

erudition which, to them, must have seemed a sign not of aesthetic motivation but health and genius itself.

For some readers, therefore, an exercise of historical imagination may be required; if we are to indulge the Alexandrians in their lush learnedness, their aestheticism, their swaggering literary polemic, we must reach back to a time before the suspicion of texts had become ingrained, when 'writers' and 'readers' were exciting new categories and there seemed to be only one Library in the world worthy of the name. The least we can say is that their poetry sheds light on the differences between a text-based and an oral poetic culture. The typical virtues of 'Alexandrianism' – its small scale and humble subject matter, its technical polish and flaunted allusiveness, as well as what we might call its *Ars Poetica* instinct and its carefulness in the organization of its books – would all be picked up by the Romans and passed by them into the mainstream of medieval and modern European poetry. Surrounded by more books than they could ever read, the denizens of the Library were kids in a candy store, gluttons in the timeless new world of text where they were free to feast at leisure. Small wonder, then, that a Callimachus, holed up with his books, shunning Timotheus, reading and responding to Plato, invented literary poetry.

Callimachus

Scholarly, ingenious, playful, prickly, Callimachus of Cyrene (circa 110–240 BCE) was the greatest poet of his age and an Alexandrian par excellence; indeed, he was progenitor, high priest and avatar of what today we term 'Alexandrianism', a term which conjures (among other things) extravagant erudition, literary self-consciousness, generic experimentation and cross-pollination, and technical polish. Born in Cyrene, a Greek city on the Libyan coast about 700 miles west of Alexandria, Callimachus spent most of his life in the capital, as a courtier to both Ptolemy II Philadelphus and Ptolemy III Euergetes. One source claims that, when young, he was a schoolteacher in the Alexandrian suburb of Eleusis, another that he was a 'youth of the court' – the latter implies higher birth, and is, at first sight, more likely. Callimachus never headed the Library, but he was one of its most productive scholars; his more than 800 books included a thorough bibliography of its vast holdings (he is often said to have 'invented' bibliographical science), alongside many works with titles such as *Foundations of Islands and Cities*, *On the Rivers of Europe* and *On Wonders and Miracles in Italy*. His poetry displays a similarly compendious bookishness. He was constantly picking quarrels with critics, whom he attacks in his extant poems. The most prominent was said to be Apollonius – 'of Rhodes' supposedly having been attached to his name only after he fled there to escape Callimachus' salvos. But, like most good stories about ancient poets, this latter claim seems to have been the invention of a later age.

Amartyron ouden aeido: 'I sing nothing without a witness' (or 'nothing unattested'), Callimachus writes in his fragment 612. It appears to be a classic truth-claim, descended directly from the epiphany granted by the Muses to Hesiod, the didactic poet and Homer's rough contemporary, at the beginning of his *Theogony*. There, appearing as he grazes his sheep on Mount Helicon, the Muses tell Hesiod: 'We know how to tangle falsehoods that sound true / but we also know the truth, when we want to tell it' – the implication being that Hesiod, with their help,

will be speaking the truth. For him, the Muses are sources of divine inspiration; in Callimachus, especially in the first two books of his aetiological work, the *Aetia*, they speak from the shelves of scrolls. The poet presents himself as a compiler, sifting and rewriting what has already been written. And yet there are reasons not to take him at his word. By the third century BCE, poets had fully absorbed the heckling of such eminences as Xenophanes (pp. 109–13) and Plato; they treated the traditional truth-claims of oral poetry with healthy irony, if not outright cynicism. As poet, Callimachus may claim to be a Good and Truthful Scholar, but his tongue is often firmly in his cheek. Elsewhere he says: 'I'd like my lies, when I tell them, to be convincing.'

The question of originality is tricky here. Though there is no reason to assume that Callimachus' nerdy enthusiasms (for aetiology, say) are not authentic, and he does write personally at times (see, for instance, *Iambus* 12, p. 266); and though, in fact, his writing is full of personality of voice – still, regardless of all this, if we want creation *ex nihilo* (out of nothing), or *ex vivo* (from the life), Callimachus is not our poet. Despite (and because of) his indebtedness to other authors, however, Callimachus was a great innovator. He may well have been the first poet to make extensive use of prose as a source for verse – a thing Shakespeare also did, when, for example, he made a rather ordinary passage from North's Plutarch, describing Cleopatra's appearance on a barge, into one of the most transcendent passages of poetry in *Antony and Cleopatra*. Callimachus opened up poetry to new subjects and attitudes. He introduced technical refinements to the dactylic hexameter. He was among the first to arrange his own poems into books. His *Hymns* 1 (p. 269) and 5 (p. 272) deploy a new kind of *mimesis*, or imitation of life, intended to evoke cult ceremonies for readers who were not actually present. And, in passages we have come to call 'programmatic', he formulated aesthetic principles, which he proclaimed in verse: for example, his preference for poetry that was 'slender' and polished; for pure streams (of diction) and untrodden paths (of subject matter). These had an immense influence on Roman poets in particular; and, even when their 'project' diverged from his, they borrowed his way of asserting it. In particular, the Prologue to his *Aetia* (I.I, p. 258) became the single most influential piece of Greek literature in Rome, leaving its mark on

compositions by Virgil (pp. 398–410), Propertius (pp. 421–45), Horace (pp. 453–91) and Ovid (pp. 492–526).

A further word on the *Aetia*. The inclusion of selections from that work in the present volume is, on generic grounds, difficult to justify. Though the poem is elegiac in meter and, to some extent, in subject matter (for example, the symposium scene in the *Banquet of Pollis*, p. 139), its operative mode is best described as 'didactic'. The works which are closest to it in spirit and style – Propertius' fourth book of *Elegies* and Ovid's learned long elegy about the Roman calendar, the *Fasti* – are for the most part excluded for reasons of genre and space (though two unrepresentative poems from Propertius' Book 4 are given: see pp. 440 and 442). I would argue, however, that Callimachus is such a central figure, such an important hinge between the oral poetics of the Archaic lyricists – composers for the literal or figurative stage – and the literary poetry of the Romans – writers for the page – that he deserves a more well-rounded selection than would appear if, on generic grounds, I included samples taken from only the *Iambi* and the *Epigrams*. As such, an exception has, in this case, been made: an idiosyncratic one, admittedly, but one that I believe is justified.

Callimachus was an aesthete, an intellectual entertainer and a polemicist; he was smarter and better than other Alexandrian writers, and he was pleased to say so. For me, his playful bookishness recalls a triumvirate of modern writers – Constantine Cavafy, Jorge Luis Borges and Umberto Eco – who share with Callimachus, and each other, a fascination with the arcana of history and an unabashed obsession with libraries and reading. In the end, Callimachus' scholarly attainments may have been surpassed by the librarians who came after him, but his influence – and his exquisite Greek – never were.

The *Aetia*°

I.1°

Prologue: To the Critics

You're [always] croaking at my music's strains,
 Telchines, cretins whom the Muse disdains,°
 since I've made no uninterrupted song
 of kings or heroes, thousands of lines long,
 but speak in little spurts, as children do,°
 despite the many decades I've lived through.
 [Hear] this, Telchines: 'Tribe [both dull and vile,]
 trained just to simmer in your vicious bile:
 [I] write slight poems – [so what?] The tender stalk
 10 *Demeter* bears outweighs the mighty [*Oak*],°
 and of *Mimnermus*' volumes, it's the Fine,
 not the Fat Woman, proves his verse divine.°
 Let cranes fly far, from Egypt up to Thrace,
 to wage their war against the Pygmy race;°
 from far away let Scythian arrows fall
 upon the Mede; but poems are sweeter small.°
 Damned cross-eyed yokels! Measure my success°
 not by the Persian chain, but artfulness.°
 I can't bear thunder in my poetry –
 20 don't seek it there! It's Zeus who booms, not me.
 For, when I first had taken pen in hand,
 Lycian Apollo uttered this command.°
 [He said, 'My friend,] a bard's tending should render
 his sacrifices fat, but his Muse slender.
 I say this too: don't stumble through a rut
 that wagons leave, or drive your chariot
 through others' tracks or down wide roads, but tread
 an unworn path, though tightly limited.'
 [Agreed:] my readers love the high, clear voice
 30 [of the cicada,] not the ass's noise.°
 Let others honk the donkey's flop-eared cry;

let me be delicate, be winged, ah, fly
 forever, singing as I sip the dew –
 [bountiful] manna of the holy blue –
 and shed old age, for me as ponderous
 as Sicily atop Enceladus.°
 [No matter;] Muses, once they've glorified
 a man in youth, in age stand by his side.

Fragment 178+2.43°

The Banquet of Pollis

[For Pollis didn't skimp on or] ignore
 the Festival of the Cask-Opening or
 Orestes' Pitcher-Feast, which slaves adore;
 but now it was your yearly feast he kept,
 Erigone, whom Attic women wept,°
 with some like-minded friends, and, in addition,
 one new to Alexandria, an Ician
 by birth, here on some personal affair,
 fresh off the boat. We grabbed a couch to share,
 not by design, but Homer's aphorism –
 10 'the god leads like to like' – must have some wisdom,°
 since we both hated chugging unmixed drafts
 like Thracians, but preferred petite carafes.°
 In the third round of drinks, when I had learned
 his name and family, I told him as I turned,
 'It's really true, the rule, "Wine should be cut
 with water, yes, but also scuttlebutt."°
 It's on us – since these Ganymedes won't pour it
 with ladles, and your pointed looks won't score it
 from gazes of unbending condescension,
 20 now free men must compete for slaves' attention –
 to drop it like a drug into the cup
 ourselves, Theogenes, and drink it up.
 Come on, and tell me everything I yearn
 to hear from you. Here's what I'd like to learn:

Fr. 178

10

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by Hybrias the Cretan' (p. 65) – perhaps they found him funny, and connected his name with the 'overweening arrogance' (*hybris*) of his boast. In any rate, as a piece for general reperformance this poem seems in line with the kind of postprandial fantasizing described by Bacch. fr. 40b (p. 185) and Pi. fr. 124a+b (p. 163). The first line of each stanza echoes Ar. (p. 6), if we take *doru* as 'spear' rather than 'ship' (see n. *ad loc.*).

POST-CLASSICAL GREEK LYRIC

250. *Introduction*. 'vast sums of money . . .': Letter of Aristeeas 9 (trans. R. J. Charles).
 251. *The dolphin who had once saved Arion*: See Anon. 939 (p. 239) and n.
 252. *one cynical wag*: Timon of Phlius, quoted in Ath. *Deip.* 1.22d.
 ' . . . opposite to other men in almost all matters': Hdt. *Hist.* 2.33.

Callimachus

255. *Poet Introduction*. One source claims . . . he was a schoolteacher: The sixth-century CE Byzantine encyclopedia known as the *Suda* (s.v. 'Callimachus') says 'another that he was a youth of the court': The twelfth-century Byzantine polymath John Tzetzes, quoted in Susan Stephens' 'Introduction', in *Brill's Companion to Callimachus*, p. 11.
critics, whom he attacks in his extant poems: See, for example, *Ant.* 1.1 (p. 258), *Ia.* 1, ll. 6–30 (pp. 61–2), and *Hy.* 2, ll. 105–13 (pp. 271–3).
'We know how to fangle falsehoods . . .': Hes. *Th.*, ll. 26–8.
 256. *'I'd like my lies, when I tell them . . .'*: Call. *Hy.* 1 (To Zeus), l. 63.
a thing Shakespeare also did: In *Antony and Cleopatra*, 2.2. Cf. Plutarch, *Life of Antony* 26.
 257. *the poem is elegiac in meter*: See Note on Meters (p. xxxi).
an exception . . . that I believe is justified: The components of the argument for Callimachus' importance are, to some degree, scattered throughout this book. I am persuaded by Eric Havelock's argument in his *Preface to Plato* (*passim*) that much of Plato's criticism of Homeric poetry (see *Intro* to the Classical Period, pp. 190–92) is a criticism of its cultural furniture and mental technology of oral poetry; and it seems to me that Callimachus' efforts showed the way to write poetry after Plato (see *Intro* to Post-Classical Greek Lyric, p. 253), particularly for the

Romans who came after him. On the latter, see especially the *Intros* to Latin Lyric (pp. 365–72), Catullus (pp. 373–5) and Propertius (pp. 421–4). For more on Callimachus in the Alexandrian transition from stage to page, see n. on Call. *Hy.* 2 (p. 269).

258. *Aetia*. The *Aetia* (*Causes*) is a long poem in four books which focuses on 'aetiological' narratives – that is, stories about the origins or causes of various phenomena, mostly cults and rituals. The poem is episodic in structure – there is no consistent attempt to weave the various stories together, as in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. However, there is a narrative frame in the first two books – the poet dreams that he travels to Mount Helicon in Boeotia, where he meets the Muses and asks them questions about the causes of various things. (This Hesiodic encounter, psychologized by Callimachus into the realm of dreams, became a frequently imitated motif among the Romans; see, for example, Prop. 3.3, p. 432, and n.) The *Aetia*'s third and fourth books, however, abandon the narrative frame to present their aetiologies as discrete stories.

Unlike Callimachus' *Hymns* (pp. 269–76) and *Epigrams* (pp. 276–81), the *Aetia* (and the *Iambi*, pp. 261–8) does not survive in a direct manuscript tradition. For the most part, we rely on papyrus finds – comprising Callimachus' own text, as well as (mostly anonymous) ancient summaries and commentaries – from the trash heaps of Oxyrhynchus for our knowledge of the poem. Major fragments of the *Aetia* were published throughout the twentieth century, between 1910 and 1976; scholars have then done their best to put the fragments in order. (My versions rely on Annette Harder's 2012 text and commentary.) One of the results of this piecemeal publication history is that single episodes, stitched together from multiple papyri, may have several seemingly unrelated fragment numbers attached to them.

- 1.1. *Prologue: To the Critics*. This poem, the prologue to Callimachus' *Aetia*, was hugely influential, and contains many tropes we associate with 'Callimacheanism' in the Roman elegists: for echoes of this poem see, e.g., Prop. 2.1, 3.3 (pp. 427 and 432); Hor. *Epod.* 14 (p. 459) and *Odes* 1.6 (p. 466); Ov. *Am.* 2.1 (p. 498); and Mart. 4.8 (p. 541). (Vi. *Ecl.* 6 is also heavily in its debt.) Here Callimachus defends his own style and attacks his critics.

- 1.2. *Telchines*: Callimachus calls his critics by the name of the malevolent, pre-Olympian magicians eventually destroyed by Zeus. Associated with islands like Rhodes, Ceos and Crete, they were famed as metalworkers, and the first to cast statues in bronze, but their crude efforts were soon replaced. Cf. Pi. *Ol.* 7, ll. 89–94 (pp. 142–3) and n., which takes a more positive view of their art.

l. 5. *little spurts*: Callimachus probably refers to the discontinuous, episodic nature of the *Aetia*, as contrasted with a more unitary epic. The *Metamorphoses*, incidentally, manages both types of poem at once: a 'Callimachean' epic which is both episodic and continuous.

ll. 9–10. *The tender stalk Demeter bears ... the mighty [Oak]*: Although the lines, made more difficult by the fragmentary text and our ignorance of the works alluded to, I assume that *Demeter* is an elegiac poem by Callimachus' predecessor at Alexandria, the scholar-poet Philitas of Croton (n. on Call. Hy. 2, l. 110, p. 272), while the *Oak* may have been a different, perhaps worse poem. The lines assert a typically Callimachean preference for the small and sophisticated (Demeter's 'tender stalk', i.e., wheat) over the large and unrefined – not only oaks, but also acorns, the crude forage of a time before agriculture (for which, see Tib. 2.1, ll. 38–9, p. 418). The 'tender stalk' may also carry a reference to Philitas' famously emaciated figure, as he is described by his younger contemporary Hermesianax as 'pale and thin, with glosses and lean with lemmata' (fr. 7.77–8), a portrayal echoed by Athenaeus (*Various Histories* 9.14) and Athenaeus (*Deip.* 9.401d–e).

ll. 11–12. *the Fine, not the Fat Woman*: Perhaps the 'Fine' woman is the *Nanno*, and the 'Fat' the *Smyrneis*, or it could be the other way around (see Intro to Mimnermus, p. 27). For another suggestion, see n. on Call. Hy. 2, ll. 105–12 (pp. 271–2).

ll. 13–14. *Let cranes fly ... against the Pygmy race*: The Pygmies, 'small infantry / Warred on by cranes' (Milton, *Paradise Lost* 1, ll. 411–12; cf. Hom. *Il.* 3, ll. 3–7), were a fabled race of dwarfs, eventually defeated by their avian enemies. Homer has the cranes fly from north to south to fight the Pygmies, but Callimachus reverses the direction of their flight. The Elder Pliny (*Natural History* 4.44) also places the Pygmies in Thrace.

l. 16. *the Mede*: See n. on the Intro to Timocreon of Rhodes (p. 181).

l. 17. *Damned cross-eyed yokels*: The envious Telchines (see n. on l. 1 above) spend so much time making the Evil Eye that they have become cross-eyed.

l. 18. *the Persian chain*: The *schoenus*, a Persian land-measure, was from thirty to sixty stades (approximately 3½–7 miles) in length.

l. 22. *Lycian Apollo*: A standard epithet for Apollo, of unknown origin. While Apollo was worshiped in Lycia, on Mounts Cragus and Taurus, and had an important oracle there in Patara, many associate the epithet either with *lykos*, 'wolf', or *lykē*, 'light'.

ll. 29–30. *my readers love the high, clear voice of the cicada*: The tuneless drone of cicadas and similar insects seems to have struck Greeks as particularly musical. In Plato's *Phaedrus* (259b–c), Socrates claims that they are the descendants of early humans who were 'so overwhelmed with the pleasure of singing that they forgot to eat or drink; so they died without even realizing it'. Cf. Sap. 58a (p. 47), and Leo. Tar. 21 (p. 308) and 91 (p. 310).

l. 36. *Enceladus*: One of the Giants vanquished in the Gigantomachy; see n. on Xen. 1, l. 24 (p. 110). According to the *Library* of Apollodorus, Enceladus fled, but Athena threw on him in his flight the island of Sicily' (1.6.2, trans. Frazer); his battle with Athena was reportedly depicted on the sixth-century temple of Apollo at Delphi (Euripides, *Ion*, ll. 209–11). Pindar, by contrast, has Typhus (or Typhoeus) account for the volcanism of Mount Aetna; see n. on Pi. Py. 8, l. 16 (p. 152).

Fragment 178+2.43, *The Banquet of Pollis*. This fragmentary poem probably stood as the first in Bk. 2 of the *Aetia*. In it, Callimachus attends a dinner party thrown by his Athenian friend Pollis (of whom nothing more is known) and meets a stranger, Theogenes of Icus (modern Alonissos, in the Sporades), whom he plies with questions about an obscure Ician ritual in honor of Achilles' father, Peleus.

ll. 4–5. The three festivals mentioned are all Athenian festivals connected to Dionysus. The first two, the *Cask-Opening* (*Pithoigia*) and the *Pitcher-Feast* (*Choes*), were part of the Anthesteria, held in January or February. The story goes that Orestes, after killing his mother Clytemnestra, came to Athens, whose king, Demophon, was afraid either to turn him away, or to pollute himself and his people through contact with a matricide. Therefore Orestes was allowed to enter, but speak to no one; he sat alone at table and drank his pitcher of wine. The Athenian ritual accordingly involved a form of collective, solitary drunkenness: everyone – laborers, slaves, even children – received their own table and pitcher and drank competitively, in silence. The slaves' participation in this event probably explains both their fondness of it ('which slaves adore', l. 3) and their refusal to pour the wine in l. 18 – they're busy drinking. The third festival Callimachus mentions, held for Erigone, was called the *Aiora*, or the 'Swing', and probably took place at a different time. Erigone was the daughter of Icarius, whom Dionysus had taught to make wine. When a group of shepherds became intoxicated for the first time with Icarius' new product, they thought they had been poisoned, and killed him, causing Erigone to hang herself. During