

On the basis of language and allusion, I argue that the *Homeric Hymn to Selene* (32) should be dated to the early-fifth century BCE or earlier. This runs counter to conventional wisdom, which places the hymn's time of origin to the Hellenistic period or later. Such an early date of composition has serious implications for our understanding of the collection of the Homeric hymns as a whole.

Hymn 32 has received little scholarly attention. The arguments of Allen, Halliday, and Sikes (1936) that it is late represent the scholarly consensus on the topic. Vocabulary (ἐνδιόονται, line 6, appears nowhere else before Theocritus), infelicities of style, and a “search after recondite mythology,” particularly the otherwise unknown figure of Pandeia, are the evidence they offer. Gelzer (1987) goes further, assigning this hymn, along with those to Ares (8) and Helios (31) to a distinct genre of “astral hymns” composed in the early imperial period. It is worth pointing out, however, that Gelzer assumes a late date for *Selene* rather than really arguing for one. Cassolá (1975), who prefers an earlier date, levels this criticism against scholarship on *Selene* more broadly, arguing that none of the evidence cited makes a definitive case for Hellenistic authorship, and indeed that it points at least as strongly to an archaic date.

Building on Cassolá's skepticism, I argue for an early date for the hymn. The strongly Hesiodic language of the hymn, difficult to understand in an imitator of Homeric texts, is one piece of evidence. In addition, there is the testimony of two intertexts: the phrase Μουσάων θεράποντες appears at line 21 of the hymn and also at line 913 of Aristophanes' *Birds*, where it is attributed to Homer; and the phrase γαῖαν ἐλίσσειται is found at *Selene* line 3 and in a fragment of Empedocles (45 D-K). The former, noted by Allen, Halliday, and Sikes, is not strong evidence on its own, since the reference could also be to the pseudo-Homeric *Margites*. The latter, previously unobserved, makes a more compelling case. The Empedocles fragment describes the moon as reflecting the light of the sun, adapting Homeric language to do so. Although the brevity of both hymn and fragment make it difficult to know who is alluding to whom, I argue that Empedocles' language suggests he is rebutting the argument of another source, probably this hymn in particular. It, on the other hand, betrays no knowledge of Empedocles' cosmology (such as we would expect if it were the later text), but instead is unambiguous in its description of the moon the source of its own light. In understanding the intertext as an allusion by Empedocles to the hymn, we must place the *terminus ante quem* for the hymn's composition in the mid-fifth century.

This has significant implications for our understanding of the corpus of the Homeric hymns. First, the hymn's reference (lines 18-20) to epic recitation becomes the earliest evidence for the hymns as *prooimia* to epic performance, a point controversy in the scholarship of these poems. Second, since the goddess Selene received little or no cult in archaic and classical Greece, the performative context for the hymn could not have been a festival or similar cult event. It would be corroboration, then, to the arguments of Clay (1989), who identified symposia, rather than festivals, as the performative context for the Homeric Hymns.