

**Stephens, S. A.**

*Callimachus: the Hymns*. Oxford/New York, Oxford University Press, 2015. xiv, 324 pp. Pr. £19.49 (pb). ISBN 9780199783045.

This new Callimachean commentary has a modest goal: "to provide readers with a convenient and accessible edition of all six of Callimachus' hymns in one volume, accompanied by notes sufficient for ease of reading" (p. vii). S(tephens) has in fact produced a very helpful edition which more than fulfils this ambition and will be of much use to readers of Callimachus' hymns, especially those tackling his work for the first time. Alongside considerable linguistic help, S. offers concise yet lively interpretations of these poems, succinctly distilling the fruits of past scholarship while also adding new interpretations of her own. Limitations of space mean that she has had to be selective in the material covered, so specialists in the field will treat this volume as a supplement to, not replacement of, the older, more extensive editions of individual hymns. Nevertheless, S. has packed a lot into this commentary, which should be welcomed for rendering Callimachus more accessible to a wider audience.

The format of the volume is what one would expect of a commentary: after preliminary material (including eight maps) comes a forty-four-page introduction; each hymn then follows with its own introduction, text, translation and commentary; the book concludes with a bibliography of works cited and three indexes (of 'Subjects', 'Selected Greek Words', and 'Passages Discussed').

The introduction offers a wide-ranging and informative overview of Callimachus and his context, highlighting many of the themes that will recur throughout the commentary, including the nature of the hymnic genre, the poetry's connection with the Ptolemies, and issues of dating, language and style. The section on 'Dating the Hymns' (pp.16-22) provides an early example of S.'s skilful combination of literary and historical approaches, and readers will benefit from her clear explication of metrical rules (pp.30-32) and lists of relevant manuscripts and papyri (pp.38-46). Occasionally, issues are presented too schematically: the hymns' strongly Homeric diction is explained as a result of Homer's centrality in the education system (p.22), with no mention of generic or metrical considerations. But the introduction is largely a model of breadth, clarity and concision. Similarly, the miniature introductions to every hymn are effective overviews of each poem's key themes and topics.

The text of the hymns printed here is, as S. herself acknowledges, "deliberately conservative" (p.46) and differs little from Pfeiffer's edition. Nevertheless, the text is accompanied by a selective apparatus and S. addresses the thornier textual cruxes in the commentary with remarkable brevity and precision. There is an occasional lack of consistency between the two (e.g. her preferred solution at *hDelos* 41 (Schneider's ἀπὲξ Ἀνθαο/Ἀνθοιο) does not even appear in the apparatus), but the majority of her textual choices and discussions are sensible and convincing. Especially laudable are her efforts to explain metrical anomalies as deliberate literary moves before resorting to emendation (e.g. p.192 on *hDelos* 71, the double caesura conveying the aged Peneius' halting steps; p.204 on *hDelos* 151-52, signalling a Homeric intertext; p.258 on *hAth* 93-5, with its expressive word order).

The translations that accompany each hymn "aim for clarity and are intended to provide the reader with [S.'s] understanding of the text" (p.vii). They are, on the whole, clear and accurate, despite moments of inaccuracy or omission: the translation of *hAth* 38-9 on p.243, for example, seems to leave δᾶμον ἐτοιμάζοντα untranslated ("when he perceived death being plotted for him", rather than "when he perceived that the people were preparing planned death for him"). One might also wonder whether πούλυμέδμνε should have been translated the same in both *hDem* 2 and 119 to highlight the ritualised repetition ("the provider of much corn," p.273; "the provider of many bushels of grain", p.275: the rare verbatim repetition of an entire line passes unmentioned in the commentary),

and non-Americans might find “gimme” too colloquial a translation of the childish δός (μοι) (*hArt*, p. 117). But such quibbles are minor and rare, and the translations are generally a very reliable guide to the Greek.

The majority of the book is made up of the lemmatic commentary on each hymn, which assists both the reading and interpretation of the poems. One of the most common notes is a gloss on an individual word, noting its meaning and other occurrences before and after Callimachus. Some might object that much of this information is only a LSJ or TLG search away, and indeed, such pedagogical assistance sometimes comes at the expense of more probing analysis of the poetry, but the accumulation of such notes does highlight the vivacity and originality of Callimachus' language: newcomers to his poetry will gain a better appreciation of the verve with which he manipulates his literary heritage, combining different generic and dialectal forms alongside an injection of novel coinages and Homeric *hapax legomena*, often in a single line (e.g. the combination of epic, lyric and Doric elements alongside a Hesiodic *hapax legomenon* in *hArt* 31, p.126).

Beyond such glosses, S. situates the hymns within their wider literary, political and religious contexts. Sources and intertexts feature regularly throughout, ranging across time and genres, from both verse and prose. Those familiar with S.'s work will be unsurprised to find a number of references to Plato (*cf. Callimachus in Context* 2012, Ch.1): an especially nice example is Callimachus' allusion to Plato's 'misreading' of *Od.* 1.351-352 at *hArt* 1 (p.122). Verbal and thematic parallels with Hellenistic contemporaries are often noted, although S.'s approach to these is somewhat inconsistent. In the introduction, she expresses sensible caution about issues of priority and direction of influence (p.8), but such caution is sometimes thrown to the wind in individual notes (e.g. pp.136 on *hArt* 108, 137 on *hArt* 114). Whatever parallels she cites, however, S. is usually very good at extracting their “significant intertextual resonance” (p.25); this is especially the case with Callimachus' appropriation of Homeric *hapax legomena*, the use of which is not merely a display of scholarly erudition, but also draws much from the original Homeric context (e.g. pp.144-45 on *hArt* 178, 256 on *hAth* 75). Occasionally, however, more could have been said on specific parallels: on *hArt* 21, for example, we are simply told that ὀξείησιν ὑπ' ᾠδίνεσσι of Leto's birthpangs “may recall *Il.* 11.268” (p.125). It is surely worth noting that the Homeric phrase refers to the pain Agamemnon suffers from a battle wound, compared in a simile to the pangs of childbirth (*Il.* 11.269-272); Callimachus has transformed Homer's simile into reality.

S is well-attuned to the potential metapoetic significance of Callimachus' language. Besides familiar points, such as the description of Delos as ‘slender’, ἀραιή (*hDelos* 191, p.211), she notes that Artemis' request for a small bow may be a programmatic inversion of the usual Homeric μέγα τόξον (p.123 on *hArt* 9); that Hera's braying in *hDelos* aligns her with the ass-like Telchines of the *Aetia* Prologue (p.189-90 on *hDelos* 56); and that Leto's avoidance of trodden paths parallels the Prologue's Apolline poetics (*Aet.* fr.1.25-28 Pf., p.192 on *hDelos* 74). She is also keenly aware of structure on both a macro- and micro- level. The introduction examines the hymns as a “carefully arranged collection at both formal and thematic levels” (‘The Hymns as a Collection’, pp.12-14) and the commentary frequently notes thematic and verbal cross-references between the poems. The gradual accumulation of evidence offers much ammunition to those who wish to see the hymns as a carefully-constructed ‘Poetry Book’. On a smaller scale, she also illuminates the structure of individual hymns (especially the strong ring composition in *hAp* – the programmatic epilogue is no detachable appendix) and even individual sentences. Indeed, she often highlights the literary potential of word order to create so-called ‘word pictures’ (p.28). Such close reading also produces many fine notes on etymological puns, geographical doublets and metrical effects (especially spondeiazons). One area which could perhaps have received more attention, however, is the hymns' rich *Nachleben*, especially in Latin poetry.

Despite this strong emphasis on the literary, S.'s Callimachus is no hermit sealed in the ivory tower: she notes many potential links to the Ptolemies' wider cultural and historical context, as well as to the religious and cultic realities of the Hellenistic world. *HAp*'s connections with Cyrene are compellingly detailed (p.74), and the suggestion of an Alexandrian setting for *hDem* is attractive (pp.264-7). Cases of historical allegory and allusion may occasionally be pushed too far: e.g. does *hAp* 85 really hint at the fortification of Zoster during the Chremonidean war (p.95), or does Berenice I really stand behind Leto (pp.218-9 on *hDelos* 240)? But many of the Ptolemaic connections are very plausible. The story of Erysichthon in *hDem*, for example, is considered a "mirror held up to those in power that reflects their own egregious behavior" (p.264), an attractive suggestion that perhaps deserved further exploration. Readers familiar with S.'s work will also be unsurprised to find numerous cross-references to Egyptian myth and ideology; after a brief comment in the introduction (p.14), however, such connections largely receive cursory mention, with references to further discussion in her 2003 monograph (*Seeing Double: Intercultural Poetics in Ptolemaic Alexandria*). I wonder whether this was a missed opportunity to re-state her case and respond to critics of her original thesis (e.g. Goldhill, *Gnomon* 77 (2005), 99-104).

Despite the general excellence of the volume, it could have benefitted from further proofreading to avoid a number of small typographical errors: e.g. read "*hArt* 222-24" for "*hArt* 222-34" (p.31); "and a fragment" for "a and fragment" (p.199 on *hDelos* 115); "construing" for "contruing" (p.201 on *hDelos* 128); "Bing 1988: 129n66" for "129n64" (p.208 on *hDelos* 171-89) and "129-31 (especially n67)" for "129-31 (especially n46)" (p.209 on *hDelos* 177a-b). Somewhat more serious are cases of mistaken identity: "Atalanta", not "Artemis", slew the Centaurs Hylaeus and Rhoecus (p.150 on *hArt* 222); and "Thetis", not "Athena", is the addressee of Zeus at *Il.* 1.524-6 (p.261 on *hAth* 131). Alongside a number of minor formatting problems, the large indentation of the pentameters in the elegiac fifth hymn is unattractive to the eye. In spite of these issues of presentation, however, S.'s edition is a valuable resource and would work especially well as part of an (under)graduate course on hexameter poetry, hymns or Hellenistic literature more generally.

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