Matthew Hosty, trans., comm., *Batrachomyomachia (Battle of the Frogs and Mice): introduction, text, translation, and commentary*, Oxford Classical Monographs, Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 2020, 304 pp., $105.00, ISBN 978-0-19-884990-2.

The *Batrachomyomachia* was largely out of favour during the twentieth century: although the poem was noted as an isolated example of the genre of ancient 'parody' and was printed among the Homeric apocrypha, it was deemed an unfunny curio. The introduction to Hosty's volume therefore begins with 'two problems' (1-2): first, how to deal with a unique representative of an ill-defined genre (raising such questions as 'What do we mean when we talk about parody, and is it the same as what the Greeks and Romans meant?'), and, secondly, how to account for its popularity – for, as his discussion of the poem's reception and influence demonstrates (47-62), the tale of epic battle between frogs and mice was widely read and enjoyed for many centuries.

In response to these questions, Hosty's commentary offers a thoroughgoing rehabilitation of the *Batrachomyomachia* through stylistic analysis, making the case that its parodic engagement with the Homeric epics is subtle, sophisticated and pervasive – to the extent that in line 135 the frogs even seem to be Alexandrian-style philologists studying Homeric vocabulary (187) – and thus that the poet particularly rewards readers who perceive the depth of the engagement. In this project Hosty builds on the work of several scholars who have demonstrated the feasibility of such an approach in recent decades (58-9). With origins in Hosty's doctoral thesis, this commentary is itself the fruit of a decade's work, and his intimate familiarity with the poem is evident throughout in the careful collation and discussion of Homeric parallels, judicious consideration of textual problems and persuasive analysis of the workings of the poem's humour.

The volume's introduction sets the poem within its literary contexts before turning to textual matters. Hosty first considers date and authorship (2-14), concluding that late-third or early-second century BC is the most likely date of composition, a *terminus post quem* being established by several allusions to Callimachus. As well as literary and linguistic evidence, Hosty uses the Archelaus Relief; if one accepts his view that the mice depicted there allude to the *Batrachomyomachia*, the poem must date from before c. 150 BC. Although the authorship remains mysterious, he tentatively raises the possibility that attributions to 'Tigres the Carian' and 'Timarchus the Carian' in MS P point to 'an Ionian – perhaps even a Milesian – origin' that would be plausible for 'a witty Hellenistic pastiche of Homer' (14). But this must, indeed, remain tentative.

The next section, focusing on the first of Hosty's two problems, covers 'parody and pastiche' (14-21), surveying the familiar difficulties in defining *παρῳδία* and relating it to modern 'parody'. Employing the framework of Genette's categories, he views the *Batrachomyomachia* as *pastiche* or 'playful imitation', and raises the important points that the text, with its 'low' material in 'high' epic style, would probably have been considered an example of παρῳδία by at least some ancients (such as Lucian), but that it is not the 'criticism via imitation' usually implied by the modern term 'parody', and that readers should also approach it without the modern assumption that a 'parody' must be amusing (so that it is not a failure if the reader does not laugh).

A little hidden away in n. 33 is a guiding principle that contributes to the effectiveness of Hosty's interpretation: the readiness of many ancient readers to believe that the poem was by Homer must mean that nothing in it seemed 'completely beyond the bounds of what Homer might have written', a consideration which furnishes 'a useful check on our analysis of the poem'. From this I would suggest that it is sensible for a modern reader to attempt to replicate an ancient reader's approach to the poem by thinking in terms of Homer himself having some gentle fun (bearing in mind, we might note, its appearances in ancient lists of Homer's 'fun poems' (παίγνια), which also include such texts as *Margites*), tempting though it might be to imagine the author as a critic of Homer gleefully drawing attention to perceived failings.

Talking frogs and mice have origins in the world of fable, and this tradition is examined next (21-32). Hosty demonstrates that the poem's characterisations are consistent with the fabular tradition: shrewd mice are 'tiny but courageous gluttons' while boastful and arrogant frogs are ultimately put to flight. He argues that the poet is likely to have taken as a model something like the fragmentary *Galeomyomachia* (as we title it) and provided the mice with a new, less obvious foe, probably inspired by the *Fable of the Mouse and the Frog*. A further suggestion, that the *Arachnomachia*, *Geranomachia* and *Psaromachia* attributed to Homer by the Suda also involved mice as the foes of the spiders, cranes and starlings, is the more convincing as Hosty adduces the parallel of the mouseless title *Batrachomachia* by which Martial and Statius refer to the poem.

A section on the poem's metre and Homeric language (33-47) examines the conscious use of Homeric morphology, and the considerable extent to which Homeric phrasing is not simply borrowed but subtly changed – as in the two examples βέλει ὀξυόεντι (line 194) and στιβαρὸν δόρυ (line 207), which 'couple weapons with adjectives never used to describe them in Homer' (34; cf. the note on line 229, identifying 'a characteristic concern for expressions which allude to and yet differ from Homeric models'). The commentary thus strongly makes the case that the poet is envisaging readers with an ability to recognise not only what Homer does but also what he does *not* do (37). In light of the point raised above about ancient readers' readiness to believe this poem a work of Homer, the implications of this could be taken further: might an ancient

reader be at all inclined to use this as evidence for *non*-Homeric authorship, or rather as evidence for Homer's own careful obedience to set rules of parodic procedure, which would reinforce an impression that he is having fun parodying his own poetry? The detailed discussion of metrical features demonstrates that the author's practice reflects an attempt to sound more old-fashioned by largely rejecting Hellenistic refinements, notably by ignoring Naeke's law (46-7).

The introduction's final 20 pages address the notoriously poor state of the text. Hosty argues that the textual tradition in the two MS families is 'still fundamentally united', so rejects the 'multitext' approach of Glei (who produced two separate texts of the poem), observing that scribes would have considered that they were copying 'a poem with a single fixed historical author' and thus been less likely to engage in 'open-source' rewriting. But he equally cautions against a positivism that would suggest that any edition can ever form a 'correct' text (64). His critical edition is based on his own collation of nine important manuscripts of the tenth to late-thirteenth or early-fourteenth century (Glei's sigla FJLPQSTYZ), so that 'every reading I record is based on autopsy' (66).

As he sets out his principles (78-81), Hosty acknowledges the special problems posed by the poem's content, since an illogicality that one reader interprets as textual corruption could be viewed by another as 'deliberate surrealism' creating humour, the most striking example being the return of the dead Psicharpax (lines 230-46). His way of dealing with this is sensible: he starts from an assumption that the poet is consistent in imitating and subverting, but not flouting, Homeric norms, so that (for example) a soldier will not attack a member of his own army. It seems to me that this is supported by the evidence throughout the commentary that the poet is a deeply knowledgeable and thoughtful reader of Homer. Although subjectivity is inevitably still involved in this approach, it leads to the adoption of a middle ground between previous editors' extremes, which I illustrate with a few examples of Hosty's approach to the deletion of lines.

He argues that repetition within a very short passage can be defended, as imitative of Homeric practice (and thus he retains both lines 226 and 230). Likewise, although editors have thought line 222 suspect, Hosty finds it 'sophisticated' and unlikely to be an interpolation. His solution here is simple and elegant: transposing this line before 220 and adopting the reading of ST – ἐπορνύμενος, rather than PQYZ's ἐπορνυμένου – makes much more sense of the passage and deals with the scholiasts' unnatural interpretation of this word.

But he follows other editors in rejecting, as obvious interpolation, the whole of lines 42-52 (noting further that this passage is missing from the sole papyrus fragment of the poem, published only in 2003). Yet he keeps lines 53-5 (which do appear on the papyrus); in answering one of Glei's objections to these lines he pleasingly interprets 'Homer' from 'Homer' by pointing out that the poem's frog-names reflect an association between frogs and vegetables, so that Glei's

point that real-life frogs are carnivorous is irrelevant to a consideration of these lines referring to frogs' vegetable diet. Attention to the bigger picture of the poem also leads to the deletion of line 123, which 'would make nonsense of the later scenes on Olympus'. He keeps line 61 (thus parting company with other editors), on the grounds that the supposed interpolation is harder to parse than the line it allegedly glosses (and, I would add, it serves to emphasize the frog's boasting of the benefits of amphibious life in response to the mouse's erroneous assumption that frogs live only ἐν ὕδασιν in line 33). At line 292, where the 'paradosis gives viable if not optimal sense', Hosty prefers restraint, not intervening even though rejecting West's transposition results in 'odd' syntax.

The Greek text is printed with a facing English translation that provides a clear and accurate guide to the meaning, but also captures the style by using a 'very free six-beat rhythm' modelled on Richmond Lattimore's Homer translations (85). Lattimore's familiarity for many modern readers helps to create something of the uncanny feeling resulting from parody of familiar Homeric style. The literal meanings of the characters' names ('Lick-plate', 'Mud-man', etc.) are provided in an index of characters (289-90), but Hosty avoids using these in the translation, setting out instead to capture the same 'distancing effect' that a reader of Homer in translation experiences with characters' names (85).

I noted only three problems: at line 120 the translation 'So come now: let us arm ourselves and march forth against them' elides the distinction between second- and third-person (ἄγεθ' ὁπλίζεσθε καὶ ἐξέλθωμεν), and in fact translates the reading ὁπλιζώμεσθα recorded in the apparatus. Line 196's translation is missing; and line 242 has 'face-down' for *ὕπτιος*, which should surely be 'face-up'.

Throughout the commentary there is much discussion of the subtlety with which the poet deploys allusions, although Hosty is always careful not to overstate possible links and uses the term 'allusion' to refer to 'intertexts I judge readable and identifiable enough to tell a story about' (Introduction, n. 5). For instance, while identifying Athene's speech (lines 177-96) as 'certainly indebted' to the mousetrap story in Callimachus' *Aetia* fr. 54c, with multiple points of similarity, he is rightly sceptical of West's claim that there is allusion to Moschus' *Europa* in lines 65-81. The evidence here is simply not sufficient to prove that the poet is playing with this particular version of what was a popular myth – and consequently the passage cannot be evidence for the date of composition (153-61; cf. 6-7). Likewise, Hosty identifies a possible echo of *Batrachomyomachia* 113 in Diodorus Siculus, but I agree that 'the link is not strong' (177), and it seems most likely coincidental.

The contexts of the poem's borrowings and allusions are thoroughly examined for significance. So, on line 68, Hosty identifies the form τερπόμενος (also in line 11) as ominous foreshadowing, since 'an alert Homeric reader' would realise that this form appears in Homer only at *Od.* 12.52, used of Odysseus listening to the Sirens; but also 'the intertext is sophisticated' since 'Psicharpax

is τερπόμενος twice, both times on or around water, yet the water which delights him is a threat to his survival' (156).

A satisfying confluence of allusions is identified at lines 92-8, where we learn that the mouse's dying curse is not only modelled on those of Patroclus and Hector (and might also be influenced by the drowning victim's curse in Timotheus' *Persae*), but is also particularly appropriate as it is familiar from fable. Hosty is nonetheless careful to observe that what seems the most obvious intertext, in the version of the *Fable of the Mouse and the Frog* in the *Vita Aesopi*, might itself have been borrowed from the *Batrachomyomachia*.

The note on line 195 points out that ἀγχέμαχοι ('close fighters'), used of mice here and of the Mysians at *Il.* 13.5, might have suggested itself as specially applicable since *Μυσοί* suggests μῦς. Here it could be brought out more that this in fact creates subtle humour that rewards the expert Homer-reader. I suspect that punning could also lie behind the aorist form *καταμῦσαι* four lines earlier: does the non-Homeric long upsilon, noted by Hosty, draw attention to the syllable precisely because it creates a μῦς-pun?

Hosty's arguments are usually very convincing, although the discussion of the imperfect ἔην in line 8 (ὡς λόγος ἐν θνητοῖσιν ἔην) perhaps over-complicates its significance, leading to the translation 'as the story among mortals *once* had it' (my italics). I agree that the λόγος in question here is the Gigantomachy, but the tense does not obviously imply that that story 'is now a thing of the past'; rather it explains that the Mice were emulating (μιμούμενοι) the deeds of the Giants simply because the story was at that time already well-known and thus available to inspire them, and the departure from the expected present tense brings this out. The poet is enjoying the piquancy of tiny Mice performing acts like those of Giants, but not, I suggest, to the extent of implying that the Gigantomachy has been '*replaced* ... by this new slimline Hellenistic pocket Gigantomachy' (my italics).

In the poem's second half Hosty identifies play with 'accidental resurrections' and 'impermanent death', his view of which will be familiar from his article on 'Schrödinger's Mouse' (*JHS* 137, 2017, 135-41). He argues that in lines 230-46 the apparent confusions that result in a character dying more than once actually suggest 'intentional parodic engagement with Homer's accidental resurrections' (such as the 'notorious crux' of Hypsenor seemingly coming back to life at *Il.* 13.423), rather than indicating textual confusion, as has generally been assumed. So, as with the repetition in lines 226 and 230, Hosty is happy to allow the oddities to stand as deliberate imitation, arguing that the poem 'goes out of its way to draw attention to the problems' (225). This reading seems to me entirely consistent with the poet's approach, and Hosty strengthens his argument by pointing out that the passage also draws special attention to itself by the 'unusually' close similarity to the pattern of events in the combat at *Il.* 4.517-35.

In summary, Hosty's stimulating commentary not only provides the reader with a clear and level-headed guide through the *Batrachomyomachia*'s textual difficulties but also uncovers a host of features revealing the depth and significance of the poet's intertextual engagement. The volume is well produced, with barely any typographical errors, and its dustjacket features a delightfully armed mouse wielding (as in lines 129-30) a sewing-needle spear.

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Cécile Daude, Sylvie David, Michel Fartzoff, Claire Muckensturm-Poulle, *Scholies à Pindare.* Volume II: *Scholies à la deuxième Olympique*, Institut des sciences et techniques de l'Antiquité, Besançon: Presses Universitaires de Franche-Comté, 2020, 38.00 €, 310 pp., ISBN 978-2-84867-771-2.

The second volume in this series appeared seven years after the first.[1] Prodi's estimate that the series will comprise 17 volumes in total[2] would mean that anyone awaiting a French translation of the ancient scholia to the Pythians (let alone the Isthmians) will need a great deal of patience, not to mention longevity, since at the current production rate the final volume may not appear until the third decade of the next century. The editors deserve some thanks for making available a serviceable translation of the ancient scholia to *Olympian* 2 (although it is not free from error) and for some interesting discussion in the commentary. However, they have paid insufficient attention to the constructive criticisms made by reviewers of the first volume[3] and as a result the second volume is not an adequate piece of scholarship. That it should have taken a team of four seven years to produce a volume of the scholia to a single ode of Pindar serves to show what a sterling job Drachmann (henceforward 'Dr.') did having regard to the materials and time available to him.

Daude's introduction (13-41) is well-written and contains some good discussion of the interest in history, myth and poetic language apparent in the scholia to *Olympian* 2.

[1] The concept of the series seems confused. On the one hand, it aims to provide a translation for those with insufficient Greek or who need assistance to translate the scholia themselves (a laudable task). On the other, it purports to provide a detailed scholarly commentary. There are therefore two different audiences. The editors serve the needs of the first, but a much better job could and should have been done serving those of the second.

[2] E.E. Prodi, *BMCR* 27 December 2014 https://bmcr.brynmawr.edu/2014/2014.12.27/.

[3] See the reviews of M. Cannatà Fera, *Gnomon* 88, 2016, 677-84; T. Phillips, *CR* 65, 2015, 341-3; Prodi (n. 2) and G. Ucciardello, *Mnemosyne* 6, 2015, 1035-9. A. Neumann-Hartmann, *MH* 71, 2014, 214-15 is little more than a notice. The review of G. Lachenaud, *REG* 127, 2014, 231-3 seemed to be puffed up with patriotic pride and lacking in objectivity.