

HESIOD'S KINGS AND NICARCHUS' NESTOR

It has seemed strange to many that Hesiod should have included in his eulogy of the Muses' gifts (*Theogony* 80 ff.) a longish passage concerned with kings. The importance of the Muses to poets is obvious. But what have they to do with kings? Many and varied suggestions have been made.¹ West, in his edition of the *Theogony* (Oxford, 1966), asks, "Why are the kings introduced at all?" His suggestion is that they are emphasized and praised here because Hesiod recited his poem to kings. No one can disprove this guess. It is, however, more likely, I think, that the presence of the kings is due to Hesiod's consciousness that the Muses are important not only for poetry, but for prose as well. The only kind of prose he can imagine which would have, in our terminology, a "literary" quality is oratory, and the king is chosen as the orator par excellence. It is the grace shed by the Muses on both prose and verse which makes both of these literary vehicles inspiring and useful for men. It is thoroughly characteristic of Hesiod that neither kind of "literature" is thought to be for entertainment. The poet can bring solace to the sorrowing with his songs about the glorious deeds of heroes or about the blessed gods. The orator can settle disputes with his "inspired" eloquence.

The Hesiodic passage may be of some use in giving a degree of sense and coherence to a quatrain attributed to Nicarchus in the *Greek Anthology*. It purports to be an inscription on the tomb of Telephanes, the flute player.²

1. A few fairly recent ones are briefly criticized by W. J. Verdenius in "Notes on the Proem of Hesiod's *Theogony*," *Mnemosyne*, XXV (1972), 151, n. 4.

Ὀρφεὺς μὲν κιθάρα πλείστον γέρας εἴλετο θνητῶν,
 Νέστωρ δὲ γλώσσης ἡδυλόγου σοφίῃ,
 τεκτοσύνη δ' ἐπέων πολυίστωρ θεῖος Ὀμηρος,
 Τηλεφάνης δ' αὐλοῖς, οὗ τάφος ἐστὶν ὁδε.

Gow finds this "a clumsy quatrain" and calls Nestor in line 2 "a ridiculous companion for Orpheus and Homer." The poem is certainly no masterpiece, but possibly it is not quite so bad as Gow maintains. The author, whoever he was, having chosen to honor the great flautist Telephanes, decides to deal in his short poem with music and literature. Music is divided into string instruments and wind instruments, literature into prose and verse. Nicarchus chooses to arrange his examples with the easy elegance of chiasmus: music, literature, literature, music. In each field he cites one supreme master, and he has chosen all of his examples, except Telephanes, from the heroic age. Orpheus, therefore, is the obvious choice to represent string instruments. Oratory is a sensible choice to represent heroic prose, epic the natural choice for heroic poetry. Homer is obviously the poetical champion, and Nestor is far from ridiculous as a choice to represent oratory. Granted, the oratory of Nestor came down to Nicarchus, as it has come down to us, in hexameter verse, but it is not unreasonable for Nicarchus to assume that Nestor ordinarily spoke in prose.

FREDERICK M. COMBELLACK

UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

2. On Nicarchus, Telephanes, and this poem, see Gow-Page, *The Greek Anthology: Hellenistic Epigrams* (Cambridge, 1965), II, 425, 427-28.

A NEW FRAGMENT OF DURHAM, CATHEDRAL LIBRARY MS B. II. 30

In *Codd. Lat. Ant., Supplement*, E. A. Lowe lists as item 1786, Düsseldorf, Staatsarchiv Fragm. S.N., one fragmentary leaf in Anglo-Saxon majuscule of saec. viii in. containing Cassiodorus *Expositio in Psalterium* 144. 7-19 in epitomized form. As Lowe notes in his description, both in format and text the leaf

is similar to Durham, Cathedral Library MS B. II. 30 (*Codd. Lat. Ant.*, II. 152)¹ which also contains an epitomized text of the Psalm commentary. I am not sure how Lowe arrived at the conclusion that the leaf contains the same abbreviated text of the Psalm commentary as the Durham MS, since the Durham

1. See also R. A. B. Mynors, *Durham Cathedral Manuscripts to the End of the Twelfth Century* (Oxford, 1939), pp. 21 f.