

The Creation of Ritual Space through Callimachus' Mimetic Hymns

Callimachus' six hymns represent the best preserved work from the Hellenistic poet.

While all the hymns function as a unified group, three hymns stand out: the *Hymn to Apollo*, the *Bath of Pallas*, and the *Hymn to Demeter*. They all include or allude to an epiphany of a deity, can be characterized as mimetic hymns, and present distinct myths and religious rituals. There is much debate on the function and origin of these hymns, ranging from composition for a specific festival to simple literary exercises. Whatever the original impetus, these hymns bring us closer to understanding Hellenistic religion and ritual in Ptolemaic Alexandria, and thus must be studied as more than literary compositions. I will argue that the three hymns of Callimachus, because of their mimetic nature and religiously specific diction, serve two functions for two sets of audiences. Firstly, for a modern audience, they shed light on ancient rituals and festivals for Apollo, Athena, and Demeter. Secondly, for an ancient audience, they had the ability to create ritual space in a non-ritual location.

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