

Benjamin Acosta-Hughes, Luigi Lehnus, Susan Stephens (eds.), *Brill's Companion to Callimachus*, Leiden: Brill, 2011. Xviii + 708 pp. ISBN 13: 978-90-04-15673-9.

'Nay, if you come to that, Sir, have not the wisest men in all ages, not excepting Solomon himself,—have they not had their Hobby-Horses?'

Laurence Sterne, *Tristram Shandy*, Chapter 1.VII.

This is not a handbook. As the editors explain in the introduction, they have not set out to cover the topics that might have been expected in a one-volume Companion to Callimachus, or at least, they do not cover them in a conventional way, author by author or genre by genre. Instead, the collection is organised into five sections — 'The Material Author', 'Social Contexts', 'Sources and Models', 'Personae', and 'Callimachus' Afterlife'. An *Index Rerum* which has been considerably designed, and does not dismay the reader with line upon line of undifferentiated numbers, directs us, instead, towards discussions (for example) of performance, or Homer, or hymns and the hymnic genre as they are distributed across the structure adopted here. So far so good. For me, the question about this volume is whether the contributors, instead of being marshalled into starting boxes and let loose upon a pre-set track, have sometimes been allowed to gallop away on their respective hobby-horses.

The titles of the sections are more or less self-explanatory. Section One concerns papyri and the contexts in which Callimachean fragments are quoted (though Peter Parson's essay, essentially on socio-linguistic context, belongs more naturally in Section Two). Section Two, 'Social Contexts', concentrates on the political background against which Callimachus wrote his poetry about kings and queens and the religious culture in which he wrote his hymns. Section Three eschews big names like Homer, Hesiod, and Pindar, in favour of the avant-garde (or what was avant-garde in the previous century and a half) or popular (fables, proverbs). There is also a chapter on the crucial question of Callimachus' relationship to contemporary literary criticism. Insofar as Homer and Co. are treated in this section, it is in an essay on Callimachus' relationship with the Muses — which is complemented by a piece on textual inspiration in the form of the Atthidographers. Section Four is the most problematic, with puzzling pieces by Cozzoli and Payne (below) as well as a taxonomically unclear piece by Yannick Durbec, 'Individual Figures in Callimachus', on character types (not narrative voice) in Callimachus' *oeuvre* which ranks Acontius and Cydippe in the 'archaic and classical periods' and treats Leodamas (fr. 115 Pf.), who has a *terminus ante quem* of the eighth century, as a contemporary figure.

Be that as it may, the aim is above all to reflect 'the growing trend toward reading [Callimachus'] poetry within its political, social, and art-historical contexts' (Introduction, p. 8), and contexts are high up the agenda, not only in Section Two, but also in Section One (the contexts in which the book fragments are embedded and in which the *diēgēsis* was found; the literary and socio-linguistic contexts in which Callimachus made his particular dialectal choices), as well as in Section Five with its diachronic perspective. In a volume so open to contextual readings, Alan Cameron's out-of-the-ivory-tower approach¹ is treated generally sympathetically; indeed, the general level of engagement with this hugely important work, seventeen years after it was written, is a welcome change from the nonplussed silence with which it has often been greeted. (Alessandro Barchiesi, 'Roman Callimachus', for one, is receptive, though cautious about Cameron's marginalisation of historical epic, and points out reasonably enough that what was on

¹ Alan Cameron, *Callimachus and His Critics* (Princeton, 1995).

the agenda for Callimachus need not also have been on the agenda for the Roman reinterpreters of his programmatic statements.) And although, as the editors say, there is no separate section on performance, Cameron's views seem to have resulted in a small drift in favour of the performability of Callimachus' hymns (Weber, 'Poet and Court'; Petrovic, 'Callimachus and Contemporary Religion'). Challenges to the *status quo* are always refreshing.

Sometimes, though, context swamps the topic it is meant to illumine. Peter Parsons, 'Callimachus and His *Koinai*' sets out to sketch Callimachus' 'linguistic ambience', 'to illustrate, above all from papyri, how Callimachus' contemporaries in Ptolemaic Egypt may have reacted to his work, to the use that he made of the poetic *koine* that they inherited and the actual *koine* that they spoke' (pp. 135, 152), but alongside much that is genuinely enlightening (best of all on the considerations that could affect dialect choice, and on its effects), other contextual material illuminates Callimachus only tangentially (a sub-section with the promising heading '*Poetic Koine?*' surveys various kinds of glossary, but the gains for Callimachus are only (i) to suggest parallels with some of Callimachus' glossographic works, (ii) to suggest that Callimachus himself was susceptible to glossographic treatment) or bears less specifically on him than it does on Graeco-Egyptian culture more generally (e.g. a survey of the Zeno archive, material familiar from elsewhere). The same applies to other chapters. Gregor Weber's 'Poet and Court', a historian's piece about the personages and culture of the royal court, might equally well have served as context for all (or none) of Posidippus, Apollonius, or Theocritus; insofar as there are literary questions here, they concern the place of poetry in court life during the time of Callimachus, rather than the place of the court in the poetry of Callimachus. The essays by Ivana Petrovic and Lucia Prauscello, respectively on the relevance to Callimachus' *Hymns* of contemporary sacred laws and regulations, inscribed oracular responses and *programmata*, and on the continued resonances in Callimachus' works of the past centuries' controversies surrounding the New Music, necessitate a fair amount of context-setting (in the first) and literary history (in the second) in order to support their contentions, but in neither case am I persuaded that the security of the thesis justified the expenditure of space in a volume which arouses hopes of a less whimsical treatment of Callimachus.

Too much repetition between chapters is avoided. Surveys of the contents of the *Aitia* are offered in the essays of Luigi Lehnus, 'Callimachus Rediscovered in Papyri', and Giulio Massimilla, 'The *Aitia* through Papyri', and discussions of the linkages between different *aitia* in Massimilla and Annette Harder, 'Callimachus as Fragment'; citations in grammarians are discussed in Harder and Ivana Pontani, 'Callimachus Cited'; Choniates, last-known reader of a complete text of Callimachus, in Pontani and Claudio De Stefani and Enrico Magnelli, 'Callimachus and Later Greek Poetry' (pp. 564–5). The editors say, in their introduction, that they have included 'conflicting interpretative positions'. Fine, since pluralism is healthy, though in practice open conflict is minimised. The bicultural approach associated with Susan Stephens, Daniel Selden et al. — arguing for 'double vision', whereby one and the same text can be meaningfully interpreted by different cultural constituencies — does not receive separate treatment in the volume, in keeping with editorial policy not to replicate recent scholarship (although the cover shows the image of a culturally amphibious black granite statue of a Ptolemaic queen). But Weber is implicitly agnostic about the extent to which Egyptians, who were 'clearly oriented toward the culture that was dominant politically', 'contributed any fundamentally different perspectives to the poets who may have absorbed their influence' (p. 240). Markus Asper's essay, 'Dimensions of Power', is also on a potential collision-course with Stephens' view, when he argues for the creation of a common pan-Hellenic background for the Greeks overseas, both spatially in the range of places named in Callimachus' poetry and temporally in the range of references, mythological and historical, over a common past. His focus is on Greeks and Greekness, and it is with a certain amount of scepticism that one finds, on the penultimate page, an honourable mention of the Stephens consortium and an assurance that 'doubtless Hellenistic

court poets integrated Egyptian elements of Pharaonic ideology into their praise of contemporary kings' (p. 176). Nevertheless, the two approaches are born of contemporary concerns, Stephens et al. responding to the experience of living in a multicultural environment, Asper to that of emigration and the desire to forge a new identity through selective memories of the Old Country.

So this is a Callimachus for the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, in some ways a North American Callimachus. In other ways it is an Italian one, for Italian scholarship and culture is very prominent in this volume. An essay by Emanuele Lelli on 'Proverbs and Popular Sayings in Callimachus' draws constant parallels with modern Italian usage. Another, by Mario Citroni on '*Arte Allusiva*', or the modern study of allusion in ancient texts, takes its point of departure from the works of Giorgio Pasquali and traces their reception in Italy and their development, not exclusively by Italian scholars, but with especial concentration on them. (To be sure, the study of allusion, born in the Latin reception of Greek poetry, was naturally at home in Italy, but Citroni's article specifically shies away from the larger European context of the study of allusion: cf. p. 578.) And the weakest piece in the collection, by Adele-Teresa Cozzoli on 'The Poet as a Child', takes the idea as a slender peg on which to hang a ponderous and essentially conservative piece on Callimachus' poetics which, in its beetle-browed ruminations on intellectual history, name-drops poets and theorists such as Giovanni Pascoli, Angelo Conti, Cavalcanti and Calvino (not to mention Bruno Snell's *Discovery of the Mind*). Indeed, the idea of poet-as-child is the hobby-horse ridden by more than one contributor to this volume, with curious results in both cases. The other (another exercise in name-dropping), 'Iambic Theatre' by Mark Payne, seemed to go something like this. Freudian anxieties about paternity and Bloomian anxieties of influence are to be dethroned (Callimachus can perfectly well stage his 'fathers' without getting all Oedipal about them); what better explicates him is a Lacanian approach according to which he is saddled with an over-ambitious mother in the form of tragedy, inimical to his child-like qualities of precocity, imagination, and self-indulgence in its rigorist demands for 'reconciliation with reality'. (This was frankly bewildering: according to the metaphor, how does Tragedy constitute a female lineage, and according to literary history, how do we know that Hellenistic tragedy represented the kind of constraint Payne has in mind? What about Euripidean tragi-comedy? Why couldn't a precocious imaginative child manage that?)

I did learn much from this volume — even if I was sometimes surprised to find myself learning it in this particular context. For special praise I would single out Giovanni Benedetto, 'Callimachus and the Atthidographers', which preserves a nice balance on the background to the ancient genre and modern scholarship on it, and on its use in the *Hecale* and *Aitia*. In an impressive distillation of a vast subject, Alessandro Barchiesi provides food for thought on Callimachus' uptake in Roman poets and on the different styles and strategies of Callimachean appropriation in Catullus, Propertius, Virgil, Ovid, and Horace. And the piece by De Stefani and Magnelli on the reception of Callimachus in later Greek poetry, necessarily summary despite being half as long again as most of the other pieces in the collection, is a welcome contribution to a huge and under-researched project. Even within its restricted compass, the authors manage to illustrate something of the multiplicity of approaches which have been taken towards Callimachus, as well as to observe several undetected echoes in Gregory of Nazianzus and Nonnus (none of them the sort of observations that could have been made mechanistically with the TLG).

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