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# The 'Culture Heroes' Represented through the Poetry in the '*Bibliotheka Historica*' by Diodorus Siculus

Victoria Rotar

## Abstract

Numerous stories about the mythological 'Culture heroes' which corresponded to the accounts of the great deeds performed by real historical personalities, constitute one of the major themes of the '*Bibliotheka Historica*' by Diodorus Siculus. Another remarkable feature of this text is the habitual use of poetry for reference. This paper deals with poetic fragments cited by Diodorus for providing illustrative and informative evidence about pre-eminent figures of the Greek mythology.

The concentration of poetic citations around the main topics of narration is one of Diodorus' methods of history writing, another aspect of which is the preference of Homeric epics for quotation as a source of the Greek myths. In a number of instances, the citations of Homer come along with the descriptions of excellent qualities of great mythological figures and the significant events of their lives.

In the historical part of the *Bibliotheka*, Diodorus alludes to such function of poetry as commemorating the lives of great personalities. It represents the pragmatic aspect of Diodorus' history, which is claimed by the author to instruct mankind in wisdom. He mentions public praises as a reward for conferring noble actions and pays much attention to the material testimony of encomiastic inscriptions.

### 1. Diodorus' 'Universal History': Its Sources, Methodology and References.

The *Bibliotheka Historica* of Diodorus Siculus, which is the largest work of ancient historiography that we possess, initially incorporated forty books. Even if the majority of them have been lost, the material of the *Bibliotheka* is invaluable for reconstruction of past events.

Diodorus lived and worked in the first century BC, and the cultural context of the Hellenistic period is reflected in his work to a considerable degree. It is evident in the chosen 'type' of the historiographical genre where the author, himself the native of Agyrium in Sicily, endeavours to relate the history of nearly all nations known for his time. Such historical hallmarks as syncretism in religious systems and practices, the well-established notion of deified ruler and the reconsideration of the value of ancient mythological traditions are all manifest for the careful reader of the *Bibliotheka*.

Diodorus' work, therefore, is an illuminating example of ancient historiography, in particular – for the period when the genre reached its 'greatest' mode of expression in all aspects – temporally, spatially, thematically. The *Bibliotheka* of Diodorus illustrates how the authors who endeavoured to compose a 'universal history' were looking forward to broadening the range of their sources, using not only the testimonies of their predecessors of historiography, but also referring to the works of different genres.

Although Diodorus' *Bibliotheka* is still being generally considered mainly as a depository of the lost works of his predecessors and, besides, as a work poor in style and of purely compilative nature<sup>1</sup>, a number of scholarly works have been made from the opposite point of view, which recognises the originality of Diodorus as an author, with his own purposes and methods of writing a history.<sup>2</sup>

The present piece of research, done on the theoretical basis of reconsidered attitude towards Diodorus, focuses on the citations of poetry in the *Bibliotheka* related to one of the major themes of this work – the representation of the 'Culture Heroes'.

Diodorus, definitely, belongs to that type of ancient historians who considered the testimony of poets to be of significant value. According to the statistics of D. Dueck's research on the use of poetry by all ancient Greek historians whose works have

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Stylianos 1998, Hornblower 1981, Funke 2011.

<sup>2</sup> For example, Sacks 1990, Sulimani 2011, De Moraes-Mota 2010, Green 2006.

survived, Diodorus' *Bibliotheka* contains the greatest number of poetic citations.<sup>3</sup> Apart from this, the text of Diodorus distinguishes itself among other ancient Greek histories in terms of quoting a wide range of names of ancient poets cited directly (poetic fragments and oracles in poetic form) and by means of retelling and paraphrasing.

Diodorus inserts the quotations of poetry as a proper addition to the information provided by his main sources; the accounts of the prose writers. The examples of virtually all the genres of the ancient Greek poetry can be found in Diodorus' history<sup>4</sup>, Homer being the most cited and frequently referred to throughout the whole of the *Bibliotheka*.

## 2. *Mythological Heroes and the Homeric Epics.*

Homer, who is 'the Poet' ('ὁ ποιητής') for Diodorus, along with the Homeric Hymns, is cited directly over thirty times and regularly mentioned throughout the first pentad of the *Bibliotheka*. And it is remarkable that the quotations of Homer, which is Diodorus' main poetic reference, can be seen as 'grouped' around the main themes of the *Bibliotheka* (in particular of the first five books devoted to ancient myths).

One of such themes is represented by the stories about the 'Culture heroes', which have long been identified by the scholars<sup>5</sup> as one of the main recurring motifs that account for thematic consistency of Diodorus' work, namely for the first Pentad. And Diodorus, in the general introduction to his work, states that following the great examples of the past is one of the advantages that brings the knowledge of history. He encourages his readers to use these examples 'for correction (πρὸς διόρθωσιν) and ... to have the memory of the accomplishments (μίμησιν τῶν ἐπιτετευγμένων) throughout the course of life' (D.S. I.1.4).

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<sup>3</sup> Dueck 2007: 97.

<sup>4</sup> Diodorus cites (directly or indirectly) or mentions as a source the authors of epic poetry (Homer, Hesiod, Orpheus, Aratus, Eumolpus), tragedy (Euripides), lyric poetry (Simonides, Callimachus), comedy (Aristophanes and Philemon).

<sup>5</sup> I. Sulimani and K. Sacks, for example, discuss the 'Culture heroes' of Diodorus' *Bibliotheka* throughout their works (Sulimani 2011, Sacks 1990).

After that he observes which activities used to be performed by the 'benefactors' of mythological times, as well as by the real rulers and military leaders related in his history. Importantly, Diodorus underlines that, as a result for their benefactions, they have become famous (προεκλήθησαν, ἐφιλοτιμήθησαν):

'...as the founders of cities (οἱ κτίσται πόλεων); others, having introduced the laws (νόμους εἰσηγήσασθαι), ensured the security of the common life; and many pursued sciences and arts (ἐπιστήμας καὶ τέχνας ἐξευρεῖν), thus having obtained great fame for the improvement of mankind' (D.S. I.2.1).

Hence, being a response to the cultural atmosphere of the Hellenistic period (namely, to the practice of reverence of a king-benefactor), the method of Diodorus reflects such an integral part of Greek poetry from the most ancient times as singing the praises of great men. In this respect, Diodorus uses poetic citations in accordance with his conception of writing a history 'as a means of education for leaders', since they were treated by Diodorus as the 'major players in events and thus a figures of interest'<sup>6</sup>. At the same time, the poetic citations of this type show the correspondence between the 'mythological' and 'historical' parts of the *Bibliotheka*.

I. Sulimani identifies six main 'culture heroes' of the first pentad of Diodorus work, who are the characters of the mythologies from different regions: Egyptian (Osiris and Sesostris), Greek (Dionysus and Heracles), Assyrian (Semiramis), Libyan (Myrina)<sup>7</sup>. But, in general, Diodorus tends to tell in detail all myths, regardless of their origin, though, naturally, more attention is given to the Greek myths, which comprise the half of his 'mythological' section.

Diodorus speaks about such characters as having conferred great and noble deeds in a way corresponding to his accounts about the major culture heroes, with due emphasis on their virtue and extraordinary features. And, for the purposes of more vivid illustration, he supports the narrative with the citations of poetry.

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<sup>6</sup> Bissa 2010: 56.

<sup>7</sup> Sulimani 2011: 7.

However, what shows the correspondence between the ‘mythological’ and ‘historical’ parts of the *Bibliotheka* are the biographies of real rulers and military leaders which include the quotations of poetry. Obviously, this method of Diodorus reflects such an integral part of Greek poetry from the most ancient times as singing the praises of great men.

In a number of instances the quotations of epic poetry come along with the descriptions of excellent qualities of great mythological heroes and the significant events of their lives. According to the definition given by Diodorus to the characters of this type,

‘some of them were awarded heroic honours, others – the honours equal to those of the gods (οἱ μὲν ἡρωικῶν, οἱ δὲ ἰσοθέων τιμῶν ἔτυχον), and all of them were praised with great commends (μεγάλων ἐπαίνων ἠξιώθησαν), for their virtue has become immortal in history’ (τῆς ἱστορίας ἀπαθανατιζούσης) (D.S. I.2.4).

For example, in Book IV, where Diodorus relates the myths about Heracles, he inserts a fragment of the Homeric epics in order to illustrate the apotheosis of the hero, who, as mentioned at the very beginning of the *Bibliotheka*, ‘received immortality for having benefited mankind’, (τὸ γένος τῶν ἀνθρώπων εὐεργετήσας τύχη τῆς ἀθανασίας) (D.S. I.2.4). Then Diodorus writes: ‘as the Poet (τὸν ποιητὴν) states in his Necyia,

*I saw the shade of Heracles, but for  
Himself he takes delight of feasts among  
Th' immortal gods and for his wife he hath  
The shapely-ankled Hebe.*<sup>8</sup>

And they say that Zeus wanted to place the name of Heracles among the twelve [Olympian] gods, but the latter refused’) (D.S. IV.39.3-4).

Another mythical benefactor is Orion, who, ‘having constructed [in Sicily] the sanctuary of Poseidon, became distinctively famous among the locals (τιμώμενον ὑπὸ τῶν ἐγγχωρίων διαφερόντως)’. At the same time, Orion was awarded immortality different than that of Heracles:

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<sup>8</sup> *Odyssey* XI.602-3. Poetic fragments (marked here *in italics*) from the *Bibliotheka Historica* of Diodorus Siculus are taken from the edition with the translation of C.H. Oldfather C.L. Sherman, C.B. Welles, R.M. Geer, F.R. Watson. Otherwise translations are my own.

due to his fame, he got his place among the stars in the sky, thus having received immortal memory (διὰ δὲ τὴν δόξαν ἐν τοῖς κατ' οὐρανὸν ἄστροις καταριθμηθέντα τυχεῖν ἀθανάτου μνήμης).

Still, his great fame is also 'confirmed' by what had been said in 'Nekyia':

*And after him I marked Orion huge,  
Driving wild beasts together o'er the mead  
Of asphodel, the beasts that he himself  
Had slain on lonely hills; and in his hands  
He held a mace, ever unbroken, all  
Of bronze.<sup>9</sup>*

Moreover, Diodorus relates about the benefactions performed by Orion in a manner typical of him: providing different accounts of the story. It is important here, that, along with a generally accepted' version ('ἔνιοι δὲ λέγουσι'), it is Hesiod the poet who accounts for one of the versions about Orion's accomplishments (reconstruction of mainland after the earthquake and building a sanctuary).

Finally, this story of Orion related by Diodorus in IV.85 is a vivid example where the illustrative nature of the citations of Homeric epics is seen the most: 'in the same way he [Homer] related that he [Orion] was eminent in his size ('περὶ τοῦ μεγέθους ἐμφανίζων'), as well as in his height:

*These were the tallest men that ever earth,  
Giver of grain, did rear, and goodliest  
By far, save for Orion, famed abroad<sup>10</sup> (D.S. IV.85.4-7).*

Otherwise, Diodorus depicts with the aid of the citations of Homer the outstanding features of Erichthonius, who 'was distinguished in happiness and wealth (εὐδαιμονία καὶ πλούτῳ)':

*The wealthiest was he of mortal men;  
Three thousand mares he had that grazed throughout  
His marshy pastures<sup>11</sup> (D.S. IV.75.2).*

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<sup>9</sup> *Odyssey* XI.571-575.

<sup>10</sup> *Odyssey* XI.309-10.

<sup>11</sup> *Iliad* XX.220-21.

The story about Thamyras, who ‘was of outstanding nature (φύσει διαφόρῳ) ... due to his exceptional musical talent (τῷ μελωδεῖν)’ is also supported by the Homeric lines:

*But him, enraged, they [the Muses] maimed, and from him took  
The gift of song divine and made him quite  
Forget his harping<sup>12</sup> (D.S. III.67.3).*

Finally, Ajax, the hero of the *Iliad*, is mentioned as being ‘honoured by the leaders (τιμώμενον ὑπὸ τῶν ἀριστέων)’. Even though it is not the myth of the Trojan War is told in V.28, the legendary virtue of Ajax provides for Diodorus a good comparative material to illustrate the ritual of the Celts to honour their best warriors:

*To Ajax then were given of the chine  
Slices, full-length, unto his honour<sup>13</sup> (D.S. V.28.4).*

This citation of Homer illustrates the material from Book V, where the author proceeds to relating the customs, habits and practices of smaller tribes, whose places of living were, for the most part, a long distance from the cultural centres of Diodorus’ world (such metropolises as Rome, Alexandria, major Greek cities etc). The historian, therefore, is consistent in using the cultural heritage of the Homeric epics, common for his Greek and Roman readers, so that the worlds of ‘the others’ would be understood to the fuller extent.

### *3. Diodorus and Strabo: the Representation of the ‘Culture Heroes’ Compared.*

The *Geography* of Strabo is not only a work temporally close to Diodorus’ *Bibliotheka*. Both belonging to the Hellenistic period, they share a number of features in terms of the authors’ attitude and methods of composing a ‘universal’ work, including the convergence of ideas and motives. One of the characteristics that unifies two texts is, undoubtedly, the extensive use of Homer’s epic poems for reference. Hence, a number of relevant examples for comparing the manner of writing about the heroic figures of the Homeric epics can be found in Strabo’ *Geography*.

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<sup>12</sup> *Iliad* II.599-600.

<sup>13</sup> *Iliad* VII.321.



Thus, in the first chapter of Book I, Strabo, while reasoning on the specific nature of such task as writing a description of lands, says that the greatest travellers of the Greek legends had been defined as 'the wisest heroes (φρονιμωτάτους τῶν ἡρώων)' by the poets. From the geographer's viewpoint, what distinguishes the great men of the epic past is their 'empirical knowledge' related primarily to their 'fondness of travelling and wondering everywhere (ἀποδημήσαντας πολλαχοῦ καὶ πλανηθέντας)'.

Strabo inserts the Homeric lines in order to illustrate the great travel experience of such heroes as Odysseus, who have '*seen the cities and known the minds of many men*'<sup>14</sup>; Nestor, who used to live among the Lapithes – a people '*from a distant land afar — for of themselves they summoned me*'<sup>15</sup> (Il 1.270); and Menelaus, whose words tell: '*I roamed over Cyprus and Phoenicia and Egypt, and came to Ethiopians and Sidonians and Erembians and Libya*'<sup>16</sup>.

Strabo mentions Heracles in this list of 'great adventurers' as well and, compared to the hero awarded divine honours in Diodorus' *Bibliotheka*, Strabo's Heracles should be understood as one among the other experienced travellers, enumerated by the author. Heracles is introduced as a man who '*had knowledge of great adventures*'<sup>17</sup> ('μεγάλων ἐπίστορα ἔργων'), this definition is drawn from Homer who had 'much experience and knowledge (ἀπὸ τῆς πολλῆς ἐμπειρίας τε καὶ ἱστορίας)' (Str. I.1.16).

It is natural, however, that a 'prime' epic hero for a geographer is Odysseus, whose rich life experience ('τῶν ἡρώων ὁ πολυπειρότατος') is also mentioned by Diodorus in the context of examples worth describing in a historical account. Diodorus quotes Homer for illustration: '*Of many men the cities saw and learned / Their thoughts (πολλῶν ἀνθρώπων ἴδεν ἄστεα καὶ νόον ἔγνω*'<sup>18</sup>)' (D.S. I.1.2).

Strabo, on the other hand, finds in the Homeric epics those lines which show Odysseus' practical proficiency of various kinds ('τῶν πάντων μάλιστα ἀρετῆ πάση

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<sup>14</sup> Poetic fragments (marked here *in italics*) from *the Geography* of Strabo are taken from the edition with the translation of H.L. Jones. Otherwise the translations are my own.

<sup>15</sup> *Iliad* I.270.

<sup>16</sup> *Odyssey* IV.83-85.

<sup>17</sup> *Odyssey* XXI.26.

<sup>18</sup> *Odyssey* I.3.

κοσμεῖ) and, at the same time, which could serve a relevant example for the narrative of his *Geography*. Odysseus represented in Strabo's work not only 'of many men the towns did see and minds did learn (πολλῶν ἀνθρώπων ἴδεν ἄστεα καὶ νόον ἔγνων)'. He is also 'the sacker of cities (ὁ ππολίπορθος)', having conquered Troy 'by means of his counsels and his persuasiveness and his deceitful arts (βουλῆ καὶ μύθοισι καὶ ἡπεροπηίδι τέχνῃ)'; he 'prouds himself in agriculture (ἐπί γε τῆ γεωργίᾳ σεμνύνεται)', in gathering harvest ('ἐν ἀμητῶ'), in ploughing ('ἐν ἀρότῳ') and, certainly, in rhetoric ('ἡ ῥητορικὴ φρόνησίς'), all these characteristics being supported by the Homeric lines:

*'In the deep grass might the match be, and might I have a crooked scythe, and thou another like it'<sup>19</sup>;*  
*'Then shouldst thou see me, whether or no I would cut a clean furrow unbroken before me'<sup>20</sup>;*  
*'But when he uttered his great voice from his chest, and words like unto the snowflakes of winter, then could no mortal man contend with Odysseus'<sup>21</sup>*

It is important that for Strabo Homer's 'wisdom' not only makes him a source whose credibility is not questioned by 'all men of knowledge' use his evidence for such illustrations of practical achievements ('πάντες οἱ πεπαιδευμένοι μάρτυρι χρῶνται τῷ ποιητῇ ὡς ὀρθῶς λέγοντι περὶ τοῦ τὴν τοιαύτην ἐμπειρίαν εἰς φρόνησιν συντείνειν μάλιστα'). Moreover, Strabo associates the ability of producing speeches by orators such Odysseus to the natural talent of a poet, the best representative of which in for him is, undoubtedly, Homer. He wonders if a poet can describe a man skilled in rhetoric without having himself command in producing speeches, and insists that the ability 'to imitate life in speech' is inseparable from the knowledge of this life (Str. I.2.4-5).

In contrast, Diodorus also chooses a mythological character for comparing with the mastery of a prose writer (that is, a writer of history), and Heracles serves for him as a best example of a hero whose hard labours were rewarded by immortal fame ('μεγάλους καὶ συνεχεῖς πόνους καὶ κινδύνους ἔκουσίως, ἵνα τὸ γένος τῶν

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<sup>19</sup> *Odyssey* XVIII.368-369.

<sup>20</sup> *Odyssey* XVIII.375.

<sup>21</sup> *Iliad* III.221-222.

ἀνθρώπων εὐεργετήσας τύχη τῆς ἀθανασίας'), which is also the typical of the process of writing a universal history (D.S. I.2.4).

#### 4. *The Historical Heroes and the Elegy in Diodorus' Bibliotheka.*

Explaining what military leaders should aim for – the immortal glory ('τῷ διὰ τῆς δόξης ἀθανατισμῶ'), Diodorus also mentions public praises as a reward for conferring noble deeds for soldiers μετὰ τὴν τελευτὴν ἐπαίνοις (D.S. I.1.5). But this time it is in the historical part of the *Bibliotheka*, where Diodorus alludes to such function of poetry as commemorating the lives of great personalities.

In Book XIV he mentions that many poets lamented the story of Phyton, the military leader ('ὁ στρατηγός') of the Rhegians, whose act of vengeance upon Dionysius, the tyrant of Syracuse, made him being praised during his lifetime ('κατὰ τὸν ἄλλον βίον ἐπαινούμενος'), and whose 'miserable change of fortune after all were lamented by the poets (μετὰ ταῦτα ποιητὰς τοὺς θρηνήσαντας τὸ τῆς περιπετείας ἐλεεινόν)' (D.S. XIV.112.3-5).

And in Book XVI Diodorus mentions that Philip (or, in particular, his Persian campaign) received a public commend by means of a poem cited by a professional actor during the feast. And there is a full quotation of the verses, which is of considerable length, beginning:

*Your thoughts reach higher than the air;  
You dream of wide fields' cultivation.  
The homes you plan surpass the homes  
That men have known...* (D.S. XVI.92.3-4).

Apart from this, Diodorus pays much attention to the material testimony of encomiastic inscriptions, whose citations are located within the 'historical' part of the work. In the first pentad, the only example of this kind concerns the Cretan heroes of the Trojan War who 'received a magnificent burial and immortal esteem (ταφῆς ἐπιφανοῦς ἀξιωθῆναι καὶ τιμῶν ἀθανάτων)'. The monument raised in their honour was adorned with poetic lines:

*Behold Idomeneus the Cnosian's tomb,  
And by his side am I, Meriones,*

*The son of Molus.* (D.S. V.79.4).

However, as was discussed above, in the case of illustrating the exceptional qualities and great actions of mythological heroes, Diodorus' prefers to cite 'the Poet', that is – Homer. The reason for this perhaps is that Homer had been long considered as the 'greatest' and 'the most famous' of Greek poets, which is also not once articulated by Diodorus in his work.<sup>22</sup>

Similarly, for the illustration of such a 'collective' historical hero as a victorious army, Diodorus' choice is one of the best representative of elegy – a genre used for the purposes of commemorating in poetic form. In Book XI, Diodorus cites the famous elegies of Simonides composed as memorials to the warriors at Thermopylae, distinguished as 'the only ones of the other warriors before them who progressed into the state of immortality due to the exceptional virtue they possess (μόνοι τῶν πρὸ ἑαυτῶν διὰ τὴν ὑπερβολὴν τῆς ἀρετῆς εἰς ἀθανασίαν μετήλλαξαν)'.<sup>23</sup>

In this example, it is evident that for Diodorus the testimony in the poetic form ('πολλοὶ καὶ τῶν ποιητῶν') has equal value with that of the prose writers ('οἱ τῶν ἱστοριῶν συγγραφεῖς μόνον') – in this case, obviously, the historians. The sources of both type are able to perform the function of leaving the everlasting memory of great accomplishments ('καθύμνησαν αὐτῶν τὰς ἀνδραγαθίας'), as for those attributed to the warriors at Thermopylae. Simonides the melic poet ('ὁ μελοποιός') is not only referred by name, but also mentioned as 'worthy of their value' ('ἄξιον τῆς ἀρετῆς αὐτῶν') with his commemoration ('τὸ ἐγκώμιον') fully cited:

*Of those who perished at Thermopylae  
All glorious is the fortune, fair the doom;  
Their grave's an altar, ceaseless memory's theirs  
Instead of lamentation, and their fate  
Is chant of praise. Such winding-sheet as this  
Nor mould nor all-consuming time shall waste.  
This sepulchre of valiant men has taken  
The fair renown of Hellas for its inmate.  
And witness is Leonidas, once king  
Of Sparta, who hath left behind a crown  
Of valour mighty and undying fame.* (D.S. XI.11.6).

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<sup>22</sup> D.S. I.12.2, I.69.4, I.96.2, III.2.3, III.67.2.

In a similar manner Diodorus speaks about the moment when, at the time of Themistocles' leadership, 'the city of the Athenians enjoyed its greatest growth (πολλὴν ἐπίδοσιν ἐλάμβανε)'. Again, he inserts a full citation of the inscription that is aimed to glorify the city's eminence:

*E'en from the day when the sea divided Europe from Asia,  
And the impetuous god, Ares, the cities of men  
Took for his own, no deed such as this among earth-dwelling mortals  
Ever was wrought at one time both upon land and at sea.  
These men indeed upon Cyprus sent many a Mede to destruction,  
Capturing out on the sea warships a hundred in sum  
Filled with Phoenician men; and deeply all Asia grieved o'er them,  
Smitten thus with both hands, vanquished by war's mighty power. (D.S.  
XI.62.2-3).*

The Athenians, again, in Book X are responsible for performing a public commemoration of themselves through the piece of elegy ('τὸ ἐλεγεῖον') after their immediate victory in the Chalchidean battle ('εὐθύς ἀπὸ τῆς μάχης Χαλκίδος ἐκυρίευσαν'):

*Having conquered the tribes of Boeotia and those of Chalcis  
Midst the labours of war, sons of Athenians quenched  
Insolence high in dark bonds of iron; and taking the ransom's  
Tithê set up here these mares, vowed unto Pallas their god. (D.S. X.24.3).*

But the Athenians definitely followed a common Greek practice of inscribing elegiac verses as a celebration of their military achievements. And the author of the *Bibliotheka* appears to share such attitude to the poetry as the most effective way of presenting the victory of the Greek army, which is also fair for his historical account. Chapter XI is particularly rich in examples that illustrate the end of the Persian War. Diodorus starts from more broad commemoration that is illustrated through the quotation of the poem ('ἐλεγεῖον τόδε') devoted to all Greeks who took part in the defence of Delphi:

*This is the gift the saviours of far-flung Hellas upraised here,  
Having delivered their states from loathsome slavery's bonds.*

Then follows the poem devoted particularly to the Lacedaemonians:

*Here on a time there strove with two hundred myriads of foemen  
Soldiers in number but four thousand from Pelops' fair Isle.*

And, finally, the dedication to the Spartan warriors:

*To Lacedaemon's folk, O stranger, carry the message,*

*How we lie here in this place, faithful and true to their laws. (D.S. XI.33.2-3).*

The victorious defence of Delphi is also represented, apart from a prose account, by means of poetic citation. As Diodorus writes, the Delphians wished to leave an everlasting memorial (‘ἀθάνατον ὑπόμνημα’) to the appearance of the gods at the critical moment. And, obviously, the poetic inscription cited afterwards, serves as a proper addition to the testimony in material form (‘τὸ τρίπαιον’):

*To serve as a memorial to war,  
The warder-off of men, and as a witness  
To victory the Delphians set me up,  
Rendering thanks to Zeus and Phoebus who  
Thrust back the city-sacking ranks of Medes  
And threw their guard about the bronze-crowned shrine. (D.S. XI.14.4)*

Finally there is evidence in the text of Diodorus that citing poetry (in particular – elegiac inscriptions) could be a characteristic feature of the genre of ‘universal history’. Thus, in Book XIII there is a reference to Ephorus – a predecessor of Diodorus who is considered to have introduced this form of history-writing. According to the reference in Diodorus’ *Bibliotheka*, the text of Ephorus may well have contained a poetic citation as well:

‘the testimony of these events can be seen in the shrine at Coroneia, as writes Ephorus, which has the following inscription: (δηλοῖ δὲ τὰ περὶ τούτων ἀνάθημα κείμενον ἐν τῷ περὶ Κορώνειαν νεῷ, καθάπερ φησὶν Ἐφωρος, τὴν ἐπιγραφὴν ἔχον ταύτην):

*These from the crews of fifty ships, escaping destruction,  
Brought their bodies to land hard by Athos' sharp crags;  
Only twelve, all the rest the yawning depth of the waters  
Took to their death with their ships, meeting with terrible winds  
(D.S. XIII.41.2-3).*

##### *5. Poetic Commemorations in Earlier Histories.*

Diodorus inserts poetry in the reports of noble deeds so that they would be preserved in the memory of mankind. His method reflects the interrelations between different literary genres. As it is illustrated by E. Bowie, the historiography was influenced from the side of the elegiac and iambic narratives which ‘offer ... overt

moral comment on actions of both citizens as their enemies'<sup>23</sup>. And this technique used by Diodorus is also found, though in a lesser extent, in the texts of earlier histories.

The most famous poets of the time are referred by name in the *Histories* of Herodotus as the authors of commemorating verses:

‘And the Persians killed many of them, and a number of famous men, like Euaclides, the general of the Eretrians. He had won prizes in competitions, and was greatly praised by Simonides of Chios, the poet (καὶ πολλοὺς αὐτῶν οἱ Πέρσαι φονεύουσι ἄλλους τε ὀνομαστούς, ἐν δὲ δὴ καὶ Εὐακλίδην στρατηγέοντα Ἐρετριέων, στεφανηφόρους τε ἀγῶνας ἀναραιοῦσά τε καὶ ὑπὸ Σιμωνίδεω τοῦ Κηίου πολλὰ αἰνεθέντα).’ (Hdt. V.102.3).

‘Many warriors from the ... army were killed, including Aristokyprus of Philokyprus, the king of the Solians. Solon the Athenian, while being to Cyprus, praised that Philokyprus in his poems much greater than the other tyrants (τετραμμένου δὲ τοῦ στρατοπέδου ἄλλοι τε ἔπεσον πολλοὶ ... καὶ ὁ Σολίων βασιλεὺς Ἀριστόκυπρος ὁ Φιλοκύπρου, Φιλοκύπρου δὲ τούτου τὸν Σόλων ὁ Ἀθηναῖος ἀπικόμενος ἐς Κύπρον ἐν ἔπεσι αἶνεσε τυράννων μάλιστα).’ (Hdt. V.113.2).

Thucydides, however, mentions and cites verses in relation to the stories about more private affairs, such as Peisistratus’ self-glorifying epigram:

*Peisistratus the son of Hippias  
Erected this to stand  
I'th' Temple of Apollo Pythius,  
Witness of his command.*<sup>24</sup> (Thuc. VI.54.7);

and the following dedication in poetic form to Archedice, the daughter of the tyrant of Lampsakus inscribed on her tomb:

Archedice, the daughter of King Hippias,  
Who in his time  
Of all the potentates of Greece was prime,  
This dust doth hide.  
Daughter, wife, sister, mother unto kings she was,  
Yet free from pride. (Thuc. VI.59.3).

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<sup>23</sup> Bowie 2001: 64.

<sup>24</sup> Poetic fragments (marked here *in italics*) from *The Peloponnesian War* of Thucydides are taken from the edition with the translation of Th. Hobbes. Otherwise the translations are my own..

Regarding the latter example of poetic quotation, not so frequent in the text of Thucydides, S. Hornblower has shown that such reference is, in fact, the result of broader interrelations between the narratives practised by the historian and the authors of epinikian poems, such as Simonides and Pindar<sup>25</sup>.

Consequently, poetry can be seen among the principal sources for the stories related to one of the major themes of the whole of the *Bibliotheka* (and especially of the first pentad) – the lives of exceptional ‘culture-heroes’. Furthermore, the citations of poetry can be regarded as means for constructing the narrative around the main themes of the *Bibliotheka*. Culture heroes, epic heroes, military historical heroes are all commemorated by the historian who is employing poetic fragments for citation. In general, it corresponds to Diodorus’ method of writing a history, which involves the quotations of poetry.

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<sup>25</sup> Hornblower 2004: 26, 57.



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