

ANDREW FAULKNER, ATHANASSIOS VERGADOS AND ANDREAS SCHWAB (edd.), *Reception of the Homeric Hymns*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2016, xiv+409 pp., \$150.00, ISBN 978-0-19-872878-8.

Andrew Faulkner has acquired great merits for the contemporary study of the Homeric Hymns. After his rich commentary on 'Aphrodite' (2008) and an edited collection on the interpretation of the Hymns (2011, both OUP), he now offers a volume of newly commissioned essays on the reception of the Hymns. The themes and topics suggest an attractive variety of points of view: chronologically they range from the Roman Imperial period to the early XIX century, with the exception of Jenny Clay's important discussion of the Hymns in connection with Greek vase painting. In cooperation with Athanassios Vergados and Andreas Schwab, the three of them operating in Heidelberg between 2012 and 2014, Faulkner has once again promoted interest in those texts, individually and as corpus, by inviting contributions primarily but not exclusively on the literary aspect. Reasonably enough, some of the questions foregrounded in the 2011 collection of interpretive essays – issues of genre, poetics, relationship to other kinds of hymns and cult practice, performance, transition from aural culture to textual collection – are not central to this new project: the previous volume had stated the aim of covering the period from the genesis of the oldest hymns to, roughly, the III century BCE in Hellenic tradition. In addition, a new Faulkner project (with O. Hodkinson, Brill 2015) has quite recently staked another approach to the Hymns, based on narratology and genre, and extending from early Greek culture to Neoplatonic and Orphic texts, not excluding epigraphically attested songs.

The three editors do a good job in contextualizing the papers, and their Introduction is unusually rich and detailed: it includes a reassessment of the presence of the Hymns in Hellenistic poetry, with reference to recent discussions. Clay's paper has interesting links with her important work on the Hesiodic corpus and its representation of the life and power of the Olympic gods. This is followed by a compact and interrelated panel of close readings dedicated to major Augustan poets: Clauss on the Homeric Hymn to Hermes in Virgil and others (not a frequently studied topic up to now), in a discussion that rightly draws attention to the concomitant influence of Apollonius and Callimachus; Stephen Harrison on Horace; John Miller and Jason Nethercut on the Hymns in Ovidian epic; Alison Keith on the importance of the Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite in Augustan texts, in an era when the new and sole ruler of Rome is represented as a descendant of Aeneas and Venus.

A cluster of papers on Greek texts produced in Imperial and Late Antique culture follows, with a number of unusual and rarely explored aspects: the Hymns emerge as important presences in Lucian's divine dialogues (P. Strolonga), more occasional in Aelius Aristides (A. Vergados), and in the allegorical and mythographical tradition (J.B. Torres); the Hymn to Ares is compared to the Hymns of Proclus in the context of Neoplatonic reevaluation of Homer (R. van den Berg); some traces can be recuperated in Christian and pagan poetry of Late Antiquity (G. Agosti), in a study that refreshingly includes both canonical authors like Nonnos and also outliers such as the painted epigram from the Dakhleh oasis edited in 2008 by Raffaella Cribiore and others, or the tantalizing 'Strasbourg Cosmogony', linking the origins of Hermopolis Magna to the origins of the universe.

The brief section IV offers two papers on the Byzantine tradition, with soundings both on the history of the text and scholarship (Ch. Simelidis) and on XII century praise poetry (A. Faulkner). The modern section spans some very exciting moments of rediscovery and re-appropriation: Humanistic literature and scholarship of the XV century (O. Thomas), the amazing intertextualist Poliziano (M. Elisabeth Schwab), English poets between late XVIII and early XIX century (N. Richardson, the doyen of Homeric Hymns reappraisal). The book ends with one of the most surprising convergences (A. Schwab, 'The Homeric Hymn to Demeter in Romantic Heidelberg'): the work of J.H. Voss on the Homeric Hymn to Demeter. After the discovery of the manuscript in Moscow in 1777 (Codex Mosquensis), the Demeter Hymn with its Eleusinian aperçus enters European culture and in particular German research and participates to a heated debate on the scope and methodology of the nascent science of antiquity, with a growing component of 'history of religions and symbols'. At stake is no less than a question on whether early Greek culture is indebted to Oriental mysticism (India, Egypt), and on the possibility of a pre-Homeric stratum of mystery religion; all this while the question on whether there was ever a single unified 'one god' religion still makes its influence felt. The debate involves the likes of Creuzer, Heyne, and Hermann, and Voss is a timely (if defensive and Hellenocentric) participant, producing a Latin translation, a German translation, and a first German commentary on the new Hymn.

This last chapter encourages us to revisit the book as an invitation to research what different communities do with the Hymns. Even if a number of encounters analyzed or chronicled here are just 'pointillisme' or vestigial presences, or happen at a very formal level, and even if this type of collection will unavoidably over-stress the cultural importance of every single encounter or epiphany, the interplay of those essays urges us to formulate questions that will be food for thought in the future: the relationship of divine images and narrative myth, the interplay of narrative and ritual, the interaction of early Greek texts with postclassical belief systems, the relationship between

praise for the gods and praise for political power, the use of the Hymns as sources for new approaches to the study of religion and to the definition of mythology as a field.

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