Michael Brumbaugh, *The New Politics of Olympus. Kingship in Kallimachos' Hymns*, Oxford – New York (Oxford University Press) 2019, 328 S., ISBN 978-0-19-005926-2 (geb.), £ 55,–

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The title of B(rumbaugh)'s book refers the reader back to Jenny Strauss Clay's 1989 "The Politics of Olympus", a discussion of the form and meaning of the Homeric Hymns, in which she analyzed four of the major Hymns (to Hermes, Apollo, Aphrodite and Demeter) as reflections of an ongoing theological speculation about the nature of Zeus' power and its meaning, on Olympus as well as on earth. B. on the other hand wishes to demonstrate how Callimachus' six Hymns can be related to what we know of the kingship of the Ptolemaic dynasty ruling Alexandria in Callimachus' era and its ideologies.

Following in the footsteps of scholars like Mary Depew (*Gender, Power and Poetics in Callimachus' book of Hymns*, Leuven – Dudley 2004), and Frederick T. Griffiths (*Theocritus at Court*, Leiden 1979), B. attempts to read the Hymns as the Ptolemies might have wished to do. That is to say, he reads these poems as presenting analogies and examples of kingly and queenly gods (or divine Kings and Queens) in which the Ptolemaic royals might see a flattering reflection of themselves or at least of their own ideals of rulership. As the reader will note, the previous sentence is couched in conditionals, to indicate how subtle such a process is understood to have been by B. It is not the case that we should expect the gods to 'stand in for' certain identifiable members of the royal household; rather, in their praiseworthy traits, epikleses, and in the peace and plenty they are doling out, they should be read as paradeigmata of the ideal ruler, and hence as models for or indeed analogues of the Ptolemies themselves, who famously wished to be known as divinities. B. argues that the Hymns are a consistent literary project, and that their current order reflects Callimachus' own ordering of the material. He makes much of intratextual echoes and allusions he recovers from the various poems, in particular when it comes to the variety in titles used to address the various divinities (anax, anassa, basileus etc.) and in recurring characterisations of, for instance, the goddess Hera as a cruel and despotic tyrant-like ruler, or the God Apollo as a young king equal to his father Zeus. Such careful editing of the material is argued to underscore the central message about good kingship which was meant both to praise and instruct the royal audiences.

The book has a relatively brief introduction focussing on Callimachus' historical background, the literary discourse on kingship and its themes, and the

possible performances or other contexts for the Hymns. Most important is the part where B. outlines his vision of Callimachus' project of 'reconfiguring' the Olympus so as to make it more suitable to the third century courtly context of Alexandria. Callimachus does this, for instance in the Hymn to Zeus, by 'editing out', redirecting or contradicting (in his characteristic and elusive way) unwelcome archaic literary traditions about the violent dynastic struggles and harsh familial enmities characterising the succession myths as told by Hesiod and referenced by Homer. No plotting, castrations, or cannibalism, therefore, but rather a focus on smooth father-son power-transitions between Zeus and Apollo, wholesome sibling rivalries between Apollo and Artemis, a strict but eventually relenting Athena, and an angry Demeter whose resentment of Erysichthon is entirely justifiable. The only truly evil-spirited goddess to foil these admirable and ultimately reasonable divinities is of course the incorrigibly jealous Hera, who is made to stand in for the proverbial cruel tyrant, so B. claims.

After the introduction the argument falls into two parts. In part one (On Zeus' Kingship) three chapters all focus on the Hymn to Zeus (the first, and briefest poem of the collection). In the second part (The Divine Family and the Ptolemaic Dynasty) we read discussions of the Hymn to Apollo (Apollo as a New Paradigm for Kingship), the Hymn to Delos (Saviors, Tyrants, and the Poetics of Empire) and one chapter (On the Good Queen) discusses the three Hymns to female divinities (Artemis, Athena and Demeter). Finally, a conclusion returns to the methodological issue of reading these Hymns along the rhetorical theories of Figured Speech as addressed to rulers (as found in Demetrius) and answers affirmatively the question whether we can see these poems as a kind of Princes' Mirror.

What distinguishes this book (and to this reviewer's mind, in a positive way) from most books about Callimachus, is the focus on realia and historical information about Callimachus's own life and especially about the Ptolemies who form the assumed audience of these poems. B. leaves no stone unturned when it comes to finding attested ideological parallels or hunting out historical leads for specific details present in the descriptions of Callimachus' divinities. This is mostly compelling and insightful: the discourse about Ptolemaic kingship does become much more concretely and tangibly related to the poet's panegyric poems than it often does in discussions of Hellenistic poetry. One example is the observation that in the Hymn to Zeus, where all of Zeus' paraferalia are of course duly named, one glaring omission calls attention to its absence: why is there not a single reference to Zeus' thunderbolt? B. cleverly links this to Callimachus' unwillingness to evoke allusions to the contested Ptolemaic succession, and in particular to the dissatisfied older half-brother of Ptolemy Philadelphus, Ptolemy Keraunos, who may have been regarded as a liability (28–33). In the discussion of the Artemis Hymn, it is similarly convincing to relate Arsinoe II Philadelphus's relation with Ephesus

(or Arsinoeia, as it was briefly called after a synoikism by Lysimachus, one of Arsinoe's previous husbands) to the prominent mention of this city in the poem, without claiming in any way that Artemis 'is' Arsinoe (212–216). Such readings compellingly make Callimachus' elusive and extremely subtle poetry surprisingly concrete indeed. Somewhat inconsistently, B. at the same time cautions against trying to identify the vexed references to 'my king' or 'my kings' in the Apollo Hymn (2.25–27; 2.68); there the reference is apparently meant to be 'multivalent', 'allowing the referent to shift', while focusing on the fact that it is only the king that Callimachus calls his own who can be expected to enjoy Apollo's help (142).

All of this is not to say that no attention is being paid to questions of meta-poeticity, or intertextuality with earlier and contemporary poetry. Indeed, especially in the discussion of the Zeus Hymn in part one, these questions receive ample attention. It is not always easy, however, to see how they sit with the simultaneous claim that Callimachus' poetry is referencing concrete political events such as mentioned above. Why, for instance, would the Hymn to Zeus' rather remarkable choice to compare a king to a bee-king (with the rare word ἐσσηνα, 1.66) specifically remind the Ptolemies of a detail in Plato's *Philebus*? There, in what would appear to be a passing remark (301d4–e2) rather than a thematic focal point, the question is posed whether or not the appearance of king in a human community can be compared to the spontaneous appearance of a 'king' in a beehive. In this particular case it seems hard to see why B. does not rather accept Susan Stephens' suggestion (*Seeing Double. Intercultural Poetics in Ptolemaic Alexandria*, Berkeley – Los Angeles, 2003, 107–108, which he does mention) that the bee hieroglyph formed a part of the attested cartouches of the name of the king (69–73).

Somewhat similarly, it seems that overmuch space and ingeniousness are being spent on making the relatively unsurprising point that Rhea's search for water to wash her newborn in this same poem is really a metapoetic image for the poet's aporia and his attempts to 'give birth to' a new type of Zeus (or Ptolemy-Zeus) in his praise poetry (102–126). This is a symptom of a slight misbalance in the book in general: why so much space is being spent on the metapoetics of the Hymn to Zeus, while for instance the three hymns treating female deities are thrown together in a single chapter to discuss the extremely intriguing figure of the Good Queen is not made clear, especially since matters of metapoetics do not receive similar weight in this second part. This also applies to the choice to discuss some alleged intertextual allusions to texts of the past in great detail (e.g. the *Philebus*) while only touching very lightly on what are tantalising parallels with contemporary poetry (of Theocritus' *Idylls*, only 17 is referenced in any detail, while 18, 22 and 24 could surely have contributed insights to a discussion of Callimachus' choice of talking about gods while addressing the kings).

A final slight point of criticism is that anyone not aware of the tone of Callimachus' Hymns would never guess from B.'s book how full of jokes, ironies and humorous absurdities they are. We could say that kingship discourse is a serious matter, but precisely that observation begs the question why Callimachus often seems so flippant when talking about toddler divinities like Artemis ripping out the chest hair of the Cyclopes, or when he makes his unmistakable jibes at bourgeois discomfort in the description of the plight of Erysichthon's parents, who can never bring their ravenous son to social gatherings anymore. If Erysichthon is to be read as a figure of the 'avaricious tyrant' who is defeated by the righteous queen Demeter, surely, he is also a figure of (grim) fun. So, how should we interpret this?

These considerations apart, the book is important and insightful in its erudite treatment of the historical context of Callimachus' Hymns, its view of these poems as reflecting the ideology of Ptolemaic kingship is compelling; and it provides many fascinating suggestions as to how Callimachus' patrons may have read these poems. Brumbaugh's work is required reading for anyone wishing to understand the place of the Hymns at the court of the Ptolemies, and fits in well with the growing interest for the Ptolemaic context of much Alexandrian poetry, from Posidippus to Theocritus, Apollonius and beyond.