BOOK REVIEW

Callimachus: The Hymns. Edited by SUSAN A. STEPHENS. Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2015. Pp. xx + 324. Paper, $18.99. ISBN 978-0-19-978304-5.

Apart from his epigrams, Callimachus' six hymns are the only works of this prolific author to have reached us almost perfectly intact. They were a collected edition even in antiquity, perhaps even compiled by Callimachus himself. And yet, while much excellent work has considered individual hymns, as a collection they have lacked a comprehensive, up-to-date commentary, which would allow students and scholars to easily approach them together. Stephens' commentary fills this gap, providing text, translation, and commentary for all six hymns in a very reasonably priced volume.

Stephens' substantial introduction provides background on the intellectual and political atmosphere in which Callimachus was writing, focusing on (among other things) Callimachus' life and works, his relationship with contemporary poets, and the hymns' ties to the Ptolemies. The introduction also contains an exceptionally clear and accessible explanation of Callimachean hexameter and equally helpful charts of the Epic-Ionic and Doric forms. Other highlights include a refreshingly unintimidating overview of the manuscript tradition and a complete list of papyri containing the hymns (including papyri not in Pfeiffer's 1953 edition,[1] still the standard text).

The volume contains several maps illustrating important places and routes journeyed in the hymns. Although more detail would be helpful, they still aid in visualizing the hymns' complex geography. There are also three illustrations: the hieroglyph for "King of Upper and Lower Egypt" from the Rosetta stone, which expands our understanding of the bee imagery in the *Hymn to Zeus*; a statue of Apollo from Cyrene, whose iconography echoes the description of the god in the *Hymn to Apollo*; and a Trajanic coin from Alexandria depicting a chariot carrying a *kalathos* basket, a scene similar to the cultic activity depicted in the *Hymn to Demeter*. Unfortunately, the quality of the image of the Apollo statue is poor, its

[1] Pfeiffer, R. 1953. *Callimachus.* Vol. 2. Oxford.

size is small, and the angle hides the god's bow—a key element of his accoutrement.

Preceding each individual hymn's text, translation, and commentary is a four-part introduction: a general introduction, "The Deity and His or Her Relevant Cults," "Sources and Intertexts," and "The Ptolemaic Connections." The text does not widely diverge from Pfeiffer's. Stephens includes more Doric forms in the two Doric hymns (the *Hymn to Athena* and the *Hymn to Demeter),* but fewer than Bulloch's 1985 and Hopkinson's 1984 commentaries.[2] The translations fluctuate from the extremely literal to the fairly loose. In either vein, at times they undermine Stephens' stated purpose: clarity and expressing her understanding of the text. For instance, there are some odd choices in rendering tense; an expressed wish is pointed out in the commentary, but reads more like a command;[3] some choices in construing ambiguous language are not explained in the commentary,[4] etc.

Due to space constraints, the commentary is less detailed than earlier commentaries on individual hymns. It contains more information, however, than the commentaries on the *Hymn to Zeus* and the *Hymn to Athena* in Hopkinson's *Hellenistic Anthology* or the Bryn Mawr commentary, which contains four of the six hymns.[5] Concise notes guide the reader through questions of interpretation, thematic or verbal connections among the hymns, textual problems, and historical and cultural context. At times the notes seem pointed to an undergraduate audience, defining vocabulary easily found in LSJ and explaining fairly straightforward grammatical constructions. At other times, they seem geared to scholars already steeped in other Hellenistic poetry and scholarship, who will not be thrown by references to passages and ideas in Callimachus' other poetry as well as Stephens' own earlier work. The commentary is at its best when explaining unique or unusual forms and variants, giving background on geographical locations and cult, and paying special attention to parallels in tragedy and lyric (as

[2] Bulloch, A.W. 1985. *Callimachus. The Fifth Hymn.* Cambridge; Hopkinson, N. 1984. *Callimachus. Hymn to Demeter.* Cambridge.

[3] *Hymn to Apollo* 12–13.

[4] e.g., *Hymn to Artemis* 249: τοῦ δ᾽ οὔτι θεώτερον ὄψεται ἠώς. "… and dawn saw nothing more divine than this" (121). Other translators interpret ὄψεται as a future indicative, e.g, "dawn will never look up a godlier … one" (F. Nisetich. *The Poems of Callimachus.* Oxford, 2001)

[5] N. Hopkinson. *A Hellenistic Anthology.* Cambridge, 1988; R. Schmiel. *Callimachus' Hymns I, II, V, VI.* Bryn Mawr Commentaries, 1984.

opposed to the already well documented Homeric intertexts, which still receive their due).

Beyond the benefit of containing all six hymns, this volume provides the first English-language commentary on the *Hymn to Artemis*. Moreover, Stephens' attention to the Ptolemaic contexts of the hymns is a valuable addition to earlier commentaries, especially in the cases of the *Hymn to Zeus* and the *Hymn to Delos*. In the note on line 170 of the *Hymn to Delos*, for instance, Stephens points out that not only does Ptolemy II's likeness to his father mirror Hesiodic ideals, but it also resonates with Egyptian tradition, in which "each pharaoh could be imagined as a reincarnation of his father."

As Stephens admits, the volume relies heavily on earlier commentaries on individual hymns. While this is fairly natural and some of these volumes continue to be invaluable, their influence occasionally leads to cryptic notes. For example, at line 16 in the *Hymn to Athena*, a hymn unique for its absence from papyri, Stephens justifies the form χρίματα (in place of the more usual χρίσματα), noting, "the reading is confirmed by the papyrus." Consulting the relevant note in Bulloch's 1985 commentary, however, reveals that it is a papyrus of the *Iamboi* that in fact provides the argument for the reading.

I would recommend this book to classicists who are interested in the *Hymns* and want to know more about them. Graduate students studying for their exams are another natural audience. It certainly is a book that I will keep close at hand.

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