Introduction

This book offers four interrelated case studies of the reception at Rome of the Greek poetry of the last three centuries BC, most notably that of Callimachus; my principal concern is how Roman poets both imitated and distanced themselves from those Greek models, how as a result Roman poetry is both comfortingly familiar but also, upon closer inspection, unsettlingly 'other' for someone approaching it from the Greek background. Many of the ideas (e.g. Dionysus/Bacchus) and techniques (e.g. similes) which Roman poets used to reflect upon their relationship to Greek models precisely foreground issues of integration and separation, of sameness and difference, of the familiar and the foreign; I hope therefore that this book will be seen as a contribution to the very lively contemporary debate about the 'Hellenisation' of Rome and of Italy more generally.[1] Although the focus will be the stimulus which Callimachus gave to Roman poets, I hope also that the book will convey some of the richness of Greek poetry of this period and some small sense of just how much we have lost.

Callimachus has, very rightly, held a special position in modern discussion of the Roman imitation of Hellenistic poetry; in their different ways, and in some poetic modes though not in others, Catullus, Horace, Virgil, Propertius, and Ovid all explicitly look to Callimachus as a principal model, to be imitated in both the letter and the spirit. Particularly since the publication in 1927 of Callimachus' polemical 'Reply to the Telchines', which stood at the head of the *Aitia*, it has been recognised that Latin poets allude to a small number of 'programmatic' passages in Callimachus with remarkable

[1] Wallace-Hadrill 1989, Barchiesi 2005, and Feeney 2005 offer helpful introductions to some of the aspects of the debate most relevant to this book.

frequency – the 'Reply' itself (fr. 1 Pfeiffer–Massimilla),[2] the close of the *Hymn to Apollo*, *Epigram* 28 ('I hate the circling poem . . .') – and it would probably not be unfair to suggest that for some Latinists 'Callimachus' is (essentially) those passages; certainly, despite the fact that the breadth and variety of Callimachean influence on Latin poetry continues to stimulate criticism of a very high order,[3] Walter Wimmel's *Kallimachos in Rom* (1960), a book increasingly cited rather than read, but one whose influence in some academic cultures is still (not unfairly) potent, entrenched that position in a way for which Wimmel himself should not be held solely responsible. That the 'Callimachus' whom many modern critics of Roman poetry have so fetishised is a much narrower poet than Callimachus from Cyrene is, of course, widely recognised, and sometimes explicitly so,[4] but it was an easy 'mistake' to make. Particularly when the key question for critics of Latin poetry was the attitude of the poets to traditional Roman values and the poetry which enshrined them, and hence to the 'regime' and its values, Callimachus seemed to offer a code through which such matters could be discussed; nothing could apparently be more straightforward than the end of the *Georgics* in which 'great Caesar thunders in war' by the Euphrates (cf. Callimachus fr. 1.11–20), while Virgil enjoys the *ignobile otium* of a Greek-speaking town.[5] Moreover, of course, the modern distortions, such as the idea that Callimachus repeatedly preached against the writing of hexameter epic, derive ultimately from Roman poetry itself: Roman poets were under no obligation to give an equal hearing to all parts of any model's oeuvre, or indeed a fair one to any part.[6] So too, much of the (happily now fading) modern critical dichotomy between a content-laden and socially engaged poetry of the archaic and classical periods, on the one hand, and Hellenistic poetry which is only concerned

[2] Hopkinson 1988: 98–101 offers a still useful survey; the number of allusions continues to grow, cf. below p. 38.

[3] Thomas 1993 offers a helpful introduction to the subject; Zetzel 2002 raises important general considerations.

[4] Cf., e.g., Schiesaro 1998. The strictures scattered throughout Cameron 1995 are often well taken.

[5] Scodel–Thomas 1984 point out that this is one of three passages in Virgil where the Euphrates is named, on each occasion in the sixth line from the end of a book; it is hard to avoid their conclusion that Virgil was thinking of Callimachus' *Hymn to Apollo*, in which the 'great' but muck-filled 'stream of the Assyrian river', identified by the scholiast with the Euphrates, appears in the sixth verse from the end. On this passage cf. also below pp. 126–7.

[6] Cf. below p. 28 on 'generic' differences.

with an appropriately sophisticated style in which to express things of little importance, on the other, can be traced back not merely to the nineteenth-century origins of the whole concept of *Hellenismus*, to ideas of a culture which has allowed traditional values to become diffused, but also to the remarks of 'Longinus' in *On the Sublime* 33 about the 'flawless' Apollonius, Eratosthenes, and Theocritus.[7] Hellenistic poetry has always suffered from critical generalisation.

The now traditional view of how Latin poetry exploited both Callimachus and the idea of Callimachus cannot be divorced from a view about the nature of Callimachean poetry itself. Callimachus and those Greek poets who imitated him or who shared in the same *Zeitgeist* were seen to mark a radical, and self-conscious, break with the past, a break as apparently clean as the difference between performance in the public spaces of the *polis* and the composition of poetry in and for the sheltered spaces of the Museum. The talismanic sign of such a break became, in Wilhelm Kroll's phrase, 'die Kreuzung der Gattungen', 'the crossing of the genres', by which was indicated the alleged overturning of the classical order of genre by the inclusion of one generic kind (very broadly defined) within another, an overturning only possible when the context of composition was utterly removed from the traditional contexts of recitation and performance.[8] Kroll pointed to real features of third-century poetry; increasingly, however, the study of Hellenistic poetry has come to emphasise both its continuity with the past and the self-consciousness of its bridge-building activity. Here, it is the forms, rhapsodic, elegiac, and lyric, and the contexts, ceremonial and sympotic, of archaic poetry, which exercised the most important influence upon third-century poetry; to put it very simplistically, much of what we have of Callimachus and Theocritus, and the *Argonautica* in its entire conception, may be seen as a re-creation, sometimes explicit (e.g Callimachus' *Iambi*), in a modern idiom of archaic poetic forms.[9] There is indeed a break with the past in the recognition of changed

[7] Cf. Hunter 1993b: 3–5, 2003c: 220–5, below p. 93. The absence of the name of Callimachus from our text of *On the Sublime* is an interesting phenomenon; I hope to discuss this elsewhere.

[8] Kroll 1924: 202–24. For Kroll's spiritual predecessor here, Plato, such 'Kreuzung' was rather the result of too much power in the hands of the public audience (*Laws* 3.700a–e), cf. Fantuzzi–Hunter 2004: 17–19. It is relevant also that the last couple of decades have seen important work on the Greek categories of genre, which has to some extent undermined the old certainties; for a brief discussion and bibliography cf. Hunter 1999b.

[9] Cf. Hunter 1996, Fantuzzi–Hunter 2004: 1–41.

circumstances of composition, but Hellenistic poetry attempts recuperation, at least as much as it glories in difference. Moreover, the circumstances of Hellenistic patronage and the production of poetry could be made, without too much imaginative effort, to resemble those of the archaic period; it was not absurd to find analogues, though not of course equals, for Philadelphus in the magnanimous patrons of the past.[10] The lesson was not lost on Roman poets and their patrons.

If the uneasy alliance of the old and the new in Hellenistic poetry was itself to be imitated by Roman poets and negotiated through ideas such as that of Dionysus, there is very little evidence that the Roman poets would have found in Greek tradition a Callimachus who was recognised as marking a radical and innovative break with the past. His greatness was, as far as we can tell, recognised relatively early, and he was both more widely read than has often been imagined and – to judge by the earliest papyri – read in traditional ways; it is not too misleading, nor too paradoxical, to think of the Callimachus of, say, 80 BC as a 'classical' poet.[11] The idea that Alexander's death had wrought a profound change in poetry seems to be a later critical product than similar reflections in the history of rhetoric.[12] This is not the place to rehearse the self-fashioning of the Roman 'neoterics',[13] or indeed Wendell Clausen's famous argument that it was Parthenius who (almost literally) brought knowledge of 'the Alexandrian *avant garde*', most notably Callimachus, to Rome,[14] but it is clear that the rhetoric of Roman 'Callimacheanism' has (unsurprisingly) affected the modern critical view of Greek literary history. In another way, however, the paradoxes which haunt the Roman appropriation of Greek poetry do (knowingly) find their counterpart in features of the cultural and political life of Alexandria.

Much in the social and cultural organisation of Alexander's new city, now the Ptolemaic capital, proclaimed continuity with the traditional structures, or the manner in which they were imagined, of the Greek homelands. It was, however, precisely in that proclaimed continuity, not with any one set of cultural traditions, but with those of all Greek cities, that the real watershed

[10] On Hellenistic poetic patronage see Hunter 2003a: 24–45, citing earlier bibliography.
[11] Cf. further below pp. 142–3.
[12] I have discussed some issues of periodisation in Hunter 2001c.
[13] Hinds 1998: 74–83 offers an excellent way-in and the relevant bibliography.
[14] Clausen 1964; for a brief survey cf. Fantuzzi–Hunter 2004: 462–7.

of Alexandria lay; the Greek culture on display in the city and the way it was imagined, like the élite Greeks of Alexandria themselves, were drawn from all over the Greek world. Alexandrian culture itself was thus, like the religious and political institutions which flourished within it, both old and new; we may think of Sarapis, the 'new' god who, like the always new Dionysus some of whose attributes he borrowed, also carried the weight of immemorial tradition,[15] or the divinisation of members of the ruling house, a practice for which Theocritus and Callimachus have no difficulty in finding early precedents in Greek mythology and poetry.[16] Whether it was the particularity of the local Greek traditions now transported to Alexandria or the pan-Hellenism of a unifying Ptolemaic rhetoric which was to be emphasised, everything depended upon the angle from which you looked.[17] Moreover, the Ptolemies' claim to be the true heirs to Alexander, and to the Greek heritage more generally, was bolstered not merely by their possession of Alexander's body (cf. Strabo 17.1.8) but also by their equally displayed cultural patronage, most visible in the institutions of the Museum and Library; the possessions of the Library, no less than Alexander's body, required 'preservation', and preservation soon became monumentalisation, in which a wish to make the past active and important in the present could be presented as a return to genuineness, rather than an open acknowledgement of on-going creative change; it is at this stage that past texts become 'sources'. Callimachus' *Aitia* is the key witness to these two related aspects of Alexandrian cultural rhetoric. Would the Roman succession to political control over Greece and then Egypt lead to a similarly appropriative monumentalisation of Alexandrian culture?

The world which Callimachus' poetry offers stretches, like the cults of his own Artemis, across the Greek world; like the goddess of the Callimachean hymn, it too is both very local and also extraordinarily 'international'. The readership it implies and creates is one bound by loyalties not to one *polis*, but to a particular view of what was worth 'preserving' in Greek culture and language.[18] Callimachus too united, rather than divided, the Roman poets who

[15] Cf. Fraser 1972: I 246–76, esp. 254. For these Dionysiac paradoxes cf. below pp. 9–10.

[16] Some discussion in Hunter 1996: 131–8, 2003a: 50–3. Of particular interest in this connection is the description of Artemis' divinisation of Iphimede (i.e. Iphigeneia) at Hesiod fr. 23a.21–4 Merkelbach–West.

[17] Selden 1998 is in part a thought-provoking discussion of this topic.

[18] Important considerations in Schmitz 1999 and Asper 2001. Once again, we may be reminded of the (real and implied) audience for much archaic lyric and elegiac poetry.

accepted the challenge,[19] but it was not easy; the equivocal position of Greek poetry in the world after Alexander travelled with it as it was 'translated' from its Alexandrian background to a new home in Italy. I hope that this book will display, rather than cover over, the tensions which this literary colonisation involved.

[19] Cf. Feeney 2005: 240: 'Even when the project of a hellenized literature in Latin had been underway for two centuries, engaging intimately with someone like Callimachus was clearly a massive challenge for a native Latin speaker.'

CHAPTER

I

In the grove

1 The priest of the Muses

Callimachi Manes et Coi sacra Philitae,
in uestrum, quaeso, me sinite ire nemus.
primus ego ingredior puro de fonte sacerdos
Itala per Graios orgia ferre choros.

> Shade of Callimachus and sacred rites of Coan Philitas, allow me, I pray, to pass into your grove. I enter first, as priest from an unsullied spring, to bring Italian mysteries in dances of Greece. Propertius 3.1.1–4

These critically tormented verses introduce a poem (and a book of poems) in which the poet rejects the writing of Roman imperial epic in favour of erotic elegy and which closes with a forecast of posthumous fame for himself parallel to that of Homer:

meque inter seros laudabit Roma nepotes
illum post cineres auguror ipse diem.
ne mea contempto lapis indicet ossa sepulcro
prouisum est Lycio uota probante deo.

> I too [i.e. as well as Homer] will be praised by the later generations of Rome; I myself forecast such a day after I am ashes. That the grave where the stone indicates my bones shall not be neglected has been decreed by the Lycian god, who accepts my prayer. Propertius 3.1.35–8

Apollo's epithet 'Lycian', which Propertius uses nowhere else, picks up Λύκιος, the epithet given to the god by Callimachus as he recalled the god's poetic instructions to him in the prologue to the *Aitia*, the elegiac poem which

had secured Callimachus' place among the greatest of Greek elegists (fr. 1.22). The 'shade of Callimachus' thus both opens and closes the poem; allusion is a powerful form of communion with the dead. Much in Propertius 3.1 – such as the motif of the fame which Homer conferred upon the subjects of his poetry (cf. Theocritus 16.48–57, 17.116–20) – is familiar from its Hellenistic background, but much too is new.[1] The poet's priestly guise we recognise as a familiar Roman appropriation of the sometimes faded metaphor of the poet as Μουσάων θεράπων 'attendant/worshipper of the Muses'; elsewhere poets are inspired *uates* or solemn *Musarum sacerdotes*.[2] The sacral voice of Callimachus' so-called 'mimetic' hymns to Apollo, Athena, and Demeter, which construct ceremonial performances to which the poems act as accompaniment, may well have contributed to particular manifestations of this idea (e.g. the *Hymn to Apollo* is reflected in the opening of Horace's first 'Roman ode', 3.1), but the Roman cultural and religious heritage was the crucial factor. In this instance, the imagery of v. 4 is very striking: 'Greek form, Italian subject matter' may lie at the heart of the portentous claim,[3] but Propertius seems here to have something more specific in mind, and this section will try to tease out some of the 'thick' background which gives the verses their particular resonance.

The language of *orgia* takes us to the world of mystic divinities such as Demeter, Dionysus, and Isis;[4] the word is in fact found not infrequently in connection with the Muses, though particularly in their association with Dionysus and mystery cults (cf., e.g., Aristophanes, *Frogs* 356, Propertius 3.3.29).[5] In the *Georgics* Virgil carries the sacred objects (*sacra*) of the Muses, 'struck (*percussus*) by a great love' (2.475–6); *percussus* is there another Dionysiac word (cf. Lucretius 1.922–3 *acri | percussit thyrso laudis spes magna meum cor* 'great hope of praise has struck my heart with the sharp thyrsus'), recalling such declarations as that of Archilochus who could 'lead off the dithyramb, the fair song of Dionysus when [his] mind was thunderstruck

[1] Fedeli 1985: 38 speaks of the poem's 'singolare contaminazione' of Roman and Greek motifs; cf. also Papanghelis 1994: 198–9. For some of the (often overlooked) humour of the poem cf. Lyne 1998: 143.

[2] For many passages and bibliography cf. Nisbet and Hubbard on Horace *c.* 1.1.35, 1.31.2, Nisbet and Rudd on Horace *c.* 3.1.3, P. Hardie 1986: 11–22.

[3] Cf., e.g., Sandbach 1938: 214, Fedeli 1985 ad loc.

[4] Cf. Dodds on Euripides, *Bacchae* 34.

[5] For this association cf. below p. 42. For *orgia Musarum* cf. Fedeli 1985: 50, A. Hardie 2004.

(συγκεραυνωθείς) with wine' (fr. 120 West).[6] The reference to 'dances' leads in this same Dionysiac direction. Propertius in fact presents himself as a 'spreader of cult', a priest bringing the rites of a distant place to a new homeland, and the closest analogue in surviving literature comes from a text to which we shall often recur. In Euripides' *Bacchae* Dionysus comes to Thebes in the guise of the leader of a band of the god's female worshippers (*thiasos*, v. 56), in order to introduce his rites (*teletai*) to the city which he sees as rejecting him. Thebes, as the god emphatically stresses (vv. 20, 23), is the first Greek city to which he has come in his triumphant movement from east to west;[7] the introduction of the rites to Thebes is therefore also their introduction to Greece. Moreover, the god's worshippers, the sacred instruments they use ('the drums which are native to the city of the Phrygians', vv. 58–9), and by clear implication the rites themselves are decidedly 'barbarian' (cf. esp. vv. 55–61); that the god himself, however, is in reality a child of Thebes and that the rites are both new and immemorially traditional are to become two of the paradoxes at the heart of the play. This pattern is highly suggestive not just for the opening of Propertius 3.1 but for the Roman adoption of Greek poetry as a whole, a poetry which is always foreign and always new, but also always the model for imitation, rooted in tradition and sanctioned by the great stretch of time.

As a site of cultural contest, these paradoxes were not in fact new to the Romans. The cult of Bacchus had long been naturalised on Italian soil, but Livy tells a story of how scandal erupted around these rites in 186 BC:

> The senate decreed that both consuls should undertake an enquiry into secret conspiracies. A lowborn Greek came first to Etruria, a man with none of the many skills which that most learned of nations has introduced among us for the tending of mind and body, but a mere sacrificer and fortune-teller (*sacrificulus et uates*); nor was he even someone who fills minds with error by publicizing his *religio* and professing openly his business and teachings, but an overseer of secret and nocturnal rites. There were initiations which were at first imparted only to a few, but then began to spread widely among men and women. To *religio* were added the pleasures of wine and feasting, to entice more people in. When wine had inflamed them, at night with males mingled with females, young with old, and when

[6] Cf. also Tibullus 1.2.3 with Maltby's note, and below p. 69.

[7] Text and interpretation of vv. 20–3 have been much debated (cf. Dodds ad loc.), but the basic point is not affected.

> all sense of modesty was extinguished, all types of indecency began to occur, since each person had to hand the pleasure to satisfy the cravings to which he was naturally most inclined . . . The damaging effects of this evil spread from Etruria to Rome like a plague (*ueluti contagione morbi*).
>
> Livy 39.8.3–9.1 (trans. Beard–North–Price)[8]

Livy presents the coming of the rites and the scandal which erupted around them as part of the same narrative, whereas in fact the rites had come to Rome well before this;[9] what is important here, however, is not the historicity, but rather the very shape of his narrative. What the first part of Livy's account offers, in brief, is a '*Bacchae* narrative' in which Greece, and then Etruria, which shared with Euripides' Dionysus a Lydian heritage,[10] take the rôle of Asia and Rome takes the part of Thebes and Greece. The *Graecus ignobilis* who is presented as the 'first inventor', the Propertian *primus sacerdos*, of the rites is, like Dionysus, a ξένος (*Ba.* 233), and Livy's charge that he was a *sacrificulus et uates* is strikingly reminiscent of Pentheus' dismissal of the unknown promoter of Dionysiac rites as γόης ἐπωιδός 'a magician and chanter of spells' (*Ba.* 234); the charges of alcohol-induced indecency under the cloak of night are, of course, the very stuff of Pentheus' imagination (cf. *Ba.* 217–25, 237, 260–2, 469, 485–7).[11] Bacchic rites put at stake the nature of both 'Greek-ness' and 'Roman-ness'; when is a 'foreign import' so naturalised and domesticated, for example into the peaceful pleasures of the Greek symposium (cf. *Ba.* 379–85), that it is no longer 'foreign'? The ambivalent relationship with traditional Roman values and with the epic poetry (itself of course imitative of the greatest of Greek poets) embodying those values which the Roman elegists cultivated thus found a ready pattern in the discourse of Bacchic cult. In telling of the coming of the pernicious rites, Livy himself must stress that Greece had been responsible for very many beneficial cultural improvements (39.8.3); novelty and change, the borrowing from abroad, were themselves Roman 'traditions'.

[8] Cf. Beard–North–Price 1998: 2.289.

[9] Cf., e.g., Beard–North–Price 1998: 1.93, with 1.92 n. 73, for some of the large bibliography on the affair of the *bacchanalia*; Gruen 1990: 34–78 is particularly helpful.

[10] That Etruria was settled from Lydia is a view found as early as Herodotus 1.94; for Dionysus' Lydian origin in the *Bacchae* cf. vv. 13, 234, 464.

[11] Even Livy's language of 'contagion' (39.9.1) finds a parallel in the *Bacchae*, cf. v. 344 with Dodds' note.