

Quintus of Smyrna and Hesiod

Quintus of Smyrna's *Posthomerica* is considered a particularly bad re-hashing of Homer (Lloyd-Jones). This misreading disregards passages alluding to Homer's epic rival Hesiod (Koning), which serve as a method of defining Quintus's poetic program. Focusing on Quintus's *Musenanruf* where he speaks of himself, I show that his self-portrayal as a shepherd-poet (a Hesiodic conceit) invoking the Muses before reciting a *katalogos* (a Homeric practice) is emblematic of his project of presenting a reading of the Trojan saga through a Hesiodic lens.

Quintus's *Musenanruf* evokes the *Dichterweihe* from the *Theogony* precisely when he seems to emulate Homer's *Musenanruf* before the Catalogue of Ships. While the Hesiodic allusions are not overlooked by critics, they have not received adequate explanation. Bär, writing that Quintus's engagement with his tradition is meta-literary, does away with the 'biographical' reading of the passage. So, when Quintus claims the Muses came to him while pasturing his flocks in Smyrna, Bär reads this as Quintus's way of linking himself with Homer, since Smyrna purported to be Homer's birthplace. Maciver concurs: "the reference adds to the already inherent idea that we are to read Quintus as a second Homer. In fact, there is nothing in this passage which points away from Homer." But Quintus's portrayal as a shepherd-poet turns our gaze undoubtedly to Hesiod. So, too, Quintus's identification of a particular place of divine encounter recalls Hesiod's mention of Helicon. Locating the poet and constructing a poetic persona is Hesiodic and opposed to Homer's practice of anonymity (*Arist. Poet.*). To interpret Smyrna simply as symbolic, furthermore, would take away from the many instances in the poem where the geography of Asia Minor plays a part in the narrative (Vian). Finally, Quintus's word-choice for pasturing (*véμονται*) alludes to Callimachus's imitation in the *Aetia* of the *Dichterweihe* (Vian, Pfeiffer). Hesiod's presence in this passage of poetic self-reflexivity should not be taken lightly.

Quintus says that he was pasturing his flocks “on a mountain neither too humble nor excessively lofty,” a line taken by Hopkinson to be “programmatic, implying that the poem is written in a middle style.” While James and Maciver reject this view, inspection into ancient assessments of Hesiod’s style lends credence to Hopkinson’s idea. Quintilian writes that Hesiod champions the middle style, which differs from Homer’s grand style by virtue of the “softness of words,” frequency of figures, digressions and *gnomai*, all features pervading Quintus’s poem. That Quintus would include this line within his Hesiodic self-portrayal makes perfect sense: not only does Quintus portray himself in the image of Hesiod, he also adapts the same stylistic register, something that in antiquity distinguished Hesiod’s poetry from Homer’s (Hunter).

Quintus shares his Hesiodism with the internal poets of the *Posthomerica*. Nestor sings an *encomium* to Achilles, an action which no king in Homer ever undertakes. Rather, it aligns him more closely with kings and singers in the *Theogony*. The bard at the end of the *Posthomerica* sings a song for the Achaeans as they feast in celebration of their victory. They have at this time turned their minds away from war and “toward the works of Eunomia and lovely Euphrosyne” (14.123-24). The Greeks resemble men depicted on Achilles’ shield in a deeply Hesiodic vignette (5.44-48), where they are described as “far from” war, committed to the “lovely works of Eirene” (5.44), and watched over by Dike (5.47). The Greeks therefore represent a fulfillment of Peace, Good-Governance, and Justice—all three children of Themis and Zeus, and bi-products of Zeus’s governance of Olympus (Scully). Together, Nestor and the bard recapitulate the entire *Posthomerica* between them, and so they are doubles for Quintus. The *Posthomerica* is thus a Hesiodic reading of a Homeric narrative.

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