

From Olympus to Cyrene: Homeric Prologues in Callimachus' Second Hymn

Scholarship on Callimachus' *Hymn to Apollo* has generally treated the poem's dynamic opening as a mimetic frame that at some point gives way to a more conventional celebration of Apollo (e.g., Williams 1978, 3, 39; Bing 1993, 187; Depew 1993, 66; Cheshire 2008, 356). There has been some disagreement, however, regarding the precise location of the shift between this frame and the hymn proper. Peter Bing, for example, who provides an excellent summary of attempts to identify this shift (1993, 186-188), concludes that "we cannot find the seam; perhaps we were never meant to" (188). The present paper, however, proposes that by reworking a pair of lines from the longer *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* (3.19, 207), Callimachus does in fact mark such a seam. Furthermore, his allusive reworking recommends that his own opening (1-31) be read in light of the Delian and Pythian prologues of the Homeric hymn (1-18, 179-206).

After declaring that Apollo will honor the chorus of youths (28-29), the speaker of Callimachus' hymn promises that this same chorus will for its part continue to celebrate the god for more than a single day (30) – an easy task, the narrator asserts, since Apollo makes such a ready theme for song: ἔστι γὰρ εὐμνος· τίς ἄν οὐ ῥέα Φοῖβον ἀείδοι; (31). The rare adjective εὐμνος occurs only twice in the *Homeric Hymns*, in identical lines that effect transitions from the prologues of the Delian and Pythian sections of the longer hymn to Apollo: πῶς τὰρ σ' ὑμνήσω πάντως εὐμνον ἔόντα; (3.19, 207). This allusion alone suffices to mark Callimachus' line 31 as a transition from his own prologue, but closer inspection reveals that Callimachus has reworked the Homeric line as a whole, skillfully reversing both the order of its phrasing and its sense. The causal participial phrase εὐμνον ἔόντα at the Homeric line's end opens Callimachus' line as ἔστι γὰρ εὐμνος, while the deliberative question (πῶς τὰρ σ' ὑμνήσω;) expressing *aporia* in the Homeric hymn (Race 1982, 6-7) is transformed into a rhetorical question that expresses absolute certainty (τίς ἄν οὐ ῥέα Φοῖβον ἀείδοι;). Likewise, whereas the Delian and Pythian sections of the Homeric hymn proceed to illustrate the *difficulty* of choosing how to celebrate Apollo (20-24, 208-213), and then select a theme marked by the word πρῶτον (25, 214; cf. Race, 7-8), Callimachus' speaker confidently illustrates the *ease* of praising the god (32-57) before settling finally on the three climactic themes recognized by Cheshire (2005, 335): τὰ πρῶτα θεμελίια (58), πρῶτιστον ἔδεθλον (72), πρῶτιστον ἐφύμνιον (98).

But Callimachus' reworking of the Homeric line also encourages that his dynamic opening be read against the prologues of the Homeric hymn. While those prologues depict arrivals by Apollo at Olympus as timeless vignettes, Callimachus innovates by situating his epiphany firmly in the mortal realm, during Carneia at Cyrene. Whereas the Delian prologue begins with the gods trembling

(τρομέουσιν, 2) as a bow-wielding Apollo draws near (ἐπὶ σχεδὸν ἐρχομένοιο, 3), Callimachus opens with the laurel and shrine trembling (ἑσείσατο, 1) at Apollo's approach, warning away the sinful (2). In the Pythian prologue, when a lyre-wielding Apollo arrives at Olympus, the gods immediately begin to sing and dance (188-203); likewise, since the god is no longer far (ὁ γὰρ θεὸς οὐκέτι μακρὴν, 7) from the Cyrenean shrine, Callimachus' speaker urges the youths to prepare a chorus (χόρον, 8). From the outset, therefore, Callimachus merges elements of the Delian and Pythian prologues in his own opening, vividly linking the present ritual experience of the Cyrenean community with that of the Olympians themselves. At the same time, this device introduces the opposition between the god's violent aspect (seen in the Delian prologue and the bow) and his gentler one (seen in the Pythian prologue and the lyre), the very tension that, as Bassi has observed (1989, 219-231), the remainder of Callimachus' prologue, indeed the hymn as a whole, seeks to resolve positively for the ritual community and the poet himself.

Works Cited

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