

Ἰὴ παιῆον: the perception of divine time in Callimachus' *Hymn to Apollo*

In his *Hymn to Apollo*, Callimachus constructs a unique sphere of time: a sacred copresence of the remote past of divine foundations, the time of myth, and the human present. This simultaneity encapsulates the god's ongoing interaction with men throughout the ages. Apollo's power is primarily seen through the prism of the time of men on earth. This is in striking contrast with the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, where the god is firmly placed in the Olympian sphere of immortal time.

Scholarship on Callimachus' *Hymn to Apollo* has mostly focused on the voice speaking in the hymn (Bing 1993; Harder 1992), the founding of Cyrene (e.g. Calame 1993; Nicolai 1992) and the concluding dialogue between Apollo and Envy (e.g. Wimmel 1960; Bundy 1972; Bassi 1989; Cameron 1995; Asper 1997). The construction of time in the hymn is a surprisingly understudied phenomenon. Yet from the outset, time is very much in the foreground. Callimachus begins by vividly evoking a present moment during a festival in honor of Apollo, as the god is just about to appear. The young men of the chorus are asked to honor the god, "if they are to marry and cut their gray hair in old age, and if the city wall is to remain standing on its ancient foundations" (14-5). The present festival thus functions as an important hinge between the city's "ancient foundations" and its future.

The present moment, in which the chorus is asked to "keep religious silence" (εὐφημεῖτ', 17) and then to "say ἰὴ ἰή" (25), is shared by two figures from the mythic past: Thetis, when she hears the ritual cry ἰὴ παιῆον ἰὴ παιῆον, stops mourning the loss of her son Achilles, and Niobe, who has been turned into a stone, suspends her grief (20-4). The poet conjures up an extraordinary 'simultaneity of εὐφημία', in which both the participants of the present festival and two figures from the time of myth share in the same moment of sacred silence. At the hymn's

close, the poet narrates how Apollo first showed his skill with the bow when he came to Delphi and shot the giant snake, while the people were shouting ἦ ἦ παιῆον (103). When the hymn at last evokes and re-enacts this very first utterance of the ritual cry (cf. πρότιστον, 98), Thetis and Niobe, it has to be assumed, again hold their breath and participate in the sacred moment created by these words. Even as the chronological sequence of events is dissolved in the sacred copresence of the remote past, the time of myth and the present, the present is charged with the long past the god has shared with men. The site where the eternal power of the god is acted out according to the hymn, then, is primarily the time of men on earth, as encapsulated in the sacred simultaneity.

This vision of time is in clear contrast with the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*. The monstrous Typhaon whom Apollo kills in the archaic text embodies the divine struggles for succession (Clay 66), and the hymn is very much concerned with establishing Apollo's place in the eternal Jovian order of the world. Callimachus' *Hymn to Apollo*, then, expresses a fundamental shift in paradigm, which can be traced in other Hellenistic texts as well. The gods are no longer primarily acting within their own sphere of divine time, but they are now increasingly understood in their interaction with the time of men.

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