

Callimachus, in his *Hymn to Zeus*, engages in two simultaneous projects: on the one hand, he celebrates his explicit subject, Zeus (paying tribute, through this vehicle, to Ptolemy Philadelphus; in this respect, see Hunter 2002); yet, at the same time, Callimachus also concerns himself with the creation of the Hymn itself (Hurst 1994), grappling with previous literary tradition and contradictory narratives of the birth and majesty of Zeus. In two polemical sections (4-9, 60-65), Callimachus discusses the plausibility and authenticity of his own poetic accounts. The second of these polemical sections climaxes with the somewhat unsettling prayer: “Would that my lies persuade the ears of my hearer!” (ψευδοίμην αἰόντος ἄ κεν πεπίθοιεν ἀκούην, 65), echoing Hesiod’s famous pronouncement by the Muses (ἴδμεν ψεύδεα πολλὰ λέγειν ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα, *Theo*.27). This paper argues that ψευδοίμην in line 65 brings to fulfillment the metaliterary discourse of Hymn 1, intimately connecting the act of deception with the creation of poetry, and examines how this connection of poetry and deception (ψεῦδος) can be fruitfully analyzed in other parts of the Callimachean corpus.

First, by reviewing the occurrences of ψεῦδος and its cognates in *Hymn* 1, culminating in line 65, I show how Callimachus employs the word in the so-called polemical passages. In these two passages, he juxtaposes explicit discussion of the poem in progress, especially its relationship to previous literature (criticizing those accounts which disagree with him: e.g. dismissing the Cretan account of Zeus’ birth by dismissively labelling all Cretans ψεῦστα, 8-9) with implicit clues that belie the inadequacies of his “proofs” of his own poetic superiority (catalogued thoroughly by Harder 1992, Lüddecke 1998, and Cuypers 2004). The incongruity between Callimachus’ claims of plausibility and the incompetence of the arguments by which he pretends to prove this plausibility—which aim at rationality but are based on fallacy or assumption—ironically exposes the real import of ψευδοίμην: the lie which he hopes to tell well is the very poem he is writing. This connection between deception and poetry is forged all the more strongly because Callimachus fails to live up to the convention of plausibility which he had set out.

Given this link between lying and poetry as forged in *Hymn to Zeus*, I then suggest that the uses of ψεῦδος and its cognates in other Hymns (ἐψεύσαο at 6.83; ψευδοπάτωρ at 6.98; and ψεύδεα at 5.136) can also be thought of as bringing attention to their own literary production by Callimachus. They achieve this either by pointing to deception *within* the text as a result of Callimachus’ own literary creation (the excuses that Erysichthon’s mother invents in the *Hymn to Demeter*), or by speciously calling on the actor inside the text (in the *Hymn to Bath of Pallas*) as an authority to confirm the authenticity of the very narrative in which that actor appears.

Finally, I examine how this connection between poetry and lies manifests itself in another part of the Callimachean corpus which demands just as active a reader as the *Hymns*, the epigrams (Bing 1995). In Epigram 13 Pf. (= 31 G.-P.), a passerby addresses the *stèle* of Charidas, then converses with the dead Charidas himself. Callimachus exposes his poetic invention (“invented” in the sense of both “creative” and “deceptive”) by having the “resurrected” Charidas dismiss any possibility of return (“way back up,” ἄνοδοι, l. 3) from the Underworld with the word ψεῦδος—thereby invalidating Charidas’ own ability to make this assertion. Callimachus, at the moment of the employment of ψεῦδος, snaps the suspension of disbelief that the conventions of imaginary epitaph require and thereby brings attention to those conventions and, in turn, his own literary activity.