

REVIEWS  
RESEÑAS



ATHANASSIOS VERGADOS, *The Homeric Hymn to Hermes: Introduction, Text and Commentary*. Berlin / Boston, De Gruyter, 2012, 717 pp., ISBN 978-3-11025969-8.

The *Editio Princeps* of the *Homeric Hymns* was published in 1488 with Homeric epics by Chalcondyles. Since then, new editions have always included the hymns with Homeric epics. Around 1800, the hymns were edited by Ilgen (1796), Matthiae (1805) and Hermann (1806). In these editions, the *Homeric Hymns* appeared for the first time without the Homeric epics. Afterwards, many editors published editions of the whole *Homeric Hymns*. In 1974, Richardson released *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* on its own, which was the first time a full commentary for only one hymn was produced. In 2008, Faulkner, one of Richardson's students, created a new edition of the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* with a commentary based on his Oxford Ph.D. dissertation. In 2012, Vergados published an edition of the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* and Olson published the *Hymn to Aphrodite*. Since 2000, many scholars have paid attention to *Homeric Hymns*. West produced a new edition of Loeb Classical Library Series in 2003 and Richardson's Cambridge edition of three hymns (to Apollo, Hermes and Aphrodite) was released in 2010. The prefaces of Vergados's edition and that of Richardson (2010) both indicate that many young scholars have worked on the hymns as their doctoral theses. It is clear that attention to the hymns has peaked recently.

Vergados's edition is based on his doctoral dissertation at the University of Virginia written under the guidance of J. S. Clay; Since he got a Ph.D. in 2007, he has continued to improve his dissertation. At the same time, he has written many articles for top journals. Surprisingly, his research interest includes not only *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* but other topics as well<sup>1</sup>.

This volume consists of an introduction; a text, including an *apparatus criticus*; a lengthy commentary; a bibliography; illustrations, including maps of Hermes's journeys and photos of vase paintings and other ancient artworks; and indices (*index rerum* and *index locorum*).

The introduction includes a summary of the hymn; investigations of major hymn topics (i.e. music and humour); relations to archaic literature (especially to Homer, Hesiod and the *Homeric Hymns*) and to other literature; the date and place of composition; and an introduction of extant manuscripts. He

<sup>1</sup> "P.Mich.Inv. 1715: Letter from Simades to Pynas." *Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists* 46, 2009, 59-68, "Penelope's Fat Hand Reconsidered (*Odyssey* 21.6)." *Wiener Studien* 122, 2009, 7-20, "Corinna's Poetic Mountains (PMG 654)." *Classical Philology* 107, 2012, 101-18.

argues that the hymn was composed in the second half of sixth century in an unknown location. His argument for the date includes a detailed discussion about previous research. Former scholars dated the hymn based on linguistic features; the number of strings on the lyre, which Hermes made in the hymn; or social affairs described by the poet of the hymn. Vergados points out none of the criteria of former scholars are without problems. He dates the hymn based on archaeological materials: for example, the sanctuary of Poseidon Onchestos, which existed from the late sixth century, is emphatically described at vv. 186–7. Moreover, at v. 512, where Hermes invented the syrinx, Vergados argues that Hermes was depicted with it during the sixth century, while from ca. 500 BC onwards we see his son Pan represented with the instrument. We may say that Vergados adopted a moderate dating if we compare his dating with Richardson’s “sixth-century date”<sup>2</sup> and Janko’s argument that “a date for the poem towards the close of the sixth century fits the evidence best.”<sup>3</sup> Concerning whether the hymn was composed orally or not, he argues that the hymn belonged to a grey area between oral and literate composition. Although it was composed with the aid of memorized verse (possibly worked out in writing beforehand), it was performed orally. In the last part of the introduction, he confesses that he did not collate manuscripts and mainly followed Càssola (1975) concerning stemma and *apparatus criticus*. Càssola’s investigation on the manuscripts is trustworthy and not only Vergados but Faulkner (2008) and Richardson (2010) also relied on it.

In his text, the *apparatus criticus* is divided into three sections: the first includes parallel examples from Homer, Hesiod and the *Homeric Hymns*; the second includes those from other works; and the third illustrates information from the manuscripts and the conjectures of other editors. We did not find a new conjecture of Vergados, as he said, “my approach to the constitution of the text is conservative: wherever possible, I attempt to preserve the MSS reading” (p. 157). His text is sometimes different from Càssola’s text, who is the latest editor publishing a full text and commentary of the whole *Homeric Hymns*. Vergados listed the divergences from Càssola’s text in the latter portion of his introduction and discussed them in the commentary. I personally am interested in the places where Vergados’s text is different from West’s text (2003). West is a well-known and distinguished scholar, and he sometimes printed readings that former editors did not print and are based partly on the orthographic rules that he adopted while editing the *Iliad* (Teubner, 1998, 2000). In the preface of the *Iliad*, West explained the orthographic rules in detail. In following cases, Vergados and West

<sup>2</sup> N. Richardson, *Three Homeric Hymns: To Apollo, Hermes, and Aphrodite*. Cambridge 2010, p. 24.

<sup>3</sup> R. Janko, *Homer, Hesiod and the Hymns: Diachronic Development in Epic Diction*, Cambridge 1982, p. 143.

(2003) decided to choose different orthographies: *h.Herm.* 64, 304, 315, etc. ὁ (Vergados) / ò (West), 65 ἄλτο (V.) / ἄλτο (W.), 158 Λητοΐδου (V.) / Λητοΐδου (W.), 159 ἦ σὲ (V.) / ἦ σε (W.), 174 ἦ τοι (V.) / ἦτοι (W.), 174 ἔγωγε (V.) / ἐγώ γε (W.), 188 παρέξ (V.) / πάρεξ (W.), 253 Λητοΐδης (V.) / Λητοΐδης (W.), 309 ὦ πόποι (V.) / ὦ πόποι (W.), 440 ἔσπετο (V.) / ἔσπετο (W.). Also, concerning the movable *v* at the end of a verse, Vergados adds the *v* when the next verse begins with a vowel and omits it when the next verse begins with a consonant. West adds it whenever it can be added<sup>4</sup>. Moreover, concerning an oxytone at the end of a verse, Vergados prints an acute accent before a punctuation mark and a grave accent if there is no punctuation. West, on the other hand, always prints an acute accent<sup>5</sup>. These differences suggest that Vergados did not blindly follow West. Vergados's choice should be respected because such choice should depend on the editor. I do want him to explain why he did not adopt West's forms and orthographic rules. For me, it is regrettable that Vergados hardly commented on West in the cases cited above, neither in his commentary nor in his *apparatus criticus*.

His commentary is very lengthy and includes many topics. First, he argued in detail about humour and music, which are the main topics of the hymn. Although the poet of the hymn used humour in many places, we sometimes fail to see the humour. Vergados attempts to provide for us an understanding of the humour. For example, at vv. 302–3, Apollo who was unable to find the stolen cows through his own skill, claims that he can find them with Hermes's frivolous omens: εὐρήσω καὶ ἔπειτα βοῶν ἴφθιμα κάρηνα | τούτοις οἰωνοῖσι. Vergados states that it is humorous in the phrase “τούτοις οἰωνοῖσι” (with these omens) at v. 303, which is uttered by Apollo (i.e. the oracular god himself). Also, as Vergados points out, there are humorous contrasts between v. 387, where Hermes was called by the terrible and strong nickname Κυλλήνιος Ἀργειφόντης “the Cyllenian, the Slayer of Argus” and v. 388, where the god has his baby clothes. Unfortunately, however, in a few places I do not understand the humour that Vergados suggests. At v. 307, where Hermes called Apollo as Ἐκάεργε, Vergados says, “this form of address is again possibly humorous, since ‘he who works from afar’ is now only too close to Hermes.” This is not interesting to me because Ἐκάεργε is merely a common epithet and the epithet is sometimes used when Apollo spoke with someone in front of him (e.g. *Il.* 7. 34). Concerning music, his argument is so detailed and convincing that I suspect Vergados has significant experience in playing music. His argument about how to construct the lyre (258–9, 266–7, 270) includes many technical terms and is

<sup>4</sup> For the movable *v* at the end of a verse, see M. West, *Homerus: Ilias*. Vol. 1, Stuttgart and Leipzig 1998, XXV.

<sup>5</sup> For the accent of an oxytone at the end of a verse, see M. West, *Aeschylus: Tragoediae*, Stuttgart and Leipzig 1998, XXXI.

very detailed. It is very interesting that we can judge the date of the hymn based on the number of the strings on a lyre (p. 269). He also comments on the plectrum in detail (p. 273) and refers to other artistic elements, such as Statuettes of Centaurus in museums (p. 401).

Of course, he also covers linguistic and literary problems. He comments on special words and phrases (e.g. *hapax*, or rare words and phrases) and also focuses on seemingly common ones. He informs us how the usages of the words and phrases are different from those in Homer and Hesiod. For example, *σμερδαλέον κονάβησε* is found to inspire awe or fear in Homer, but this cannot be the meaning either at v. 54 or v. 420 of the hymn. The common word, *δειρή*, is used only at v. 133 in the context of eating. Vergados focuses on v. 154 *μητέρα δ' οὐκ ἄρ' ἔληθε θεῶν θεός, εἶπέ τε μῦθον* "the god did not pass unseen by the goddess his mother, but she said to him." He says that the subject of the formula *εἶπέ τε μῦθον*, which is common in a speech introduction such as here, is always the same as that of the preceding verb. However, v. 154 is the only one where we have a change of subject. Such arguments could inform readers of the feature of the poet's composition.

He spills much ink on conjectures and treatments of former editors. One important feature of his commentary is his reference to older editions. Vergados referred to not only the editions of the last half of nineteenth century (e.g. Baumeister and Gemoll) but also editions around 1800 (e.g. Ilgen, Matthiae and Herman), which have lengthy commentaries written in Latin. He sometimes discussed their arguments. For example, he accepts *ὠμόρογαζε* which is Ilgen's conjecture at v. 361, and says that Ilgen followed another old scholar, Ernesti. Moreover, although Vergados rejects the deletion of vv. 17–9 by Ilgen, he indicates that the deletion was followed by most editors until Gemoll. Matthiae deleted 294–306 and replaced them with *τὸν δ' Ἐρμῆς μύθοισιν ἀμείβετο κερδαλέοισιν*. Vergados lists the reasons for Matthiae's replacement and denies each reason in detail. Hermann thought that vv. 145–9 presented inconsistencies, which he attributed to interpolation. Vergados explains the reasons for Hermann's treatment, and points out that Baumeister followed Hermann. Then, Vergados lists the reasons why he does not accept Hermann's criticism. Although Vergados often denies conjectures and treatments of old editors, I respect his approach of focusing on them again and sincerely discussing them. He thoroughly refers to previous research concerning the hymn and compiles almost all of the valuable works. I think his edition reaches the summit of a body of research that scholars have been building since Chalcondyles published the *Editio Princeps*, and I believe that previous scholars of this hymn would agree with my opinion.

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