

BOOK REVIEW

Callimachus in Context: From Plato to the Augustan Poets. By BENJAMIN ACOSTA-HUGHES and SUSAN A. STEPHENS. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012. Pp. xiv + 328. Hardcover, £60.00/\$99.00. ISBN 978-1-107-00857-1.

Callimachus' poetry has become the perfect touchstone for classicists against which to determine other authors' self-positioning in the cultural arena. In turn, the defenses he mounts against anonymous "rivals" are now more and more often investigated as a means of fictionally projecting a positive image of his own intellectual peculiarity (P. Bourdieu's original ideas; see J. Klooster, *Poetry as Window and Mirror* (2011)). However, the "context" to which Benjamin Acosta-Hughes and Susan Stephens refer in their title has an ampler range of meanings than Bourdieu's "cultural arena"; it includes not only the contemporary concerns and individuals Callimachus engages in his poetry, but also the way in which Latin poets of the 1st c. BC adapted Callimachus' positions.

The first three chapters of the book are a full review of Callimachus' allusive reactions to other writers and the issues they address. First, there is an individual rival, Plato, whose relevance for Callimachus had so far been substantially unexplored. Then, there is the discussion of Callimachus' interaction with his 'ally' Hipponax in *Iamb* 1, and the stance he takes on the matters that were 'hot' in his day (or at least Callimachus presents them as such). Callimachus' self-positioning here helps define his poetics in much greater detail. Only a few years ago, Callimachus' "rivals" were the "Telchines," supposedly jealous opponents reprimanded by Apollo at the close of the *Hymn to Apollo*, and the writers of monumental epic (or, as Alan Cameron or Ewen Bowie posit, of narrative/catalogic elegy). The varied challenges and differentiations Acosta-Hughes and Stephens now delineate come to form a much broader context than used to be the case.

From Ch. 1 we learn (irrefutably, I think) that Plato was among the intellectual predecessors whom Callimachus challenged most frequently. Callimachus' own position in the quarrel between poetry and philosophy is, understandably, quite different from Plato's. An obvious starting point is Callimachus *HE* 53,

which features Cleombrotus, who commits suicide after reading Plato's *Phaedo* on the topic of the soul's immortality (is he the character of the same name featured in the *Phaedo*?). The connection is so obvious, in fact, that the authors omit to observe that this epigram not only reveals Callimachus' attention to Plato, but also mockingly blames him—a philosopher who had so often decried the danger that readers/spectators might imitate the evil characters they encounter in poetry—for not understanding how dangerous his own philosophical works could be. The authors' next step leads to an original and convincing re-reading of the *Aitia* prologue. Here, Acosta-Hughes and Stephens see Callimachus defend an idea of musicality that may be reacting to Plato's appropriation of *μουσική* for philosophy. It is rooted in fact in an aesthetical appreciation of "lightness" that is diametrically opposed to both Plato's opinions about poetry's educational value and the taste for sublimity displayed by Dionysus in Aristophanes' *Frogs*. A similar dialogue with Plato surfaces in Pollis' banquet in *Aitia* 2, which constitutes a re-writing of the *Symposium* and of sympotic etiquette, as well as a criticism of Plato's ideas about the ideal state and the ideal ruler. Having unveiled the rivalrous role Plato plays in Callimachus' oeuvre, the authors suggest that Hipponax, the "ally" of *Iamb* 1, may have served Callimachus as a model of non-philosophical wisdom to oppose to Plato's "professional" philosophy. Besides, Hipponax agrees to "time-travel" to Alexandria to intervene in the fights among the scholars of the Museum and modify his original topics to fit Callimachus' ideas and his contemporaries' issues. This formerly archaic, now fully "Alexandrianized" poet thus serves as a brilliant illustration that one need not be from the same century as one's great literary predecessors in order to imitate them successfully (*Iamb* 13).

Chap. 2 investigates Callimachus' positioning towards different forms of literary performance and the relevant authors: dramatic genres; lyric meters and sympotic poetry; spoken meters. About dramatic genres, Acosta-Hughes and Stephens insist that Callimachus' epigrams on tragedy, tragic masks, and dramatic competitions—*HE* 26, 57, 58, 59—do not prove that he despised theatrical genres; he may simply be criticizing their excessive weight in education, or conveying his disdain for popular occasions of performance, or his preference for Euripides and the New Music; but I do believe one should not simply dismiss the more generally scornful tone that is prevalent in these epigrams, which may have something to say about Callimachus' negative views of the theater-genres (it seems a point of agreement with Plato, though with totally different motivations that confirm the most substantial difference: Callimachus would simply hate the

mob audiences of the theaters and their unruly reactions that conditioned the correct aesthetic appreciation of the poets, whereas Plato appears to care about the way these large audiences could be ethically affected by poets). Extremely interesting is the suggestion that the etymology of ῥαψῳδός, discussed in the fifth aition of *Aetia* 1 as derived from ῥάβδος, is meant to suggest that Callimachus' role in the composition of the *Aitia* resembles that of the ῥαψῳδοί stitching together epic tales; Callimachus would then be pursuing his own "continuous" διηγετικὸν ἄεσμα, albeit one quite distinct from the suggestions of the Telchines.

Ch. 3 focuses on the way Callimachus draws lines of continuity between continental Greece on the one hand, and Alexandria or the Ptolemaic kingdom on the other. He thereby "ennobles" recent geo-political developments and (re-) constructs his own poetic landscapes in tune with the encomiastic "Ptolemaic" geography that has in recent years been made more familiar by texts like the New Posidippus. For example, Callimachus moves the newborn Zeus to Crete (after his birth in Arcadia) in *HZeus* and emphasizes that Ptolemy was born at Cos in *HDelos*. Callimachus thereby opts for spaces that are located halfway between the Macedonian "homeland" and Egypt. Similarly, he describes Thera as the motherland of Cyrene in *HApollo*, with Thera being between Sparta and Libya. And two of Callimachus' lost works, *Arrival of Io* and *Foundation of Argos*, probably connected the Macedonian kings to Argos, via the city's Egyptian founder, Danaus. Above all, the *Aitia* are brimming with stories that place Alexandria-related mythological characters or landmarks on the map of Greek mythology and lore (the relevant pages are supported by a final "Appendix" on the stories' arrangements within the *Aitia*, which is useful not only to newcomers to Hellenistic literature). Finally, the *Hecale* includes a radical Callimachean appropriation of a most prominent character of Athenian myth and drama (Theseus), inasmuch as the focus of the narrative is the humble life of the old lady Hecale, rather than the deeds of Theseus.

Ch. 4 is an excellent addition to Richard Hunter's *The Shadow of Callimachus* (2006), as it offers a thorough study (not exhaustive, of course) of the way Latin poets of the 1st c. BC—mainly the Neoterics, Catullus, Virgil, Propertius, and Ovid—re-contextualize the Callimachean model to have it fit their own cultural agendas. For example, they erase the Egyptian connections that Callimachus had encomiastically pursued, and they often replace them with more familiar Greek images. They also adjust their new texts to specifically Roman occasions. Acosta-Hughes and Stephens' emphasis on the female voice of Sappho as added or mag-

nified in Catullus' translation of Callimachus' "Lock of Berenice" is especially thought-provoking.

This book discusses anew or re-discusses an awesome number of understudied texts of Callimachus, and the discussions are thoughtful, well-informed, well-written, and substantially accurate—the zeugma identifying the four-syllable past and passive verbal forms *expolitum* and ποτέπλασθε (aorist) as both “participles” (224) is the biggest lapsus I could find. I am sure that it will have a long shelf-life, and I hope it will inspire similarly holistic research on Theocritus. Of course, Richard Hunter' pioneering *Theocritus and the Archaeology of Greek Poetry* (1996) has covered already much of the field, but one would in particular hope to see a study of Theocritus' engagement with Plato. Theocr. 14, after all, is just another miniature *Symposium* mainly about love, though it chooses not to eulogize an idealized educative love in the Platonic mode. Instead, it investigates how to cope with unfulfilled love in everyday life; as such, it is in tune with the presentation of love as despair that is ubiquitous in the Theocritean corpus, and the effects of “realism” regularly pursued in the bucolic poems.

MARCO FANTUZZI

Columbia University, mf2481@columbia.edu