dunque presumibilmente informale: è difficile, allora, che il documento fosse concepito per essere mostrato in giro a scopo ‘promozionale’, mentre potrebbe rappresentare più facilmente un appunto personale, forse in vista della preparazione della scaletta di un concerto specifico; al contrario, i ‘programmi del circo’ sono redatti, come specificano gli editori, in un ventaglio di scritture indicate come «large and stylized» (5215: p. 183), o sono vergati da una «large, well-spaced fluent round hand» (5218: p. 188), e in generale mostrano un «generous layout» (introduzione, p. 182). È evidente, dunque, la loro funzione di ‘pubblicizzazione’ dell’evento, sia che si trattasse di inviti rivolti a individui specifici, sia che fossero biglietti da distribuire al pubblico prima dell’inizio dello spettacolo. In tutti questi casi, la possibilità di disporre da subito di una riproduzione avrebbe sicuramente consentito al lettore di rendersi conto più agevolmente di questioni che investono direttamente l’essenza stessa del testo presentato. E lo stesso vale, ancora, per testi letterari sospetti di essere autografi d’autore (una categoria sempre più oggetto di studi specifici, negli ultimi anni), come il carme lirico 5191. Possiamo confidare, dunque, che la messa in rete di tutte le immagini consentirà di estendere ulteriormente la conoscenza di questi testi, anche al di fuori della cerchia dei papirologi.

Il volume, in conclusione, fornisce materiali inediti di primaria importanza per ricostruire alcuni dei tratti più caratteristici della società grecoromana, arricchendo la documentazione disponibile su molte tematiche assai dibattute e, soprattutto, aprendo la strada a indagini completamente nuove. La cura editoriale, la precisione degli apparati, il rigore nella presentazione dei testi ne fanno, al tempo stesso, un punto di riferimento metodologico da cui non si potrà prescindere.

Cassino

Lucio Del Corso

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This large commentary on the longest of the Homeric Hymns is the extensive reworking of the author’s dissertation, originally submitted at the University of Virginia. The book is made up of a lengthy introduction of ca. 160 pages, a text with elaborate critical tripartite apparatus (50 pages), an enormous commentary (ca. 370 pages) and extensive bibliography, illustrations and indices. As this summary already shows, the author leisurely exposes his findings on the Homeric Hymn. This is often very useful, but at certain moments trimming of the material (which is sometimes redundant, or not obviously relevant) might have been welcome. Nevertheless, to begin with the final judgment, this is an admirably solid work of scholarship on the Homeric Hymn to Hermes, enlightening many of this attractive poem’s remarkable facets, and firmly establishing its place in Greek literary history. It will doubtless become a standard work of reference for anyone working on the Homeric Hymns and other early hexameter poetry.

The introduction is made up of (1) a summary of the poem, (2) a section on music, poetry and language, identifying these as core themes of the hymn, (3) a discussion of humour, (4) the poem’s relation to archaic literature, (5) its relation....
to other literature (i.e. Alcaeus and later), (6) structure and arrangement, (7) date and place of composition, (8) transmission and text.

The interpretations in section 2 are subtle and convincing and have the added benefit of being very clearly formulated. For instance, Vergados posits a convincing relation between the god’s ‘identity crisis’ as a would-be Olympian and his first song about his own parentage in terms that suggest the stability and longstanding character of Zeus’ affair with Maia. At the same time the *mise en abyme* that is hereby created (the poet singing a song about a god who is singing a song about a god, who is ... *etcetera*) is unpacked in an enlightening way. Equally clearly set out is the section about humour in the Hymn. Vergados distinguishes four types: parody of hymnic/epic themes, parody of specific epic passages, situational humour and linguistic humour, which he discusses in a sensitive and convincing way. Especially the remarks on linguistic humour go a long way to explain many of the unusual epithets and formulas in the poem which previous scholars have sometimes considered problematic. The only question that remained for this reviewer was how, when, and why the god Hermes had specifically become associated with humour in Greek literature (and perhaps in actual ritual too). Vergados points to an earlier publication by himself on this theme, but I found myself wishing that this material had in some form been included in the book, rather than, say, some of the elaborate comments on parallels with later literature (section 5), which, at least to this reader, seemed less relevant for the actual appreciation of the poem.

Sections 4 and 5 extensively list parallels (textual and thematic) with earlier, contemporary and later literature. This part of the book is somewhat problematic. In section 4 it remains unclear how the intertextuality among the older hexameter poetry is to be envisaged as working: when is it a question of shared formulaic epic diction, deliberate parody, or pointed allusion? Some more explicit methodological remarks on this would have been welcome. The fact that the discussion of parallels on a verbal and thematic level is interrupted by an analysis of prosody feels somewhat strange. The section ends with a paragraph pointing out thematic relations to other archaic literature and an appendix on the question whether this was an oral or a literate composition, taking as its starting point the representation in the poem itself of Hermes as improvising his song. Precisely this emphatic remark by the poet that Hermes *improvised* his song (rather than performing a pre-existing song, which may therefore have been the default expectation) is picked up to argue that we may not summarily decide between oral or literate composition in the case of this poem: «there is a wide grey area in between» (75), which consists of so-called oral-derived or post-oral poetry. The overall argument is typical of the sensible approach to complex issues throughout the book, but it could have been made richer perhaps if an attempt had been made here to reflect on the verbal parallels with earlier and contemporary hexameter as laid out earlier on in the section. As it is, this remains implicit.

Section 5 consists of two main parts, the first focusing on references to the story (verbal as well as some visual material) of Hermes the (baby) cattle thief and inventor of the lyre in other authors, culminating in a schematic representation of the putative web of influences on the poem and exerted by the poem (109). The second part lists numerous allusions (mostly verbal parallels) in later poetry. This
section might have been considerably shortened if the author had chosen merely to list the parallels in order to point out the possible influence of the poem on later works. This would equally well have allowed those interested to look up the passages indicated and form an opinion of how convincing, or relevant, or enlightening on the level of interpretation the stipulated echoes are for the later poems. As it is, the list may lead to the observation of the suggestive fact that the Homeric Hymn to Hermes seems to have enjoyed an avid readership especially in the Hellenistic era (Apollonius, Callimachus and pseudo-Theocritus Id. 25).

Readers are left to draw their own conclusions from this.

The structure and arrangement of the hymn are discussed in section 6, which does a good job at pointing out the subtle arrangement of the various intersecting ring compositions making up the poem, but some more probing comments on the poet’s choice to reverse the order of what must have been the original story (i.e. the abduction and killing of Apollo’s cows in order to produce the lyre, which requires elements made of cowhide) would have been welcome.

Section 7 is very good on date and place of composition, and respectfully but firmly refutes the attempts of earlier scholarship at dating and localizing the original composition of this poem. Whereas the author, after consideration of the possibilities, remains agnostic as to the original place of composition, he carefully argues for a date in the second half of the sixth century.

Section 8 discusses the transmission of the text. The actual text as given on pages 164ff is mainly that of Cassola, with divergences listed on pages 158–9. There are three textual apparatus listing formulaic parallels (1), parallels with later literature (2) and critical remarks (3). The second reduplicates to a great extent the findings of section 5.

Vergados is as conservative as possible when it comes to retaining MS readings. This means he tries to take the text on its own terms as it has been transmitted, not printing any lacunae. Wherever previous scholarship assumed that readings were problematic, the issue is elaborately and clearly discussed in the commentary, allowing readers to decide for themselves the merits or problems of previously proposed conjectures.

The commentary, as noted, is impressively huge and thorough and cannot be done justice to in detail in the scope of this brief review. What follows are some fairly general impressions. Vergados expounds the text on three levels: by section (e.g. p. 215ff: 1–9: Hermes’ parentage), line-by-line, and on the level of individual words or word groups. Some of the lemmas are quite lengthy, and read like mini essays, which is often welcome, but at times puts the reader at risk of losing the thread of the poem. The scholarship throughout is sound, exhaustive, and usually clearly presented. The extreme attention to lexical as well as technical detail (Hermes’ making of the lyre, the sandals, and the fire sticks) means that the commentary succeeds in answering or at least expounding admirably some of the vexed problems of the hymn on a lexical and interpretational level (e.g. on Maia’s epithet αἰδοίη, vs. 5, p. 224; on the tortoise’s gait, described by the poet as σαῦλα ποσὶν βαίνουσα, vs. 28, p. 248; on the adjective οὖλα applied to wood, vs. 113, p. 323). However, sometimes extreme attention to detail and the wish to be complete seem to run away with the author. For instance on p. 293 note to vs. 80 I wonder whether it is really necessary to quote 12 (!) examples to parallel the
formulaic pairing of adjectives beginning with an *alpha privans*. Again, at p. 294, note to vs. 81: in the context of the fashioning of Hermes’ sandals from tamarisk and myrtle wood I found it somewhat hard to see the relevance of the fact that «myrtle was used in medicine against diseases of the bladder and as antidote to the bites of spiders and scorpions; the juice of its berries, mixed with wine, was used as a purgative.» No doubt a reader of Nicander would like to know this, but how does it illuminate the direct context here?

However, quibbles aside, the overall impression is that this commentary certainly succeeds in answering many of the various kinds of questions on a structural, interpretational, and lexical level that arise when reading the poem. The full *indices rerum* and *locorum* enable the reader to find what she is looking for, and the bibliography too is extensive and up to date. Despite the noted issues of the disputable relevance of some of the included material, it is absolutely beyond doubt that this book is a learned and valuable contribution to the study of the *Homeric Hymns* in general and this specific poem in particular.

Groningen

*Jacqueline Klooster*

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Das Buch gliedert sich in drei Kapitel: (1) ‘Introduzione. Lo *status quaestionis*’ (S. 11); (2) ‘commento’ (23); (3) ‘una ipotesi sull’origine del prologo’ (111). Es folgt eine ausführliche Bibliographie sowie drei Indices (‘studiosi citati’; ‘luoghi citati’; ‘codici e papiri citati’).
