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LOUSY BOYS AND PSEUDO-HOMERIC GIGGLES

1. *The anecdote*.

An anecdote recounts that an irreverent group of children deceived no lesser than Homer with a riddle about their own lice. The earliest source to recall this funny story is Heraclitus of Ephesus, who according to Diogenes Laertius (9.1) flourished in the 69th Olympiad, i.e. 504-501 BC. In an unusually accessible fragment passed down by Hippolytus, Heraclitus says:

Heraclitus D22 Laks-Most (= 56 Diels-Kranz, 21 Marcovich, 22 Kahn) in Hippolytus, *Refutatio* 9.9.6:

ἐξηπάτηνται, φησίν, οἱ ἄνθρωποι πρὸς τὴν γνῶσιν τῶν φανερῶν παραπλησίως Ὁμήρωι, ὃς ἐγένετο τῶν Ἑλλήνων σοφώτερος πάντων· ἐκεῖνόν τε γὰρ παῖδες φθεῖρας κατακτείνοντες ἐξηπάτησαν εἰπόντες· ὅσα εἴδομεν καὶ ἑλάβομεν, ταῦτα ἀπολείπομεν, ὅσα δὲ οὔτε εἴδομεν οὔτ' ἐλάβομεν, ταῦτα φέρομεν.

"Men are deceived in the recognition of what is obvious, like Homer who was the wisest of all the Greeks. For he was deceived by boys killing lice, who said: «what we can see and catch we leave behind; what we neither see nor catch we carry away»." (tr. Kahn 1979)

A similar story is recalled in Alcidamas' *On Homer* (4th century BC), partly preserved in P. Michigan 2745[1], and in much later writings of the Roman period, namely the *Certamen Homeri et Hesiodi*, all the extant *Lives of Homer* and the caption for a fresco in the *Casa degli Epigrammi* in Pompeii[2]. Heraclitus' version differs from the later ones in that he describes the boys simply as παῖδες rather than as fisher-boys, he does not mention that Homer died because he was not able to solve the riddle[3], and he reports the riddle in prose form, while the later sources quote it in hexameters[4].

It is clear that Heraclitus expects his readers to be familiar with the anecdote. His point is not to introduce a new riddle – to this end, he prefers to resort to his own –, but to prove Homer's lack of resourcefulness and to show that even the knowledge of the allegedly wisest of all Greeks is not

[1] See Avezzù 1982. Kirk 1950, however, has argued that lines 1-14 of the papyrus, where the anecdote of the riddle is recalled, are a later interpolation "probably from the commentary on the life of Homer which was the main source of the Life in the *Certamen* and the other *Lives*" (p. 157). For possible meanings of the riddle see Bassino 2019, 191 f.; on comparable versions of the lice riddle in other languages and literary traditions see Grossardt 2016, 9 with further references; Bonsignore 2011, 21 f. frames the riddle in the cultural and anthropologic context of the so-called 'neck riddles'.

[2] See Bassino 2019, 192 on this caption. An epigram on Homer's death (11 GP) alludes to the riddle without quoting it: cf. Bonsignore 2011, 17-23.

[3] While Kirk 1950 attempts to use such oppositions to develop a stemma of the *Lives of Homer*, the differences may be simple omissions and do not necessarily prove that Heraclitus knew a different version of the anecdote.

[4] Ps.-Herodotus, *Life of Homer* 35 reports both a prose and a hexametric version of the riddle.

true wisdom (σοφίη), which, of course, is to be found only in the words of Heraclitus himself[5]. Scholars unanimously accept the fragment as authentic[6].

If compared with the rest of the Heraclitean corpus, D22 LM is striking for two features: its narrativity and its light-hearted character. In fact, this is the only narrative we find in Heraclitus[7], who, judging from the surviving fragments, prefers cutting and gnomic-like sentences. As for the funny character, this is at odds with the pungent irony to which Heraclitus resorts when mocking outstanding personalities of Greek culture, such as Homer, Hesiod, Archilochus, Xenophanes, Hecataeus, and Pythagoras: D20 LM (B40 DK), D21 LM (B42 DK), D24 LM (B105 DK), D25 a LM (B57 DK), D25 b LM (B106 DK), D26 LM (B129 DK), D27 LM (B81 DK)[8]. Unlike Xenophanes, who in *Silloi* makes fun of poets and philosophers[9], Heraclitus is not interested in recalling funny stories, but usually criticises false knowledge sternly.

Because of such unusual features, and since Heraclitus seems to take for granted that his audience is familiar with the anecdote of the lice riddle, D22 LM raises the question of its possible source – a source that had to be well-known in Ephesus at the end of the 6th century BC, and that has to contain elements of humorous narrative about Homer's life.

2. *Homeridai and the early biographic tradition about Homer*.

Where could the anecdote of Homer and the lice riddle possibly come from? Surprisingly, commentaries on Heraclitus do not linger on this question. However, in Heraclitus' day anecdotes about Homer's life were not yet proliferating as they did in later centuries. Moreover, unlike the stories that freely circulated about the life of other semi-legendary personalities such as Aesop and the Seven Sages, biographic anecdotes about Homer had their most reliable and authoritative source in a guild of professional rhapsodes, the so-called Homeridai, whose interest was to establish themselves as the only authority for Homer's life and works. Building on an assumption formulated seventy years ago by G. S. Kirk (1950)[10], I am going

[5] See Marcovich 1978 (1967), *ad loc*.; Kahn 1979 *ad loc*.; Gianvittorio 2010, 45 and 104.

[6] The only exception is a short sceptical remark by Bywater. For an analysis of the language see Kirk 1950, 158-60, who sees in κατακτείνοντες a chief argument for the authenticity of the fragment.

[7] See Marcovich 1978 *ad loc*.

[8] Destrée 2014.

[9] E.g. Xenoph. D64 LM [= 14 DK] ridicules Pythagoras for being reincarnated as a dog and beaten up, cf. Xenoph. D1-D5 LM.

[10] Cf. Burkert 1972, 77 and Latacz 2011, 13, who refers Heraclit. D22 LM more generally to "Rhapsoden-Rezitationen homerischer Dichtung".

to argue that the anecdote might come from a lost pseudo-Homeric poem probably composed by the Homeridai not later than the first decades of the 5th century BC[11].

To begin with, there are issues of historical and literary plausibility to consider: would it be historically plausible that a poem composed by the Homeridai was known to Heraclitus and to his readers? And would it be plausible that such a poem dealt with anecdotes from Homer's life in a humorous fashion? The answer to both questions is yes. Several sources agree that the Homeridai were especially active starting from the 6th century BC on the isle of Chios: if Acusilaus from Argos knew of the Homeridai and could say that they were from Chios (*FGrHist* 2 F 2), Heraclitus and his readers, who around the same time lived ca. 120 km from Chios as the crow flies (in Ephesus, today's Selçuk), can be safely assumed to have heard of the Homeridai and of their works – in fact, it is easy to imagine that the Homeridai, just like Heraclitus himself, also divulgated their writings through the *Artemision* in Ephesus[12].

As for the second question, that is, whether a poem by the Homeridai could deal with Homer's life with sense of humour, we know that these rhapsodes had set up their minds not only to divulgate Homeric works and apocrypha, but also to spread anecdotes about Homer's life[13] and that, interestingly, some of these anecdotes were to play down Homer's greatness. At about the same time that Alcidamas recalled the lice anecdote, Isocrates (*Helen* 65) reported that

> λέγουσι δέ τινες καὶ τῶν Ὁμηριδῶν ὡς (*sc*. Helene) ἐπιστᾶσα τῆς νυκτὸς Ὁμήρῳ προσέταξε ποιεῖν περὶ τῶν στρατευσαμένων ἐπὶ Τροίαν, βουλομένη τὸν ἐκείνων θάνατον ζηλωτότερον ἢ τὸν βίον τὸν τῶν ἄλλων καταστῆσαι· καὶ μέρος μέν τι καὶ διὰ τὴν Ὁμήρου τέχνην, μάλιστα δὲ διὰ ταύτην οὕτως ἐπαφρόδιτον καὶ παρὰ πᾶσιν ὀνομαστὴν αὐτοῦ γενέσθαι τὴν ποίησιν.
>
> "… some of the Homeridai also relate that [Helen] appeared to Homer by night and commanded him to compose a poem on those who went on the expedition to Troy, since she wished to make their death more to be envied than the life of the rest of mankind; and they say that while it is partly because of Homer's art, yet it is chiefly through her that this poem has such charm and has become so famous among all men." (tr. Norlin 1980)

This is quite amusing: some Homeridai, twisting the literary *topos* of

[11] *Contra* De Martino 1982, 31-45, who, due to D21 LM (B42 DK), thinks that Heraclitus included a fictional and critical life of Homer in his *syggramma*.

[12] The *Contest of Homer and Hesiod* (18) reports that a tablet containing the *Hymn to Apollo*, which probably was the work of the Homeridai (see below), was stored in a temple of Artemis (see Bassino 2019, 190). By the end of the archaic period, temples as important and well-frequented as the Ephesian *Artemision* also functioned as libraries *ante litteram* (Nieddu 1984).

[13] On Homerid biographical poetry see Kirk 1950. More generally on the poetic activity of the Homeridai see Sbardella 2012 and 2014.

poetic inspiration through divine epiphany, had spread the anecdote that it was the very woman who caused the Trojan War who commanded Homer, in a dream, to compose an epic which glorified her own mischief. The irony went as far as to say that the poetic appeal of the *Iliad* was actually due for the most part (μάλιστα) to Helen's charm, not to Homer's art. This makes it is conceivable that a poem composed by the Homeridai would contain amusing details on Homer's life.

If a poem ascribed to Homer dealt with circumstances from Homer's life, then of course the narrative or parts of it had to be presented as autobiographical. This too is entirely possible[14]. The *Hymn to Apollo*, which ancient and modern scholars believe to be the work of the prominent Homerides Cynaethus of Chios[15], contains autobiographical elements as well: here, 'Homer' presents himself as a blind poet from Chios roaming from place to place to perform poems which shall outlive him and reach future audiences (*Hymn. Ap.* 166-176):

> ἀλλ' ἄγεθ' ἱλήκοι μὲν Ἀπόλλων Ἀρτέμιδι ξύν,
> χαίρετε δ' ὑμεῖς πᾶσαι· ἐμεῖο δὲ καὶ μετόπισθε
> μνήσασθ', ὁππότε κέν τις ἐπιχθονίων ἀνθρώπων
> ἐνθαδ' ἀνείρηται ξεῖνος ταλαπείριος ἐλθών·
> 'ὦ κοῦραι, τίς δ' ὔμμιν ἀνὴρ ἥδιστος ἀοιδῶν
> ἐνθάδε πωλεῖται, καὶ τέωι τέρπεσθε μάλιστα;'
> ὑμεῖς δ' εὖ μάλα πᾶσαι ὑποκρίνασθαι ἀφήμως·
> 'τυφλὸς ἀνήρ, οἰκεῖ δὲ Χίωι ἔνι παιπαλοέσσηι·
> τοῦ πᾶσαι μετόπισθεν ἀριστεύουσιν ἀοιδαί.'
> ἡμεῖς δ' ὑμέτερον κλέος οἴσομεν, ὅσσον ἐπ' αἶαν
> ἀνθρώπων στρεφόμεσθα πόλεις εὖ ναιεταώσας·
> οἳ δ' ἐπὶ δὴ πείσονται, ἐπεὶ καὶ ἐτήτυμόν ἐστιν.
>
> "But now, may Apollo be favourable, together with Artemis,
> and hail, all you Maidens! Think of me in future,
> if even some long-suffering stranger comes and asks,

[14] Following the biographies of Homer and the *Certamen*, Homer also composed his own funeral epigram.

[15] See *Sch. Pind. Nem.* 2.1c, though Thucydides (3.104.4-5) calls this hymn Homeric. Today, many scholars endorse the idea that Cynaethus was the author of the so-called Delian part of the *Hymn to Apollo*: see Pavese 1974, 122; West 1975, 165 ff. (cf. Id. 1999, 370 f., 2003, 9-12); De Martino 1982, 57-61 (on Cynaethus see also Rzach 1913, 2148-50; Burkert 1979; De Martino 1983). Long before this, stylistic analyses had assessed that the *Hymn to Apollo* combines two originally separated poems, namely an early Pythian hymn (starting at l. 179) and a later Delian hymn, which was eventually placed before the Pythian (*contra* Burkert 1979). E.g. Hoekstra 1969, 26: "It looks as if the poet, though handling the diction in a more or less 'Homeric' way in the story, kept much less to – indeed was unable to manage – the traditional combinations, when he had to describe the contemporary gatherings at Delos". On Cynaethus see also Rzach 1913, 2148-50; Burkert 1979; De Martino 1983. Richardson 2010, 13-15 surveys the discussions on the matter.

«O Maidens, which is your favourite singer
who visits here, and who do you enjoy most?»
Then you must answer with one voice,
«It is a blind man, and he lives in rocky Chios;
all of his songs remain supreme afterwards».
And we will carry your reputation wherever we go
as we roam the well-ordered cities of men,
and they will believe it, because it is true." (tr. West 2003)

Like other poems of the archaic and classical period, the *Hymn to Apollo* was expected to spread across different geographic regions and to outlive its debut performance, chiefly through re-performances (cf. l.173, "all of his songs remain supreme afterwards")[16]. For the Homeridai, embedding information about Homer's birthplace and life into this and other poems was an effective means to influence not only present but also future opinions on the subject.

3. *Lice riddle and Epikichlides: matching points.*

The few pieces of information we have about the lost pseudo-Homeric poem *Epikichlides* match well with the anecdote of Homer and the lice riddle, and in the absence of better evidence this makes *Epikichlides* a possible source for the anecdote.

All that is known of *Epikichlides* comes from a few late testimonies: Hesychius' *Life of Homer* merely mentions the title along with other allegedly Homeric works; Ps.-Herodotus' *Life of Homer* (24) classifies *Epikichlides* among the παίγνια, funny poems, and says that it was composed in Bolissos – that is, interestingly, in Chios –[17]; and two further testimonies are to be found in Athenaeus' *Deipnosophistae*. Athenaeus (65a) first reports the para-etymology of the title *Epikichlides* which is provided by Menaechmus, a 4th century BC scholar who is our safest *terminus ante quem* for the composition of this poem (see below). In another place (639a), Athenaeus mentions that *Epikichlides* dealt with erotic matters and lists it along with Clearchus of Soli's *Erotic Questions* and the works of Sappho, Anacreon and Archilochus. The funny contents alleged by Ps.-Herodotus and the erotic ones alleged by Athenaeus are by no means irreconcilable: for example, the comically erotic adventures of Ps.-Homer's *Margites* and the verbal abuse which Archilochus directed against his ex-fiancée Neobule show that *eros* and parody could very well blend together in archaic poetry. The one single

[16] See Spelman 2018.

[17] Ps.-Herodotus, *Life of Homer* 24: καὶ τοὺς Κέρκωπας καὶ Βατραχομαχίην καὶ Ψαρομαχίην καὶ Ἑπταπακτικὴν καὶ Ἐπικιχλίδας καὶ τἆλλα πάντα ὅσα παίγνια ἐστὶν Ὁμήρου ἐνθαῦτα ἐποίησε παρὰ τῷ Χίῳ ἐν Βολισσῷ.

fragment that, thus far, has been tentatively attributed to *Epikichlides* is quoted by Plato[18]. While this attribution is highly speculative[19], Plato's quotation would confirm that the poem, just like other Homeric apocrypha, was in hexameters[20] and, more importantly, that it was composed and divulgated by the Homeridai. Also, Plato would provide a *terminus ante quem* slightly earlier than Menaechmus for the composition of *Epikichlides*: such an early date is plausible in view of *Margites*, another funny-erotic pseudo-Homeric poem which probably dates back to the archaic period[21]. All in all, *Epikichlides*, like other Homeric apocrypha, can be reasonably attributed to the guild of the Homeridai, who starting from the end of the 6th century BC

[18] Plato *Phaedr*. 252b quotes two hexameters as belonging to the "stored-away verses" recited by the Homeridai, and West 2003 thinks that the two lines may come from *Epikichlides*. The quotation runs as follows: λέγουσι δὲ οἶμαί τινες Ὁμηριδῶν ἐκ τῶν ἀποθέτων ἐπῶν δύο ἔπη εἰς τὸν Ἔρωτα, ὧν τὸ ἕτερον ὑβριστικὸν πάνυ καὶ οὐ σφόδρα τι ἔμμετρον· ὑμνοῦσι δὲ ὧδε –

τὸν δ' ἤτοι θνητοὶ μὲν Ἔρωτα καλοῦσι ποτηνόν,
ἀθάνατοι δὲ Πτέρωτα, διὰ πτεροφύτορ' ἀνάγκην.

"And some of the Homeridai, I believe, recite from their stored-away verses two hexameters on Love, one of which is quite outrageous and not perfectly metrical. They sing as follows:

«Mortals call him winged Eros,
but the immortals call him Wingederos (Πτέρωτα), because he must grow wings»."

(The word Πτέρωτα is composed by πτερόν and ἔρωτα, hence the pun).

[19] Rzach 1913, 2147 paraphrased ἀπόθετα ἔπη as "entlegene und nicht sehr bekannte Dichtungen" and regarded the two verses as of mystic or orphic content and as not invented by Plato. See more recently Yunis 2011, 155 on Plato's words ἐκ τῶν ἀποθέτων ἐπῶν: "In relation to texts, books, or ideas, ἀπόθετος refers to items that are unknown to the public because they are held in reserve or secret […]. There is no evidence that secret Homeric verses existed as a recognized category in Plato's day; 'the secret verses' is part of Plato's joke. Only because S[ocrate]s' verses are 'secret' and recited only by 'some Homeridae' […] can S[ocrates] present them as Homeric even though no one had ever heard them before. West 'paraphrases' τῶν ἀποθέτων ἐπῶν as 'apocrypha' and assigns S[ocrate]s' verses to a humorous poem entitled Ἐπικιχλίδες […], whose existence and Homeric attribution are first attested after Plato […]. The verses most likely achieved apocryphal status by their appearance here […]. The verses are transparently Plato's invention […]. S[ocrates] essentially admits as much in his immediately following words, τούτοις δὴ ἔξεστι μὲν πείθεσθαι, ἔξεστιν δὴ μή".

[20] Independently of this dubious fragment, Ps.-Homer's *Epikichlides* had to be either in hexameters or in a mix of hexameters and iambic trimeters, like *Margites* and, according to Aristotle, other "similar works": e.g. Xenophanes' *Silloi*. Cf. Aristot. *Poet*. 1448b 28 ff.: ἀπὸ δὲ Ὁμήρου ἀρξαμένοις ἔστιν, οἷον ἐκείνου ὁ Μαργίτης καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα, ἐν οἷς κατὰ τὸ ἁρμόττον καὶ τὸ ἰαμβεῖον ἦλθε μέτρον, διὸ καὶ ἰαμβεῖον καλεῖται νῦν, ὅτι ἐν τῷ μέτρῳ τούτῳ ἰάμβιζον ἀλλήλους. If that is so, then Heraclitus' prose could only be paraphrasing the poem and not a *verbatim* quotation.

[21] Gostoli 2007, 11-13.

were successfully ascribing to Homer a number of their own works[22].

I now come to the matching points between the anecdote of the lice riddle and the evidence about *Epikichlides*. The first and most obvious thing to remark is that a funny anecdote is likely to come from a funny poem, and this is just how Ps.-Herodotus describes *Epikichlides*. A second yet related point concerns the very title *Epikichlides*, which deserves some attention. According to the afore mentioned Menaechmus (*ap. Athen.* 65a), the boys used to reward Homer for his poetic performances by giving him thrushes (κίχλαι), and *Epikichlides* obtained its title from this practice. While this explanation has been accepted by many modern scholars[23], epics are usually entitled according to their contents rather than circumstances related to their performance, and Homeric and pseudo-Homeric poems are no exceptions to this rule. M. L. West was certainly right in pointing out that since *Epikichlides* was a funny poem it makes more sense to explain the title as being derived from κιχλίζω "to giggle" than from κίχλη "thrush"[24]. For these reasons, I suggest that the title *Epikichlides* derives from κιχλίζω and refers to the funny contents of the poem. We can compare the curious word (αἱ) ἐπικιχλίδες with nouns formed in a similar way, such as (αἱ) ἐπανθρακίδες (Aristoph. *Ach.* 670 and *V.* 1127): this comic word is formed from the verb (ἐπ)ἀνθρακίζω "to broil on the coals" and with the attached suffix -ιδ-, which often indicates diminutives[25], and literally means "smallish things to broil on the coals", i.e. "small fish for frying" (LSJ *s.v.*). Along the same lines ἐπικιχλίδες, formed from the verb (ἐπι)κιχλίζω and with the attached suffix -ιδ-, seems to indicate "little things to giggle about", i.e. short, light-hearted stories[26]. The anecdote of the lice riddle, in which a group of children makes fun of Homer, matches well with this interpretation of the title.

Finally, the very presence of children is remarkable, because the entire

[22] On the Homeridai as authors of pseudo-Homeric poems see e.g. West 1975, 167. On the identity, purposes and activities of the Homeridai see Allen 1907; Rzach 1913; West 1999; 2001, 15-17; 2011, 8-9; Graziosi 2002, 208-217.

[23] For 19th century scholarship see e.g. Bode 1838, 412; Nietzsche 1874-1875, 48. In our century, Selzer 2006 and Gostoli 2007, 16 ("avevano come oggetto vicende di animali") have endorsed this view.

[24] West 2003, 229.

[25] See Chantraine 1933, 342: "Là où le feminine en -ιδ- se trouve en concurrence avec un féminin d'un autre type, il comport plus ou moin nettement une nuance de sens diminutive […]. On s'explique qu'un suffixe feminine qui exprimait volentiers un rapport de subordination ou d'appartenance se soit prêté à fournir des diminutivs […]. Le dérivé indique une chose plus petite ou accessoire, en liaison avec le mot d'où il est tiré […]", with many examples. On nouns containing the suffix -ιδ- see also Buck-Petersen 1944, 416 f.

[26] As remarked above, a mix of funny and erotic contents would also be conceivable: cf. *Margites*.

biographic tradition about Homer knows of only two circumstances involving children: one is that in which some boys confronted Homer with the lice riddle, the other is that Homer composed *Epikichlides* and other poems when he was employed as a teacher for the sons of a Chian family[27]. A connection between the two situations in which the first teacher of Greece actually dealt with children would be intriguing. A final thought is that this connection might imply that the supposed original audience of *Epikichlides*, i.e. Homer's pupils from Chios, also featured as characters in the poem, i.e. as the boys who ask the riddle. In this regard, it is remarkable that in the most ancient thread of the anecdote tradition, which of course includes Heraclitus, the boys are not called, as in later sources, fisher-boys, but simply children (παῖδες)[28], and that they sport a puzzling familiarity with the venerable Homer by interrogating him and by having fun at his expenses[29] (also, in some versions of the anecdote it is the young people who first address the adult with questions, not the other way round). This may indicate that the boys are no strangers but good acquaintances of Homer, as pupils living under the same roof with their teacher would be[30]. Be that as it may, it is common practice when narrating stories to children to include the young narratees in the narrative as characters. To mention just one famous example from literature, young Alice Liddell was Lewis Carroll's primary audience for *Alice in Wonderland* and also featured as the main character of the narrative. The Homeridai may have resorted to a similar narrative technique in their *Epikichlides* or "Little stories to giggle about"[31].

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[27] Ps.-Herodotus, *Life of Homer* 24. The same author recalls that children sung Homer's verses from a poem called *Eiresione* (*epigr*. 14 Markwald = 15 West) during a procession at Samos, but this does not imply any personal interaction between Homer and the children (*Life of Homer* 33; see Markwald 1986, 245-75; Palumbo Stracca 2014).

[28] Koniaris 1971 thinks that the original version of the riddle read παῖδες.

[29] Graziosi 2002, 162 explains this familiarity as a consequence of Homer's poverty.

[30] We do not know how the later fisher-boys version came into being. Maybe, once the riddle had been connected to Homer's death, later sources had to make up that the boys were from Ios – not Chios –, where Homer was supposed to have died (cf. most recently Grossardt 2016, 7-26, Bannert 2020), and changed their identity – sons of a Chian family – into the rather anonymous one of local fisher-boys.

[31] Many thanks to Herbert Bannert, to Walter Stockert and to the anonymous reviewers for their helpful remarks on this paper.

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ABSTRACT:
A funny ancient anecdote, first recounted by Heraclitus of Ephesus, says that Homer was confronted by a group of children with a riddle about their own lice. This paper formulates two hypotheses. The first is that the lice anecdote was spread by the Chios-based guild of the Homeridai, who, starting from the 6th century BC, established themselves as the chief authority on Homer's life and works: indeed, Heraclitus shows that this anecdote circulated in the time and area of the Homeridai's peak activity. The second and more speculative hypothesis is that the anecdote appeared in the lost poem called *Epikichlides*, which like other Homeric apocrypha might well have been composed by the Homeridai. While too little is known about *Epikichlides* to make a strong case, there are some interesting matching points with the anecdote about the lousy boys.
KEYWORDS:
Homer, Homeridai, Heraclitus, Homeric apocrypha, riddles, ancient biography.