balance of his *kosmos* and for the stability of his kingship: mating with Nemesis means to Zeus that he is sheltering his kingdom from frictions and tensions that social reprobation can generate.

According to Cratinos, then, the rape finally takes place in Rhamnous. In another fragment of the play he alludes to Leda's role as Helen's

<sup>35</sup> M. Detienne, *Les maîtres de vérité dans la Grèce archaïque*, Livre de Poche, Paris 2006, pp. 85-112; cf. more recently on the old men of the sea and their connection with the administration of justice: G. Cursaru, *Structures spatiales dans la pensée religieuse grecque de l'époque archaïque. La représentation de quelques espaces insondables: l'éther, l'air, l'abîme marin*, Dissertation Université de Montréal 2009, available at: <<https://www.academia.edu/>>, pp. 432-439 (09/16).

<sup>36</sup> Μετὰ δὲ Σόλωνα οἰχόμενον ἔλαβε ἐκ θεοῦ νέμεσις μεγάλη Κροῖσον, ὡς εἰκάσαι, ὅτι ἐνόμισε ἑωυτὸν εἶναι ἀνθρώπων ἀπάντων ὀλβιώτατον. Αὐτίκα δὲ οἱ εὐδοντι ἐπέστη ὄνειρος, ὅς οἱ τὴν ἀληθείην ἔφαινε τῶν μελλόντων γενέσθαι κακῶν κατὰ τὸν παῖδα. «But after Solon's departure divine retribution fell heavily on Croesus; as I guess, because he supposed himself to be blessed beyond all other men. Directly, as he slept, he had a dream, which showed him the truth of the evil things which were going to happen concerning his son». Hdt. i, 34 (transl. by A.D. Godley, Harvard University Press, Cambridge [MA] 1920).



nurse<sup>37</sup>. These passages seem to suggest that the Athenian tradition followed the *Cypria*<sup>38</sup>, where Nemesis is a goddess, raped by Zeus, as well as the mother of Helen who was nursed by Leda. She is a goddess whose aptitude at metamorphosis attests to her fluid, changing nature and her ability to swiftly cover different areas of the *oikoumene*, even though she is still involved in Zeus' *kosmos* insofar as her presence among the mortals ensures their existence. Many scholars have observed that there are several allusions in the comedy to Athenian politics at the time of Pericles, but I will return to this point at a later stage.

### *Nemesis and Ocean in the local Attic context*

I shall now try to reconstruct the context of the local Attic tradition that turns Nemesis into Ocean's child, as indicated by Pausanias. Ocean should be taken as a starting point in order to understand the manner of his presence in the Attic imagination. The importance of Ocean for the Athenian context arises from Aeschylus' tragedy *Prometheus Bound*. Here, for the first time, the god abandons his seat at the borders of the Earth, where he usually lives. He normally does not even take part in divine assemblies<sup>39</sup>, but now flies on a griffon to reach<sup>40</sup> Prometheus in Scythia. Griffons are described in the tragedy as hybrid birds with the paws and body of a lion and the head and beak of an eagle. They are called «Zeus' dogs»<sup>41</sup>. Their function as "Gold-keepers" in the Greek sources<sup>42</sup> connects them with the defense of the sovereignty<sup>43</sup>.

Ocean tries to convince Prometheus to recognize his limits and align himself with the will of Zeus in order to participate in the new *kosmos* (γίγνωσκε σαυτὸν καὶ μεθάρμοσαι τρόπους νέους· νέος γὰρ καὶ τύραννος ἐν θεοῖς, Aesch., *Prom.* 309-310). This clear reference to the adage written on the pediment of the temple of Apollo at Delphi was among the precepts attributed to Nemesis in some *Sentences* of Menander and epigrams of the *Anthologia Palatina*, where the goddess proclaims: Μηδὲν ὑπὲρ τὸ μέτρον<sup>44</sup>. Ocean, described as a figure of mediation and reconciliation, is dismissed by the revolutionary Prometheus, whose struggle against the new order imposed by Zeus is paradigmatic of the Athenian struggle against tyranny. If Ocean

<sup>37</sup> Crat., Fr. 115 K.-A.

<sup>38</sup> The presence of the Dioskouroi on the pedestal seems also to lead in this direction. See also E. Bakola, *Cratinus. The Art of Comedy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford - New York 2010, p. 221.

<sup>39</sup> At the assembly called by Zeus in the *Iliad* (xx, 7), Ocean and the nymphs are the only ones among the gods who did not participate.

<sup>40</sup> Aesch., *Prom.* 286; *Schol.* Aesch., *Prom.* 284b.

<sup>41</sup> Aesch., *Prom.* 804-805.

<sup>42</sup> Hdt. iii, 116.

<sup>43</sup> E. Federico, *Bella circa Metalla e grifoni chrysophylakes. Usi e abusi mitici dell'oro*, in M. Tortorelli Ghidini (ed.), *Aurum. Funzioni e simbologie dell'oro nelle culture del Mediterraneo antico*, L'Erma di Bretschneider, Rome 2013, pp. 317-318.

<sup>44</sup> *Anth. Pal.* xvi 223; 224 and Straton xii 193. See also *M.S.* 520; 4, 12 Jäkel.

is representative of «conventional»<sup>45</sup> wisdom, which also finds expression in the use of Delphic sentences, Prometheus embodies a prophetic knowledge, which keeps the secret of the duration and solidity of Zeus' kingdom. As noted by D. Konstan, however, the instance of reconciliation to which Ocean gives voice is not radically rejected by the titan, but only postponed, in a perspective that teleologically is already looking toward democracy<sup>46</sup>. In the tragedy, Ocean's daughters share the sufferings of the titan who is nailed to a rock by Zeus, encouraging him to surrender toAdrastea<sup>47</sup>, who is a divine figure typically linked to Nemesis<sup>48</sup>. Furthermore, Aeschylus supports elsewhere the idea of Ocean's proximity to the Aethiopians<sup>49</sup>.

All these considerations allow us to infer that Ocean<sup>50</sup> had a place in Attic imagery as a wise figure who encourages respect for limits, specifically those established by Zeus. He travels on an imaginary animal like the griffon<sup>51</sup>, which he can ride even without bridles, just through the power of his thought (γνώμη στομίον ἄτερ εὐθύνων)<sup>52</sup>. He expresses an instance of mediation, cohesion, and social control, which recalls Nemesis. His daughters are also in charge of Adrastea's law, whose name immediately refers to Nemesis. To sum up, the kinship of Ocean with Nemesis contributes to a better understanding of the goddess in the Attic context.

### *The Nemesis Statue in Rhamnous and its Attributes*

Let me now return to the *agalma* in order to explore the subtle grammar underlying it. I will begin with the pedestal, where the introduction of Helen to her mother Nemesis is sculpted. Many different generations are present in the scene: Helen's parents and the nurse, Helen's brothers, Helen's husband, and Helen's daughter. The other young people seem to refer to future generations. Helen's story was well-known: she abandoned her nuptial *oikos* to follow another man to another land, far away from Greece; she overstepped the limits of the *oikos*, becoming the wife of a foreigner, even a Barbarian; she overstepped the limits of the *polis* and those of the *Hellenikon*. When

<sup>45</sup> D.W. Dahle, *A Note on the characterization of Okeanos in the Prometheus Bound*, in «Echos du Monde Classique» 33 (1989), pp. 341-346: p. 342.

<sup>46</sup> D. Konstan, *The Ocean episode in the Prometheus Bound*, in «History of Religion», 17, 1 (1977), pp. 61-72.

<sup>47</sup> Aesch., *Prom.* 935. Cf. also *Schol.* Aesch., *Prom.* 936b.

<sup>48</sup> See for example, *Men.*, Fr. 226 K.-A.; *Ael. Herod.*, s.v. Ἀδράστεια; *Zen.* 1, 30, 1 and H. Posnansky, *Nemesis und Adrasteia. Eine mythologisch-archäologische Abhandlung* ("Breslauer Philologische Abhandlungen", 5), W. Koebne, Breslau 1890.

<sup>49</sup> Aesch., Fr. 323 Mette (= *Strab.* 1, 2, 27).

<sup>50</sup> Ocean is also in several ways present in the Attic religious landscape: According to the mythographer Pherekydes, Ocean was the father of Triptolemos, who was connected to Eleusis (*Pher.*, *FGrHist* 3 F 53); a daughter of Ocean, Kallirhoe (*Hes.*, *Theog.* 288) gave her name to a spring flowing in the Valley of Ilissos, while one of the most important Attic rivers was named like the Celtic Eridanus (*Paus.* 1, 19, 4), born from Ocean and Tethys (*Hes.*, *Theog.* 337).

<sup>51</sup> *Schol.* Aesch., *Prom.* 284a-b and *Eust.*, *Comm. in Hom. Od.* v, 435.

<sup>52</sup> Aesch., *Prom.* 287.



she returned from Troy she could not escape the accountability that was inscribed in her destiny as Nemesis' daughter.

Furthermore, if we assume that the reconstruction of the pedestal by archaeologists is correct<sup>53</sup>, then Helen was represented as covered with a veil in the presence of Nemesis. This scene is reminiscent of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Book of the *Iliad*. There, after the duel between Menelaus and Paris, Helen refuses to obey Aphrodite's order to seek out her husband in the *thalamus*, lest she arouse the *nemesis* of the Trojan women. Forced by the goddess, however, she surrenders to the divine will and covers herself with a veil<sup>54</sup>. Helen, who showed too late that she feared human *nemesis*, is finally exposed to divine *nemesis*. This episode, significantly, takes place in the presence of young and old people, showing the action of Nemesis to different generations. It is placed in an Attic context, where finally the reintegration of Helen into her family occurs, even if under the dark gaze of Nemesis. It is in Attica that transgressions are brought back to the established limits.

The negotiation of limits might also be expressed by two attributes of the Rhamnousian Nemesis (fig. 1): the *phiale* with the Ethiopians in the right hand and the apple branch in the left. We observe, in the reconstruction of the statue known to us from copies of the Roman era<sup>55</sup>, that the hand with the *phiale* is stretched out, as in many other divine images, towards the worshippers. The *phiale*, which was used in libations and marks the first step of the ritual, seems to embody the beginning of communication between gods and mortals<sup>56</sup>. The presence of the Ethiopians does, then, assume a particular

<sup>53</sup> The reconstruction of the pedestal of Nemesis' statue is a controversial issue. Scholars have been trying to find a solution to the inconsistencies between Pausanias' account and the archaeological data. A *status quaestionis* on the different hypotheses can be found in B. Petrakos, *La base de la Némésis d'Agocrate*, in «Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique» 105, 1 (1981), pp. 227-253 and Id., *Ο ΔΗΜΟΣ ΤΟΥ ΠΑΜΝΟΥΝΤΟΣ*, cit., pp. 259-266, who counts two horses and 14 figures, two more than listed by Pausanias, whose names are unknown. K.D. Shapiro Lapatin, *A family gathering at Rhamnous? Who's who on the Nemesis base*, in «Hesperia» 61, 1 (1992), pp. 107-119, basing his reconstruction on a neo-Attic relief from Rome, which is now in Stockholm, recognizes «an extra female figure» in addition to those mentioned by Pausanias and suggests that she could be identified as Klytaimnestra. He supposes also the presence of Zeus at the corner of the base. According to P. Karanastassi, *Wer ist die Frau hinter Nemesis? (Studien zur Statuenbasis der Nemesis von Rhamnus*, in «Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts (Athenische Abteilung)» 109 (1994), pp. 121-131, the fourth female figure represented on the base could be Themis, a goddess who was also worshipped in Rhamnous. A. Kosmopoulou, *The Iconography of Sculptured Statue Bases in the Archaic and Classical Periods*, Wisconsin University Press, Madison 2002, pp.130-133, esp. 132, reexamines the entire issue and finally argues that the many interpretations given by the scholars «are not mutually exclusive». She points out that the scene represented on the base «was probably open to multiple interpretations».

<sup>54</sup> Hom., *Il.* III, 410: «Not I. I am not going to him. It would be too shameful/ I will not serve his bed (κεῖσε δ' ἐγὼν οὐκ εἶμι: νευεσητητόν δέ κεν εἶη/κείνου πορσανέουσα λέχος), since the Trojan women hereafter would laugh at me, all, and my heart even now is confused with sorrows» (transl. R. Lattimore, *The Iliad* e-book). On Helen's attitude to shame, see M. Ebbott, *The wrath of Helen: self-blame and Nemesis in the Iliad*, in G. Nagy, *Homer and Hesiod as Prototypes of Greek Literature*, Routledge, New York - London 1999, pp. 235-253.

<sup>55</sup> For a catalogue of the several existing copies of the Rhamnousian Nemesis, see G.I. Despinis, *ΣΥΜΒΟΛΗ ΣΤΗ ΜΕΛΕΤΗ ΤΟΥ ΕΠΙΤΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΑΓΟΡΑΚΠΙΤΟΥ*, Εγύης, Athens 1971, pp. 28-44.

<sup>56</sup> On the importance of the *phiale* within the communication between divine and human,

meaning. Pausanias seems to have questioned this significance, but he finally refuses the explanation given by the experts, which was based on the place of residence of the Ethiopians as well as on Nemesis' genealogy. Nevertheless, Pausanias' refusal to accept this interpretation, which was circulating at his time, might conceal the terms of an ancient debate around the statue and the attributes decorating it, a debate that probably reflects a fundamental feature of the ancient images, which are polyvalent by definition<sup>57</sup>. The plasticity of meanings they convey is intertwined with the various levels of understanding through which an image can be read. According to G. Pucci<sup>58</sup>, an image derives from the intersection of two social practices, that of production and that of reception. Firstly, even if the time of production can be identified as a specific point on the timeline, and hence historically contextualized, the core of meanings that a statue expresses is fluid and multilayered already at the moment of its creation, above all in a polytheistic context. Secondly, its reception is obviously subject to continuous changes and readjustments. This is particularly true in the case of Rhamnous, where the ethnic and social composition of the deme underwent significant transformations over the centuries<sup>59</sup>, which could have affected the reception and perception of the goddess and of the statue.

We return to the Ethiopians on Nemesis' *phiale*: some scholars have given them a political reading, suggesting that this iconographic choice is

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especially when it is held in the hand of a cult statue, see E. Simon, *Archäologisches zu Spende und Gebet in Griechenland und Rom*, in F. Graf (ed.), *Ansichten griechischer Rituale. Geburtstags-Symposium für Walter Burkert (Basel 15. bis 18 März 1996)*, Teubner, Stuttgart - Leipzig, 1998, pp. 135-136. For further interpretations regarding the meaning of the *phiale*, cf. A.-F. Laurens, *Intégration des dieux dans le rituel humain? L'exemple de la libation en Grèce ancienne, in Images et rituel en Grèce ancienne*, L'Arbresle, La Tourette 1985, pp. 35-49; P. Veyne, *Images de divinités tenant une phiale ou patère*, in «Mètis. Anthropologie des mondes grecs anciens» 5 (1990), pp. 17-30; K.C. Patton, *Religion of the Gods. Ritual, Paradox and Reflexivity*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2009, esp. pp. 121-180; and more recently H. Collard, *Montrer l'invisible. Rituel et présentification du divin dans l'imagerie attique*, Presses Universitaires de Liège, Liège 2016, pp. 98-110, who stresses the function of this libation instrument in the communication between the human and divine spheres.

<sup>57</sup> J. Marcadé, *La polyvalence de l'image dans la sculpture grecque*, in H. Metzger, ΕΙΔΩΛΟ-ΠΟΙΙΑ. *Actes du colloque sur les problèmes de l'image dans le monde Méditerranéen classique (Château de Lourmarin en Provence, 2-3 Septembre 1982)*, G. Bretschneider, Roma 1985, pp. 27-37.

<sup>58</sup> G. Pucci, *Imagine*, in M. Bettini - W. Short (eds.), *Con i Romani. Un'antropologia della cultura antica*, il Mulino, Bologna 2014, pp. 353-376.

<sup>59</sup> Since the occupation by the Spartans of the deme of Dekeleia (410 B.C.E.), Rhamnous played a very important strategic role. A big fortress was built in its territory, which became some time later the last frontier of Attica, when the Boeotians added the deme of Oropos to their territory. During the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E. many Athenian soldiers had their headquarters in Rhamnous. Departing from the reform of the epehbian service (334 B.C.E.), Rhamnous was indicated as one of the places for their military training. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C.E., after the Macedonian occupation of Attica, also the ethnic composition of the deme changed, because Macedonian officials and mercenaries were present near the epehbes and the Athenian soldiers. On the history of the deme through the centuries and in particular on the Rhamnousian fortress, see J. Pouilloux, *La forteresse de Rhamonte (Étude de topographie et d'histoire)*, E. de Boccard, Paris 1954; B. Petrakos, *La forteresse de Rhamonte*, in «Comptes-rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres», 141, 2 (1997), pp. 605-630; and more recently regarding the Hellenistic period, R. Oetjen, *Athen im dritten Jahrhundert v. Chr. Politik und Gesellschaft in den Garnisonsdemen auf der Grundlage der inschriftlichen Überlieferung*, Wellem, Duisburg 2014.

an expression of successful Athenian military power over the “Barbarians” represented by the Persians<sup>60</sup>. This interpretation is obviously influenced by Pausanias’ account of the Rhamnousian Nemesis as the punishing goddess of the Persians who landed at Marathon. Conversely some other scholars are more inclined to read the Aethiopians as an allusion to the limits of the Earth, which the power of Nemesis is able to reach.

However, I would emphasize that the Aethiopians were known among the Greeks as an *ethnos* characterized by their sense of justice, living in a boundary-blessed land, where they enjoyed a proximity to the gods, who were often their guests<sup>61</sup>. Consequently, the *phiale* that seems to be offered to the worshippers, and its depiction of Aethiopians, might symbolize the limits allowed for mortals<sup>62</sup>.

Finally, as far as the apple-branch in the other hand is concerned, scholars usually interpret it as a reference to the garden of the Hesperides, basing their argument on the analogy with a 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E. Athenian relief representing Herakles with the goddesses, one of whom is holding an apple branch<sup>63</sup>. According to the tradition, the garden of the Hesperides was located beyond the Ocean<sup>64</sup>. It was a space reserved only for the immortals<sup>65</sup>. The apple-branch, which is held down in the left hand of the Nemesis statue and thereby appears inaccessible, might represent those territories that are off-limits to mortals. In this respect it is meaningful that on a crater in

<sup>60</sup> N.R.E. Fisher, *Hybris: A Study in the Values of Honour and Shame in Ancient Greece*, Aris & Philips, Warminster 1992, pp. 503, n. 407; E. Stafford, *Worshipping Virtues. Personification and the Divine in Ancient Greece*, Duckworth, London 2000, p. 86.

<sup>61</sup> Hom. *Il.* 1, 422-425. Cf. A. Ballabriga, *Le Soleil et le Tartare. L’image mythique du monde en Grèce archaïque*, Éditions de l’EHESS, Paris 1986, pp. 45-60. On the features of the Aethiopians in Greek sources and their relationships with the *peirata* and other peoples dwelling at the extreme limits of the earth, like the Hyperboreans, see B. MacLachlan, *Feasting with Ethiopians: life on the fringe*, in «Quaderni Urbinati di Cultura Classica», n.s. 40, 1 (1992), p. 15-33.

<sup>62</sup> See E. Simon, *Der Goldschatz von Panagjuriste – Eine Schöpfung der Alexanderzeit*, in «Antike Kunst», 3, 1 (1960), pp. 3-29; 8; G.I. Despina, ΣΥΜΒΟΛΗ ΣΤΗ ΜΕΛΕΤΗ ΤΟΥ ΕΡΓΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΑΓΟΡΑΚΡΙΤΟΥ, cit., p. 64; and W. Ehrhardt, *Versuch einer Deutung des Kultbildes der Nemesis von Rhamnus*, cit., pp. 29-39. On the Aethiopians as iconographic motif, see F.M. Snowden, *LMC*, s.v. “Aithiopes”, vol. 1, 1 (1981), pp. 413-419; 417-418, and for a *status quaestionis* regarding different interpretations, *ibi*, p. 418. Several explanations have been offered for the presence of the Aethiopians on the Nemesis *phiale*: either making an allusion to the Athenian struggle with the Barbarians (Ch. Picard, *Pourquoi la Némésis de Rhamnonte tenait-elle à sa droite une coupe ornée de têtes de nègres?*, in «Revue Archéologique» 1 [1958]), or as a reference to the Homeric portrait of the Aethiopians and to their piety toward the gods (L. Lacroix, *Delphos et les monnaies de Delphes*, in Id., *Études d’archéologie numismatique*, Peeters, Paris 1974, pp. 37-51; pp. 49-50).

<sup>63</sup> H.A. Thompson, *The altar of Pity in the Athenian agora*, in «Hesperia» 21, 1 (1952), pp. 47-82; E.B. Harrison, *Hesperides and heroes: a note on three-figure reliefs*, cit., pp. 76-82; G.I. Despina, ΣΥΜΒΟΛΗ ΣΤΗ ΜΕΛΕΤΗ ΤΟΥ ΕΡΓΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΑΓΟΡΑΚΡΙΤΟΥ, cit., p. 64 and n. 213; *LMC*, vol. v, 2, 104 n. 2707; W. Ehrhardt, *Versuch einer Deutung des Kultbildes der Nemesis von Rhamnus*, cit., p. 33.

<sup>64</sup> Hes., *Theog.* 274-275.

<sup>65</sup> A. Però, “Eracle e i nomi d’oro delle Esperidi”, in M. Tortorelli Ghidini (ed.), *Aurum. Funzioni e simbologie dell’oro nelle culture del Mediterraneo antico*, L’Erma di Bretschneider, Rome 2013, pp. 153-162. For an analysis of the sources of the Hesperides’ Garden, see Ph. Matthey, *Les pommes d’amour des Hespérides. 1<sup>ère</sup> partie – le jardin aux portes du soir*, in D. Barbu et al. (eds.), *Mondes clos. Cultures jardins*, «Asdiwal», Suppl. 1, Infolio editions, Genève 2013, pp. 139-164.

Amsterdam of the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E., Herakles, who was fated to be accepted among the Olympians, receives from a seated Hesperid an apple-branch, which she holds up<sup>66</sup>.

To sum up this point, on the pedestal of the Rhamnousian statue, the exposure to Nemesis is represented as a consequence of the overstepping of a limit that should have been respected. The gesture of Helen covering herself with a veil, at the centre of the scene, expresses the sense of *aidos* felt by someone exposed to *nemesis*<sup>67</sup>. Further, the attributes of the statue seem to indicate different kinds of limits: those permitted and those forbidden to mortals<sup>68</sup>.

I still do not have a full explanation for the deer and the statues of Nike on the goddess' crown. Their interpretation poses problems, as it is uncertain how these figures were placed on the crown. Was it a sequence of deer on the one side, and of Nike's *agalмата* on the other side, or did they alternate?<sup>69</sup> Or was it a sequence of Nikai grasping deer, like in a hydria from the Metropolitan Museum in New York (fig. 2), as E. Simon suggested many years ago<sup>70</sup>. Two observations can be made. First of all, the association of Nike's *agalмата* and deer on a crown sounds a bit like an oxymoron. The deer is known in Greek antiquity for being fast, ambiguous, weak, and long-lived; usually, its habitat is marginal spaces such as forests or mountains; it is the prey *par excellence*<sup>71</sup>. However, its salvific epiphany attests to a divine presence which falls within the category of *thauma*, as in the case of Odysseus on Circe's island<sup>72</sup>, or Iphigeneia, whose life was spared on the sacrificial altar by the appearance of a deer<sup>73</sup>. On the other hand, the statues of Nike on the crown, which are *agalмата* on the *agalma*, as an expression of force and victory counteract the extreme weakness of the deer and its attitude to escape. One needs to bear in mind that the shrine of Athena Nike stood on the Acropolis while a Nike soared into the hands of the Athena Parthenos inside the Parthenon. Perhaps the statue of Nemesis at Rhamnous should be interpreted as a node in the network of artistic works related to Phidias' circle in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, which dotted the landscape of Attica and conveyed precise religious meanings.

<sup>66</sup> *LMC*, vol. v, 2 (1990) n. 2719.

<sup>67</sup> D. Cairns, *Aidōs*, Clarendon Press, Oxford - New York 1993, pp. 51-52.

<sup>68</sup> For a different interpretation of the statue, see W. Ehrhardt, *Versuch einer Deutung des Kultbildes der Nemesis von Rhamnus*, cit. See also G.I. Despinis, *ΣΥΜΒΟΛΗ ΣΤΗ ΜΕΛΕΤΗ ΤΟΥ ΕΡΓΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΑΓΟΡΑΚΡΙΤΟΥ*, cit.

<sup>69</sup> On the different proposals, cf. G.I. Despinis, *ΣΥΜΒΟΛΗ ΣΤΗ ΜΕΛΕΤΗ ΤΟΥ ΕΡΓΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΑΓΟΡΑΚΡΙΤΟΥ*, cit., pp. 63-64.

<sup>70</sup> E. Simon, *Der Goldschatz von Panaguriste – Eine Schöpfung der Alexanderzeit*, cit., pp. 3-29: p. 18; on this *hydria* from New York, W. Züchner, *Griechische Klappspiegel*, in «Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Ergänzungsheft» 14 (1942), p. 192, n. 2, and G.M.A. Richter, *A Greek Bronze Hydria in the Metropolitan Museum*, in «American Journal of Archaeology» 41, 4 (1937), pp. 532-538, who identifies the goddess as Artemis.

<sup>71</sup> On the deer as a prey in hunting, see A. Schnapp, *Le chasseur et la cité. Chasse érotique dans la Grèce ancienne*, A. Michel, Paris 1997.

<sup>72</sup> Hom., *Od.* x, 157-184.

<sup>73</sup> Eur., *Iph. Aul.* 1580-1590. On the problems related to the final part of Euripides' play, see V. Andò, *Cronaca di una morte misteriosa*, in «Mythos» (2014), pp. 137-150.

The second point I noticed is that Pausanias uses the plural when he speaks about deer and little *agalmata*. This makes me think that the Nikai on the crown were intended to celebrate not one, but many victories under the divine protection of Nemesis. Furthermore, Pausanias seems to allude to the contribution of the goddess in warding off enemies<sup>74</sup>. This could refer to an invasion of the Attic borders, as the construction of the fortress in Rhamnous in the same chronological period would suggest<sup>75</sup>.

*Which victory for the Rhamnousian Nemesis?*

The fact that the statue seems to celebrate many victories brings us directly to the last part of this contribution: was the Persian defeat at Marathon with the contribution of Nemesis among these victories? The flourishing of the cult has been placed in the middle of the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E., even if we can find some traces in Rhamnous already in the 6<sup>th</sup>. The shrine with the statue seems to have been of great importance between 430 and 420 B.C.E., as suggested by many archaeologists<sup>76</sup>. If this is correct, then one must look to the last years of the Pentecontaetia or to the first part of the Peloponnesian war for an answer to our question, a view supported by Cratinos' play discussed earlier. Here, scholars have recognized Pericles<sup>77</sup> behind the figure of Zeus, and read the play as a vaguely disguised political satire, which was probably inspired by the story narrated in the *Cypria*. Furthermore, Pausanias' references to members of the Periclean entourage, like Phidias, might suggest that the Athenian politician paid particular attention to Nemesis' cult. If so, then the Athenian victory celebrated by the statue was most probably not that of Marathon, which was known as the military exploit of Miltiades, who belonged to the family of Pericles' political enemies. Under these circumstances he would not have had any interest in commemorating this event with a statue.

Pericles' generation might have been more interested in celebrating another success against the Persians, namely the naval combat of Salamis, ten years after Marathon, in 480 B.C.E. Between these two battles there were significant differences, which contributed a particular meaning in Greek political imagery for each of them. First of all, Marathon was a pitched battle, fought by Athenians belonging to the landed class, who could provide the hoplite equipment for themselves. The heroes of Salamis were, instead, oarsmen of the lowest Athenian class, who after the battle assumed a crucial role in the maritime democracy promoted by Pericles. Finally, the most important difference between Marathon and Salamis, which justifies the importance to

<sup>74</sup> «The Persians were convinced that nothing would hinder their conquest of Athens» (Paus. I, 33, 2).

<sup>75</sup> B. Petrakos, *La forteresse de Rhamnonte*, cit.

<sup>76</sup> W.B. Dinsmoor, *Rhamnountine Fantasies*, in «Hesperia» 30 (1961), pp. 179-204; M.M. Miles, *A Reconstruction of the Temple of Nemesis at Rhamnous*, cit., pp. 133-249.

<sup>77</sup> Pericles was usually identified with Zeus in Athenian comedy; see for example Cratinos, Fr. 73 K.-A.

the Athenians of the former battle after the end of the Peloponnesian war, was that this former one was entirely an Athenian victory against the barbarian oppression, whereas the latter success was achieved by Athens as part of a Hellenic coalition under Spartan leadership. During Pericles' time and even later, Salamis was considered to have been the greatest Athenian success against the Barbarians. But some time later, in the last third of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, when the disastrous results of the Peloponnesian war between Athenians and Spartans showed the limits of the maritime democracy, the memory of the brave warriors of Marathon returned in vogue<sup>78</sup>.

But it is also possible that the repeated appearance of deer and small statues of Nike on Nemesis' crown refer to the many glorious achievements of the Athenians in defending their territory and increasing their *arche*, as stated by Pericles in the *logos epitaphios* pronounced for the dead in the first year of the Peloponnesian war. In that speech the Athenian *strategos* celebrates the character of the Athenians who, through their ability to combine both "courage" (τολμᾶν) and "calculation" (ἐκλογίζεσθαι), have forced all seas and earths to be submissive to their "daring" (τόλμα)<sup>79</sup>.

This Athenian ability seems to correspond to the invitation given by Ocean to Prometheus, and to the warning conveyed by Nemesis' statue, to explore the limits that are accessible to mortals while respecting the inaccessible ones.

Nonetheless, no reference to the sanctioning power of the goddess can be found, either in the statue or in the cult, at least not in the 5<sup>th</sup> century. B. Petrakos, the archaeologist who recommenced the excavations in the 1980s in the Attic deme, observed that the Rhamnousian Nemesis had "milder" features. In his opinion, she is a sort of vegetative goddess who helps the farmers and shepherds to avoid discord regarding water distribution and the demarcation between their properties<sup>80</sup>. What indeed arises very clearly from the analysis so far, is the goddess' warning function. She demonstrates how best to deal with limits, borders, and boundaries, how to respect assigned spaces and roles, and that these may be challenged only when it is permitted. The tradition that turned Nemesis into the punishing goddess of barbarian *hybris* may have arisen later, perhaps during the 4<sup>th</sup> or the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C.E., as suggested by Matthias Haake<sup>81</sup>. It might also have coincided with the revival of the hoplite ethics embodied by the ephebes after Epikrates' reform (335-334 B.C.E.). The ephebes, who were required to reside in the fortress of Rhamnous during their military service, were particularly sensitive to the

<sup>78</sup> For this reconstruction: H.-J. Gehrke, *Marathon: a European Charter Myth?*, in «Palamedes» 2 (2007), pp. 93-108: pp. 100-102.

<sup>79</sup> Thuc. II, 40-41.

<sup>80</sup> B. Petrakos, *Ο ΔΗΜΟΣ ΤΟΥ ΠΑΜΝΟΥΝΤΟΣ*, cit., p. 188.

<sup>81</sup> M. Haake, *Antigonos II. Gonatas und der Nemesisstempel in Rhamnous. Zur semantik göttlicher Ehren für einen hellenistischen König an einem athenischen 'lieu de Mémoire'*, cit. Doubts about the relation between Nemesis and the Athenian victory of Marathon were posed also by B. Knittlmayer, *Kultbild und Heiligtum der Nemesis von Rhamnous am Beginn des Peloponnesischen Krieges*, in «Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts» 114 (1999), pp. 1-18: pp. 2-4.



exploit of the warriors of Marathon, as demonstrated by the later heroic cult devoted to them<sup>82</sup>. Another possibility is that the rise of the new barbarian danger represented by the Celts, whose aggression against the Greek world was often compared to that of the Persians in 5<sup>th</sup> century, could have contributed to the construction of the myth surrounding Marathon. The Celts were defeated by the Macedonian Antigonos Gonata in the battle of Lysimachia in 278/7 B.C.E. Some years later the Rhamnousians established a sacrifice to him, as king and saviour of the Athenians, during the Nemesia feast<sup>83</sup>. Pausanias states, significantly, that the Celts came from the Ocean<sup>84</sup>. He also supports a completely different conception of the *eschatia* represented by Ocean, a conception strongly influenced by the western Roman conquests of the 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C.E./C.E. In this period, Britannia, mentioned by Pausanias in his visit to Rhamnous, was a target of Roman interest<sup>85</sup>. For the Periegete, as already for Herodotus<sup>86</sup>, Ocean was no longer a ring surrounding the earth. But Pausanias was also an attentive reader of the 5<sup>th</sup>-century historian. He was certainly familiar with the story told by Herodotus in the 1<sup>st</sup> Book, in which the barbarian Croesus was struck by the ἐκ θεοῦ νέμεσις μεγάλη, thinking himself the happiest man on earth<sup>87</sup>. The Periegete should not have had any difficulties in accepting the version that was circulating later of a Rhamnousian Nemesis who punished the barbarian *hybris* at Marathon.

### Conclusions

Daughter of Night according to Hesiod, and of Ocean according to the Attic tradition related by Pausanias, Nemesis presents a mythical story that connects her directly to a chaotic pre-Olympic phase. Like other goddesses, such as Metis or Themis, she is forced into sexual intercourse with Zeus. She thus shares with Metis and many other mythical figures the dramatic experience of divine rape, which she relentlessly tries to avoid. She seeks refuge in the water, in a marvellous escape, marked by a sequence of changing forms,

<sup>82</sup> M. Jung, *Marathon und Plataiai. Zwei »lieux de mémoire« im antiken Griechenland*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 2006, pp. 191-201; G. Proietti, *La memoria delle Guerre Persiane in età imperiale e la 'Stele dei Maratonomachi'*, in «Annali della Scuola Archeologica di Atene» 90, s. III, 12 (2012), p. 80.

<sup>83</sup> B. Petrakos, *Ο ΔΗΜΟΣ ΤΟΥ ΠΑΜΝΟΥΝΤΟΣ*, cit., p. 11-13. On the relationship between Antigonos Gonata and the Rhamnousian Nemesis, see M. Haake, *Antigonos II. Gonatas und der Nemesistempel in Rhamnous. Zur semantik göttlicher Ehren für einen hellenistischen König an einem athenischen 'lieu de Mémoire'*, cit. and more recently L. Cazzadori, *Nuove feste a Rannunte* (SEG XL1 75; *Arat.*, Phain. 96-136, *Call.*, Fr. 110. 71 Pf), in «Studi ellenistici» 29 (2015), pp. 111-144.

<sup>84</sup> Paus. x, 20, 3.

<sup>85</sup> G. Zecchini, *I confini occidentali dell'impero romano: la Britannia da Cesare a Claudio*, in M. Sordi (ed.), *Contributi dell'Istituto di Storia antica XIII*, Milano 1987, pp. 250-271.

<sup>86</sup> Hdt. II, 23; IV, 8; IV, 36. Cf. J.S. Romm, *The Edges of the Earth in Ancient Thought (Geography, Exploration and Fiction)*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1992, pp. 32-41.

<sup>87</sup> Hdt. I, 34. On the relation between Herodotus' and Pausanias' works, see V. Pirenne-Delforge, *Retour à la source. Pausanias et la religion grecque*, Centre International d'Étude de la Religion Grecque Antique, Liège 2008, pp. 25-32 and p. 344 with previous bibliographical references.

leading her to the farthest edges of the earth. The connection with water and the tendency to metamorphose allow us to include her among the so-called “shape-shifters”, divine powers at the margins, whose control by Zeus is important for the resilience of the *kosmos*. She presides over a particular form of justice whose effectiveness, which is shown to different generations, educates them to respect limits, ensures social cohesion, and responds to mankind’s expectations of a balanced world. In these terms, she is absolutely necessary for the new Olympic order, which establishes a rigorous division of *timai* among immortals and the definitive separation between gods and men. Helen, as the outcome of the union with Zeus, also takes part in this new order and cooperates in its stability. According to the tradition related by Pausanias, the worshipped Nemesis of Rhamnous is an implacable goddess, who is in charge of the punishment of *hybris* and whose cult was connected to the Athenians’ victory at Marathon.

However, the examination of the literary evidence and their historiographical classification show a much more complex framework in which the rise of this tradition can be better understood if placed in the 4<sup>th</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C.E. The history of the shrine, the investigation of the local context, and the iconographic analysis of Nemesis’ *agalma* allow us to reconstruct the profile of a warning power that oversees the limits assigned to mortals, and whose sanctioning aspect is only secondary.



Fig. 1: Reconstruction of the Nemesis statue in Rhamnous taken from *Versuch einer Deutung des Kultbildes der Nemesis von Rhamnus*, in «Antike Kunst» 40, 1 (1997), Abb.1, p. 31, with kind permission of the author.





Fig. 2: Bronze hydria (water jar) with silver inlay (late 5th century B.C.)-Metropolitan Museum of Art (n. 37.11.6) with kind permission. Available at: <<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/253533>>.

## ABSTRACT

*According to a passage of Pausanias' Periegesis (I, 33, 2-4), the statue of Nemesis in Rhamnous was made by Phidias from a piece of Parian marble, which the Persians had brought along at the time of the battle of Marathon to build a trophy, sure as they were that they were going to conquer Athens. The Periegete describes in detail the agalma of Nemesis, defining her as the most implacable against the hybristai. The statue has a crown with deer and small images of Nike. In the left hand, she carries an apple branch, and in the right hand a phiale on which Aethiopians are carved. Pausanias reports that he was not able to guess the reasons why Aethiopians were represented on the phiale, and he does not accept the statement of those who give as an explanation the fact that they live near the river Ocean, and Ocean is the father of Nemesis. Pausanias then proceeds with an excursus in a Herodotean manner to demonstrate that the Aethiopians never dwelled on a river Ocean, and he adds that in any case Ocean is not a river, but rather the extreme part of the sea navigated by men. He thus accepts the genealogy that makes Nemesis Ocean's daughter. He repeats it in Book 7 (5, 1-3) where, speaking about the two Nemeseis of Smyrnai, he specifies that the dwellers of Smyrnai assign them Night as mother, while the Athenians say Ocean is the father of Nemesis. Pausanias insists upon this double genealogy for Nemesis, referring to*

*the Hesiodic Theogony (211-225) and the Athenian tradition, respectively. This paper aims at exploring the origins and the terms of the Athenian tradition, describing Nemesis, who implacably sanctions the overwhelming of the limit, as a child of Ocean, himself a liminal figure who marks the spatial borders of human action.*

*In un passo della Periegesi (I, 33, 2-4), Pausania riferisce che la statua di Nemesis, nel demo attico di Ramnunte, era opera di Fidia ed era stata scolpita da un blocco di marmo pario che i Persiani portarono con loro all'epoca della battaglia di Maratona per farne un trofeo. Essi erano infatti convinti che avrebbero conquistato Atene. Il Periegeta descrive nel dettaglio l'agalma della dea, definendola la più implacabile contro gli hybristai. La statua portava sulla testa una corona decorata con cervi e piccoli agalmata di Nike. Nella mano sinistra aveva un ramo di melo, mentre nella destra una phiale sulla quale erano rappresentati degli Etiopi. Pausania dice di non essere stato in grado di scoprire il motivo di tale decorazione, ma afferma di non condividere la spiegazione di coloro che sostengono che la ragione sia da ricercare nel fatto che gli Etiopi vivono presso la corrente del fiume Oceano che sarebbe, a sua volta, il padre di Nemesis. Il Periegeta procede poi a un excursus di sapore tipicamente erodoteo per dimostrare che gli Etiopi non abitano sull'Oceano e che quest'ultimo non è affatto un fiume, ma la parte estrema del mare navigato dagli uomini. Egli accetta dunque la versione locale che Nemesis sia la figlia di Oceano e la ripete ancora nel VII libro (5,1-3) dove, parlando delle due Nemesis di Smirne, precisa che gli Smirnei invece assegnano alla divinità Notte come madre, mentre gli Ateniesi dicono che sia Oceano il padre. Pausania insiste su questa doppia genealogia, che fa riferimento tanto alla Teogonia di Esiodo (vv. 211-225), quanto alla tradizione ateniese. Questo articolo si propone di esplorare le origini e i termini di questa tradizione locale che descrive Nemesis sia come una divinità che sanziona implacabilmente, sia come la figlia di Oceano: quest'ultimo, a sua volta, figura liminale che marca i limiti spaziali dell'azione umana.*

## KEYWORDS

Nemesis, Rhamnous, Pausanias, Ocean, Athens

Nemesis, Ramnunte, Pausania, Oceano, Atene

