IS HOMER REALLY “ENOUGH”?
Echoes of *h.Hom.* 33 in Theoc. 22

*Editare, commentare, interpretare. Approcci multiformi al testo letterario*

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General Remarks: The state of scholarly studies

- Hellenistic poetry: reuse of earlier material, through allusion and reworkings
  - problem: what are its sources and how are they used?

- Theocritus: studies have focused on his reception of:
  - archaic poetry (Effe 1978; Hunter 1996)
  - epic (Kurz 1982)
  - hexametrical genres (Faraone 2021)
  - oral poetry (Pretagostini 1992; Sbarrella 2016)

- His debt towards the Homeric Hymns, however, remains scarcely examined

- cf., on the other hand, similar studies for Callimachus (Vamvouri-Ruffy 2004; Faulkner 2010; 2011; 2013; Acosta-Hughes, Cusset 2013).
**AIM OF THIS TALK**

- A new reading of the XXII *Idyll* to the Dioscuri is offered.

- The beginning is written with *b.Hom.* 33 to the Dioscuri in mind (Gow 1950; Page 1955; Hunter 1996; Sens 1997).

- The end too, containing a poetic manifesto, shows the influence of the *Homeric Hymns*. 
A STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS

1. Hymnic opening

We hymn the two sons of Leda and of aegis-bearing Zeus, Castor and Polydeuces, grim to challenge in boxing when he has strapped his palms with the oxbide thongs. Twice we hymn, and a third time, the two brothers born in Lacedaemon to Thestius’ daughter, who succour men already on the very brink of disaster, and steeds that panic in the bloody fray, and ships which, defying the constellations that set and rise into the heavens, encounter grievous tempests—blasts that raise a huge wave from astern, or from ahead, or where they will, and cast it into the hold, and breach the bulwarks on either side. And with the sail hangs all the tackle, torn and in disarray, and as the night comes on with heavy storms of rain, the wide sea roars beneath the blows of the blasts and of the iron hail. Yet even so from the very depths do ye recover ships with their crews, that thought to die. And forthwith the winds are stillled and oily calm lies on the deep. The clouds disperse this way and that; the Bears are seen again, and between the Asses the dim Crib, betokening that all is fair for voyaging.

O succourers both of mortals, beloved pair, horsemen and harpers, athletes and singers, shall I with Castor or with Polydeuces first begin my song? Both will I hymn, but sing of Polydeuces first.

(Transl. A. Gow)
2. Polydeuces’ fight with Amycus (vv. 26-134)

3. Castor’s fight with Lyneus (vv. 135-213)

4. Farewell to both Castor and Polydeuces (vv. 214-223)
Ἀμφὶ Διὸς κούρους ἐλικώπτες ἔστετε Μοῦσαι (1)
Τυνδαρίδας Λήδης καλλισφόρου ἁγλαὰ τέκνα,
Κάστορα θ’ ἰππόδαμον καὶ ἀμώμητον Πολυδεύκεα,
τοὺς ὑπὸ Ταὐγέτου κορυφή ὅρεος μεγάλοιο
μιχθείσ’ ἐν φιλότητι κελάτεκε Ἀρείων (5)
σωτῆρας τέκε παῖδας ἐπιχθονίων ἀνθρώπων
ὡκυπόρων τε νεών, ὑπὸ τις σπέρχωσιν ἄελλαι
χειμέρας κατὰ πόνον ἀμείλιχον· οἱ δ’ ἀπὸ νηών
εὐχόμενοι καλέουσι Διὸς κούρους μεγάλοιο
ἀρνεῖσιν λευκοῖσιν ἐπ’ ἀκρωτήριο λευκῆς (10)
πρόμηνις· τήν δ’ ἀνεμός τε μέγας καὶ κῦμα θαλάσσης
θήμαν ὑποβρυχίνην, οἱ δ’ ἐξαπίνης ἐφάνησαν
ξοφήσαν πτερύγασιν δι’ αἴθερος ἀξεῖσιν,
αὐτίκα δ’ ἀργαλέων ἀνέμων κατέπαυσαν ἀέλλας,
κῦματα δ’ ἐςτόρεσαν λευκῆς ἀλὸς ἐν πελάγεσσι, (15)
ναῦταις σήματα καλὰ πόνου σφίσιν· οἱ δὲ ἰδόντες
γῆςεαν, παύσαντε δ’ ὀξυροῦ πόνοι.
Χαίρετε Τυνδαρίδαι ταχέων ἐπιβήτορες ἰππών·
αὐτάρ ἐγὼν ὑμέων καὶ ἄλλης μνήσομ’ ἀοιδῆς.

Tell about the Sons of Zeus, O round-eyed Muses – The
Tindarids, fair-ankled Leda’s splendid children, Castor the
horse-tamer and faultless Polydeuces, whom below the
peaks of the great mountain Taygetus, after uniting in love
with the dark-cloud so of Kronos, she bore to be saviors
of mankind on earth and of swift-faring ships, when winter
tempest race over the implacable sea. And the men from
their ships invoke the Sons of Great Zeus in prayer, with
white lambs, going onto the stern deck, and the strong
wind and sea swell overwhelm the ship: suddenly they
appear, speeding through the air on swift wings, and at
once they make the fierce squalls cease, and lay the waves
amid the flats of a clear sea for the sailors, fair portents to
their travail; The sailors rejoice at the sight, and their misery
and stress are ended. I salute you, Tyndarids, riders on swift
steeds. And I will take heed both for you and for other
singing.

(Transl. M. West, modified)
### HOW DO THEOC. 22 AND H.HOM. 33 COMPARE?

The similarities and not in the lexicon, but in:

1. the hymnic devices

   - ὑμνέομεν (Theoc. 22, 1) vs ὑμνεῖ Μοῦσα (b.Merc. 1; b.Hom. 9, 1; 14, 2)
   - ἄρξομ᾽ἀείδειν (Theoc. 22, 5) vs ἄρχομ᾽ἀείδειν (b.Cer. 1; b.Hom. 9, 8; 11, 1; 13, 1; 16, 1; 26, 1; 28, 1)
   - The use of χαῖρε (χαίρετε Δήδας τέκνα, Theoc. 22, 214)
   - Request of fame (ἡμετέροις κλέος ὑμνοῖς / ἐσθλὸν ἀεὶ πέμποιτε): the poet can ask the god to ornate his singing (b.Hom. 10, 5; 24, 5), so that he shall win in a rhapsodic recital (b.Hom. 6, 19-20), or earn prosperity in life (b.Cer. 494; b.Hom. 30, 18; 31, 17).
   - The narrative is freely constructed; the hymnic elements, however, are faithfully kept
2. Structural element and function

- *b.Hom.* 33, 19 αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ ὑμέων τε καὶ ἄλλης μνήσομ’ ἀοιδῆς > a rhapsodic *prooimion*

- Theoc. 22, 4 ὑμνέομεν καὶ δὶς καὶ τρίτον
  - after the hymnic opening, two *epyllia* to Castor and Polydeuces singularly (δὶς), and a farewell to both > three songs (τρίτον)

- The hymnic opening at vv. 1-24 is not included in the count: it functions as a *prooimion* > that which precedes (πρό) the song (οἴμη)

- Theocritus seems to imitate, through literature, the performative custom of the rhapsodes
THE HYPOTHESIS OF A MIMETIC PROOIMION

- Gow (1950): The hymnic opening (vv. 1-25) was an originally independent poem

- The following verses (26-134) are a response to Apollonius Rhodius (2, 1-97)

- The hymn thus introduces a literary querelle: «the criticism is more urban and no less effective» (Gow 1950 p.384)

- The main addressee here, perhaps, is not Apollonius, but Homer> cf. the ending of the Idyll
Glory for you, Princeps, the bard of Chios fashioned when he hymned the town of Priam and the ships of the Achaeans, the battles round Ilium, and Achilles, that tower of strength in fight; and to you I too bear the soothing strains of the clear-voiced Muses.

(transl. A. Gow)
In the Homeric *epos*, the Dioscuri have no significant place


I know them [the Achaeans] well, could tell you all their names-
Two only I cannot see, two high commanders,
Kastor the horse breaker, Polydeukes the skilled boxer,
Brothers of mine, all born of the same mother.
Either they didn’t come with them from lovely Lakedaimon,
Or, if they did make the trip in their seagoing vessels,
They’re bit willing now to join these men in combat
Through fear of all the shame and reproaches leveled at me.
So she spoke; but them the nurturing earth already
Held under in Lakedaimon, their native land.

(Transl. P. Green)
What does Theocritus mean, saying that «Homer sang the Dioscuri»?

Gow (1950, p. 407): «the Dioscuri [...] make any reference to the Iliad untimely»

Sens (1997): mythological revisionism > Theocritus corrects Homer

Perhaps Theocritus had in mind not only the Iliad and the Odyssey, but also the Homeric production in a broader sense: the rhapsodic, post-Homeric poetry

Cameron (1995) and Sbardella (2004): the allusion is to the Cypria (cf. Argumentum 12 , 21 ff. Bernabé; frr. 8, 15)
A MATTER OF REFERENCES

• Are the *Homeric Hymns* also alluded to?

• The opening show influences of the *Homeric Hymns* (cf. supra)

• Theocritus might have had access to the corpus (though not necessarily the same we read today) > cf. Faulkner 2011, p. 195, with further bibliography
  o Theoc. 1, 29-31 e 11, 46 ff. seem to be a reworking of *b.Hom*. 7, 40 sgg.
  o Theoc. 17 hechoes *b.Ap.*;
  o Theoc. 24, 1-63 is perhaps inspired by *b.Cer.*
Glory for you, Princeps, the bard of Chios fashioned…
and to you I too bear the soothing strains of the clear-voiced Muses…
…and for gods songs are the fairest meed.
(Transl. A. Gow)

• H.Ap. 172: τυφλὸς ἄνηρ, οἶκεὶ δὲ Χίῳ ἐνι
• b.Hom. 17, 1 (to The Dioscuri): Κάστορα καὶ Πολυδεύκε’ ἀείσεο, Μοῦσα λίγεια
• b.Hom. 9, 7; 14, 6: χαῖρε δ’ ἄοιδή

• Contra: GOW (1950) and SENS (1997)
A PIECE OF LITERARY IRONY?

Theoc. 7, 43-48:

‘τάν τοι’, ἕφα, ‘κορύναν δωρύττομαι, οὖνεκεν ἐσσί
tάν ἐπ’ ἀλαθεία πεπλασμένον ἐκ Διὸς ἔρνος.
ὡς μοι καὶ τέκτων μέγ’ ἀπέχθεται ὡς τις ἔρευνή (45)
Ἰσον ὀρευς κορυφά τελέσαι δόμον Ὀρομέδοντος,
καὶ Μοισάν ἄρνιχες ὡσι ποτὶ Χῖον ἄοιδόν
ἀντία κοκκύζοντες ἐτώσια μοχθίζοντι.’

“I will give thee my stick, for thou art a sapling whom Zeus has fashioned all for truth. For much I hate the builder who seeks to raise his house as high as the peak of mount Oromedon, and much those cocks of the Muses who lose their toil with crowning against the bard of Chios.”
(Transl. Gow)

- Who are «Cocks of the Muses»?
- The reference is perhaps to the rhapsodes (Sbarrella 2005)
- The real heir of Homer would then be Theocritus himself
• The Idyll is a Ringkomposition, like many others (Pretagostini, 1984)
• It begins referring the Homeric Hymns > a literary precedent is established
• It ends referring the Homeric Hymns

• This time, however, the model is surpassed:

• vv. 220 ff.: «to you I too bear the soothing strains of the clear-voiced Muses such as they give me and my own store provides» (οἷ᾽ αὐταὶ παρέχουσι καὶ ὡς ἐμὸς οἶκος ὑπάρχει, / τοῖα φέρω;
No more, as erstwhile, are men eager to win praise for glorious deeds, but are enslaved by gain. [...]. “And who would listen to another? Homer is enough for all” (Transl. A. Gow)

Who would have known ever the chieftains of the Lycians, or Priam’s long-haired sons, or Cycnus, maidenlike of skin, if poets had not sung the battle cries of men of old? Never had Odysseus won lasting fame, who wandered six score months through all the word, and came alive to the farthest Hades, and escaped from the cave of the baleful Cyclops [...] had not the minstrelsy of an Ionian man profited them. (Transl. A. Gow, modified)
THE LITERARY OPERATION OF THEOCRITUS

• Genres: hymnic and epic > tradition
• Theme: Dioscuri > innovation

• The result is a commentary on poetic legacy and innovation:

• Theoc. Ep. 27, 1 (= AP 9, 434, 1)

Ἄλλος ὁ Χῖος, ἐγὼ δὲ Θεόκριτος ὃς τάδ᾽ ἔγραψα
The Chian is another, but it is I, Theocritus, the author of these works

(Transl. Gow, modified)