CHAPTER 1

Callimachus in Verona
Catullus and Alexandrian poetry

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The first poem of Catullus begins with emphasis on smallness (*libellum*, *libelli*), craftmanship (*expolitum*, *doctis*, *laboriosis*) and literary value (*nugas*). Readers have not failed to appreciate that these are also crucially important themes in one of the most influential of all Greek literary texts, the prologue to the *Aetia* of Callimachus, a passage which poses many problems of interpretation but which certainly deals with questions of poetic craft and merit and the use of size as an aesthetic criterion in the evaluation of literature. There is agreement among most scholars that when in addition Catullus' 'little book' is presented as *lepidus*, it is crying out to be judged quite specifically in terms of the Callimachean 'slender Muse' (Μοῦσαν . . . λεπταλέην, *Aetia* fr. 1.23).[1] It seems difficult, therefore, to go against the now well-established and generally accepted idea that Callimachus must play an important role in any attempt to investigate Catullus' poetic art.[2] But how precisely can we define the term 'Callimachean'? And how useful is this term for readers who want to try to appreciate the poetry of Catullus and make sense of its relationship to both Greek and Latin literary traditions? These are difficult questions, but they must be posed.

Poem 65 in the Catullan corpus contains these words (15–16):

> sed tamen in tantis maeroribus, Hortale, mitto
> haec expressa **tibi carmina Battiadae**.
>
> But despite such great pain, Hortalus, I am sending
> these poems of Callimachus, translated for you.

[1] See, for example, Syndikus (1984) 72, Wiseman (1985) 183, Holzberg (2002) 12, Batstone (2007) 236, Knox (2007) 157–8. More generally, see Wheeler (1934) 80–6. On the text of Callimachus, fr. 1.11 and the problematic reading αἱ κατὰ λεπτόν, see Lehnus (2006). On the slender Muse of line 23 see Fantuzzi and Hunter (2004) 66–76.

[2] For an excellent survey of the whole question see Knox (2007).

Poem 116 begins thus:

> Saepe **tibi** studioso animo uenante requirens
> **carmina** uti possem mittere **Battiadae** . . .
>
> Often I have sought, like a keen hunter, poems of
> Callimachus that I could send to you . . .

There can be little doubt that the attentive reader is expected to appreciate that there is a connection between these two couplets. In each, and in the same metrical position, Catullus mentions poems of Callimachus, identified as a descendant of Battus.[3] Furthermore, the former poem acts as the introduction to a translation of a section of the *Aetia* in Poem 66, while the first word of the latter poem, *saepe*, translates the first word of the *Aetia*, πολλάκι.[4] The connection will have been even more obvious if Poems 65 and 116 did indeed open and close a Catullan *libellus* of elegiac poems.[5] Whatever one's opinion of that idea, if one accepts that there is a meaningful connection between the two couplets, then it must be obvious that in turn they create a highly marked and obviously very important recollection of the explicitly introductory Poem 1 and its Callimachean credentials.[6]

A great deal of work has gone into investigating these and many other moments of intertextual and intratextual engagement in Catullus and their overall importance for attempts to grasp the structure and thematic coherence of his oeuvre.[7] But once again, difficult questions abound. Was our collection organized by the poet himself or is it the result of editorial work done after his death? Can we be sure that the corpus as we have it can be divided up into three separate books? If we believe we can, what was in each book? Was one of those books entitled *Passer*? Given such uncertainty, is it really possible to establish the significance of intratextual patterns both within each of the *libelli* and between them? Amidst

[3] The *Suda* states that Battus was the name of Callimachus' father, but the better known figure of that name is the mythical founder of Cyrene: Pind. *Pyth.* 5.55, Hdt. 4.151. The poet himself uses the patronymic at *Ep.* 30.1: 'You are passing by the tomb of Battiades . . . '. For discussion see Fantuzzi and Hunter (2004) 297–9, 464.

[4] See Pontani (1999), Knox (2007) 164. For additional Callimachean elements in 116 see Macleod (1973) = (1983) 181–6, Barchiesi (2005) 334–6.

[5] See Skinner (2003) for a full-scale defence of the thesis that Poems 65–116 form an elegiac *libellus*; note also Hutchinson (2003) = (2008) ch. 5. See Butrica (2007) and Skinner (2007b) for useful surveys of the history of the transmission of the text and the whole question of the arrangement of the collection as a whole; see also Claes (2002), and Gutzwiller and Hutchinson in this volume.

[6] On Callimachean influence and the mention of Battus at 7.6 see Cairns (1973) 19–20.

[7] Since the fundamental study of Wiseman (1985) see, for example, Beck (1996), Claes (2002), Hutchinson (2003) = (2008) 109–30, Hubbard (2005).

the debates surrounding these matters Callimachean poetry and poetics are often invoked as a key part of the argument. In 1985, for example, T. P. Wiseman wrote: 'We can see now . . . how Catullus exploited his readers' knowledge of the *Aetia* at the beginning of all three books of his collection.'[8] At this point it becomes important to emphasize that in recent years research on Hellenistic poetry has brought about some radical changes in the appreciation of Callimachus and of his profoundly influential *Aetia*.

In 1995, Alan Cameron challenged established and cherished certainties about Callimachus and opened up new ways of thinking about his poetry and its reception. His revisionist interpretations offered new perspectives on a number of much debated issues. Cameron attaches great importance to orality, performance culture and social function in reaction to approaches based on the culture of the book and preconceptions based on the image of the ivory tower and ideas about *l'art pour l'art*. In addition, his radical reinterpretation of the *Aetia* prologue as a text which has little or nothing to do with epic poetry has strongly challenged many traditional readings of many Hellenistic and Roman texts.[9] More recently, S. Stephens has argued that Hellenistic poetry has suffered from being read in terms of purely Greek cultural patterns and that it requires careful study from an Egyptian perspective as well.[10] Her approach depends on a profound process of historicization in relation to Callimachus and his contemporaries, especially Theocritus and Apollonius Rhodius. Concerning the latter, in 1993 R. Hunter had already offered a ground-breaking reading of the *Argonautica* from a Ptolemaic perspective. He draws attention to the central position in the Alexandrian court which the post of Librarian of the Royal Library accorded Apollonius and emphasizes the importance of those aspects of the story which celebrate the successes of Greeks overseas. He also draws attention to contemporary political links between Egypt and the Black Sea and such episodes as that in Book 4 which looks forward to the foundation of Cyrene. As a result, Hunter is able to show how Apollonius' poem can be read as an exploration of the relationship between Alexandria and its Greek past, in both literary and historical terms, and also as relating to the history of the Ptolemaic presence both in North Africa and in the wider Greek world.[11] Along similar lines, M. A. Harder has argued that

[8] Wiseman (1985) 183.
[9] Cameron (1995); for an excellent discussion of the main issues see Harder (2002). See also Weber (1993), Hose (1997), Strootman (2010) on the social setting and function of Hellenistic poets.
[10] Stephens (2003); note also Koenen (1983), Weber (1993), Selden (1998). Goldhill (2005) is an important review of Stephens, generally sceptical but setting out the issues clearly.
[11] Hunter (1993a) 152–69. His approach has now been extended by Mori (2008).

in his *Aetia* Callimachus engages in complex and profound ways with Greek culture and history viewed from a specifically Ptolemaic perspective. Her approach results in seeing the poem as a serious text whose ideology and function align it with many of the concerns more usually associated with epic and historiography.[12] In addition, M. Fantuzzi and R. Hunter have published an excellent general study of Hellenistic poetry which marks a watershed, bringing together the results of the explosion of research which has taken place in the field since the 1980s and setting out the paths which scholars are likely to follow in the decades to come.[13] Their work is remarkable for its highly nuanced readings of generic and intertextual strategies within an overall approach which takes into account the broader cultural context, both in terms of Greek literary history and the Alexandrian setting. Finally, R. Hunter has published a short study devoted entirely to the reception of Callimachus in Latin poetry, one striking feature of which is his discussion of the idea that Latinists have gone too far in their construction of a modernist Hellenistic poetics and that for the late Republican and Augustan poets Callimachus was a classical Greek poet to be studied and imitated in much the same way as any other.[14]

But what does all this work on Callimachus and Alexandrian poetry mean for the study of Catullus? It is the aim of this chapter to outline the issues involved in answering this question by looking in particular at one influential feature prevalent in the research just summarized: the tendency to historicize Hellenistic poetry more firmly than ever before. Fortunately, in recent years, Catullus has been the focus of several general studies and attempts to survey the critical *status quo*, thus facilitating any attempt to get some kind of grip on the scholarly trends of the last sixty years, particularly since the publication in 1959 of K. Quinn's epoch-making *The Catullan Revolution*.[15]

In her recent survey of major themes in Catullan criticism from c. 1950 to 2000, J. H. Gaisser outlines and contextualizes the contribution made by Quinn's study in the light of both earlier and subsequent trends in interpretation. Of particular interest is the connection she makes between

[12] Harder (2003).
[13] Fantuzzi and Hunter (2004); the original Italian version was published in 2002.
[14] Hunter (2006) 1–6, 141–6. A collection of his other work on Hellenistic poetry and its reception may be found in Hunter (2008). Acosta-Hughes (2010a) also calls into question some commonly held assumptions about the originality of Hellenistic poetics.
[15] See, for example, Martindale (1999), Holzberg (2002), Gaisser (2007) and (2009), Skinner (2007a). A second edition of Quinn's book appeared in 1969, reprinted in 1971 and again in 1999 with a new introduction by C. Martindale.

Quinn's use of the idea of 'revolution' and research into the influence of Callimacheanism on Catullus undertaken by Clausen and Ross.[16] For Quinn, the poetry of Catullus marks a real 'change of course' in the history of Latin literature.[17] He is well aware of the difficulties involved in evaluating the precise nature of this change, given the relative paucity of knowledge concerning both earlier and contemporary poetry, but he goes on to attempt to situate it in relation to both the Hellenistic and the Roman background.[18] As for the latter, which is treated in much more detail, he divides it into three strands: the 'epic-tragic' tradition, the 'comic-satiric tradition' and a third 'made up from epigram and the polymetric fragments' of Q. Lutatius Catulus, Porcius Licinus, Valerius Aedituus and Laevius. Subsequently, the whole thrust of Quinn's argument is to emphasize the size of the gap between Catullus and his predecessors. When he turns his attention to Hellenistic poetry, Quinn initially refers to it as a 'great fresh wave' and as 'the new poetry' and 'the new movement'.[19] But his profoundly negative appreciation of the art and style of Hellenistic poetry soon becomes apparent. He refers to a 'disease' in Hellenistic composition, one which came from 'making poetry in a kind of literary laboratory', while an essential element in the Catullan achievement is his simple and direct mode of expression, which is favoured over Alexandrian poetic diction, characterized as 'an odd jumble of worn, pretentious literary archaism'.[20] In the end, Quinn's approach leads him into stating that 'the term Alexandrian, once we become reluctant to accept it as simply pejorative, loses a good deal of its critical significance'.[21] One of the reasons for his adoption of this critical position is his desire to counter the approach which tended to argue that all that was successful in Latin poetry could be put down to the fact that it was based on translation or close imitation of Greek models. While his approach was somewhat novel in the 1950s and was highly promising in opening up new ways of looking at Latin poetry, it led to a failure on Quinn's part to attempt to investigate in any detail the connections between the Greek poetry of the third century and the new Roman poetry of the first century BC. For him, the novelty of the neoterics had to be understood in mainly Roman terms. But this approach was soon to be modified.

In 1964 W. Clausen published his famous paper 'Callimachus and Latin Poetry'. For Clausen, even if his main interest is in Virgil, the idea of some

[16] Gaisser (2007) 6–15. [17] Quinn (1959) 4.
[18] Quinn of course owes a very considerable debt to the important study of Wheeler (1934). In turn, Granarolo (1971) builds on Quinn.
[19] Quinn (1959) 5. [20] Quinn (1959) 59–60. [21] Quinn (1959) 31.

kind of Catullan revolution in Latin poetry is a given, but he criticizes Quinn for failing to appreciate its fully Callimachean inspiration. And in the bringing of Callimachus to Rome, Clausen gives a key role to Parthenius, about whom he says, 'I do not understand why those who have written recently about the New Poetry make so little of him.'[22] For Clausen, no Latin poet was seriously or inventively interested in Callimachus before the middle of the first century. As a result, the essential element in the evolution of the New Poetry, and so of Catullus, becomes the discovery of Callimachus and his poetics, and that discovery is due to Parthenius, who acts as a teacher and mediator. His main contribution is taken to lie in his detailed explanation of the complexities of Hellenistic poetry, knowledge which could then be applied to the handling of new kinds of subject matter, such as provided in his own *Erotica Pathemata*, addressed to Gallus for use in either his elegies or his *'epos'*, i.e. epyllia. In *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature* of 1982, Clausen reworked his earlier study and enshrined its conclusions in two terse statements: 'Of Hellenistic poets the one who meant most to the New Poets was Callimachus . . . ' and 'Callimachus' poetry was brought to Rome by Parthenius of Nicaea, a zealous Callimachean.'[23] The title of the chapter in which these statements appear is 'The new direction in poetry'.

Clausen's brief paper, beautifully written in his own typically elegant and profoundly learned style, and bolstered as it was by the then recent and exhaustive work of Wimmel on the reception of Callimachus in Rome, exercised enormous influence on Latinists.[24] Doubts were expressed about the exact role of Parthenius, but for thirty years no serious objection was mounted against his picture of a Callimachean watershed in Latin literary history.[25] But what exactly did Latinists mean when they said that Catullus was in some sense a Callimachean? And how did the identification of Callimachean elements in Catullus affect interpretation of his poetry? For Clausen himself, poets such as Catullus and his like-minded contemporaries Cinna, Calvus, Cornificius and others were linked to Callimachus by objections to epic poetry and by a kinship which meant they could appreciate 'his experiments with language, his technical refinements, his passion for elegance'.[26] Clausen also identifies as Callimachean those interests pursued

[22] Clausen (1964) 188. In fact, as has been noted often, Rostagni (1932–33) = (1956) 49–99 had already argued for the importance of Parthenius as a key intermediary between Hellenistic and mid-first-century Roman poetry. On Parthenius see Hinds (1998) 74–83, Lightfoot (1999), Francese (2001).
[23] Clausen (1982) 180 and 184. [24] Wimmel (1960).
[25] On the role of Parthenius see the doubts expressed by Crowther (1976). His scepticism concerning much of what was becoming established opinion about the new poets in the 1960s had aready been expressed in Crowther (1970).
[26] Clausen (1964) 192–3.

in turn by Euphorion and Parthenius: local legends, aetiology, geography, mythology and the poetic form of the epyllion, which is characterized by interest in obscure mythological allusion, concentration on feminine emotions, the morbid and erotic, and the avoidance of traditional forms of epic narrative.[27] There can be little doubt that work in this vein made a rich contribution to the understanding of the literary texture of Catullan poetry and Latin literary history. However, it quickly became clear to some scholars that use of a critical vocabulary in which the repeated use of such adjectives as 'learned', 'refined', and 'exquisite' to define certain aspects of Catullan style which were taken to be quintessentially Callimachean was of limited critical use, and certain modifications to the broad picture so briefly outlined by Clausen began to appear.

In 1969, D. O. Ross attempted to provide a precise analysis of certain aspects of Catullan language and style in order to try to identify those elements which could be defined as broadly Alexandrian and neoteric. After looking in great detail at such features as the use of compounds and diminutives, the postposition of particles, exclamatory '*A*!' and adjectives in *-osus* and *-eus*, Ross arrived at the conclusion that the collection of epigrams which forms the third group of poems in the Catullan corpus was not indebted to these traditions at all, but was instead to be situated within an entirely Roman poetic tradition. Given the generally accepted idea that the epigram is one of the most characteristic of all Hellenistic genres and the one most quintessentially associated with the ideal of poetic λεπτότης, this is a remarkably surprising proposition. What are we to make of an argument that Catullan epigrams are best read in relation to a Roman poetic tradition when some of them are close imitations of Callimachean models? Whether one agrees with him or not,[28] the material Ross gathered and the unexpected conclusions he reached illustrate perfectly the difficulty of situating Catullus within the traditions of Greek and Roman literary history and deciding exactly what may be usefully described as Callimachean, Hellenistic, Alexandrian or neoteric.[29]

[27] Clausen (1964) 191.

[28] But note the remarks of Hinds (1998) 78–80, Morelli (2007) 534–41.

[29] Clausen (1964) 187 had already remarked: 'It is a mistake, not uncommon in our literary histories, to employ the terms "Hellenistic", "Alexandrian", "Callimachean" interchangeably'. For Clausen, Roman neoteric poetry is essentially Callimachean. The point is made again in an important contribution by Thomas (1993a) 198–9, emphasizing the pervasive influence of Callimachus in late Republican and Augustan Latin poetry and attempting to define Callimacheanism (specifically in relation to Virgil) in terms of a liking for certain kinds of poetic structure, tropes and word-play, learning, tone, metapoetics, intertextuality, ambiguity and ideology. On the last of these elements and the tendency to accord more importance to Callimachus' poetics than to his politics see Heyworth (1994), Nelis (2005).

Subsequently, in 1978, in an important and influential contribution, R. O. A. M. Lyne attempted to identify precisely a coterie of neoteric poets and their shared poetic interests, producing strong arguments against those who refused to believe in the existence of a group of poets who could be associated with Cicero's reference to the *neōteroi* in a letter to Atticus in 50 BC (*Att.* 7.2.1).[30] Despite the arguments of some sceptics, it is indeed very hard to believe that, when Cicero on three different occasions refers to *neōteroi*, *poetae noui* and *cantores Euphorionis*, he does not have in mind a group of poets active in the middle of the first century BC who could be characterized by certain shared stylistic traits and tastes in Greek models.[31] For Lyne it is not epigrams or short polymetric poems of an erotic or satiric nature but rather the epyllion, as exemplified by Catullus 64, which is the defining element of their originality in Roman terms and of their debt to Hellenistic traditions. Lyne goes on to argue that Poems 61–66 are a distinctly Callimachean group, since they are all, in one way or another, experiments in narrative form. He sees them as reactions to the way in which Callimachus developed alternatives to epic, alternative ways of structuring narrative forms and retelling mythic stories. It is, then, Callimachean experimentation with the epyllion, a form of 'perversely ingenious alternative epos', that becomes the crucial element in the definition of Catullan and neoteric Callimacheanism.

More recently, M. Fantuzzi and R. Hunter have considered anew the longer poems of Catullus in relation to Callimachean and other Hellenistic models.[32] Situating Catullus within a survey of Roman strategies of engagement with Hellenistic poetry, their reading demonstrates the sophistication of Catullan techniques. For them, Poem 66 is not simply a translation of the *Coma Berenices*; it is also a poem which reflects on the act of translating Callimachus as just one approach among others to the whole project of creating in the Latin literary tradition texts to rival the Greek classics. And some of these other approaches are in fact tried out by Catullus in other poems. As such, the famous translation of Sappho in Poem 51 should be set alongside Poem 66, but without putting any emphasis on periodization: Catullus is not imitating first an archaic model and then a Hellenistic exemplar; instead he is thinking about Greek literature as a continuum by tracing Hellenistic poetry back to its Archaic and Classical roots. In turn, he is also reflecting on the various ways in which Roman poets react to the

[30] See Lyne (1978) against (e.g.) Crowther (1970).
[31] See Hollis (2007) 1–2; for a more sceptical position see Tuplin (1979), Courtney (1993/2003) 189–91.
[32] Fantuzzi and Hunter (2004) 467–85.

Greek literary classics.[33] One of the most telling features of the approach of Fantuzzi and Hunter is the way in which they offer elucidation of precise moments of intertextual engagement while also paying close attention to matters of genre, literary history and the wider cultural context. Their rich interpretations lead to the realization that the term 'Callimachean' is most useful only when one can show beyond reasonable doubt that Catullus was actually writing with a specific Callimachean text in mind. Furthermore, the ways in which they elucidate intertextual patterns, for example the presence of Apollonius Rhodius in Poem 63 as well as in Poem 64,[34] provide an excellent illustration of the limitations involved in use of the more general term 'Hellenistic' and of how over the years it may even have hindered the appreciation of the influence of specific models.

One thing above all should be clear from the above discussion: in the period during which Callimachus became a central name in Catullan studies, Callimacheanism was defined in terms of the choice of certain kinds of subject matter and certain technical and stylistic features. Little attention was devoted to Callimachus as a court poet or to the many ways in which his poetry is quintessentially Ptolemaic in outlook. But these are exactly the aspects of Callimachean studies which have come to the fore in recent years. Today, Callimachus is no longer read purely as a poet who wrote only for a small and learned intellectual elite within the Museum, nor as a poet worth reading only for a small number of influential texts marked by polemical opinions about literature. Instead, he is seen as a poet who also engaged in many different ways with the political and cultural milieu in which he lived and worked. The fact that significant sections of his output contain poems addressed to the Ptolemies is now allowed its full significance in the interpretation of his poetry as a whole. The question then has to be asked: did Catullus read Callimachean poetry with an eye to its political aspects as well as to its poetics? It will be useful to begin by looking at the political nature of Catullan poetry.[35]

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The Catullan corpus as a whole contains a significant number of poems which may be described as broadly political. The brilliant work of T. P. Wiseman, culminating in his 1985 study *Catullus and his World*,

[33] Cf. Farrell (1991) ch. 7, esp. 276–8, Hinds (1998) 74–83 for important discussions of the ways in which the idea of a clear-cut neoteric revolution in Roman literary history must be carefully deconstructed. On the multi-layered intertextual relationship involving Sappho, Callimachus and Catullus see Acosta-Hughes (2010b) 62–104.

[34] Fantuzzi and Hunter (2004) 480–5.

[35] For an excellent survey of this question see Konstan (2007); important too for the broader intellectual and social context are Feldherr (2007) and Tatum (2007).

both put an end to the simplistic characterization of Catullus as just a love poet and allowed subsequent research to investigate through various approaches the relationship between the erotic poems and the rest of the corpus, the socio-historical setting the poems create and the ways in which elite Roman audiences are likely to have encountered and interpreted his work.[36] No matter how we divide up the surviving poems, the fact remains that a reading of the Catullan corpus as a whole, in whatever order, offers readers a picture of Roman society from a number of perspectives. Detailed study of Catullan language has demonstrated that his choice of vocabulary is often double-edged, with key words having both a literary and a more broadly social significance. As is well known, Catullus speaks of his erotic relationship with Lesbia as a *foedus* and employs the vocabulary of *amicitia* and *urbanitas* in describing its course and the social milieu in which it evolves. In doing so he is exploiting in highly insightful and complex ways the language and ideology of social performance employed by the Roman elite.[37] As a result, the reader of the corpus as a whole is drawn into the reconstruction of a love affair in a particular cultural moment, i.e. mid-first-century Italy. It is this period, with the evocation of its protagonists, its codes of behaviour and its historical problems and discourses, which is set up in the poems as the background for Catullus' acts of social performance as a lover, poet, satirist, friend, enemy, man or brother. To read Catullus is to bring vividly to life the image of a young Transpadane provincial making his way in Rome and its empire while offering caustic comment on the behaviour of its elite in many spheres of activity. This act of reading also brings to life the voice of a profoundly Hellenized commentator on Roman poetry. Just as the social or political vocabulary can shed a particular light on the poetics of this new voice and in particular of its erotic narratives, so the unfolding erotic plots are also to be related on different levels and in different ways to the political setting and the representation of social *mores* as a whole. As a result, words and actions which on their first usage seem to belong to a particular sphere or register subsequently turn out to be much more complex. To take a very well known example, the adjective *lepidus* applied to the new book in the first line of the opening poem is subsequently used of kinds of behaviour (e.g. 36.10), thus converting the apparently purely poetic term into one with a social force and making it

[36] Cf., for example, Fitzgerald (1995), Tatum (1997), Krostenko (2001), Nappa (2001), Wray (2001), Tatum (2007) and the helpful survey of Skinner (2007a) 1–4.

[37] This approach has now culminated in the work of Krostenko (2001), which is summarized in Krostenko (2007).