THEOCRITUS VII 61-2

BY H. D. JOCELYN

'Αγεάνακτι πλὸν διζημένῳ ἐς Μυτιλῆναν
δρια τάντα γένοιτο, καὶ εὐπλοῦν ὁμον ἱκοῖτο

δρια schol. uet. εὐπλοος Schaefer

For five hundred years or more the words εὐπλοῦν ὁμον ἱκοῖτο caused no reader of the transmitted Theocritus to confess himself in difficulties. A Byzantine of the fourteenth century interpreted them with the prosaic ἐπιλοας εἰς τὸν λυμένα ἄφικοιτο, doubtless supposing the sense of the epithet to have been transferred to the subject of the verb 1). Latinate interpreters of the sixteenth century kept the sense attached to the object: Helius Eobanus' 'placidum attingat portum' (1531) and Henri Étienne's 'tutum in portum perueniat' (1579) 2) may serve as samples of the kind of translation offered. In 1809 G. H. Schaefer followed all preceding editors of modern times and printed the paradosis, adding however a troubled note: "v. 62 εὐπλοον, scribendum puto εὐπλοος" 3). Since that date scholars good and bad have been divided. On the side of Schaefer's conjecture have stood C. F. Graefe (1817) 4), T. Kiessling (1819), C. Ziegler (1844), H. L. Ahrens (1850), J. A. Hartung (1858), U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1905), J. M. Edmonds (1912), O. Könnecke (1914), P. E. Legrand (1925), C. Gallavotti (1946),

2) Étienne's Thesaurus Linguae Graecae (1572) glosses εὐπλοος with 'nauigatu facilis', 'nauigationem facilern praebens'.
3) In his sumptuous folio edition of 1811 Schaefer printed εὐπλοον without comment. The small edition with its notes was reprinted in 1817 and 1829.
4) Epistolae Criticae in Bucolicos Graecos (St. Petersburg 1817), 27 (not seen by me).
K. Latte (1948), A. S. F. Gow (1952), P. Monteil (1968), F. Sbordone (1970), K. J. Dover (1971) and H. Beckby (1975); on the side of the paradosis J. A. Jacobs (1824), A. Meineke (1825) 5), E. F. Wuestemann (1830), G. Hermann (1832) 6), C. H. Weise (1843), C. Ziegler (1844), C. Wordsworth (1844), F. F. Ameis (1851), A. T. H. Fritzsche (1857) 7), F. A. Paley (1863), R. J. Cholmeley (1901), V. Pisani (1946) 8), G. Giangrande (1970) 9) and F. Cairns (1978) 10). For Giangrande the paradosis provides an instance of a styleme which he calls ‘adjectival enallage’ and illustrates from the hexameter poems of Nicander, Oppian and Nonnus and from some of the epigrams of the Anthology. This is in the Byzantine tradition of exegesis. Cairns on the other hand aligns himself with the Renaissance Latinists. He declares that “compound adjectives such as εὐπλοος do not have standard meanings or applications”, that there is a “richness of meaning” and a “characteristically Hellenistic allusive subtlety” in the paradosis, and that the meaning intended in εὐπλοον δρμον was ‘harbour safe for sailing in’. Schaefer’s followers have never thought it necessary to state a case at length 11). It might now be worth doing so.

In accounts of seamanship throughout the Classical and Hellenistic periods both poets and prose-writers kept the sense of δρμον (statio) distinct from that of λιμήν (portus). A δρμος was a point at which a ship tied up or dropped anchor. It might, but need not, be protected by a λιμήν 12). Image makers brought the two words

5) There is a note affirming the validity of the paradosis in Meineke’s 1856 edition.


7) Fritzsche embraced Schaefer’s conjecture in 1869 and 1870 and returned to the paradosis in 1881.

8) Pisani however offered the translation ‘... giunge egli in porto dopo una felice navigazione’.


10) This journal 1978, 72-5.

11) Gow’s commentary ad loc. explains rather than defends the conjectured text.

12) See Homer, Il. I 432-5 ει δ’ ετε δ’ λιμήνος πολυεθέος έντης Ικονο, | λητία μεν στεπάντο, θέαζαν δ’ εν νηι μελαίνη, | ιστόν δ’ ιστοδόκη πέλασαν προτόνουμι υφέντες | καρπαλίμως, τὴν δ’ είς δρμον προέρεσαν ἄρετιμος, Aratus, Phaen.