

Callimachus and Latin Poetry

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THE POETIC TRIUMPH of Callimachus—I borrow my metaphor from the poet who styled himself the “Roman Callimachus”—took place, long after his death, in Rome. It was altogether impressive. Cinna, Calvus, Catullus, Gallus, Virgil, Propertius—their imaginations were captivated by Callimachus; but for his poetry and the esthetic attitudes expressed or implied in it, much of what they wrote could not have been written; and Latin poetry would be very different. I do not mean to say that Callimachus had been a negligible figure in his own time and city. Clearly he had not: he counted for something in the Library, though he never became its head, and in the Court; he exerted a considerable influence on Euphorion, and some influence on two better poets, Theocritus and Apollonius. An important figure, then, but no literary dictator, as we may be tempted to assume from the posthumous ascendancy which he enjoyed in an alien literature and from his own acrimonious statements. Callimachus’ attitude is at once polemical and defensive. The most complete *apologia* for his poetic career he wrote towards the end of his life, as a preface to the second edition of the *Aetia*,¹ his major work, which he must have intended as a kind of substitute for an epic. He had been attacked—and violently attacked, if we may judge from the violence of his retort—by Posidippus and Asclepiades and some others, though apparently not by Apollonius. Now old poets are not passionately disturbed by criticism unless they feel themselves vulnerable to it. Callimachus’ famous refusal to write an epic surely implies a widely held view that poets ought to write epics and perhaps even some expectation on the part of those in high places. His opinions had no decisive effect on Greek poetry during his own lifetime or after his death. For over against the *Europa* of Moschus and the poetry of Parthenius (of which I shall have more to say later) we can set the titles and fragments of many epics: epics about monarchs or war-

¹ See R. Pfeiffer, *Hermes* 63 (1928) 339.

lords, epics on mythological themes, epics concerning the history of a people or a region, τὰ Μεσσηνιακά, τὰ Ἀχαϊκά, or the like.²

My chief purpose in this paper is to explain—in so far as that can be done simply; for the subject is not a simple one—the sort of influence Callimachus had on Latin poetry, and especially on the poetry or poetic career of Virgil. But first I must give some account of Callimachus himself, not because I can say much that is new about him, but because, if I do not, some part of what I have to say about Latin poetry may be unclear.

I

Callimachus' view of poetry is stated (as I have already remarked) most completely and maturely in the elegant and rancorous denunciation of his enemies—Telchines, literary troglodytes or worse—which he prefixed to the second edition of his *Aetia*. I paraphrase:

The Telchines murmur against me because I have not written a continuous poem in many thousands of verses about kings and heroes. But the shorter poems of Mimnermus and Philetas are better than their long. Let the crane delighting in Pygmies' blood fly far, from Egypt to Thrace; let the Massagetes shoot their arrows far against the Medes; poems are sweeter for being short. Judge poetry by its art, not by the surveyor's chain. Thundering belongs to Zeus, not to me.

And now I translate:

When first I set a writing-tablet on my knees, Lycian Apollo spoke to me: "Poet, raise your victim to be as fat as possible, but your Muse, my friend, keep her thin.

. . . ἀοιδέ, τὸ μὲν θύος ὄττι πάχιστον
θρέψαι, τὴν Μοῦσαν δ' ὠγαθὲ λεπταλέην.

And I tell you this besides: Walk where wagons don't travel; don't drive your chariot in the tracks of others or on a wide road, but on an unworn way, even though it be narrower." I obeyed him; for I sing for those who like the shrill echoing song of the cicada, not the braying of asses.

² See K. Ziegler, *Das hellenistische Epos* (Leipzig 1934).

Then follow the poignant lines on Callimachus' old age. This statement he placed before the original preface or proem to the *Aetia*, which he had written as a young man (*ἀρτιγένειος*, according to the Florentine scholiast): his famous Hesiodic dream of being initiated a poet on Helicon. Here is a personal, retrospective statement, deeply-felt: a poet's testament.

One cannot read very much of Callimachus without being impressed, or perhaps depressed, by his learning. But it would be a mistake to dissociate his poetry from his pedantry. Callimachus was not a poet and a scholar; he was a poet because he was a scholar, a *γραμματικός*, a man whose business was literature. And such, I think, must have been Callimachus' own view; for in his treatise against Praxiphanes he praised Aratus *ὡς πολυμαθὴ καὶ ἄριστον ποιητὴν* [fr. 460 Pfeiffer]. The earlier literature of Greece had now been collected in the great library at Alexandria, and men came to know the exquisite delight of writing books about books. Now a scholar-poet could con and compare texts; pluck a *ἄπαξ* out of Homer and define it in a context of his own making, perhaps to spite another scholar-poet; employ an obscure variant of a myth or legend, the while deftly signaling to an alert reader his awareness of other variants as well; subtly modify an admired metaphor or simile; set an old word and a new one together in an elegant collocation. As Callimachus, for example, does, in *Hymn* 1.90, *αὐτὸς ἄνην ἐκόλουσας, ἐνέκλασσας δὲ μενοιήν: ἄνη* occurs in Aeschylus, *Sept.* 713, *μενοιή* in Apollonius, 1.894; the chiasmic arrangement calls attention to what the poet has done, to his cleverness. Earlier Greek poets had made use of their predecessors, too—that is, after all, what we mean by a literary tradition—but not in quite the same way. Sophocles, for example, intended his allusions to the *Choephoroe* to be intelligible to everyone who saw the *Electra*; for otherwise something of the force of his own play would be lost. Earlier Greek poetry supposed a large group of hearers rather than a small group of readers. The poetry of Callimachus and others like him could be appreciated by only a very few readers as learned or nearly as learned as themselves. Theirs was a bibliothecal poetry, poetry about poetry, self-conscious and hermetic.

It is easy enough to understand why these umbratile poets were drawn to the composition of didactic poetry. For in such poetry they had everywhere the chance to show off their erudition and to demonstrate by how much their manner excelled their matter. Hence

their choice of inert or apparently intractable subjects to versify. Their aim was to shine, not to persuade; and in their poetry breathed no Lucretian fire. The *Aetia* is didactic in character; and to the *Phaenomena* of Aratus, written (Callimachus asserts, *Epigr.* 27) in the style of Hesiod, 'Ἡσιόδου τό τ' ἄεισμα καὶ ὁ τρόπος he gives his unstinting approval; χαίρετε λεπταί / ῥήσιες, Ἀρήτου σύμβολον ἀγρυπνίης; so might he have praised his own poetry. The attitude of Callimachus to Hesiod and Homer has sometimes been misunderstood: for Callimachus Hesiod was imitable, Homer inimitable. Callimachus did not condemn Homer, though apparently Parthenius did (it is not unusual for a disciple to be more extreme than his master); rather Callimachus condemned those who imitated Homer, who copied the epic form, not realizing that it was by now empty and obsolete, and who slavishly repeated Homer's phrases: poets like Creophylus of Samos in an earlier time, for whom to be mistaken for Homer was the highest possible compliment [*Epigr.* 6]:

Ἄομῆρειον δὲ καλεῖμαι
γράμμα· Κρεωφύλω, Ζεῦ φίλε, τοῦτο μέγα.

Callimachus was determined not to be mistaken for anybody else, not even for Hesiod. To later poets Hesiod was the exemplar of didactic as Homer was of epic poetry; and Callimachus found Hesiod more to his liking. Hesiod's poems were relatively short as, in Callimachus' judgment, poems should be; and they recounted no long, involved tales of heroes and battles. Perhaps Callimachus took the cryptic, bitter words of the Muses to the shepherds [*Theogony*, 26–8]:

ποιμένες ἄγραυλοι, κακ' ἐλέγχεα, γαστέρες οἶον,
ἴδμεν ψεύδεα πολλὰ λέγειν ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα·
ἴδμεν δ', εὔτ' ἐθέλωμεν, ἀληθέα γηρύσασθαι—

perhaps Callimachus took these words as a criticism of epic poets, notoriously careless of the truth. The *Theogony*—and I think it was the *Theogony* that most interested Callimachus—dealt with the truth, or with the true causes of things (*αἴτια*); it was learned, if naively so—but its very naïveté would have appealed to Callimachus' sophistication; above all, as Wilamowitz has remarked, Hesiod's was a personal voice. It was Hesiod who provided Callimachus with a means of describing his own source of inspiration, a matter of deep concern to so late and self-conscious a poet. While keeping his flock under

Helicon, Hesiod met the Muses; they gave him an olive branch (the visible symbol of poetic inspiration) and breathed into him the divine power of song, that he might sing of things that had been and would be, and of the gods who are forever. While still a young man Callimachus dreamt he had been wafted to Helicon and there met the Muses, who told him of the causes of things (*αἴτια*). (The details of the scene are uncertain, because only a fragment of the text survives.) The old bard of Ascra seems to describe an obvious encounter with the Muses—strange things do happen to shepherds in lonely places; but one verse [10], *ἐννύχιαι στείχον περικαλλέα ὄσσαν ἰεῖσαι*, suggests nighttime, and the meeting was later interpreted *ἀλληγορικῶς*, as a dream. At any rate, Callimachus, drowsing perhaps in a suburb of Alexandria, could only dream of encountering the Muses on Helicon. This scene served as an introduction to the *Aetia*: what did it signify? That Callimachus challenged comparison with Hesiod—of what use is a model that cannot be surpassed?—and that Hesiod, not Homer, was the poet to emulate. A personal, allusive, polemical introduction; in a word, Callimachean.

II

A poet writing in the style of Homer may be expected to begin as Homer did, with an invocation to the Muses and an epitome of the tale he means to tell. Ennius did not: he began his *Annales* with the description of a curiously personal experience, a dream in which Homer's ghost appeared to him. Homer expounded the Pythagorean doctrine of metempsychosis: his soul (he informed Ennius) had once passed into a peacock's body, but had now passed into Ennius' body; and Ennius awoke, *alter Homerus*, capable of unfolding the epic story of Roman greatness. So much, or rather so little, is certain; for only a few fragments of this initial scene have been preserved. Where did the scene take place? On Helicon? On Parnassus? (Ennius had accompanied Fulvius Nobilior on his Aetolian campaign in 189, and Nobilior, Roman-like, had brought the Muses home with him.) Or—and this has been suggested—in Ennius' rooms on the Aventine hill? Did Ennius meet the Muses or merely invoke their aid? Did he drink of Hippocrene?

Most scholars have seen in this introduction to the *Annales* an allusion to the proem of the *Aetia*, but a few have denied this, most

recently an Italian scholar,³ anxious to vindicate the Italian character of Ennius' genius. Now nothing that Callimachus wrote was better known than his dream of poetic initiation on Helicon: ἄ μέγα Βαττιάδαο σοφοῦ περίπυστον ὄνειρα . . . [Anth. Pal. 7.42.1]. Ennius was a literary man, a philologist—*dicti studiosus* he called himself [Ann. 216]; he had grown up in a Greek-speaking part of Italy, and was concerned his whole life through with Greek poetry: he could not have begun his *Annales* as he did without having the famous dream of Callimachus in mind. To imagine that he could is, as Otto Skutsch has remarked,⁴ "to imagine that a modern literary man could write of a scholar's pact with the devil, without being aware of Goethe's *Faust*." In all that has been written about the initial scene of the *Annales*—and there is very much⁵—I miss an essential question. It is this: why should Ennius allude to Callimachus' dream at the beginning of the *Annales*, τὰ 'Ρωμαϊκὰ, a long discursive epic about the vicissitudes of a people, about kings and battles? Was this not precisely the sort of poem Callimachus had condemned? Ennius' purpose, I believe, was polemical and anti-Callimachean: he designed to confute Callimachus, *alter Hesiodus*, in something like Callimachus' own oblique style. Ennius was as self-conscious a poet as Callimachus, and as preoccupied with his art. Ovid's facile judgement on the two—[Battiades] *quamuis ingenio non ualet, arte ualet* [Am. 1.15.13–14]: *Ennius ingenio maximus, arte rudis* [Trist. 2.424]—is unfair to both, but more unfair to Ennius than to Callimachus. Ennius stands at the beginning of a poetic tradition, a tradition which he helped to shape—not, like Callimachus, near the end of one; if his art is rude, it is so mainly because he was struggling with a language that had not, like Greek, been long subdued to the uses of poetry. It may seem odd that Ennius began his *Annales* as he did, with a cryptic, literary polemic. Perhaps it is; but in the introduction to Book 7, to the next part of the poem that he published, we find him similarly engaged with literary polemic [Ann. 213–15]:

*scripsere alii rem
uersibus quos olim Fauni uatesque canebant,
cum neque Musarum scopulos . . .*

³ G. Marconi, *Riv. di Cult. Class. e Medievale* 3 (1961) 224–245.

⁴ *The Annals of Quintus Ennius* (London 1953) p. 10.

⁵ For a convenient summary see J. H. Waszink, *Mnem. Ser. iv*, 3 (1950) 214–240; see also the same author's "retractatio," *Mnem. Ser. iv*, 15 (1962) 113–132.

Apparently Ennius did not mention the poet he was attacking, Naevius, by name. This is the tone, as Leo long ago remarked,⁶ that we know from Callimachus; and, as Leo acutely observed, the words *Musarum scopulos* refer to the dream at the beginning of Book 1.

Ennius, then, knew the poetry of Callimachus, or at least some part of it—I suspect that Virgil was the only Roman poet who ever read the *Aetia* all the way through. And Ennius alluded to the proem of the *Aetia* for his own reasons, private reasons, one is tempted to think; for he could hardly have expected his Roman readers to grasp the significance of his allusion. But Callimachus had little or no influence on Latin poetry until the generation of the New Poets. Ennius in his *Saturae* and Lucilius owe something to his *Iambi*, it has been argued,⁷ and Lucilius something besides to his poetic example; but evidence for these claims is slight and inconclusive; and the *Iambi* was, in Latin poetry, one of Callimachus' least consequential works. Sometime before he committed suicide in 87 B.C., Lutatius Catulus rendered one of Callimachus' epigrams (41) into Latin; but this, the diversion of an idle hour, should not be taken as evidence of any serious interest in Callimachus' major poetry or in his esthetic views. Catulus was a Roman aristocrat with a taste for Greek poetry, an elegant amateur. He would have read many Greek epigrams; one, by Callimachus, pleased him especially, and he made a version of it. Meleager's *Garland* had been published a few years before the death of Catulus; he could have read the epigram there, or it might have been shown him by a Greek friend like Antipater of Sidon, himself an epigrammatist. In all probability Catulus had never read any of the *Aetia*; had he tried to do so, he would have liked it little enough and found the oblique polemic all but incomprehensible. There is, besides, no reason to suppose that Catulus felt any aversion to old-fashioned epic; his literary circle included a certain Furius, a writer (so it would seem) of such poetry, *Annales*.

It is a mistake, not uncommon in our literary histories, to employ the terms "Hellenistic," "Alexandrian," "Callimachean" interchangeably. The poetry of Catulus, Valerius Aedituus, Porcius Licinus, and Laevius might be called Hellenistic; but it had little to do with the New Poetry, which is Callimachean in its inspiration. Callimachus was brought to Rome, I am quite convinced, by Parthenius of Nicaea,

⁶ *Geschichte der römischen Literatur* (Berlin 1913) 164–165.

⁷ By M. Puelma Piwonka, *Lucilius und Kallimachos* (Frankfurt/M. 1949).

and arrived there with all the force and charm of novelty. I do not mean necessarily that no Latin poet had heard of Callimachus, or that there were no manuscripts of his poetry in Rome, though perhaps there were none; I mean rather that Parthenius made Callimachus important to some Latin poets. The main source of our knowledge of Parthenius is Suidas. Parthenius was taken prisoner when the Romans defeated Mithridates, and became the property or prize of Cinna—*εὐλήφθη ὑπὸ Κίννα λάφυρον*; and was later freed because of his learning—*διὰ παιδείου*. Presumably Parthenius came to Rome not long after 73 B.C., the year the Romans captured Nicaea; and presumably the Cinna who is not further identified was a relative of Helvius Cinna, author of the *Zmyrna*; or perhaps there is some conflation of details in the account given in Suidas. Parthenius: mentor or friend of Cinna and Gallus and Virgil, and very likely of Catullus and Calvus as well, literary epigone of Callimachus and Euphorion—I do not understand why those who have written recently on the New Poetry make so little of him: Quinn in his *The Catullan Revolution* (1959), Wimmel in his *Kallimachos in Rom* (1960), Fordyce in his edition of Catullus (1961), unless I am mistaken, do not even mention him. Otis in his *Virgil: A Study in Civilized Poetry* (1964) does recognize his importance. It may be that literary young men of the time began to read and appreciate Callimachus on their own with no prompting. But the suddenness and intensity of their interest would be hard to explain; and I doubt that even a Cinna or a Catullus could have understood Callimachus without some tutoring.

Cinna labored for nine years to be as obscure as Euphorion, and apparently succeeded; Catullus greeted his *Zmyrna* on publication with Callimachean enthusiasm (95).

*Zmyrna mei Cinnae nonam post denique messem
quam coepta est nonamque edita post hiemem,
milia cum interea quingenta Hortensius uno*

.

*Zmyrna cauas Satrachi penitus mittetur ad undas,
Zmyrnam cana diu saecula peruoluent.
at Volusi Annales Paduam morientur ad ipsam
et laxas scombris saepe dabunt tunicas.*

The art of this poem is minute. There are, or rather were, eight

verses, divided into two sections of four verses, each section beginning with the title of Cinna's poem. I confine my remarks to the second. Two rivers are named, the Satrachus and the Po: *Satrachi* stands immediately before the caesura in the first hexameter, *Paduam* immediately after the caesura in the second; and both hexameters conclude with similar phrases: *mittetur ad undas, morientur ad ipsam*. And in the second pentameter there is an echo, intended I think, of the first:

*Zmyrnam cana diu saecula peruoluent
et laxas scombris saepe dabunt tunicas.*

A polemical poem in the Callimachean style was not meant to be merely a confutation; it was meant to be simultaneously a demonstration of how poetry ought to be written. Catullus wrote one other such poem, also attacking the wretched Volusius and his *Annales*: 36, *Annales Volusi cacata carta*, which has not quite been recognized for what it is. The *Zmyrna*—to return to 95—will be read by the banks of the distant Satrachus and live for many ages: the *Annales* of Volusius will provide much wrapping-paper for mackerel and perish by the mouth of the Po. (Volusius must have come from nearby: otherwise the emphatic reference would have no point, *Paduam . . . ad ipsam*; and the name is common on inscriptions from that part of Italy.) Catullus pays his friend an elegant compliment, as commentators have noticed: his poem will be read even by the remote river which it celebrates. But there is, I think, a piquancy commentators have not noticed in the oblique comparison of the two rivers: the broad familiar Po with its mud and flotsam, the exotic Satrachus, deep-channelled, swift and clear—such is the implication of the adjective *cauius*; Lucan (2.421–2) applies it to the Tiber and its tributary the Rutuba where they flow swiftly down from the Apennines. Callimachus had used a similar metaphor for long and short, or bad and good, poetry at the end of *Hymn 2*. Envy (*Φθόνος*) sidles up to Apollo and whispers an anti-Callimachean opinion into his ear; Apollo kicks Envy, and replies (108–12):

*Ἀσσυρίου ποταμοῖο μέγας ῥόος, ἀλλὰ τὰ πολλά
λύματα γῆς καὶ πολλὸν ἐφ' ὕδατι συρφετὸν ἔλκει.
Δηοῖ δ' οὐκ ἀπὸ παντὸς ὕδωρ φορέουσι μέλισσαι,
ἀλλ' ἢ τις καθαρὴ τε καὶ ἀχράαντος ἀνέρπει
πίδακος ἐξ ἱερῆς ὀλίγη λιβὰς ἄκρον ἄωτον.*

What was the *Zmyrna* about? The incestuous passion of Smyrna or Myrrha for her father Cinyras, her metamorphosis into a tree, and the subsequent birth of Adonis from her, or its, trunk. Precisely the sort of tale—erotic, morbid, grotesque—that appealed to Parthenius, as we may guess from the fact that he wrote *Metamorphoses*, and as we can tell from his *Περὶ ἐρωτικῶν παθημάτων*, the helpful collection of stories he put together for Gallus. One of these *παθήματα*, 11, deals with Byblis and her incestuous passion for her brother Caunus, which Parthenius himself had written about. He quotes, as a teacher might, his own verses: six verses, two of them *σπονδειαίζοντες*, with an *αἴτιον* at the end: *Καλλιμάχου τό τ' αἴσιμα καὶ ὁ τρόπος*. These are the verses, which have been curiously neglected by literary historians:

ἦ δ' ὅτε δὴ ῥ' ὀλοοῖο κασιγνήτου νόον ἔγνω
 κλαῖεν ἀηδονίδων θαμινώτερον, αἶ τ' ἐνὶ βήσσης
 Σιθονίῳ κούρῳ πέρι μυρίον αἰάζουσιν·
 καί ῥα κατὰ στυφελοῖο σαρωνίδος αὐτίκα μήτηρ
 ἀψαμένη δειρὴν ἐνεθήκατο, ταὶ δ' ἐπ' ἐκείνη
 βεύδεα παρθενικαὶ Μιλησίδες ἐρρήξαντο.

Six verses, divided into two sections of three verses, each section ending with a *σπονδειαίζων*. ἦ δ' ὅτε δὴ ῥ' ὀλοοῖο in verse 1 is answered by καί ῥα κατὰ στυφελοῖο in verse 4; θαμινώτερον in verse 2 is balanced by ἐνεθήκατο in verse 5, a word of the same metrical quality in the same position, and both words are followed by similar phrases: αἶ τ' ἐνὶ βήσσης, ταὶ δ' ἐπ' ἐκείνη. There are two proper names: Σιθονίῳ at the beginning of verse 3 and Μιλησίδες immediately after the caesura in verse 6.⁸ I would not go so far as to say that Catullus had these verses in mind when he was writing 95—there is, after all, no way of dating Parthenius' poem precisely; but I do think it likely that the technique of 95 owes something to the example of Parthenius, if

⁸ E. Rohde failed to appreciate the symmetry of Parthenius' verses or the delicacy and restraint of the narrative, and supposed that some words were lost after ἐνεθήκατο (*Der griechische Roman*³, p. 102, n.): "noch hat man nicht einmal gehört, dass die B., nachdem sie 'an eine feste Eiche den Gürtel knüpfend, ihren Hals hineingelegt hatte,' auch wirklich gestorben sei . . ." There is a passage which resembles this in a poem written by one of Parthenius' pupils, Virgil, *Georg.* 4.457–61:

*illa quidem, dum te fugeret per flumina praeceps,
 immanem ante pedes hydrum moritura puella
 seruantem ripas alta non uidit in herba.
 at chorus aequalis Dryadum clamore supremos
 implerunt montis . . .*

one may judge from these verses. And what could be more appropriate, if Parthenius, as I suspect, did inspire Cinna?

The Satrachus (or Σέτραχος) occurs only four times in ancient poetry: in Lycophron (448), which hardly matters; in Nonnus (13.459), who connects it with the legend of Adonis, as Haupt long ago pointed out (*Opusc.* 1.73); in Catullus, alluding to Cinna's poem; and in Parthenius (fr. 24 Martini). I translate part of the note in the *Etymologicum Magnum*:

'. . . there was a mountain named Aoion, from which two rivers flowed, the Setrachus and the Aplieus; and one of these [Setrachus] Parthenius called Aaos.'

Aaos was another name for Adonis; and it appears from fr. 37 that Parthenius had written about Adonis. This coincidence can hardly be fortuitous. It seems likely, to me at least, that Parthenius suggested the story of Smyrna as suitable for treatment in an epyllion, much as he later suggested stories for Gallus to use in his elegies.

Callimachus I have already discussed briefly; about Euphorion, *Callimachus dimidiatus*, I can be even briefer: so pitifully slight are the remains of his poetry. Evidently he modelled himself on Callimachus: he had Callimachus' interest in local legends, aetiology, geography, mythology, and more than Callimachus' interest in the epyllion. Euphorion, according to one scholar,⁹ "popularized the criminal love-story, and concentrated interest on the heroine." This is plausible. There is an indicative fragment¹⁰ that survives to us—Apriate, being pursued with lustful intent by the hero Trambelus, delivers herself of an erudite and disdainful speech, and then in a single hexameter hurls herself into the sea. The poet is not interested in narrative detail; he is interested rather in obscure mythological allusions and in the emotional state of his heroine; and his narrative style is consequently abrupt and elliptical, like that of Catullus in 64 or Virgil in the *Aristaeus* epyllion. Then there are Latin poems that do not survive to us, except for a few verses: the *Zmyrna* of Cinna, the *Io* of Calvus. Cinna and Calvus, *cantores Euphorionis*—for Cicero must have been referring to them, among others, poets who owed an excessive debt to Euphorion. And Cicero would have known: he had been a student

⁹ A. M. Duff in the *OCD*, s.v. EPYLLION.

¹⁰ Easily accessible in *Select Papyri* III, ed. D. L. Page (Loeb Classical Library), pp. 494–497.

of Hellenistic poetry in his youth. Euphorion was important to these poets because Parthenius made him so; it was Parthenius, I think, who introduced his friends and pupils to Euphorion.

In his note on *Bucolics* 6.72, Servius gives some account of the Grynean Grove, and then adds: *hoc autem Euphorionis continent carmina, quae Gallus transtulit in sermonem Latinum*. It may well be that Parthenius suggested the subject to Gallus for an aetiological poem, as he suggested subjects to him for his elegies. Parthenius himself had written a poem on a similar subject, the *Delos*. Stephanus of Byzantium (*Γρῦνοι*) preserves three fragments of this poem. One of these is curious and relevant. *Γρῦνοι* (Stephanus notes) is the name of a small town; the *ἔθνικόν*, or adjective, is *Γρυνεύς* or *Γρυνηίς* in the feminine; but he also knows of the form *Γρύνειος* in Parthenius' *Delos*: *λέγεται καὶ Γρύνειος Ἀπόλλων ὡς Παρθένιος Δήλω*. This is the form Virgil used in the sixth eclogue, 72: *his tibi Grynei nemoris dicatur origo*; and he later translated the phrase *Γρύνειος Ἀπόλλων* in *Aeneid* 4.345, *Gryneus Apollo*—commentators seem to have overlooked this—as (so Gellius 13.27 and Macrobius 5.17.18 tell us) he translated, or rather adapted, a verse of Parthenius in *Georgics* 1.437, *Glauco et Panopeae et Inoo Melicertae*: *Γλαύκω καὶ Νηρηί καὶ Ἰνώω (εἰναλίω Gellius) Μελικέρτη*. According to Macrobius—and his information must be from an earlier source—Parthenius tutored Virgil in Greek.

Now (it may be asked) could a single Greek professor have made such a difference to Latin poetry? The question is more easily asked than answered. We are concerned with only a few poets, pupils or friends of Parthenius; and he may well have been a forceful and persuasive teacher: he won his freedom *διὰ παιδευσιν*. But (it is only fair to add) Parthenius' teaching alone could not have produced such a renovation—some have called it a revolution—in Latin poetry: he spoke to listening ears. No significant poetry had been written in Latin for several decades; and young poets—Cinna, Calvus, Catullus—living in a turbulent and rebellious age were not minded to write an old-fashioned epic about Roman history, *Annales*. Ennius, whatever his virtues, could only seem crude and outmoded to a generation conversant with the elegance of Hellenistic poetry and ambitious of rivalling it. They could not, like Callimachus, look back to a classical poetry in their own language; they had rather to look to Greek for that. Perhaps they felt some artistic kinship with Callimachus; they could appreciate his experiments with language, his technical refine-

ments, his passion for elegance; and like Callimachus, they were in a defensive position. Their objection to epic poetry was not, I think, merely esthetic, as it had been for Callimachus; it was moral as well.

I have put this matter rather crudely; perhaps I can explain what I mean by commenting briefly on Virgil's poetic career and especially on the sixth Eclogue.

The *Liber Bucolicorum* is one of the few perfect books: each Eclogue is enhanced somehow by its position—this effect was achieved, I have no doubt, by a certain amount of rewriting; and, taken together, the ten have an additional beauty and sense. For his own profession of poetic faith Virgil reserved a place of prominence: the sixth Eclogue introduces the second half of the book and defines the character of the whole book. It has an obvious connection with the tenth Eclogue, and a less obvious, but perhaps more important, connection with the first (1–5):

*Tityre, tu patulae recubans sub tegmine fagi
siluestrem tenui musam meditaris auena,
nos patriae finis et dulcia linquimus arua.
nos patriam fugimus: tu, Tityre, lentus in umbra
formosam resonare doces Amaryllida siluas.*

Meliboeus notices Tityrus, relaxed under a beech-tree, carelessly meditating his thankful muse. They talk; and their talk is of the violence and disorder of civil strife, the possibility of reconciliation, and the infinite sadness of exile. A strange introductory poem, recognizably Theocritean in manner, but yet quite unlike anything Theocritus wrote: a suave and beautiful poem about a harsh and ugly experience that Virgil had shared with his fellow-countrymen.

The sixth Eclogue also begins with a reference to war. Virgil declines to praise the military record of Varus in epic style. The refusal is Callimachean, translated into pastoral terms (3–8):

*cum canerem reges et proelia, Cynthia aurem
uellit et admonuit: "pastorem, Tityre, pinguis
pascere oportet ouis, deductum dicere carmen."
nunc ego (namque super tibi erunt qui dicere laudes,
Vare, tuas cupiant et tristia condere bella)
agrestem tenui meditabor harundine musam.*

No attentive reader can miss the echo of the first eclogue: *siluestrem tenui musam meditaris auena*; and commentators duly notice it. But surely it needs a word of explanation? For I do not suppose that Virgil was simply trying to unite the two halves of his book with this device. Why should Virgil remind his readers of the first Eclogue at the beginning of the sixth, in a Callimachean context? To write a Roman epic a poet had to celebrate war; he had to accept war as heroic. Virgil could not, at least not then; and his refusal to write about it—*tristia condere bella*—was not merely esthetic, it was also (as the reminiscence of the first Eclogue intimates) moral. Callimachus knew nothing of war; he knew only the vast, stagnant peace of the Ptolemaic empire; for him refusing to write an epic was a stylistic decision. But for Virgil and his contemporaries it was, I feel, something more: they knew what war was. Propertius 1.22.1–5:

*Qualis et unde genus, qui sint mihi, Tulle, penates
quaeris pro nostra semper amicitia.
si Perusina tibi patriae sunt nota sepulchra,
Italiae duris funera temporibus,
cum Romana suos egit discordia ciuis . . .*

In the first Eclogue the adjective *tenui* is ornamental, necessary rather to the balance of the verse than to its sense—*siluestrem tenui musam meditaris auena*; the involved word order is suggestive of Hellenistic elegance. But in the sixth Eclogue *tenui* is more than ornamental—*agrestem tenui meditabor harundine musam*; it implies a concept of style; it is the Latin equivalent of *λεπτός* or *λεπταλέος*: *μοῦσαν . . . λεπταλέην, λεπταί / ῥήσιες*. His pastoral poetry, Virgil thus obliquely asserts, is Callimachean in character. Failure to recognize this has impaired the quality of much that has been written about the *Eclogues*.

Although the sixth Eclogue is primarily addressed to Varus, its chief figure is obviously Gallus. Because of this some readers have detected an awkwardness or lack of unity in the poem. Büchner, for example, describes the first twelve verses as “a detachable poem”.¹¹ The failure in sensibility is not Virgil’s; it is the modern reader’s: unschooled in the Callimachean esthetic, he senses disunity where he ought to sense unity. The refusal to write an epic poem implied the intention of writing some other sort of poem: the refusal was always

¹¹ PW, zweite Reihe XV, 1219.

made in a poem. Apollo's epiphany as literary critic and the poet's initiation on Helicon—these scenes are complementary, the one explicitly, the other implicitly, programmatic; and they stood together at the beginning of the *Aetia*. Ancient readers would associate, not dissociate, the two; and for such readers, and not for us, Virgil wrote the sixth Eclogue. Here are Linus' words to Gallus (69–73):

*hos tibi dant calamos (en accipe) Musae,
Ascraeo quos ante seni, quibus ille solebat
cantando rigidas deducere montibus ornos.
his tibi Grynei nemoris dicatur origo,
ne quis sit lucus quo se plus iactet Apollo.*

Apollo will be pleased with Gallus' poem about his grove: at this point the reader may recall how little pleased Apollo was with another sort of poem. Now with a summary *quid loquar*, at the beginning of verse 74, Virgil hurries Silenus' song and his own to a close. This abrupt phrase has the effect of emphasizing what immediately precedes; and the poet speaks again in his own person, as he did at the start: *cum canerem reges et proelia*.

That the same poet who wrote *cum canerem reges et proelia*¹² wrote, a few years later, *arma uirumque cano* is one of the surprises of Latin literary history, although I do not find that historians of Latin literature are at all surprised. The sixth Eclogue, as I have tried briefly to show, is an uncompromising, if oblique, statement of the Callimachean esthetic; a reader at the time of publication could not have anticipated that its author would one day write an epic—a didactic or aetiological poem perhaps, or an epyllion, but not an epic. The very fact of Virgil's poetry imposes on us and persuades us to see his poetic career as an orderly progression from the lesser to the greater work; it requires an effort of the imagination to understand that it cannot have been so. Only when he was well along with the *Georgics*, I suspect, did Virgil make up his mind, slowly and with some reluctance, to write an epic; and perhaps under some compulsion—I mean not the compulsion of an order which he would have to obey, but the

¹² Ancient scholiasts, not recognizing the allusion to Callimachus, took *cum canerem reges et proelia* as a biographical statement and imagined that the youthful Virgil had attempted unsuccessfully to write an epic before turning to pastoral; see *Vita Donati*, 19: *mox cum res Romanas incohasset, offensus materia ad Bucolica transiit, maxime ut Asinium Pollionem, Alfenum Varum et Cornelium Gallum celebraret* . . . Some modern scholiasts have made this same mistake.

even stronger compulsion of hope and expectation which he would want to satisfy.

There is much of Callimachus in the *Georgics*: its character is established by the epyllion and *αἴτιον* at the end and by the reference to Gallus; for I am certain there once was such a reference. But here and there one detects un-Callimachean ambiguities, notably in the proem to the third book, which begins in Callimachean style, but seems unclear, as if Virgil were no longer quite sure of his own intentions, or in these verses (2.173–6):

*salve, magna parens frugum, Saturnia tellus,
magna uirum: tibi res antiquae laudis et artis
ingredior sanctos ausus recludere fontes,
Ascraeumque cano Romana per oppida carmen.*

Here, in a single period, are joined an almost epic expression of pride in Italy and an allusion to Callimachus. (References to Hesiod in Virgil and Propertius are really references to Callimachus or his conception of Hesiod. You will recall the verses from the sixth Eclogue—*hos tibi dant calamos (en accipe) Musae, / Ascraeoquos ante seni . . .*—and my comments on Hesiod and Callimachus.)

The *Aeneid*, finally, is in many ways a strange epic; and there are indications that Virgil was not wholly content with it. He must have been out of his mind, he wrote, when he undertook such a task, and he wanted to burn it as he lay dying. Most likely it was illness or fatigue that caused this ultimate despondency, or an artist's dissatisfaction with an unfinished work; but, just possibly, some Callimachean scruples haunted Virgil to the end.¹³

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¹³ Read at the Fourth International Congress of Classical Studies in Philadelphia on August 28, 1964. I have added some footnotes and made a few small changes.