

# ON CALLIMACHUS' LITERARY VIEW CONCERNING EPIC

My learned colleague H. White has, in her review published in *Habis* 29, 1998, p. 388ff., demonstrated that Cameron's thesis, according to which Callimachus did not object to voluminous epic poetry, is unfounded and contradicted by ancient evidence<sup>1</sup>. For all the details, I refer the reader to her review; I should only like to dilate on Callim. *Hymn*. II, 105 f.:

ὁ Φθόνος Ἀπόλλωνος ἐπ' οὔατα λάθριος εἶπεν:  
“οὐκ ἄγαμαι τὸν αἰδὸν δὲ οὐδ' ὅσα πόντος αἰεῖδει”

Cameron, who repeatedly mentions this passage in his book, has not understood that his thesis is flatly contradicted by Callimachus' words. It is clear from the scholia *ad loc.* (Pfeiffer, *Callimachus*, vol. II, p. 53) that Callimachus, here, attacks those who mocked him because he was not able, in their opinion, to write a long epic poem (μέγα ποίημα). As regards the two lines under discussion, whether we take πόντος to mean “sea”<sup>2</sup> (in which case the proverbial vastness of the sea would symbolize, in Callimachus' line, the voluminous size of epic poems written in the manner of Homer), or “Homer” (as suggested by Herter, followed by Williams and me<sup>3</sup>), or “Pontus Euxinus” (in which case Callimachus' aside would be aimed at Apollonius Rhodius, as acutely but less than accurately perceived by Spanheim, and as cogently argued by Dr White<sup>4</sup>, who correctly sees a verbal syllepsis in line 106, instead of the impossible ellipsis<sup>5</sup> suggested by Spanheim), the fact remains that in the two lines of the Hymn Callimachus, in order to defend his own ὀλιγοστιχία, challenges the artistic validity of voluminous epic poetry<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. the judicious assessment by J.G. Montes Cala, *Calimaco, Hécale*, Cádiz (undated), p. 275 f.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. E. Eichgrün, *Kallimachos und Apollonios*, diss. Berlin 1961, p. 159 f., 169 f.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Cor. Londin.* II, 1982, p. 57 ff., with bibliography.

<sup>4</sup> *Callimachus and Envy*, *Habis* 30, 1999, p. 111 ff., with bibliography.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Smiley, *Hermathena* 1913, p. 285.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. E.Cahen, *Les Hymnes de Callimaque*, Paris 1930, p. 85 ff.