

Citation style

Skempis, Marios: review of: S. Douglas Olson, *The Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite and Related Texts. Text, Translation and Commentary*, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2012, in: *Museum Helveticum*, 73(2016), 2, p. 222, DOI: 10.21245/rec.ant.87657063



copyright

This article may be downloaded and/or used within the private copying exemption. Any further use without permission of the rights owner shall be subject to legal licences (§§ 44a-63a UrhG / German Copyright Act).

Buchbesprechungen – Comptes rendus

S. Douglas Olson: The Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite and Related Texts: Text, Translation and Commentary. Texte und Kommentare 39. De Gruyter, Berlin/Boston 2012. X, 328 p.

Four years after Faulkner's commentary on the *h. Aphr.*, S. Douglas Olson (O.) delivers his own take on this poem, which he edits, translates, and comments together with nine minor hymns. The introductory section (p. 1–51) is divided into six parts and shows O.'s initial intention to come to grips with *h. Aphr.* rather than the ensuing set of ten *Homeric Hymns*, one major and nine minor ones, because most of the subsections hosted neglect the set of minor hymns: the subsection "Date of Composition", for instance, does not even mention the date of the "related texts", the nine minor hymns. The second section (p. 54–127) is devoted to the critical edition of the texts, with interfacing translation. O. builds a block of related texts around the core, which is *h. Aphr.* The governing principle is overtly gendered and slightly ironic at once inasmuch as the set of nine minor hymns praises deities, apart from Aphrodite herself, whose relation with her field of consequence is either questionable (Athena, Artemis, and Hestia are virgin goddesses) or controversial (Hera epitomizes the underprivileged wife of a loose-liver husband such as Zeus). O. endows his text with three apparatuses: one cataloguing expressions that "quote, echo, or refer" to surviving texts of early Greek epic and beyond, a second one designating *h. Aphr.*'s use of formulaic language, and a third one documenting his textual choices. Apparatuses such as the first two ones are new to the publishing policy of the TuK series and prove a very helpful tactic that may facilitate contextual and genre-oriented readings. O.'s commentary (p. 129–320) manages to keep a good balance between linguistic pragmatics and interpretative basics; yet, it occasionally leaves its reader disappointed by not drawing associations far too obvious not to be commented upon. For instance, his note on the formulaic junction ἔργα πολυχρύσου Ἀφροδίτης (1) and the way in which it co-relates to ἔργα εὐστεφάνου Κυθερείης (6) does not take heed of the doubly catalogic context in which they are embedded: the former introduces a six-entry catalogue of species on which A(phrodite) has power, and the latter a three-entry catalogue of goddesses whom A. does not influence. Although O. acknowledges the double catalogue setting, he does not mention that A. is addressed as χρυσέη in the proem of the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* (fr. 1.4 M.-W.) and as πολυχρυσέη in the proem of *Aspis* (8), which overlaps with the *Catalogue's* Alcmena-*ehoiē*. These parallels are significant not just due to the two-headed catalogue setting of the *exordium* of *h. Aphr.*, but because they cover the first two species-entries of the opening catalogue: just as A. controls copulation in the realm of gods and mortals in *h. Aphr.*, she presides over the sexual activity of gods in the *Catalogue* (fr. 1.5 M.-W.) and that of mortals in the *Aspis* (6). It is evident that in both cases *h. Aphr.* sets out to challenge traditional contexts of *ehoiē* poetry when fashioning a pro-A. as well as an anti-A. catalogue by foregrounding (and by criticizing) her rootedness in female catalogue poetry. Scholars tend to emphasize the major shift from the divine to the human realm under the mask of "mixed" genealogies, which *h. Aphr.* stages, and never fail to comment on how this development leads up to the end of the Age of Heroes, which *h. Aphr.* insinuates by using both Anchises and the mixed mini-catalogue that features Tithonus and Ganymedes, as a case in point. It is worthwhile exploring how this sort of reasoning operates in the realm of genre, a task not undertaken so far, especially since the end of the Age of Heroes is a matter broached by the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women*, a poem that puts heroes at its epicentre as embodiments of mixed genealogies and makes out of A. herself a metaphor for sexuality and marriage as well as a pervasive theme for the entire narrative. Given the lack of positioning concerning this matter, I wish to single out one discursive particularity that speaks for an anchoring of *h. Aphr.* to contexts of *ehoiē* poetry: 1. *hoie* indexing introduces A. as a pre-entry in the catalogue of goddesses who slept with mortal men (179; cf. 175), and recurs at the close of the embedded catalogue (237s.; cf. 239). O. remarks that *h. Aphr.* 237s. are a *verbatim* loan from the Odyssean *Nekyia* (11.393s.), but makes no connection to the catalogue setting common to these references (p. 252). Marios Skempis