

Theocritus' Silent Dioscuri

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THE MOST DRASTIC modern intervention in the received text of the *Idylls* is Wilamowitz's diagnosis of the scribal omission of a page or so after v.170 of the *Hymn to the Dioscuri* and his reattribution of the following lines (to v.180) to Castor.¹ Lynceus has just followed the Dioscuri's abduction of his and Idas' fiancées with charges of bribery, rape and the wanton abuse of blood bonds. Now Castor has only these missing verses to save face, as editors² are now universally inclined to let him do in keeping with Wilamowitz's pronouncement that in such a hymn "die Menschlichkeit auf seiten der Dioskuren sein muss." But must it? To this point in the poem the twins have taken their duties as *σωτήρες* lightly, to say the least, and here Theocritus' sympathies unmistakably lie with Lynceus. The lacuna itself imports grave incoherences into an otherwise untroubled text, while the *apologiae* suggested for Castor would indict him more effectively than has his cousin. It would seem, then, that editors are dismembering a perfectly sound text to impose on the poet exactly the kind of piety toward gods and heroes that here and elsewhere he delights in scoffing.

The textual grounds for the emendation are exceedingly slight: no one has claimed inconcinnity between vv. 170 and 171, which mark the transition between two alternatives to all-out combat, both offered on the strength of family ties: "Either yield to us as your cousins, or at least limit the combat to a duel, that we may bereave our families as little as possible." These sentiments could flow naturally from the lips of one speaker, and *εἰ δ' ὑμῖν κραδίη πόλεμον ποθεῖ . . .* (v.171) strongly recalls Lynceus' salutation: *δαιμόνιοι, τί μάχης ἰμείρετε;* (v.145).³ It is only the manuscripts' uncertainty about the indicated opponent in v.175 (*Κάστωρ D, Λυγκεύς V Tr M*, using Gow's sigla) that has aroused suspicions. But *Λυγκεύς*, which would imply that the lines

¹ *Textgeschichte der griechischen Bukoliker* (Berlin 1906) 191–93.

² The last dissenters were R. Cholmeley, *The Idylls of Theocritus*² (London 1919), without explanation, and O. Könnicke, *Bucolici Graeci* (Brunswick 1914), who replied to Wilamowitz earlier in "Zu Theokrit," *Philologus* 72 (1913) 379–84.

³ *Ibid.* 380f.

are Castor's, could easily enough have been drawn into the text from a gloss on the speaker of the lines (over ἐγὼ?), and V Tr M will again misplace Κάτωρ in v.185, suppressing ἄκρας for a repetition of καρτερός from v.184; a clear error.

Wilamowitz further objects to ὄμαιμος ἐμός (v.173) from Lynceus in reference to Polydeuces on the grounds that it must mean 'brother', not 'kinsman'. But as an adjective ὄμαιμος is often not so restricted⁴ and would precisely fit Lynceus' rhetorical need here for an encompassing and ambiguous term to make the ties of family seem as close as possible. Gow⁵ argues instead that Lynceus would not describe Polydeuces as 'my' (ἐμός *codd.*) or 'his' (έός Vossius;⁶ *i.e.* Idas) 'kinsman' when his relationship to both of the Apharidae is the same. This is a fine point at best, and there is no reason to doubt the manuscripts' ἐμός from Lynceus, self-conscious as he is (αὐτὸς ἐγὼ v.153; νῶι δ', ἐγὼ Κάτωρ τε v.175), who would quite naturally discriminate himself from his brother in excluding him from the combat. Can we not tolerate a touch of solipsism at a grand moment of fraternal self-sacrifice? Certainly the rhetoric of the line, "Idas and my cousin, the mighty Polydeuces," is appropriate more to the courteous and ingratiating Lynceus than to Castor, who would weaken his appeal by slighting Idas so and from whom ὄμαιμος would be otiose.

The duel itself proceeds, by Homeric conventions, as if Lynceus had been the challenger: like Paris (*Il.* 3.328ff), he is the first to brandish his weapon, while Castor follows just as did Menelaus (ὡς δ' αὐτως Μενέλαος *Il.* 3.339; ὡς δ' αὐτως . . . Κάτωρ vv.185f).⁷ Lynceus, like Paris and Hector (*Il.* 7.244ff), makes the first thrust and comes off the worse against the man whom he has challenged. Similarly, the poet comments on the proposal for the duel as if it had come from Lynceus: εἶπε, τὰ δ' οὐκ ἄρ' ἔμελλε θεὸς μεταμόνια θήσειν (v.181) has piquancy only in reference to his frustration at the failure of the earlier negotiations (vv.167ff). This time, the narrator notes with grim irony,

⁴ Hdt. 1.151 and 8.144; Cratin. 433; Pl.Com. 192; Aesch. *Eum.* 212. Though the substantive regularly refers only to siblings, Sophocles' further definition of it in the phrase *τῆς ὀμαίμου καὶ καυγνήτης* (*El.* 12) indicates that this restriction is not necessary or binding. See also E. Bignone, *Teocrito* (Bari 1934) 321 n.1.

⁵ *Theocritus*² II (Cambridge 1952; repr. 1965) 402.

⁶ έός may also be used in the second person (here, after ὑμῶν), as often in this period: *Id.* 17.50; *Ap.Rhod. Arg.* 2.634 and 3.140; *Callim. H.* 3.103 and fr.472 Pf. Though this emendation facilitates the attribution of the lines to Castor, the appropriateness of ἐμός makes it unnecessary.

⁷ Noted by Könnicke, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.2) 380.

his suggestions will be heeded—to his cost. Later, when the poet views Idas' death from the standpoint of his mother, who will never see her son wed (vv.205f), he recalls with similar irony the desire of the initiator of the duel that for the sake of parents such a double slaughter be averted. The lines gain their full pathos only in reference to the proposal as coming from Lynceus, whose self-sacrificing gesture has fatally endangered the brother he sought to protect. The rest of the episode, then, clearly develops from the unbroken monologue which the manuscripts offer.

For the omission itself we lack any explanation more compelling than spastic scribal eye. The copyist, though given to skipping whole pages, would have to be attentive enough to pick up from a point that flawlessly advanced the argument at hand. But in such a densely constructed passage surgery so clean would surely require a bit of effort, which we would be hard-pressed to explain, and could be expected to leave at least some slight mark on the passage thus eviscerated. In fact, the text becomes troublesome only when we try to imagine it with Castor's phantom lines. The verbal preliminaries already go on nearly twice as long as the duel itself; the missing page or any adequate defense by Castor would entail a disproportion of at least three to one, leaving the second episode of the hymn's diptych twice as long as the first and mostly devoted to pointless quibbling. How are we to turn verses, which are touching and coherent as a monologue, into a debate, when both speakers would appeal equally to family ties, assume the same pose of injured innocence, and sound as conciliatory as possible? One wonders how they would ever come to blows or why the poet would bore his audience with a debate of unusual length and no real verbal clash. Theocritus did not, surely, here or elsewhere create two disputants with the same personality.⁸ We must insist on the strong contrasts in characterization which enliven all such confrontations in the *Idylls*, and in this passage we find them only in the opposition between the *πολύμυθος* and pacific Lynceus and his belligerent but silent cousins.

The match needs an aggressor, and it is clearly not Lynceus, who seems for all the world a bit startled by the violent turn that events have taken: "Why these naked blades in your hands?" The answer is

⁸ On Theocritus' contrasting characterizations see U. Ott, *Die Kunst des Gegensatzes in Theokrits Hirtengedichten* (Hildesheim and New York 1969), and J. Kühn, "Die Thalysien Theokrits," *Hermes* 86 (1968) 56–61.

obvious: "Because you are pursuing us, fully armed."⁹ By his own account, Lynceus has consistently underestimated the ruthlessness of his cousins and only slowly begins to grasp it now, as bit by bit he abandons his attempt to talk his way out of the situation. The swords are drawn; none of the cousins could be unclear about why or how they are to fight. Still, Lynceus takes this opportunity to rehearse the issues yet again and at some length—rather uncomfortably, the poet suggests, from under his helmet. His elegant catalogue of nubile Greek womanhood reveals a certain refinement, as does his wistful regret for words borne by the wind's breath to the wet sea-waves. We know from the first, then, that he is a lover, not a fighter. Like other Theocritean innocents, he has his own engaging vanity: he introduces an appeal that all present have heard before and ignored with the disclaimer *καὶ οὐ πολὺμυθος ἔων περ* (v.153). So Simichidas, who hangs on Lycidas' every approving word, claims not to be *ταχυπειθήης* of praise (*Id.* 7.38); the sentimental Cyclops claims ocular evidence that, despite all reports to the contrary, he is indeed *καλός* (*Id.* 6.34ff); and, most pertinently, the Dioscuri's previous opponent, Amycus, disdainfully introduced himself only as 'the Boxer', *οὐ γύννις ἔων κεκλήσεθ' ὁ πύκτης*. (v.69), without realizing the god he was up against (*ὦ πύκτη Πολύδευκες* v.132). It suits the symmetry of the hymn that Lynceus, who is an equally easy conquest for the Dioscuri and equally blind to their actual danger, should, like Amycus, set the terms of the match. The selflessness and naive optimism of the proposal for the duel mesh perfectly with this characterization of Lynceus; from Castor we may expect the same response that he made to the earlier pleading: silence and main force.

The rehabilitation of the Dioscuri cannot proceed, therefore, at the expense of hapless Lynceus. What defense can Castor make in any case? Wilamowitz would have him deny the bribery, but surely Theocritus will not mystify us with irresolvable disputes about points of fact external to the text. The speaker of v.171 has made conciliatory gestures, but what could these be from Castor? He will not offer the Apharidae other brides, for Lynceus has just used this tack at great length. Other recompense would raise the question of bribery again, as well as conceding the Apharidae's rights in the case. For Wilamowitz the mainstay of their defense must be that "die Heldenkraft gibt das bessere Recht"—to deceive, defraud and flee kinsmen?

⁹ K. J. Dover, *Theocritus* (Basingstoke and London 1971) 247.

The opening narrative clearly establishes that the twins have been caught red-handed; their heroic stature can only make bribery, the abuse of family ties and flight all the more dishonorable. And I am not sure that the proposal for the duel would speak greatly for Castor's humanitarianism in any case, invincible swordsman that he proves to be and with Zeus as his second. The Dioscuri would do better to keep silent, as I am sure they do.

The case against the Dioscuri is tight and consistent throughout the whole episode, and the poet has obviously gone to a great deal of trouble to make it so. Had he wanted a laudatory sequel to Polydeuces' triumph, he need only have followed Pindar's *Nemean* 10, which presents nothing in the origins of the dispute to distract from Polydeuces' saintliness.¹⁰ Theocritus has found a great deal, indeed must restructure the whole myth to get in all the damning evidence: within the options offered by the tradition, the slaughter did not have to involve cousins¹¹ or result from the rape of the victims' brides, or entail women or fraud at all.¹² But Theocritus has managed to include and amplify all of these elements, as well as creating, possibly for the first time, a speaking rôle for Lynceus. In the scene where Castor had always died¹³ he now wins in a particularly grisly manner, so that the poet, instead of celebrating the fraternal generosity of Polydeuces' shared immortality, sings of triumphant and remorseless power. The sympathy traditionally felt for Castor now goes to his victim, who, instead of Polydeuces, has become the model of brotherly love and self-sacrifice. Unarmed and decisively wounded, Lynceus, like Amycus, could have been spared. The contest is decided. But Castor proceeds to a disembowelment at the father's grave.

¹⁰ See F. Staehlin, "Der Dioskurenmythus in Pindars 10. nemeischer Ode: Ein Beispiel einer Mythenidealisation," *Philologus* 62 (1903) 182-95, an interpretation challenged in general terms by G. Norwood, *Pindar* (Berkeley 1945) 56, and J. Stern, "The Myths of Pindar's *Nemean* 10," *GRBS* 10 (1969) 125-32.

¹¹ On the myth see Gow, "The Twenty-Second Idyll of Theocritus," *CR* 56 (1942) 13-15. Tyndareus was variously brother, half-brother, or unrelated to Aphareus; see Roscher, *Lex.* III 696 *s.n.* OIBALOS and V 1406ff *s.n.* TYNDAREOS. Pindar does not mention the blood ties, which, of course, imply mortal paternity and hence identity for the Dioscuri, as fits Theocritus' account here.

¹² In the *Cypria*, *Nemean* 10 and Apollodorus (3.11.2) cattle are the source of the dispute. *Id.* 22 is our earliest literary source for the rape of the Leucippides, followed next by Ovid, *Fasti* 5.693ff, and Hyginus 80. The Apharidae nowhere appear in pictorial representations of the rape and in the *Cypria* are connected with the women only in that their stolen cattle are used to pay the bride price.

¹³ Only in Hyginus 80 does Castor survive.

The Homeric style which the poet so disastrously affects contributes little *ad maiorem gloriam Dioscurorum*; indeed, seems as counterfeit as the attempt to present the traditional scene of Castor's death as his one signal triumph. The duel with swords is a notable curiosity in Homeric terms, for the epics present no fight where men attack each other with swords or use them in protracted fighting.¹⁴ Given more time, Ajax and Hector *would have*,¹⁵ but the swordfight remained to be Theocritus' own contribution to epic—and a particularly infelicitous one. As is often noted, the weapons here require an inordinate amount of juggling: the heroes ride up armed with spears, jump out and draw their swords, revert to spears for the duel, then draw their swords again. The chariot race has its own excitement, but is not easily reconciled with the Pindaric description of an ambush at Aphareus' tomb. The poet hardly tries: everyone simply drives up to the grave and jumps out for reasons best known to himself. The duel itself offers nothing to recommend itself, just an artless pastiche of Homeric phrases without any of the close observation of detail that makes Polydeuces' long bout so variegated and interesting. Theocritus has a surprisingly good eye for action, also apparent in his *Heracliscus* (*Id.* 24) and *Bacchantes* (*Id.* 26). But at the climax of Castor's duel, and single individual exchange, we catch the poet nodding (vv.196ff):

τοῦ [Λυγκέως] μὲν ἄκρην ἐκόλουσεν ἐπὶ σκαιὸν γόνυ χεῖρα
 φάσγανον ὄξυ φέροντος ὑπεξαναβὰς ποδὶ Κάστρω
 σκαιῶ·

To this point, the poet has given us only summary description of the fighting; now abruptly, in the first four words, the contest is over: Lynceus is incapacitated. The preliminaries to this decisive exchange take another two lines to unravel, taking us back first to Lynceus' preceding move, then forward to Castor's intermediate dodge and which foot he made it with. The anticlimax could not have been hard to avoid, and the convoluted word order is most uncharacteristic of Theocritus. The failure of the lines seems willful.

The whole passage, then, is out of kilter. Disquisitions like Lynceus' are never heard on the plains of Ilium amidst brandished swords. He does clearly echo Achilles and Agamemnon,¹⁶ but mostly he is

¹⁴ B. Fenik, *Typical Battle Scenes in the Iliad* (Wiesbaden 1968) 6.

¹⁵ *Il.* 7.273ff. At *Il.* 3.361ff Menelaus makes one futile thrust at Paris.

¹⁶ See Gow *ad* vv. 156 and 160.

wasting his breath. That such a long speech should pass without a reply is disconcerting, but hardly more so than the fact that Zeus should volunteer his assistance at a point when two Dioscuri remain against the unarmed Idas. Altogether a “slovenly performance” says Gow,¹⁷ and we can hardly argue with him. But Theocritus has warned us from the first that his intentions as an epic poet may not be strictly serious: twins are a natural subject of comedy, and, lest we overlook the oddity of this assemblage of three sets of them, the poet loads the first four lines of the episode with eleven dual forms, setting up a charming little jingle on three ways to say ‘two’: *δύω . . . υἷώ | δοιὰς . . . κόρας · δισσῶ . . . τώγε*, which he seems inclined to continue: *γαμβρῶ μελλογάμω*. The poet is clearly amusing himself with the pitfalls of the Homericizing style, as hardly surprises us from a consummate parodist who nowhere takes the traditional heroism seriously. The weapons fumbled here recall the sword with which Heracles madly assaults the shrubbery in the *Hylas* and the one for which Amphitryon gropes at midnight in the *Heracliscus*.¹⁸ As a colleague of Callimachus and, it seems, equally a critic of the ζῆλος ‘Ομηρικός (*Id.* 7.45–48),¹⁹ Theocritus could hardly succumb to it unthinkingly here or, as we shall see, in the hymn’s epilogue. To celebrate the Dioscuri, he need hardly involve himself so extensively in battle poetry and clearly is doing so to mock the pretensions of the latter-day Homeridae, even as he often does those of love poets (*e.g.* *Idd.* 3, 11 and 12). Theocritus does on occasion oblige his patrons with patches of heroic verse (*e.g.* *Idd.* 16.73–81 and 17 *passim*), but in these passages he handles himself so adroitly with shields and epithets that we cannot, *pace* Gow, attribute the clumsy heroics of *Id.* 22 to simple poetic incapacity. These verses fail so well only because they were written by a poet who knows so well how to make them succeed.

Given all of his lines, Lynceus emerges as a typical and very successful Theocritean character. The calculated naïveté of the bucolic poems characterizes the poet’s view of kings and heroes as well: Praxinoa in Ptolemy’s palace (*Id.* 15), Alcmene confronting godhead incarnate (*Id.* 24), Simaetha ruined by a brief interlude with the *jeunesse dorée* (*Id.* 2), and Lynceus facing the brutality of the old heroism are all

¹⁷ *Op.cit.* (*supra* n.11) 16.

¹⁸ On Theocritus’ treatment of heroism see D. Mastronarde, “Theocritus’ *Idyll* 13: Love and the Hero,” *TAPA* 99 (1968) 273–91, and A. Horstmann, *Ironie und Humor bei Theokrit* (Meisenheim am Glan 1976) 57–79.

¹⁹ For a survey of interpretations of these lines see Ott, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.8) 161 n.444.

limited and well-meaning people out of their depth in confronting the great world. The religious emotion of the Adonis festival registers only superficially on Praxinoa, distracted as she is by the annoying crowd and the workmanship on the tapestry. Where Pindar in *Nemean* 1 presented the heroic Amphitryon as a worthy witness of Heracles' infant *arete*, Theocritus focuses instead on Alcmena, who quite overlooks her surprising son in her anxiety about Iphicles and the ominous portent of the snakes. Simaetha trusts sorcery to return her to polite society. And the hapless Lynceus persists in the belief that he can talk his way out of this confrontation, get the girls and leave everyone happy. They all seem to have wandered into a world rather grander than they can handle, and on this score they have our sympathy absolutely. The great palace by itself is no longer a fit subject for a poetry of wit and *λεπτότης*, nor is the heroic battle. Now it is the faces in the crowd that come alive. In an earlier age, Lynceus would be one of those anonymous souls who enhance some greater man's *aristeia*, falling to the dust after five or six pathetic lines about his father or wife. Likewise no one had before asked what a housewife might think of Olympian struggles in the nursery or how suburban maidens, reared on tales of Medea and Ariadne, might glamorize their own indiscretions. Theocritus' preferred perspective on the great world of heroic myth, as of the Alexandrian elite, is that of the outsiders whose revealing incomprehension has become a precious commodity in a sophisticated age. If Lynceus' loquaciousness and stolid innocence are disruptive of the hymn's wayward turn to Homericizing, so much is clearly intended, for he diverts sympathy from Castor as a very traditional sort of hero, while the poet's inversion of epic conventions demonstrates the heroic style as now insupportable.

In respecting the Dioscuri's original silence we do admittedly make the episode as a whole harder to reconcile with the rest of the poem as a hymn in their honor. But the divine twins have been disappointing pious expectations from the first. The proem presents the Dioscuri as guardians of sailors on the model of the thirty-third Homeric Hymn. In Theocritus, the storm is rougher and the crew expects to die. But these sailors, unlike Homer's, do not pray to the twins, who for their part never show up. The storm blows over, and the poet goes on with undiminished enthusiasm to the next episode. Whatever their credentials as a "zivilisatorische Macht,"²⁰ the twins debark from the

²⁰ Wilamowitz, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.1) 186.

Argo with no intention beyond tourism, find the ogre Amycus more quaint than menacing, and with unconcealed amusement take on the match purely for sport—in fact, would not mind a pancratium. Polydeuces finds the boxing itself mere child's play, no more than an afternoon's diversion. He has ostensibly pounded manners into Amycus, but the latter would, in fact, have been content to sit sunning himself had his inquisitive visitors not badgered him into a fight. And the spring which the Argonauts have won interests the poet at the end even less than it does Polydeuces earlier (v.62).²¹ Now in Apollonius' contemporary account²² this episode is very serious heroic business and, indeed, the only time his Argonauts triumph in the traditional way. Elsewhere their valor proves self-defeating (as in Cyzicus) and their triumphs most unheroic (e.g. in Lemnos and Colchis). But ridding the Propontis of Amycus and the Bebryces, as King Lycus explains at length (*Arg.* 2.774–810), is the sort of thing heroes most usefully do. It symbolizes the triumph of *τέχνη* over *βία*, Greek over barbarian and even the order of Zeus over chaos,²³ as would hardly interest the urbane Polydeuces of *Id.* 22, who is above all curious, witty, acquisitive and sportive. Theocritus' Amycus we will despise not for being the scourge of the Propontis (has he the wit?) but for fouling his opponent (v.119). As in *Idd.* 18 and 24, this heroic world seems to revolve less around war than sport. Theocritus does not intend to undercut the twins here, as is sometimes suspected,²⁴ but to make of them Hellenistic gentlemen with a clear appeal to a courtly

²¹ Sanchez-Wildberger, *Theokrit-Interpretationen* (Diss. Zürich 1955) 15f, speaks of a "parodistischen Schimmer" in the passage, while A. Köhnken, *Apollonios Rhodios und Theokrit* (Göttingen 1965) 90–93, sees its "komödienhafte Züge" as an inheritance from Sophocles' satyric and Epicharmus' comic dramatizations of the story. Horstmann, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.18) 72–79, is more inclined to see beneath the humor the poet's "ganz persönlichen Ideal des Friedens."

²² The question of who is imitating whom in these parallel passages (*Id.* 22.27–134 and *Arg.* 2.1–97) remains controversial. Gow, "The Thirteenth Idyll of Theocritus," *CQ* 32 (1938) 10–17, and *op.cit.* (*supra* n.11) 11f and 17 (recapitulated in *op.cit.* [*supra* n.5] II 231f and 382f), has argued most strongly for Apollonius' priority here and in the more closely similar Hylas narratives (*Id.* 13 and *Arg.* 1.1172–272), as Köhnken, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.21), has for the reverse. A majority of scholars side with Gow, but most recently H. Herter, *s.v.* "Apollonios," *RE Supp.* 13 (1973) 20–22, has declared himself unconvinced by the arguments of both camps. For a survey of the literature on the question see Köhnken (pp.26–31) and Herter, to which add M. Campbell, "Three Notes on Alexandrine Poetry," *Hermes* 102 (1974) 38–41.

²³ In vv.38–42 Amycus is likened to a monstrous son of Typhoeus or one born of Earth in her wrath against Zeus, while Polydeuces is like the evening star.

²⁴ Könnecke, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.2) 383.

audience. The other Ptolemaic favorites²⁵ receive much the same treatment: Helen (*Id.* 18) emerges as the well-bred Spartan princess, devotee of Artemis and Athena; and Heracles (*Id.* 24), his monumental benefactions and sufferings all but forgotten, is the model school-boy, athlete and complaisant husband of Hebe.

The Dioscuri's silence in the second episode admittedly makes them an even sharper contrast to the well-mannered sportsmen of the first. The erstwhile saviors of mankind, promoting the cause of *ξενία* in foreign parts, now abuse the hospitality of their own family. The grisly slaughter of Lynceus is as unexpected and perhaps as undeserved as the reprieve of Amycus. These antitheses, as often in the *Idylls*,²⁶ are the heart of the poem and clearly labeled: where the twins could introduce themselves to Amycus as *μήτ' ἀδίκους μήτ' ἐξ ἀδίκων* (v.56), by the end they are just strong (v.213):

αὐτοί τε κρατέουσι καὶ ἐκ κρατέοντος ἔφυσαν.

The style of the poem shows similar reversals between the gracefully variegated narrative of the Polydeuces episode and the oppressive Iliadic style of what follows. The first adventure takes place against a lavishly described background; in the second there is none. Lynceus' prolix monologue itself balances the lively stichomythia of the first episode. Moulton²⁷ has related this contrasting of styles and characterizations to the Alexandrian controversies over the writing of epic, Homeric and not. Over against a graceful and witty treatment of Polydeuces' match with Amycus, Theocritus applies a Homericizing style in the second episode to a tale that had been very elegantly told by Pindar, and thereby demonstrates the better and the worse way of dealing with heroic subjects. The twins' degeneration from agreeable to repugnant characters reinforces the message. And can the reference be to anyone but Apollonius? For the style of the Castor episode could derive from the *Argonautica* no less directly than the matter of the first episode. Apollonius had inflated the comic tale of Epicharmus' *Amycus* and Sophocles' satyr play of the same name into a formal Homeric duel: challenge, arming scene, combat, perfidy from the losing side, full-scale battle; Theocritus in the Castor episode simply

²⁵ The connections of *Id.* 18 with the court are discussed by Sanchez-Wildberger, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.21) 37–40; for Heracles see Gow, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.5) 415–19.

²⁶ See Ott, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.8).

²⁷ "Theocritus and the Dioscuri," *GRBS* 14 (1973) 41–47.

imposes an equally cumbersome epic format on the very fluid narrative of *Nemean 10*.

The Dioscuri's silence and the pattern of irony that it confirms in the poem should warn us off a second and equally unnecessary bit of surgery on the poem, this time interpretative. The hymnal epilogue, an extensive and surprisingly personal statement much like the *εφραγίς* of the Callimachean and Homeric hymns to Apollo, seems finally to turn from the Dioscuri altogether (vv.215ff): "Bards are dear to the Dioscuri and the heroes of Troy. Homer brought glory to you, Princes, as do I": *ὑμῖν κῦδος, ἄνακτες, ἐμήσατο Χίος ἀοιδός* (v.218) *ὑμῖν αὖ καὶ ἐγὼ* (v.221). Since the Dioscuri in the *Iliad* are already in the grave (3.236ff), they do not belong in this company, and therefore the majority of commentators since Hiller have taken *ἄνακτες* to refer to Homer's subjects rather than to Theocritus²⁸ or have read the epilogue as a statement on epic poetry in general more than on the poem which it concludes.²⁹ But nowhere in the Homeric or Callimachean hymns does the singer abandon his subjects in this way, especially not for other and *mortal* subjects. In any case, the twins must at least be included in the *ὑμῖν* of v.218, which surely addresses the same group as the anaphoric *ὑμῖν* of v.221. The latter must refer to the subjects of the hymn, that is, the twins, who are also the only *θεοί* in this company of heroes. There is, therefore, no way to isolate these lines from the rest of the hymn so as to avoid Gow's judgement of "extraordinary carelessness" here. But since that has been the hallmark of the preceding battle description, need we be surprised if it continues here?

As a poetic testament, this *envoi* is almost the opposite of what might be expected from Theocritus. To celebrate heroes for brute force (v.213) hardly sounds like him, and the following lines in invoking Homer proclaim the very *aemulatio* that Theocritus and Callimachus elsewhere regard as pure folly. This is not the Homer of the *Cypria* or the hymns,³⁰ but of the *Iliad* itself and its grandest, most inimitable heroes. Yet the singer does no more here than openly invite a comparison with the bard that the Castor episode has already

²⁸ So most recently Dover, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.9) 250f. Gow, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.11) 16, is a notable exception.

²⁹ Schlatter, *Theokrit und Kallimachos* (Diss. Zürich 1941) 73; Sanchez-Wildberger, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.21) 17; Moulton, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.25) 43.

³⁰ *Id.* 16.49f suggests that Theocritus did not attribute the *Cypria* to Homer in any case. See Gow *ad loc.*

made unavoidable and highly unfavorable. Having just parodied such aspirations so successfully, can Theocritus himself now step forth solemnly and seriously into the shadow of Homer? Like Callimachus in his *Hymns*,³¹ Theocritus does not normally invoke the Muses as he does here. Indeed, elsewhere his attitude to them seems notably playful and evasive.³² Finally, Theocritus' offers to explain his poetry to us, as this epilogue purports to do, mostly lead us on a merry chase, as the number and diversity of decipherments of the poetics of the *Charites*³³ and the *Thalysia* amply attest. When Theocritus comes around to similarly personal reflections in the hymnal *envoi* of the *Bacchantes* (*Id.* 26), we simply cannot believe him.³⁴ But of course we need not in *Id.* 22 either.

The interpretative problem with the epilogue, as often in Hellenistic poetry, stems from confusing the poetic *ἔγώ* with the personal voice of a poet capable of candor. The *persona* of Callimachus' *Hymns*

³¹ The Muses figure only in the *Hymn to Delos* and there only as colleagues of Apollo. On Callimachus' use of the sisterhood in the *Aetia*, see E. Eichgrün, *Kallimachos und Apollonios Rhodios* (Diss. Berlin 1961) 102–04. By transposing the Hesiodic visitation of the Muses into a dream, Callimachus announces the ironic distance he will maintain toward these traditional symbols throughout.

³² His rustics invoke them regularly enough (*Idd.* 1.64 *al.*, 5.80, 10.24), but he himself does so in his own voice only to oblige royal patrons (*Id.* 17.1) and even then can do so with considerable humor. For example, in *Id.* 16 for Hiero II, he begins by dismissing the Muses, unexpectedly strikes a worshipful attitude to them midway through (vv. 29 and 58f), but ends by reducing them to symbols of his own poems (v.107), now quite overshadowed by the *Charites*, who themselves began as humorous symbols of his poems canvassing for patronage but have in the interval been translated to a higher realm, where they enjoy the adoration once directed to the Muses. All of this shifting about seems to reflect more wit than reverence on the part of the poet. Similarly, the young and striving poet Simichidas cannot mention the Muses and Nymphs often enough in addressing Lycidas (*Id.* 7.37, 92 and 95) and in interpreting the experiences afterwards, doubtless with some amplification (vv. 12, 129, 148 and 154). But where the city-dweller senses their presence everywhere in the country, Lycidas, who might like Hesiod be expected to enjoy a neighborly relationship with the sisters, seems in fact like Theocritus himself to get along quite well without them (v.51) and to relegate their influence to the fantastic poet-figures of his own songs (v.82). His disapproving reference to the *Μοισῶν ὄρνιθες* (v.47) may pointedly refer to the tendency of the latter-day Homeridae to affect devices like the invocation of the Muses in the traditional way. See below p.366.

³³ For the spectrum of opinions on *Id.* 16 compare N. Austin, "Idyll 16: Theocritus and Simonides," *TAPA* 98 (1967) 1–21, with Horstmann, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.18) 119–37.

³⁴ On the possibility of playful irony or courtly flattery behind Theocritus' startling renunciation of all sympathy for the slaughtered Pentheus see respectively G. Giangrande, "Hellenistic Poetry and Homer," *AC* 39 (1970) 65–74, and K. J. McKay, "Theocritus' *Bacchantes* Re-examined," *Antichthon* 1 (1967) 16–28.

is not automatically to be equated with the poet himself,³⁵ and even when Callimachus does seem to speak for himself, his statements may be more formulaic and less self-revelatory than is commonly assumed, as Bundy³⁶ recently argued for the *Hymn to Apollo*. Elsewhere when Theocritus has parody to offer, he puts it in the mouth of a suitably uncouth speaker (e.g. *Idd.* 3, 11 and 12). In *Id.* 22 the *persona* becomes increasingly obvious as the hymn devolves into counterfeit heroics, so that by the end we can be sure that he does not speak for Theocritus at all.

The hymn-singer has from the first, as I have noted, stitched together passages doubtfully appropriate for a hymnic celebration, if often quite engaging in themselves. The boxing match, for instance, is a masterpiece of Hellenistic realism, sustained without similes, where Apollonius uses four, entirely by the manipulation of observational detail. It is stylishly modern *reportage* to be appreciated fully, as Wilamowitz³⁷ notes, only by other observers of the sport. In no context could the Muses as informants be less necessary or credible, but the rhapsode intrudes with a very Homeric invocation (vv.115ff):

Πῶς γὰρ δὴ Διὸς υἱὸς ἀδηφάγον ἄνδρα καθεῖλεν;
εἰπέ, θεά, σὺ γὰρ οἶσθα· ἐγὼ δ' ἐτέρων ὑποφήτης
φθέγξομαι ὅσσ' ἐθέλεις σὺ καὶ ὅπως τοι φίλον αὐτῇ.

The Muses are not only anachronistic here but redundant, for Theocritus has from the first invoked the Dioscuri and will continue to do so (vv. 17, 23, 132, 135f and the epilogue), having made them *κιθαρισταί* and *αἰοιδοί* (v.24) to serve as his inspiration. By the protocol of the Homeric Hymns, the singer may invoke either the god or the Muses but not both. These lines involve the poet, therefore, in a substantial inconsistency. The climax that they announce is not to be, for what follows essentially duplicates what has preceded, leading at last to timely concession and gracious reprieve. Theocritus' audience would doubtless find this intrusion on the narrative disconcerting, but, I suspect, also strangely familiar, for Apollonius has one of the

³⁵ The singer of *H.* 6 is a woman, and the narrator-participants of the other dramatic hymns (2 and 5) may be equally distant from the poet. Giangrande, "Theocritus' Twelfth and Fourth Idylls: a Study in Hellenistic Irony," *QUCC* 12 (1971) 95–113, considers the *ἐγὼ* of *Id.* 12 to be a malapropian rustic, and Horstmann, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.18) 116–18, suggests similar irony in the speaking voices of *Idd.* 29 and 30.

³⁶ "The 'Quarrel Between Kallimachos and Apollonius', Part I: The Epilogue of Kallimachos's *Hymn to Apollo*," *CSCA* 5 (1972) 39–94.

³⁷ *Op.cit.* (*supra* n.1) 186.

larger speaking parts in his own epic. In at least a score of passages he speaks up to call on the Muses, Apollo, other poets, Eros, Zeus, and finally the Argonauts themselves.³⁸ Traditional professions of strict subservience to the Muses, like vv.115–18, are to be found in the *Argonautica*³⁹ but not elsewhere in Theocritus or Callimachus. It has long been suspected that Theocritus' *ὑποφήτης* (v.116) recalls the *Μοῦσαι δ' ὑποφήτορες εἶεν ἀοιδῆς* of the proem to the *Argonautica* (v.22); both words are sufficiently rare to make the parallel seem more than coincidental.⁴⁰ Callimachus' close parallel to Theocritus' invocation, *εἰπέ, θεή, σὺ μὲν ἄμμιν, ἐγὼ δ' ἑτέροιςιν ἀείω* (H. 3.186), also following a question midway through the narrative, seems also to refer to Apollonius. Where Theocritus discomfits the Apollonian Muses by bringing them in at a most inopportune moment, Callimachus dispenses with them altogether, for *εἰπέ, θεή* surprisingly refers to Artemis, not the Muse. Both poets may refer thereby to a feature of Apollonius' epic style that purists could find offensive, for, while invocation and apostrophe of this sort are found in Homer, the frequency and, as we shall see, inconsistency with which Apollonius uses them is distinctly un-Homeric. The simplest explanation for vv.115–18 is, then, that Theocritus has indicated the source of his story in the Polydeuces episode by imitating a conspicuous feature of Apollonian style.

That style, as we have seen, dominates the Castor episode so completely that the rhapsode seems to forget that he is singing a hymn at all. After v.137 he ceases to call the twins *Διὸς υἱώ* and they become exclusively *Τυνδαρίδαι* (vv. 202, 212 and 216), as befits their behavior. Now, mortals are not fit subjects for hymn,⁴¹ nor are Iliadic battles, and in the epilogue the singer faces the full consequences of his way-

³⁸ See Wilamowitz, *Hellenistische Dichtung in der Zeit des Kallimachos* II (Berlin 1924) 218 n.2.

³⁹ e.g. 3.1–5, 4.552–56 and esp. 4.1–5 and 1381f.

⁴⁰ *ὑποφήτης* is found earlier only at *Il.* 16.235; *ὑποφήτορες* first in Apollonius, clearly as 'interpreters to' not 'for' the poet (*pace* Gercke, Perrotta, Faedo). See F. Scheidweiler, "Theokrits achtens Idyll und die zeitliche Folge seiner Gedichte," *AIPHO* 11 (1951) (*Mélanges Grégoire* III) 354.

⁴¹ *ἕμνος ἐγκωμίου διαφέρει. ὁ μὲν γὰρ ἕμνος ἐστὶ θεῶν, τὸ δὲ ἐγκώμιον ἀνθρώπων*, Ammonius, *Diff.* 482 (ed. K. Nickau [BT 1966] p.126). The exceptions are catalogued by Wilamowitz at E. Norden, *Agnostos Theos* (Leipzig 1913; repr. Stuttgart 1956) 392. In the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, Triptolemus and the other worshippers of the goddess, for all their good services to her, are still not included in the hymn's concluding praises. Even when Ptolemy himself seems to expect an admixture of hymnic elements in his praises Theocritus finds the matter worthy of note (*Id.* 17.7f) and recalls the traditional definition: *ἕμνοι δὲ καὶ ἀθανάτων γέρας αὐτῶν*.

ward style; he must now put the twins back in heaven, as he does with the standard *χαιρέτισμα* of the Homeric Hymns (v.214). But the high heroic style has its own momentum, and he cannot resist the impulse to go on to “the town of Priam and ships of the Achaians, the battles around Ilium, and Achilles, that tower of strength in fight.” Having already in the Castor episode depicted the Dioscuri as the Homeric heroes they never were, he now simply asserts that claim baldly, making no effort to decide whether they belong among *ἡρώεσσιν* (v.216) or *θεοῖς* (v.223).

But, then, Apollonius himself never quite decides, for after the very traditional account of Polydeuces’ match with Amycus, which the hero nearly loses, the Tyndaridae begin to be honored *οἷα θεοῖσιν* (2.809) with hymns, temples and precincts (2.163 and 806–10). Again, purists may shudder when epic heroes so easily accede to the divine prerogatives that Homer rigorously denied them. The epilogue of *Id.* 22 also fails to clarify whether this poem is finally the hymn it began as or the heroic narrative it has become. But this is clearly a matter of indifference to the rhapsode, for singers are as dear to heroes (vv.215f) as they are to gods (v.223). It is precisely on this note that the *Argonautica* ends, with a prayer to the Argonauts (4.1773ff), who, like the Tyndaridae (*Id.* 22.214f), are requested to preserve and glorify the poem in their honor. The *Hymn to the Dioscuri* as it turns into a little epic sounds very like Apollonius’ epic concluding itself as a hymn. Theocritus’ rhapsode now lays claim to more originality than he had earlier admitted in invoking the Muses (*ὡς ἐμὸς οἶκος ὑπάρχει, | τοῖα φέρω* vv.222f). But even this inconsistency catches a familiar tone, for Apollonius wavers incessantly on the question of whether he is or is not reliant on the Muses and even, on occasion, apologizes to the sisterhood for using other informants.⁴² Odd as Theocritus’ rhapsodic voice may seem, his audience will have heard it before—and not in the *Idylls*. Like the Dioscuri’s silence, the singer’s loquaciousness demonstrates how the heroic style can go wrong, and in perceiving that critical message we may rid the poem of the discontinuities which modern readers have imported into it.

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⁴² *ἴλατε Μοῦσαι, | οὐκ ἐθέλων ἐνέπω προτέρων ἔπος* (*Arg.* 4.984f). Apollonius’ habitual inconsistency is discussed by Eichgrün, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.31) 104–07.