

Nicholas Richardson, *Three Homeric Hymns: To Apollo, Hermes, and Aphrodite. Hymns 3, 4, and 5.* Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. Pp. xiii, 288, figure 1, maps 3. ISBN-13: 9780521457743. \$36.

There has been a hiatus in the scholarship on the *Homeric Hymns* as far as critical editions and commentaries are concerned. After the editions of the *Homeric Hymns* by T.W. Allen, W.R. Halliday, E.E. Sikes (*The Homeric Hymns* Oxford 1936 [1963]), F. Càssola (*Inni Omerici* Rome 1975 [1986]) and J. Humbert (*Hymnes homériques* Paris 1936), Richardson's commentary on the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* appeared in 1979, Faulkner's on the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* was published only recently (2008), while individual commentaries on other major *Homeric Hymns* are awaited.¹ Nicholas Richardson's commentary on the major *Homeric Hymns to Apollo, Hermes and Aphrodite* in the Green and Yellow series (Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics) is a welcome and much needed addition that makes the *Homeric Hymns* more accessible to students and scholars. It is unfortunate, however, that the major *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* is not included in this volume. Although its omission is understandable, since the author has already provided the standard full-length commentary on the *Hymn*, we have nevertheless lost an opportunity to provide students with a volume that conveniently contains all four major *Homeric Hymns*, which are often compared to each other by the author.

Richardson is clearly a master of the commentary genre² and thus provides a comprehensive analysis of the *Hymns*, augmented by a wealth of information on language and content that reveals the beauty of these texts. In his "Introduction" (pp. 1–33) Richardson provides a lucid discussion of the most important and vexing issues in the scholarship on the *Homeric Hymns*. With respect to the performance of the major *Hymns* Richardson suggests contests and symposia as possible performative contexts, but he is skeptical, correctly in my view, about festivals. He agrees with Parker (1991) that re-performance of these hymns would entail different contexts, while he accepts the function of the hymns as *proemia* (i.e. preludes) to the recitation of epic poetry and goes against the argument that their length would not allow them to be performed as such. He touches briefly upon the issue of the genre of the *Hymns*, noting very acutely that even though they employ conventions of the Greek hexameter poetry, they "show greater freedom when it comes to natural realism" and display similarities to early lyric poetry (p. 8). Thus, he concludes that "they could be located stylistically between Homeric and Hesiodic poetry on the one hand and lyric on the other" while they also "evoke comparison with the Archaic art of the seventh and sixth centuries BC" (p. 8). Richardson in fact often employs artistic representations as arguments for the date of the hymns (p. 24: *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*) or for elucidating the narrative (p. 252 *ad* 262 on Silenoi). For the origins of the collection, Richardson summarizes the evidence we have

¹ Athanassios Vergados, *A Commentary on the Homeric Hymn to Hermes* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012); Stuart Douglas Olson, *A Commentary on the Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012).

² See e.g. Nicholas James Richardson, *The Iliad: A Commentary, Vol. 6: Books 21-24* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

from quotations that suggest that an edition of the Hymns was available during Hellenistic times, he explains the reasons for their order and acknowledges the oddness of the *Hymn* eight to Ares, which was probably composed in the Roman period.

Under “Structure and Themes” Richardson identifies common narrative patterns among the longer and shorter hymns, while briefly mentioning how they develop differently in each hymn. He treats themes in a wider sense—a definition of a theme would be helpful here—and shows narrative similarities among the *Hymns* beyond the specific elements that constitute a theme. He notices, for example, how the narrative on the god’s first entry to Olympus is used in a double way in the *Hymn to Apollo* (where Apollo enters Olympus twice) while in the *Hymn to Demeter* it is modified and takes place at the end of the *Hymn*, when the goddess re-enters Olympus (p. 5). Aetiology and the relationship between gods and humans are some of the common aspects of the *Hymns*. Richardson also identifies as a theme the honors mortals pay to gods, since the poets and the audiences alike seek their favor (p. 6), contrary to the more popular view that the *Homeric Hymns* show primarily how gods received their honors, in particular how Zeus attributed them (see e.g. Clay 1989). Even though it is not within the scope of this book to compare the Homeric Epics and the *Hymns*, I wish Richardson had elaborated on an acute observation he makes in the introduction regarding religion: “their [i.e. the *Homeric Hymns*] portrayal of the world of mortals and of the interaction between gods and men is understandably different in some ways from what we find in the Homeric epics, although broadly speaking the divine society of these epics is the same as that of the *Hymns*” (p. 6).

In the section on the *Hymn to Apollo* Richardson goes against the dipartite structure and proposes that the hymn falls into three sections marked by a geographical catalogue (p. 9–13). He also provides a detailed table with all the thematic echoes that run through the hymn (p. 10–11). The building of Apollo’s temple at Crisa and the killing of the serpent are treated as the central episode preceded by the birth narrative and followed by the assignment of priests. This is a fresh look at the structural problems of this hymn and a significant contribution to the issue of the composition of the *Hymn*, which since Rhunken (1782) has been regarded as the outcome of the unification of two separate hymns or the expansion of a Delian Hymn.³ Richardson is correct to point out that “the poem is designed to be taken as a unified composition, and this is how we ought to read it” (p. 15). As far as the *Hymn*’s date is concerned, Richardson questions the dating methodology of Richard Janko, who identifies “false archaisms”⁴ that are explained as the poet’s deliberate usage to create the impression of a more archaic style. He astutely notes (p. 16) that other factors can explain formulaic variation, such as regional differences, subject matter, or personal style. He rejects the late sixth century date on the

³ So, most recently, Mike Chappell, “*The Homeric Hymn to Apollo: The Question of Unity*”, in *The Homeric Hymns: Interpretative Essays*, ed. Andrew Faulkner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

⁴ On this matter see Brandtly Jones, “Relative Chronology Within (an) Oral Tradition,” *Classical Journal*, 105.4 (2010): 289–318.

basis of historical evidence (i.e. the date of the first stone temple) and circumstantial evidence (e.g. no reference to Pythia, and Thucydides' vague date of the Delian festival when the hymn was allegedly composed) and prefers the early sixth century based on allusions to the First Sacred War.

For the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* Richardson notices balanced themes within the poem (e.g. the two hymns performed by Hermes) and argues that the final episode is not a later interpolation, although he bases his view solely on thematic criteria. He attributes the untraditional language and style of the *Hymn* to its comic character and naturalistic narrative. In order to establish the *Hymn's* connection with the *Hymn to Apollo*, he notes that in the *Hymn to Hermes* the three powers of Apollo are challenged, there are common references to Orchomenos, and similar rare words are used. Richardson acknowledges that if the poet of the *Hymn to Hermes* had composed it with the *Hymn to Apollo* in mind, there would be more direct linguistic links, but he carefully notes that it is plausible that the *Hymn* is a "light-hearted counterpart to the grander and more serious *Hymn to Apollo*" (p. 21). Although it is possible to suggest influence of the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* on the *Hymn to Hermes*, language echoes between the two—the instance for example of a compound word found only in the two hymns (e.g. *ad* 17 ἐγκιθαρίζω)—do not securely indicate such a relationship.

The section on legal aspects in the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* points to the hymn's echoes of Greek rhetorical theory and legal terminology (p. 21). Richardson correctly argues that these techniques cannot be used as an argument for dating since we do not know when the rhetorical figures were used; according to Richardson they only indicate a post-Homeric date. In the section "Music and Prophecy" he shows how the two arts of the two brothers are linked to each other. Richardson supports the view that the perplexing sacrifice scene provides an aetiology for the cult of the twelve gods in Olympia, although he cannot satisfactorily explain what the hides, the fat, and the meat, which Hermes displays on a rock, really stood for later (p. 175 *ad* 124–6). The argument that "it seems to indicate that something may have been on display in later times" (p. 23) is vague. Leduc's view of them as *anathemata*, which Richardson also mentions in his commentary (p. 177), seems more likely. He also attributes some narrative complexities (e.g. Hermes and Apollo appear to a mortal without disguising themselves) to the comic nature of the hymn. For the *Hymn's* dating, he favors the sixth century on account of the cult of the twelve gods at Olympia that is alluded in the *Hymn*, the developed forms of legal procedure and the rhetorical technique, vase paintings, e.g. the appearance of *syrinx* as the god's attribute, and the "high estimation of a form of music which suggests comparison with personal lyric poetry"—although he acknowledges that these arguments suggest but not prove this date. Richardson also provides a nice discussion of other versions of Hermes' cattle theft and how similar or different they are.

For the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*, he points out the irony of the *Hymn* that relates the embarrassing liaison of the goddess with Anchises and he explains it as the poem's paradoxical description of the power of love with positive and negative effects. He argues for similarities with Lesbian lyric hymns concluding that the Lesbian poets knew

this version of the hymn although “common models in earlier tradition cannot be entirely excluded” (p. 30); the latter seems more likely to me. The date Richardson accepts for the *Hymn* is seventh century without specific arguments apart from the fact that it must have been produced before the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (p. 30). I find less convincing his assertion that the hymn originates from Asia Minor or that it was composed to honor the Aeneadae, an argument most recently supported anew by Faulkner (2008). The latter is presented as the *communis opinio*, although to my knowledge it is still the suggestion of the minority. In the commentary Richardson argues against Smith⁵ that it is likely that the Aeneadae family has some historical value (p. 244 *ad* 196–197). However, he does not address the issue that Faulkner poses, that the poet of the *Hymn* imitates the part of the *Iliad* where Poseidon offers a prophecy similar to Aphrodite’s about Aeneas, and that both passages in the *Hymn* and the *Iliad* were composed with the Aeneadae in mind;⁶ an argument that is difficult to prove. Richardson could thus have elaborated more in the introduction on why “it [i.e. that the *Hymn* aims to honor the Aeneadae] seems a reasonable hypothesis and may well be correct” (p. 30). In the section on “Style” Richardson discusses the elaborate patterns of repetition and variation along with recurring motifs, and he correctly points out that these elements do not imply a late date for its composition.

The introduction ends with two sections on “The Homeric Hymns and Hellenistic Poetry” and the “Transmission of the Texts”. One of the many merits of the introduction and the commentary in general is the contextualization of the *Homeric Hymns* within the epic tradition, including a wide range of literary works and the corpus of the *Homeric Hymns* itself. The Greek text along with an *apparatus criticus* follows. Richardson uses the *apparatus criticus* in Càssola’s edition as a base and he also employs his *sigla* (p. 33). A manuscript *stemma* would be very useful here.

The commentary is rich, elaborate, and insightful. A minor criticism would be that very few comments are found on grammatical forms or syntax, especially peculiar cases, (e.g. anomalous third person form of perfect *ad* h. *Aphr.* 196, or the syntax of a verb *ad* h. *Herm.* 108, reduplicated aorist *ad* h. *Herm.* 119), although it is true that the series favors translations over grammatical analyses. Polished and accurate translations on the other hand are abundant. Discussions of emendations are few but thoughtful with good explanations (p. 124–125 on the vexing meaning of $\nu\alpha\acute{\iota}\epsilon\iota\nu$). Notes on style and originality of the language are numerous and are supported by parallels, which are often provided in full. Comments on scansion are few, mostly on anomalies or rarities (e.g. h. *Herm.* 197, h. *Ap.* 373), and tedious notes on particles are rare, wisely in my view. Richardson mentions metrical licenses or peculiarities and often gives rational explanations. He is also conservative as far as lacunas go (e.g. he accepts a lacuna after h. *Ap.* 539 but not after h. *Herm.* 91).

⁵ P.M. Smith, “Aeneadae as Patrons in Iliad XX,” *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 85 (1981) 17–58.

⁶ Andrew Faulkner, “The Legacy of Aphrodite: Anchises’ Offspring in the Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite,” *AJPh* 129 (2008) 1–18.

One of the many merits of this book is that the comments are almost never strictly linguistic in nature; they often include references to historical, archaeological, or geographical data that reveal the richness of these texts and the variety of approaches that can be employed. Richardson contextualizes the *Homeric Hymns* not only in the Homeric but also in the Lyric tradition and provides material from much later authors (e.g. Demetrius, *On style*: p. 163 *ad* 53–61). He is eager to show the variations in forms and semantics of words found originally in the *Hymns* and again in much later times (see e.g. the semantic differentiations *ad* h. *Herm.* 194). Information on cult and religion is understandably more abundant in the *Hymn to Apollo*, than in the other two, (e.g. h. *Ap.* 493–496 where he discusses the civic, moral, and nautical associations of the Delphinus cult and the later tradition that connects the name Delphi with dolphin), while references to secondary literature are also frequent (although again this is more often the case in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*). In general, Richardson refrains from rendering episodes as interpolations (e.g. Typhaon episode p. 126). Similarly, he very cautiously notes historical allusions to mythological information. At h. *Ap.* 393 he agrees with the view that Apollo’s priests coming from Cnossos may reflect a historical reality and nicely points out that there may be an etymological link between Crisa and Crete. He also views connections with Crete at lines 517–519 on the Cretan origins of the paean. He provides interesting information on various aspects of Greek life such as ship-making (ship history and the use of two steering oars, h. *Ap.* 418), tripods (h. *Ap.* 443), prophetic procedures and the bay tree (h. *Ap.* 396), calendar (h. *Herm.* 19), jewelry (h. *Aphr.* 87–90) and improvisatory songs (h. *Herm.* 55–61). Richardson avoids a simple enumeration of parallels and displays lucidly the interrelations between a variety of sources from primary texts to Scholia and art. Incorporating art into the discussion of texts can be revealing. In his discussion of Hermes’ reference to the tortoise as εἰταίρη *ad* 36 (which he views as ironic) Richardson brings in the reference to Phedias’ statue of Aphrodite Ourania standing on a tortoise (symbolism of married women staying home and being silent) and its contrast to Scopas’ statue of Aphrodite Pandemos described by Pausanias.

The commentary is carefully written, although some references are incomplete (e.g. *ad* h. *Herm.* 33 “cf. Sophocles etc.” *ad* h. *Herm.* 111 “in Sophocles etc.”, h. *Ap.* 412 “cf. Oppian, and... in Hesiod, etc.”, 413 “cf. Plato etc.”). As with Cambridge editions there are very few typos or omissions: on map 3 on Hermes’ journey there are no arrows that show the sequence of the locations he marched past, h. *Herm.* 526 should read ἄνδρα (not ἀνδρᾶ), p. 103 (top of page) quotation marks are missing around the translation, h. *Aphr.* 39 should read καταθηγή (not κατάθηγη). Faulkner’s emendation is reported in the *apparatus criticus ad* h. *Aphr.* 51 as υἱέας although it should be υἱας. There are few evaluative comments such as h. *Aphr.* 75 “the poet likes εὐποίητος” based on the frequency of the word. Some unity in terminology would be helpful: Richardson employs the following: “hapax legomenon,” “found only here,” “only here in epic,” “only here in early hexameter poetry,” “unhomeric expression,” and “first here.”

The bibliography is quite complete with a wide range of standard reference books along with works on the *Hymns* but also on related topics from religion to history to

archaeology. The few works that are missing do not harm the wealth of this bibliography but they would contribute to the discussion of some passages in the commentary and the introduction (e.g. William G. Thalmann, *Conventions of Form and Thought in Early Greek Poetry*, Baltimore, 1984; Norman Oliver Brown, *Hermes the Thief: The Evolution of a Myth*; Yiannis Tzifopoulos, “Hermes and Apollo at Onchestos in the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*: the Poetics and Performance of Proverbial Communication,” *Mnemosyne* 53 [2000] 148–163; A. Faulkner, “The Legacy of Aphrodite: Anchises’ offspring in the Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite,” *AJPh* 129 [2008] 1–18; Judith Fletcher, “A Trickster’s Oaths in the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*,” *AJPh* 129 [2008] 19–46).

Overall Richardson has succeeded in providing a thorough analysis of the three major *Homeric Hymns* and expanding our understanding of them by showing their interrelation with each other and with other genres, both in themes and in language. Moreover, he has avoided the dryness sometimes found in a commentary and made this book an extremely interesting read. This commentary will encourage instructors to teach the *Homeric Hymns* in their Greek courses and should be read by everyone interested in Greek hymns, religion, and archaic poetry.

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