

Homeric Hymn 7, 55

By Allan Kershaw,
Pennsylvania State University at University Park

θάρσει †δι' ἑκάτωρ† τῷ ἐμῷ κεχαρισμένε θυμῷ
δι' ἑκάτωρ *M* διε κάτωρ *cet.*

The sailors have been changed into dolphins, only the helmsman, here addressed by Dionysus, is spared. Almost certainly, a proper noun, the name of the helmsman has been lost¹. Editors either despair or claim that nonsense is sense². This name, I suggest, is Ἄκτωρ, a name found in (e.g.) both Homer and Hesiod, and, with the vocative restored, the true reading is δι' Ἄκτωρ. The corruption is twofold: κάτωρ is a simple anagram of Ἄκτωρ, the scribe's thought being ahead of his hand³. The confusion of omicron and omega, an error either of the eye or the ear, is common enough; in this hymn cf. v. 17 θεὸν] θεῶν *M*.

Researching the scholarship I find that my proposal is made independently of Ilgen, who, citing Aeschylus Pers. 555, printed ἄκτωρ, the common noun, which he took to mean *dux, gubernator*⁴. This is surely not correct: in the Persae the word is used of Darius ('king' says the scholiast), and the only other occurrence is Aeschylus Eum. 399 Ἀχαιῶν ἄκτορές τε καὶ πρόμοι. Neither example suggests that this word might be appropriately applied to a helmsman; the sense of 'leader' is, of course, not unwelcome in our passage, and names suggestive of occupations are quite Homeric⁵. Why Ilgen did not restore the vocative is a mystery; strange too that subsequent editors record his proposal without comment on this⁶.

1 Cf. the other examples of this formulaic line: Τυδείδη Διόμηδες ἔ. κ. ὕ. (*Iliad* 5, 243), repeated at 5, 826, and 10, 234; διε Μενoitιάδη τ. ἔ. κ. ὕ. (11, 608); Πάτροκλέ μοι δειλῆ πλείστον κ. ὕ. (19, 287); φράξο Νεστορίδη τ. ἔ. κ. ὕ. (*Od.* 4, 71). That Ovid calls the helmsman *Acoetes* is not, of course, a serious objection to my proposal.

2 «Hécator n'a rien d'impossible en soi», so Jean Humbert, *Homère, Hymnes* (Paris 1937) 175.

3 That the letters κατ form a very common sequence may have contributed, cf. *Hymn* 4, 308 ὄρσολοπεύεις where the majority of mss. read ὄρσοπολεύεις, the sequence πολ apparently irresistible.

4 *Hymni Homericæ*, rec. C. D. Ilgen (Halis Saxonum 1796) 573. I thank the library of the University of Pennsylvania for copies of the relevant pages of this rare edition.

5 A. Baumeister, *Hymni Homericæ* (Leipzig 1860), objected to Ilgen's proposal on the grounds that the word cannot mean helmsman (p. 342); he seems not to have had first hand knowledge of Ilgen since he states that the latter adduces both Aeschylus passages when, in fact, Ilgen refers only to the *Persae*.

6 Neither Baumeister (op. cit. n. 5), nor T. W. Allen and E. E. Sikes, *The Homeric Hymns* (London 1904) comment on the form (Ilgen's proposal is removed from the second edition [Oxford 1936] of Allen, Halliday and Sikes). More recently, Filippo Càssola, *Inni Omerici*

Finally, of the Homeric lines (n. 1), the hymnist seems to have paid particular heed to δῖε Μενoitιάδη (Il. 11, 608), witness the epithet and, if my restoration is right, the subtle allusion: the grandfather of the ‘goodly son of Menoetius’ was also named Actor!

(Milan 1975), lists the conjectures πάτωρ, ἄκτωρ, and κράτωρ, noting that they give unsatisfactory sense; while he adds that πάτωρ has long alpha, he says nothing about the form ἄκτωρ (p. 565).