

## Callimachean Hydrokinetics: Water as a Compositional Device in Callimachus' Hymns.

Water flows everywhere in Callimachus' hymns: a great stream pours forth from a rock (ἐκ δ' ἔχεεν μέγα χεῦμα, 32) in the *Hymn to Zeus* and droplets are sprayed from a spring (πίδακος ἐξ ἱερῆς ὀλίγη λιβάς ἄκρον ἄωτον, 112) in the *Hymn to Apollo*. In the *Hymn to Artemis* the goddess selects Oceanids and river Nymphs who dance around her near the streams of the Inopus (ἡνίκα δ' αἱ νύμφαι σε χορῶ ἔνι κυκλώσονται, ἀγχόθι πηγῶν Αἰγυπτίου Ἴνωποῖο, 170-1) and in the *Hymn to Delos* the island sails upon the open sea until she is fixed in the Aegean at the moment of Apollo's birth (ἀλλ' ἐνὶ πόντου, κύμασιν Αἰγαίοιο ποδῶν ἐνεθήκαο ῥίζας, 53-4). In the *Hymn to Athena* the goddess takes a bath by the spring of the Helicon (ἵππω ἐπὶ κράνα Ἑλικωνίδι καλὰ ῥεοῖσα, 71) and finally in the *Hymn to Demeter* everything flows down in Erysichthon's belly as into the depths of the sea (τὰ δ' ἐς βυθὸν οἷα θαλάσσης, ἀλεμάτως ἀχάριστα κατέρρεεν εἶδατα πάντα, 89-90).

An examination of the hymns shows that depictions of water play a complex role in articulating their structure and narrative. Several instances of the motif of water in Callimachus' poetry have been noted in previous scholarship (Kambylis 1965; Knox 1985; Asper 1997; Cameron 1995; Traill 1998; Heyworth 2004, Depew 2007), but no study has yet provided a comprehensive reading of how it functions within the progression of the hymns. Each hymn features a single Olympian divinity and describes myths and rituals that give detailed information on the worshipping of the gods. These mythological themes, as Depew 2007 observes, are systematically articulated in terms of a "tropology" involving springs, Nymphs, and rivers. Thus, water in the hymns is a metaphor for decoding the text itself and prompting the reader's attention to its symbolic system. According to Worman 2015: 186, Hellenistic poets

deploy images of familiar landscapes, including springs, streams and rivers, “as spaces of and for literary criticism,” to delineate distinctions between their authorial style and that of others.

Given these premises, in this paper I analyze the poetic function of water within the progression of the hymns. My investigation will be two-fold. On the one hand, I will explore details within each of the poems suggesting that the recourse to water imagery serves to define stylistic modes and to articulate poetic choices. Specifically, water images involving fine-flowing rivers, drops and springs indicate Callimachus’ refined and delicate style as opposed to one larger and bombastic which is depicted by images of marshy-swelling rivers, roaring sea, and bubbling water.

On the other hand, my discussion will focus on the ways in which water imagery traces the compositional procedures of the hymns advocated by the poet as exemplary of his stylistic values. The stream that bursts forth in the *Hymn to Zeus* metaphorically represents the bursting of the invention of the new poetry; the pure drops of water in the *Hymn to Apollo* equate the technical characterization of a small scale poetry, while the goddess’s selection of the nymphs in the *Hymn to Artemis* depicts the poetic selection of material. The selective process leads to the final definition of the new poetic parameters as represented by Delos’ fixation in the sea in the *Hymn to Delos*, and ultimately the immersion of Athena into the water in the *Hymn to Athena*, with the consequent blindness of Tiresias, is the metaphor for the investiture to the new elegiac canons as well as in the *Hymn to Demeter* the devouring sea-belly of Erysichthon represents the modes of the new iambic poetry of Hypponactean inspiration.

Finally, I argue that by means of water imagery Callimachus has created a pattern throughout the progression of the hymns that describes the distinctive steps of the compositional process of the poems, which reflect his position toward Hellenistic aesthetics.

## Bibliography

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