

THE SHADOW OF ARISTOPHANES: HELLENISTIC POETRY'S RECEPTION OF COMIC POETICS*

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The influence of Attic drama on Hellenistic poetry has been a topic of little consistent focus in recent scholarship. Most scholars are content merely to note individual cases of parallels with Attic comedy or tragedy, or lament the loss of many dramas which would doubtless prove illuminating intertexts were they to have survived.¹ What emerges is thus a rather piecemeal picture of Hellenistic poetry's engagement with earlier dramatic texts. There are, of course, some notable exceptions, such as explorations of the underlying tragic elements in Apollonius' *Argonautica* and Callimachus' *Hecale*,² as well as the analysis of comedy's influence on individual Hellenistic poems.³ Yet the full extent of Hellenistic poetry's debt to Attic drama remains largely unexplored terrain.⁴ This lack of scholarly attention may in part reflect the common belief that Hellenistic poets display a largely negative attitude to drama,⁵ but it must also stem from the traditional emphasis on Hellenistic poetry as a written artefact, detached from any immediate context of performance – apparently a far cry from the socially embedded performance-culture of fifth century Athens.

As many contributions to this volume demonstrate, however, this fifth-third century dichotomy is too simplistic, and the belief that classical drama was relatively unimportant for Hellenistic poets should be reconsidered given the continuing prominence of drama in the third and second centuries BCE. After all, new dramas were still composed and performed in the Hellenistic period, just as past Attic plays were reperformed by itinerant artists, including the touring *techmitai* of Dionysus. Archaeological evidence, too, highlights the sustained popularity and cultural prestige of the dramatic genre, visible not only in large collections of Hellenistic mask and actor terracottas, but also scenes from tragedy and New Comedy on house mosaics.⁶ Yet it is in Alexandria, above all, that drama's continuing significance is most evident, since

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¹ E.g. Hunter (1989a: 19, 188) on the loss of Sophocles' *Colchian Women* and *Rhizotomoi*, both possible sources for *Argonautica* 3.

² *Argonautica*: Murray (2014: 249 n.10). *Hecale*: Acosta-Hughes & Stephens (2012: 192–202).

³ E.g. Bettenworth (2002) on Asclepiades 25 *HE* [920–931] (= *AP* 5.181); Hunter (1996: 111–13) on *Idyll* 14 and New Comedy; Hollis (1990: 9, 145, 168, 255, 299–300) on the *Hecale's* use of comic language.

⁴ Though now see Sistakou (2016) for a thorough treatment of Hellenistic poetry's reception of tragedy.

⁵ E.g. Thomas (1979: 181–90); Fantuzzi (2007); Belioti (this volume: 5): "theatrical traditions seem to have lost their vitality." For caution against such pessimistic readings, see Cameron (1995: 60–2), Acosta-Hughes & Stephens (2012: 96–97, 102) and Acosta-Hughes (2012).

⁶ For introductions to Hellenistic drama, see e.g. Fantuzzi & Hunter (2004: 404–443), Sens (2010), Acosta-Hughes & Stephens (2012: 90–102) and Kotlińska-Toma (2015); for itinerant poets, see Cinalli (this volume: 39–78) and Hunter & Rutherford (2009) more generally; for the artists of Dionysus in particular, see Le Guen (2001), Lightfoot (2002) and Aneziri (2003); and for theatrical mosaics, see Nervegna (2013), esp. the lists in Appendixes 2 and 3 (pp.264–70).

this literary genre appears to have played a key role in the Ptolemies' political self-fashioning. Not only did the kings support public performances of drama by exempting the artists of Dionysus from the salt tax,⁷ but they also invoked its cultural capital in their large public displays of wealth and power: in Ptolemy II Philadelphus' Grand Procession, a figure of the Year (Ενιαυτός) appeared in tragic clothing and a mask (Athenaeus 5.198a) alongside the artists of Dionysus and the tragic poet Philicus of Corcyra (Ath. 5.198c);⁸ for the same festivities, Philadelphus' pavilion featured grottoes with characters drawn from tragedy, comedy and satyr-play (Ath. 5.196f); and later in the third century, Ptolemy IV Philopator's luxurious *thalamegos* boat included a roofed area which resembled a theatrical stage-building (Ath. 5.205a). Allusion to the myths and trappings of drama, therefore, clearly contributed to the Ptolemies' display and performance of their Hellenic pedigree. Yet this was not just a case of passive appropriation: beyond the razzmatazz of such public pageants, key players at the Ptolemaic court are also said to have composed drama themselves. An *Adonis* tragedy is ascribed to Ptolemy IV (*TrGF* 119), while even Callimachus composed tragedies, comedies and satyr-plays, if we can trust the report of the *Suda*.⁹ Moreover, court poets and scholars also spent much time delving into dramatic literary history: various epigrammatists wrote poems about past and contemporary dramatists, such as Dioscorides' series of epigrams which draw a literary genealogy between former Attic greats (Thespis, Aeschylus, Sophocles) and his own contemporaries (Sositheus, Machon);¹⁰ while in the Alexandrian Library, Attic drama was subjected to the same intense scholarly study as Homer. In particular, comedy was scrutinised by a succession of prominent scholars, including Lycophron, Euphronius, Dionysiades and Eratosthenes, the last of whom produced twelve or more books entitled *Περὶ τῆς ἀρχαίας κωμωδίας*. Comic drama was evidently deemed worthy of such detailed study.¹¹

It is perhaps two separate anecdotes, however, that best exhibit the Ptolemies' desire to control and possess Athens' dramatic heritage: first is the claim made by several sources that Ptolemy I Soter repeatedly tried to attract the comic poet Menander to his court;¹² and second is Galen's report that Ptolemy III Euergetes borrowed the official performance texts of the three major tragedians from Athens for a deposit of 15 talents, only to keep the originals and send back new copies, thereby forfeiting his deposit.¹³ The historicity of these anecdotes is of course questionable, but even if they are ultimately untrue, both reflect a perception of the Ptolemaic kings' strong ambition to be intimately connected with Attic drama and possess the 'real thing', be it dramatist or script. Harnessing the prestige of Athenian drama was clearly a significant part of the Ptolemies' cultural politics: through it, they could assert their own credentials as cultured, Greek monarchs, the true owners and custodians of the Hellenic past.¹⁴

⁷ *P.Hal* 1.260-65. See Fraser (1972: 1.618-9), and *Id.* 17.112-16 for Ptolemy Philadelphus' patronage of those entering 'the sacred contests of Dionysus.'

⁸ On the confusion over this poet's name (Φίλικος vs. Φιλίσκος), see Fraser (1972: II.859 n.407), Provenzale (2009: 36-37) and Kotlińska-Toma (2015: 71-2). From the presence of these and other figures in the procession, Rice (1983: 56-8) suggests that the celebrations surrounding it probably included dramatic performances.

⁹ *Suda* s.v. Καλλιμάχος (κ 227): τῶν δὲ αὐτοῦ βιβλίων ἐστὶ καὶ ταῦτα: ... σατυρικά δράματα, τραγωδία, κωμωδία, κτλ. Many are sceptical of this entry's accuracy, but see e.g. Cameron (1995: 60), esp. with n.232.

¹⁰ Dioscorides 20-24 *HE* [1585-1622] = *AP* 7.410; 7.411; 7.37; 7.707; 7.708). For the links (and significant differences) between 22 and 23 *HE*, see e.g. Bing (1988a: 39-40), Fantuzzi (2007: 490-3) and Klooster (2011: 150-154). For the epigrams as a whole, see Campbell (2013: 86-96). *Cf.* also *SH* 985, a third century BCE anthology containing at least nine tetrastichs composed on individual dramatists or tragedies and comedies: see Maltomini (2001).

¹¹ See e.g. Strecker (1884), Pfeiffer (1968: 119-120, 159-162) and Lowe (2013).

¹² Pliny *NH* 7.111 = *Men. Test.* 15; *Alciph.* 4.18.5-6 = *Men. Test.* 20. The *Suda* entry for Menander (μ 589 = *Men. Test.* 1) credits the poet not only with comedies, but also 'letters to King Ptolemy'.

¹³ Galen, *Comm. in Hipp. Epidem.* 3 (17a.606-7). See Fraser (1972: I.325, II.480-1); Blum (1991: 42, 83 n.155); Hanink (2014: 244-5).

¹⁴ Here, as elsewhere, the Ptolemies may have been following in the footsteps of Alexander the Great, who appears to have valued the cultural prestige of drama similarly: he supposedly asked for books to be sent to him in Asia, including the works of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides (*Plut. Alex.* 8.3).

Drama, therefore, was neither dead nor in decline by the Hellenistic period. By contrast, it continued to be studied, composed and performed, and it appealed to a wide range of Hellenistic society: kings, scholars and ordinary citizens alike. Given this continuing interest in drama both new and old, therefore, it is worth reconsidering the extent and nature of Attic drama's influence on Hellenistic poetry. In this paper, I shall commence this reassessment by exploring Hellenistic poetry's relationship with Attic (especially 'Old') Comedy.¹⁵ Aristophanes and his contemporaries, I argue, were both an important precursor to, and key model for, Hellenistic poetics. We shall begin by exploring how tropes that are often considered distinctively 'Alexandrian' in fact have considerable old comic precedent, before turning to Hellenistic poets' more direct reception of the agonistic and combative personae of Old Comedy, as they adopted and inverted key comic imagery and motifs. Although most scholars focus on the voice of archaic (and especially Pindaric) lyric as a key precedent for the self-presentation of Callimachus and his peers,¹⁶ I shall conclude by suggesting that Attic Old Comedy also played a significant role in the formation and development of any such "Hellenistic aesthetic": when approaching Hellenistic poetry, we cannot escape the lingering shadow of Aristophanes and his fellow old comedians – the *Aristophanis Manes*, as it were.¹⁷

1. The Precedent of Old Comedy: Literate Poetics Between Text and Performance

The traditional picture of Hellenistic poetry is one of bookish, exclusive and erudite poets, separated from Classical Greece by a vast chasm of time, space and cultural change. In his classic treatment of the topic, Peter Bing talks of these poets' "acute sense of discontinuity and isolation", and their awareness of a "rupture with the literary past."¹⁸ To some extent, such a view of Hellenistic poets' epigonality is undoubtedly true, but at its extremes it can evoke an image of scholar-poets cloistered away in the ivory tower, detached from any performance context and immersed in a purely bookish world. Although scholars have more recently emphasised Hellenistic poetry's continuing contexts of performance and broader social, political and cultural engagement beyond the Library,¹⁹ emphasis on the pure textuality of Hellenistic poetry and its break with the classical past often persists: old stereotypes die hard.²⁰

Nevertheless, scholars are increasingly aware of the numerous archaic and classical precedents for Hellenistic poetry, acknowledging that it is not an isolated outlier, but rather situated within a continuum

¹⁵ On issues of periodisation, see e.g. Nesselrath (1990; 2000); Sidwell (2000); Arnott (2010). Aristotle only talks of two kinds of comedy ('old' and 'new', Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 1128a.23-5) and the origins of the hazy 'Middle' designation are uncertain. Nesselrath (1990: 180-187) attributes the popularisation of the term 'Middle Comedy' to Aristophanes of Byzantium, in which case many of our earlier Hellenistic poets might have been working with a simple Old-New opposition. Moreover, many comedians, including Aristophanes himself, straddle the boundary between our traditional chronological divisions. Acknowledging the artificiality of our modern categories, I thus do not shrink from occasionally employing evidence from 'Middle' Comedy when relevant.

¹⁶ E.g. Newman (1967: 45-8); Poliakoff (1980); Richardson (1985: 391-9); Hopkinson (1988: 88-9); Morrison (2007); West (2011: esp. 66-67); Luz (2012); Steiner (2015).

¹⁷ Many of the comic examples discussed below have been analysed by Matthew Wright in his recent study of how Attic comedy foreshadowed trends in later literary criticism (2012). Because of his specific focus, however, Wright overlooked many of Old Comedy's numerous parallels with Hellenistic poetry, which I aim to highlight here. Talking plainly of 'Old Comedy' and 'Hellenistic poetry' can, of course, make both corpora of texts seem more cohesive and unified than they may actually be, especially given that in both cases we are heavily reliant on the fragments that have been preserved, either by chance or by the preoccupations of later excerptors (e.g. for comedy, Athenaeus with all his gastronomic interests). Nevertheless, from what does survive, there is a general consistency across each set of texts, and I believe that it is fair to see both Callimachus and Aristophanes as prime exponents of the poetry of their time, rather than radically different from their contemporaries.

¹⁸ Bing (1988a: 56); cf. e.g. Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1924: I.148-151); Pfeiffer (1968: 88); Bulloch (1985: 543).

¹⁹ Cameron (1995) remains seminal. For Hellenistic poetry in context, see e.g. Acosta-Hughes & Stephens (2012: esp. 148-203); Harder et al. (2014).

²⁰ E.g. Bing's response to Cameron (2009: 106-115); Cozzoli's talk of "the post-oral, bookish environment of Hellenistic Alexandria" (2011: 428); Barbantani's discussion of "the end of an era" and a "watershed moment" (2015: 288).

of literary development. Indeed, numerous studies now highlight Hellenistic poetry's debts to earlier literature, especially lyric poetry.²¹ It is regrettable, however, that Old Comedy is rarely mentioned in this connection, or – if it is – that discussion is largely limited to the famous contest between Euripides and Aeschylus in the *Frogs*. Yet there is in fact much in Attic comedy beyond the *Frogs* which offers parallels for key characteristics and motifs of Hellenistic poetry. Susan Stephens' recent summary of Callimachus' defining attributes, for example, could equally well be applied to Aristophanes: he too can be characterised by "his engagement with ideas about poetry, his wide-ranging generic experimentation, and his self-conscious stance as a poet between a performed art and the emerging possibilities of the text."²² Both Aristophanes and Callimachus, alongside their peers and rivals, participated in a strongly *literate* poetics, engaging with the literary tradition and poetic history, while also acknowledging the new technology of the book, with all its potential tensions.²³ In the first half of this paper, I aim to outline the shared features of this literate poetics and consider their significance, especially for our larger narratives of literary history and questions of textuality and/or performance.

1.1 *Manoeuvring within the Literary Tradition: Intertextuality and Generic Manipulation*

Old Comedy and Hellenistic poetry display a number of striking similarities at a variety of levels. A useful starting point, however, is their similarly dense intertextuality and generic manipulation. Allusion had, of course, accompanied all Greek literature from the earliest of times, already appearing in archaic epic and lyric poetry. Yet whereas earlier intertextuality tended to be restricted to famous phrases, words, or explicit citation,²⁴ old comedians display a greater sophistication and precision in their textual echoes, employing *verbatim* quotation of non-contiguous lines and half-lines from numerous diverse sources. A well-known case of such intricate intertextuality is Aristophanes' parody of Euripides' *Helen* (*Thesm.*855-919), which we can study in detail thanks to the survival of the Euripidean original.²⁵ The comedian quotes considerable chunks of Euripides' play (*Thesm.*855-7 ~ *Eur.Hel.*1-3; *Thesm.*906-12 ~ *Eur.Hel.*558, 561-6), only to deflate the tragic grandeur through bathetic references to the Egyptians' fondness for taking laxatives (855-7), Euripides' alleged addiction to ragged heroes (910),²⁶ and the simple metaplasm of ἐς χέρας ('into my hands') to the obscene *double-entendre* of ἐσχάρας (912).²⁷ Although we should be wary of underestimating the power of memory in classical Athens, it is difficult for us as modern readers to imagine how Aristophanes could have quoted so much text without consulting a written edition of Euripides' tragedy, or indeed how an audience member could spot all the details. Scholars have thus imagined a secondary reading audience for Aristophanes' comedies beyond the original performance, who had the time, leisure and resources to dissect the comedian's allusions (cf. Wright 2012; Zogg 2014: 16-23). The extent of Aristophanes' literariness, however, is even clearer when we note the rogue Sophoclean quotation lurking within this Euripidean parody (μη̄ ψεῦσον ᾧ Ζεῦ, 'don't trick me, o Zeus', *Thesm.*870a = *Soph.fr.*493a), an unobtrusive 'interpolation' which would be spotted more easily when reading, not just watching, the

²¹ E.g. Acosta-Hughes (2010). For Pindaric debts, see n.16 above.

²² Stephens (2011: 1).

²³ For Old Comedy and literacy generally, see e.g. Lowe (1993); Slater (1996); Wright (2012: esp. 60-66).

²⁴ Allusion to famous phrases: e.g. the Homeric comparison of men to leaves (*Il.*6.144-51; cf. too *Il.*2.467-7, *Od.*9.51, *Od.*7.105-6, *Il.*21.461-7), which is echoed by Mimnermus (fr.2.1-2 W²), Simonides (fr.19-20 W²), and Bacchylides (5.63-7): see Griffith (1975) and Sider (2001). Citation: e.g. Solon's criticism of Mimnermus (fr.20.3-4 W²) and Simonides' naming of various predecessors, including Pittacus (542 *PMG*), Stesichorus and Homer (564 *PMG*), and Cleoboulus (581 *PMG*).

²⁵ E.g. Nieddu (2004); Austin & Olson (2004: lx-lxii, 279-292); Wright (2012: 156-162); Farmer (2017) 177-181.

²⁶ Reading Grégoire's ἀμφίωον, with Wilson's *OCT* (2007). If we instead read ἰφύωον (Σι/Suda), we might detect another reference to Euripides' mother's services as a vegetable vendor (cf. *Ran.*840, *Ach.* 478, *Thesm.*455-6).

²⁷ Lit. 'hearts' but also a slang term for the female genitalia: see Austin & Olson (2004: 291 *ad* 911-12).

drama.²⁸ This *Helen* parody thus combines extensive quotation, alteration and interpolation of Euripides' text, a procedure that could be paralleled by numerous other comic parodies.²⁹ Taken together, the precision and frequency of such allusions establish Old Comedy as an important predecessor to the extremely literary intertextual habits of Hellenistic poets. Of course, parody is not as central to most Hellenistic intertextuality as it was to Aristophanes,³⁰ but both corpora's similar degree of literariness sets them apart from what had come before.

The precision of Old Comedy's intertextual play is even clearer when we note its exploitation of Homeric *hapax legomena*, words which only appear once in the Homeric poems and whose meaning was often unclear already in the classical and Hellenistic periods. The poetic reuse of such *hapax legomena* is considered typical of Hellenistic poetry, a by-product of the Homeric scholarship taking place in the Alexandrian library and elsewhere.³¹ Yet there is already evidence of interest in obscure Homeric words far earlier, especially in Old Comedy. In Aristophanes' very first play, a father tests his son on the meaning of Homeric γλώσσαί, including the Homeric *hapax legomenon* κόρυμβος (*Banqueters*, fr.233; cf. *Il.9.241*);³² and throughout Old Comedy, numerous Homeric *hapax legomena* are allusively redeployed: Lampsacus' ankle is twisted 'backwards' in the *Acharnians* (παλίνοστρον, *Ach.1179*), undercutting the general's mock-heroism by evoking the Homeric simile in which Paris retreats from Menelaus like a man at the sight of a snake (παλίνοστρος *Il.3.33*); the chorus of *Birds* calls mankind 'wingless' ephemerals (ἀπτῆνες, *Av.687*), as helpless as the fledgling chicks from Achilles' famous bird simile (ἀπτῆσι *Il.9.323*); the Aristophanic Aeschylus is a 'mighty roarer' (ἐριβρεμέτας *Ran.814*), equated with the Homeric Zeus as the prime archetype of elemental power (ἐριβρεμέτεω, *Il.13.264*);³³ a Thracian swallow 'roars' on Cleophon's lips (ἐπιβρέμεται, *Ran.680*) like an Iliadic blast of wind (ἐπιβρέμει, *Il.17.739*); the Muse is warned of being Carcinus' 'attendant' (συνέριθος, *Pax 786*), playing the role that Athena claimed to perform for Nausicaa (συνέριθος *Od.6.32*); and Cratinus' fountains of speech 'ring aloud' (καναχοῦσι, Cratinus fr.198.2) like Odysseus' leg as it is dropped by Eurycleia on her recognition of his scar (κανάχησε, *Od.19.469*).³⁴ One cannot deny the possibility that some of these words might have entered common parlance by the fifth century, but their largely sparse attestations elsewhere, alongside the fact that they primarily derive from 'purple passages' (similes and famous scenes) suggest that most were among the obscure Homeric γλώσσαί studied in Classical Athens. Their reuse here would thus have been packed with significant allusive force for any elite *literati* capable of spotting the allusion, just as when they recur later in Hellenistic

²⁸ Cf. Wright (2012: 148) for similar 'unflagged' intrusions, e.g. the snippets from Euripides' *Aeolus* and *Stheneboea* within *Peace*'s extended parody of Euripides' *Bellerophon* (*Ar. Pax* 58-161).

²⁹ See Rau (1967) for Aristophanic paratragedy and now Farmer (2017) for comedy in general. Titles of other poets' comedies suggest further extended parodies of famous tragedies (e.g. Strattis' *Orestes the Man* and *Phoenician Women*, as well as Cratinus' *Eumenides*). Comedy also parodied texts of numerous other genres: see e.g. Kugelmeier (1996) on comedy's lyric "reflexes".

³⁰ Though not entirely absent: note the satirical texts of philosophers such as Timon of Phlius and Crates of Thebes, who both undercut earlier epic and lyric through extensive quotation: e.g. Crates *SH* 351.1-2 (~ *Od.19.172-3*); *SH* 359.1-2 (= Solon fr.13.1-2 W²); Timon *SH* 775 (~ *Il.2.484*). See e.g. Gutzwiller (2007: 131-144).

³¹ E.g. Latte (1925: 162-163); Körte (1929: 168-169); Bing (1988a: 54): "so characteristic of the Hellenistic avant garde." For helpful lists of Homeric *hapax legomena*, see Kumpf (1984); for their use in Hellenistic poetry and the influence of Homeric scholarship on Hellenistic poetry more generally, see e.g. Rengakos (1992, 1993, 1994a, 1994b, 2008); Kyriakou (1995); Sens (2002: 205-206); Sistikou (2007).

³² See Kyriakou (1995: 3). We might compare the later comic Strato's *Phoenicides*, which depicted a cook who spoke in archaising Homeric language and could only be understood through recourse to Philetas' glossaries (fr.1.42-4): see Fantuzzi & Hunter (2004: 246-7); Bing (2009: 28-32).

³³ If Aristophanes were a Hellenistic poet, scholars would also surely note the *variatio* at play in the transformation of the Homeric χαλεπήν ... μῆνιν (*Il.13.624*) into δεινὸν ... χόλον (*Ran.814*), perhaps with a further nod to the etymologically cognate ἐδεισάτε in the same Iliadic line; see Beekes (2010: I.310) on δεινός: "From *δφει-νός, related to δειδῶ", both connected to the Indo-European *duei-, 'fear'.

³⁴ Cf. also Cratinus fr.279, a one-line fragment about a Persian rooster crowing loudly (καναχῶν). Cf. too e.g. Silk (2000b: 308) on Hermippus' evocation of the Homeric *hapax legomenon* ἀχυρμαί (*Il.5.502* – again in a simile) with ἀχύροισι in fr.48.6.

poetry.³⁵ Once more, therefore, Hellenistic literariness finds significant precedent in Old Comedy: old comedians too could engage precisely and pointedly with the specific details of another text.

We reach a similar conclusion when we consider both sets of poetry's generic interactions. Although Kroll's famous *Kreuzung der Gattungen* (1924) is too blunt and singular a concept to account for the complexity and range of generic manipulation in Hellenistic poetry, genre mixing still remains a defining feature of the period. Indeed, Callimachus' "wide-ranging generic experimentation" is one of his principal characteristics mentioned by Stephens above. Precedent for such generic manipulation is usually identified in lyric poetry, especially the epic features of the choral *Pythian* 4, or the combination of rhapsodic hymn and epic in Simonides' *Plataea elegy*.³⁶ Yet few scholars, if any, include Old Comedy in their list of predecessors, despite this drama's similarly intense manipulation of generic norms. Attic comedy's concern with genre is clear from its pointed self-definition against its rival dramatic form, tragedy,³⁷ but as Wright has recently suggested, it is also likely that "many lost comedies took the form of cross-generic experiments."³⁸ This is apparent not only from the titles of several comedies which suggest some kind of 'generic mixing,' such as Alcaeus' *Comitragedy* (Κωμωδοτραγωδία, fr.19-21) and Callias' *Alphabetic Tragedy* (Γραμματική τραγωδία, *test.*7),³⁹ but also from various comedies' close relationship with satyr-play, including the *Satyrs* of Cratinus, Ecphantides, Callias, Phrynichus and Timocles, as well as Cratinus' *Dionysalexandros*, with its chorus of satyrs.⁴⁰ Although we are admittedly basing much on the evidence of titles alone, these hints of generic 'infringement' offer a ready parallel for cases of 'generic mixing' in Hellenistic poetry, such as Callimachus' iambic epinician (Callim. *Ia.*8, fr.198 Pf.).

Beyond such large-scale generic interactions, however, numerous individual comedies also contain passages which evoke distinctive and stereotypical elements of other genres, foreshadowing Hellenistic poetry's own obsession with distinctive generic topoi. An especially arresting example is Hermippus' engagement with epic-style catalogues and invocations in fr.63, which begins by quoting the famous introduction to the Iliadic Catalogue of Ships (ἔσπετε νῦν μοι Μοῦσαι Ὀλύμπια δώματ' ἔχουσαι, *Il.*2.484), and continues with a catalogue of goods and materials which Dionysus has brought as a trader from various locations. The fragment itself is composed in dactylic hexameters,⁴¹ a metre intrinsically associated with the elevated ethos of epic,⁴² and the whole fragment clearly evokes epic grandeur, echoing various Homeric phrases, such as τὰ γὰρ <τ> ἀναθήματα δαιτός (fr.63.21 = *Od.*1.152, 21.430). Yet this grandeur is simultaneously undercut with the lowlier subject matter of luxuries and imported food, a favourite subject of comedy,⁴³ reducing, for example, the epic βόας καὶ ἴφια μῆλα ('cows and goodly sheep', *Il.*5.556) to ἀπίους καὶ ἴφια μῆλα ('pears and goodly apples', fr.63.17). This comic evocation of familiar epic *topoi* closely foreshadows Hellenistic poetry's own manipulation of the epic catalogue form,

³⁵ E.g.: ἀπτίην: Ap. Rhod. *Arg.*4.1299; Lycoph. *Alex.*750. παλίνορος: Callim. *Hecale* fr.94; Aratus *Phaen.*54; *Arg.*1.416, 2.576. συνέριθος: Callim. 37.3 *HE* [1217] (= *AP* 7.459 = 16 Pf.); *Arg.*3.942. καναχέω: *Arg.*4.907.

³⁶ E.g. Morrison (2007: 18-21) and Hutchinson (1988: 16): "The evidence from the earlier period suggests that the newness and the force of apparently mixing genres may easily be misjudged."

³⁷ See e.g. Silk (2000a: esp. 42-97). For the various distinctions between comedy and tragedy, see Taplin (1986, 1996).

³⁸ Wright (2012: 163).

³⁹ On this drama, see Gagné (2013), with n.20 for discussion of the different titles attributed to it.

⁴⁰ See Bakola (2005) and (2010: 81-117) on comedy's engagement with satyr-play. For a more sceptical view, see Dobrov (2007).

⁴¹ This fact has led some to suggest that the fragment (alongside the similar fr.77) might actually come from a *paroidia* written by Hermippus, rather than a comedy (e.g. Gilula 2000). Nevertheless, as Storey (2011: II.307) notes "the personal mention of Sitalces and Perdicas (F 63.7-8) and the possibility that a second speaker interjects at lines 7-8 (or just 8) and 10-11 do suggest the mood and the form of comedy." See, further, Olson (2007: 158-163).

⁴² Ps.-Demetrius calls the dactylic hexameter τὸ ἥρωικόν 'because of its length and appropriateness for heroes' (*On Style* 5); cf. too Arist. *Poetics* 1449a27-8, 1459b34-7.

⁴³ For food and comedy generally, see Wilkins (2000). For such a culinary reapplication of epic, cf. Plato Comicus *Phaon* fr.189, which includes a hexameter parody of Homer in the form of a cookery book: note especially fr.189.6 ἄρξομαι ἐκ βολβοῖο, which combines a verb common in epic proems with an everyday item of food (a bulb), alongside the parodic use of the archaic epic genitive ending -οῖο.

such as Timon of Phlius' similar evocation of the Catalogue of Ships' opening (ἔσπετε νῦν μοι ὄσοι πολυπράγμονές ἐστε σοφισταί, *SH* 775) and Simaetha's quasi-epic narrative in *Idyll* 2, which begins with a series of questions like a Homeric Muse-invocation:⁴⁴ in this case, as with Hermippus fr.63, a discrepancy ensues between the epic phraseology and the quotidian subject matter, involving a humble girl's seduction. Moreover, Callimachus' long list of Sicilian cities in the *Aetia* (fr.43.28-55) also appears to evoke the epic catalogue motif through its series of stereotyped introductions (43.42 φήσω; 46 and 50 οἶδα; 52 ἔχω ... ἐνισπε[ῖν]), while playfully manipulating the generic norms in presenting Callimachus – rather than the Muses – as the source of knowledge.⁴⁵ Hermippus' evocation of epic trappings thus closely resembles the generic experimentation of his later Hellenistic successors: Old Comedy, like Hellenistic poetry, latches onto and exploits the defining characteristics of each genre.

It is worth stressing, however, that comedy's engagement with characteristic elements of other genres is hardly limited to epic. Unsurprisingly, tragedy also receives a great deal of attention; besides extensive parodies like that of *Helen* above, comedy also exploits tragic set-pieces, such as expository prologues (e.g. *Ar.Aeolosicon* fr.1, cf. *Eur.Hecuba* 1-2, and *Frogs* 1119-1250) and messenger speeches (*Ar.Ach.*1174-89). Yet we also find the self-referential openings of epinician poetry echoed in the *Knights* (*Eq.*1264-73), with a distinctive dactylo-epitrite rhythm and quotation of Pindar (fr.89a), while Dicaeopolis' defence speech in the *Acharnians* appears to evoke Herodotus' historiographical emphasis on causation and origins (*Ach.*497-556).⁴⁶ Old Comedy thus frequently experiments with generic boundaries, as Wright has stressed, "marking out (or testing out) the normal limits of the respective genres in question",⁴⁷ and such explorations of generic distinctions offer ready parallels for later Hellenistic poetry, such as Apollonius' deployment of tragic and historiographical elements in the *Argonautica*, or Callimachus' incorporation of various distinct genres into the *Aetia*, including epinician (*Victoria Berenices*, fr.54-60j), sepulchral epigram (*Sepulchrum Simonidis*, fr.64), historiography (*De Siciliae urbibus*, fr.43-43a) and dedicatory epigram (*Coma Berenices*, fr.110-110f).⁴⁸

Given such similarities, we should thus not exaggerate the novelty of Hellenistic generic manipulations. Of course, the two corpora are not identical: comedy tends to evoke other genres by deploying their trademark metres (e.g. Hermippus' dactylic hexameters, fr.63; Aristophanes' dactylo-epitrites, *Ar.Eq.*1264-73), whereas Hellenistic poetry has greater freedom to transform stock elements of certain genres into new, unconventional metres (e.g. Callimachus' elegiac and iambic epinicians and elegiac epic-catalogue, *Aet.*fr.43); but this seems to reflect comedy's own generic constraints more than any radical shift in Hellenistic poetry. However, some might still claim that Hellenistic poetry is more self-conscious in its generic interactions, often deploying explicit markers of generic affiliation, such as the *Victoria Berenices*' overt reference to itself as an ἐπινίκιον (*Aet.*fr.54.3) and Hipponax's claim that he returns 'bringing an iambus' (φέρων ἰαμβον, *Callim. Ia.*1, fr.191.3). Yet even in this case, we can find a comparable concern with generic self-definition in Aristophanes' coinage of 'tragedy' (τρῦγωδία) to situate his own comedies in pointed opposition to tragedy (τραγωδία).⁴⁹ Old Comedy, therefore, clearly deserves a place alongside the likes of Pindar and Simonides as precursors of the Hellenistic fascination with genre and intertextuality. Although scholars of Hellenistic poetry often attribute such self-conscious engagement with

⁴⁴ E.g. πόθεν ... δακρύσω (*Id.*2.64); ἐκ τίνος ἄρξωμαι; (*Id.*2.65); τίς μοι κακὸν ἄγαγε τοῦτο; (*Id.*2.65). Cf. ἐνθεν (*Od.*8.500); ἀμόθεν (*Od.*1.10-11); ἐξ οὗ (*Il.*1.6); τίς τ' ἄρ σφωε θεῶν ἔριδι ξυνέηκε μάχεσθαι (*Il.*1.8). See Andrews (1996) and Hunter (2014b: 141-144).

⁴⁵ Thus Harder (1998: 102), (2012: I.35).

⁴⁶ See e.g. Wells (1923: 169-182), Forrest (1963: 8); Rau (1967: 40); Dover (1972: 87); Newiger (1980: 222); Edmunds (1980: 13 - "quite certain"); and Nesselrath (2014). More sceptical are MacDowell (1983: 151); and Fornara (1971: 25-29), who rather focuses on the "more obvious" parody of *Hdt.*1.178.3-179.3 in *Ar.Av.*1125-31. Olson offers a balanced assessment (2002: liii-liv).

⁴⁷ Wright (2012: 13). For more on Old Comedy and genre, see Wright (2012: 162-164); Bakola et al. (2013).

⁴⁸ On the *Aetia*'s generic polyphony, see Harder (1998).

⁴⁹ See e.g. Silk (2000a: esp. 42-97).

the literary tradition to the cataloguing and canonisation of the literary past in the Alexandrian Library,⁵⁰ Attic Old Comedy already offers precedent for many of these literary habits over a century earlier.

1.2 *The Literary Past and Present: Canons, Literary History and Innovation*

Another trademark aspect of Hellenistic poetry is its obsession with canon formation and literary history, a feature which is similarly associated with the systematic cataloguing of older literature in the great libraries of the era. Peter Bing, for example, has demonstrated how Hellenistic poetry's 'memorializing impulse' bears "a strong resemblance to elements in some of the great contemporary projects of Hellenistic scholarship", including the "bio-bibliography" of Callimachus' *Pinakes*.⁵¹ The most famous poetic example of such literary retrospection is a fragment from the third book of Hermesianax's *Leontion* which offers a creative historical survey of earlier poets and philosophers, from the mythical Orpheus and Musaeus to the near contemporary Philetas (fr.7, pp.98-105 Powell = fr.3 Lightfoot). Yet earlier poets feature repeatedly throughout Hellenistic literature, including Callimachus' praise of Aratus in *Against Praxiphanes* (fr.460 Pf.), his discussion of Archilochus' style in the *Grapheion* (fr.380 Pf.), his quasi-resurrection of both Hipponax and Simonides (Callim. *Ia*.1, fr. 191; *Aet*.fr.64), and his citation of Ion of Chios as precedent in *Iambus* 13 (*Diegesis*, IX. 33-36). Beyond Callimachus, moreover, fragments of Alexander of Aetolia's *Musae* provide details of different poets' lives (frr.4-5, pp.124-126 Powell = frr.6, 8 Lightfoot); Euphorion's *Hesiod* seems to have recounted Hesiod's life and death in verse (frr. 22, 22b, p.34 Powell = fr.23 Lightfoot); Timon of Phlius' *Silloi* provide a catalogue of past and contemporary philosophers (*SH* 775-840); and Hellenistic epigrammatists often memorialise past poets with numerous fictional epitaphs and encomia.⁵² As Bing has stressed, however, this literary retrospection was not limited to the royal libraries and courts: the Hellenistic era as a whole witnessed a flourishing of interest in the literary past, manifested in poetic hero cult,⁵³ as well as local cities' own lists of celebrated native authors: our most famous example of the latter is the Salmakis inscription at Halicarnassus, dated to the late second or early first century BCE, which includes a literary catalogue organised along chronological and generic lines.⁵⁴ At all levels of society, therefore, Hellenistic poets (both civic and scholarly) were fixated on the past greats of their tradition.

Nevertheless, however 'Hellenistic' this interest in literary history appears, Old Comedy demonstrates that a concern with literary canons existed well before the Library of Alexandria: already in Attic comedy, we encounter numerous catalogues of older and contemporary poets.⁵⁵ In the *Knights*, for example, Aristophanes lists a number of comic predecessors and the treatment they have received from the public (Magnes, Cratinus and Crates: *Eq.* 507-46), while in Pherecrates' *Cheiron*, the character Μουσική provides an unflattering catalogue of the New Poets, including Melanippides, Cinesias, Phrynīs and Timotheus (fr.155). Especially noticeable is the erotic flavour of this fragment, with a series of *double*

⁵⁰ E.g. Harder (2013: 100) talks of "a broad familiarity with the literary tradition and an awareness of literary genres that may be hard to imagine without the help of the library."

⁵¹ Bing (1993: 621), citing Blum (1991: 1-2) for "bio-bibliography." Cf. Lightfoot (2009: xi) who calls this interest in literary history one of the "favourite subjects of Hellenistic poetry", and d'Alessio (2000: 428) on "questo nuovo 'genere'" of "esercizio poetico in campo storico-letterario."

⁵² On Hellenistic epigram and the poetic past, see e.g. Bing (1988a: 58-64; 1988b); Barbantani (1993); Acosta-Hughes & Barbantani (2007: 429-445); Rosen (2007); Klooster (2011: 15-42).

⁵³ Bing (1993: 619-620, with n.5), including the Archilocheion at Paros; the Homereia at Alexandria, Delos, Smyrna and Chios; and the Mimnermeion at Smyrna. Cf. Clay (2004).

⁵⁴ See Isager (1998); Isager & Pedersen (2004); Gagné (2006). The literary catalogue occurs in lines 43-54 of the inscription: Herodotus, Andron, Panyassis, Cyprius, Menestheus, Theaetetus, Dionysius, Zenodotus, Phanostratus, Nossus and Timocrates. Cf. Isager (1998: 15): "the list is fairly chronological and within the chronological frame determined by genre." The first three writers of the catalogue, Herodotus, Panyassis and Andron, also appear together in another Hellenistic eulogy of Halicarnassus (*SEG* 36.975): cf. Isager (1998: 16 n.40); such listing of famous poets was becoming an increasingly regular feature of the Hellenistic world.

⁵⁵ Bing (1993: 623 n.15) acknowledges, without providing any details, that comic precedent exists, but unfairly dismisses its significance on the grounds that "the textual evidence ... though tantalizing, is slim."

entendres that cast each poet as a lover (and abuser) of Μουσική, a close parallel to Hermesianax's *Leontion*, where each poet or philosopher is associated (often humorously) with a specific lover.⁵⁶ In the *Frogs*, moreover, Aeschylus offers a similar catalogue of predecessors when listing Orpheus, Musaeus, Hesiod and Homer as examples of earlier poet-teachers (*Ran.*1030-6), the very same four poets who appear at the start of Hermesianax's *Leontion* fragment (fr.7.1-32, p.98 Powell = fr.3.1-32 Lightfoot), which suggests that both lists were organised within similarly-conceived chronological frameworks.⁵⁷ Such explicit and self-conscious cataloguing of poetic forbears is thus a clear part of the old comedians' retrospective concern with the literary past. Indeed, in some cases it seems that even entire plays were devoted to individual literary 'greats', as in Teleclides' *Hesiodoi* or Cratinus' *Archilochoi*. What is especially striking, however, is that this concern with literary history cannot easily be paralleled in earlier archaic or classical literature.⁵⁸ Again, for a parallel with Hellenistic poetry, we have to look to Old Comedy.

In one particular case, this similarity has even resulted in a textual-critical crux. A fragment about Euripides reminiscent of comic criticism is attributed to Alexander of Aetolia by Aulus Gellius (fr. 7 Powell, p.126 = fr.7 Magnelli = fr.19 Lightfoot), but half a line of the same fragment is also independently attributed to Aristophanes in a Euripidean *Vita*.⁵⁹ This inconsistent attribution has prompted scholarly dispute over the true authorship of the fragment, although an increasing number of scholars favour attribution to the Hellenistic poet.⁶⁰ If Alexander is indeed its author, we would have another clear case of Old Comedy foreshadowing the work of a later Hellenistic poet. Yet even if not, the very difficulties of ascription here are a prime indication that Old Comedy and Hellenistic poetry share a similar outlook. The focus on, and cataloguing of, poetic forebears is common to both corpora of poetry: 'belatedness' is not an exclusively Hellenistic sensation.

Such a strong awareness of the poetic past, however, inevitably raises issues surrounding one's own place and significance within the literary tradition, and both old comedians and Hellenistic poets often appear to have dealt with this challenge in the same manner: by emphasising their own originality. The ancient Greeks had long shown a keen interest in innovation in all aspects of life,⁶¹ and originality had been a core aspect of Greek poetics from Telemachus' claims in *Odyssey* 1 onwards (*Od.*1.351-2), yet proclamations of novelty are particularly conspicuous in both Old Comedy and Hellenistic literature. In the former, Aristophanes' assertions of innovation are a key aspect of his constructed persona, especially in the *parabases* of *Wasps* and *Clouds*, yet he was far from alone in stressing such originality.⁶² Metagenes, for example, claims that he feasts his audience on many 'novel' appetisers (καιναῖσι παροψίσι καὶ πολλαῖς, fr.15), while Cratinus' reference to a 'new plaything' in *Odysseus and Company* (νεοχμόν <τ> ... ἄθυρμα, fr.152) has been regarded as a self-conscious reference to that very play or to his own innovations in staging.⁶³ The comic Plato, moreover, boldly claims to have been 'the first to declare war on Cleon' (fr.115), while fr.60 of Eupolis' *Autolycus* depicts a contest between a man of novel ideas (καινοτέρως ἰδέας) and another who has merely 'licked the lips' of other poets' dishes, deploying a culinary metaphor which

⁵⁶ On Pherecrates fr.155, see Dobrov & Urios-Aparisi (1995). For this amatory poetological metaphor, cf. Aristophanes' depiction of himself as a lover of 'Comedy' (*Eq.*515-7) and Cratinus' as her husband (*Pytine*), with Sommerstein (2005).

⁵⁷ The same four poets are also listed in this order in Hippias (86 B 6 DK), in relation to his anthology of works of earlier Greek poets. This would seem to suggest some uniformity in ancient views of early poets' chronology.

⁵⁸ The closest parallel is Timotheus' listing of Orpheus and Terpander as his predecessors in *Persae* (PMG 791. 221-228); however, I would suggest that New Music's poetic self-presentation also owes much to that of Old Comedy.

⁵⁹ Aulus Gellius 15.20.8; *Vit. Eur.* I, p. 5. 2-4 Schwartz = I, p.3.65-68 Méridier.

⁶⁰ Lloyd-Jones (1994) is the strongest advocate of Aristophanic authorship; Magnelli (1999: 223-7) remains cautiously in favour of assigning the fragment to Alexander, a case for which d'Alessio (2000: 428-9) and Di Marco (2003: 67-69) add further support. Lightfoot (2009: 139) still prints the fragment in her 'Dubie Tributa' ('Dubiously Attributed').

⁶¹ See D'Angour (2011).

⁶² On novelty in Old Comedy, see further Sommerstein (2009: 120-121); Wright (2012: 70-102).

⁶³ Storey (2011: I.341).

betrays a clear preference for innovation over slavish imitation.⁶⁴ A considerable number of old comedians thus demonstrate a recurring interest in celebrating and trumpeting their own originality, a clear attempt to win the support of the festival audience and judges.

Once again, this emphasis on literary novelty is reminiscent of what we find in Hellenistic poetry.⁶⁵ Most famous, perhaps, is Callimachus' pursuit of untrodden paths in the *Aetia* prologue (*Aet.fr.*1.25-28), but we could also add the repeated programmatic advice to 'go your own way' in his first Epigram,⁶⁶ the νεοτευχές cup as an emblem of a new genre in Theocritus' first *Idyll* (*Id.*1.28),⁶⁷ as well as Hedylus' proclamation of new aesthetic values in 5 *HE* [1853-6], heralding poetry which is νέον, λεπτόν and μελιχρόν. Elsewhere, meanwhile, Meleager opens his *Garland* by gathering poems that are ἔρνεα πολλά νεόγραφα ('many newly-written shoots', 1.55 *HE* [3980] = *AP* 4.1), while Philip similarly begins his own *Garland* by 'reaping the sheaf of a recent column' (καὶ σελίδος νεαρῆς θερίσας στάχυν, Philip 1.3 *GPh* [2630] = *AP* 4.2). Just like in Old Comedy, therefore, poetic novelty seems to have been a positive concept to both pursue and celebrate in the Hellenistic age – a means to escape the burdensome shadows of the earlier literary tradition.

Amid such proclamations of novelty, however, an especially significant – and perhaps unexpected – similarity is a shared interest in metrical innovation. Peter Bing and others have often cited boasts of metrical originality as evidence for Hellenistic poetry's bookishness and textuality:⁶⁸ Philicus of Corcyra, for example, the head of the artists of Dionysus mentioned earlier, offers his novel stichic choriambic hexameters as 'gifts of a newly-written composition' to γραμματικοί, 'men of letters' (καινογράφου συνθέσεως...δῶρα, *SH* 677), while Boiscus of Cyzicus similarly claims that he has 'discovered an eight-foot line of a newly-written poem' to describe his catalectic iambic octameters (*SH* 233: καινοῦ γραφεύς ποιήματος | τὸν ὀκτάπουν εὐρών στίχον).⁶⁹ Such fragments conjure up a world of scholar-poets with pens in hand, experimenting with the limits of conventional metres. What has not been noted, however, is that we can find a close parallel for such boasts already in the old comic Pherecrates, who makes similarly proud claims about his own metrical innovation (fr.84):

ἄνδρες, πρόσχετε τὸν νοῦν	'Spectators, give your attention
ἔξευρήματι καινῷ,	to my new invention,
συμπύκτοις ἀναπαιστοῖς.	folded anapaests.' (trans. Storey)

Like both Hellenistic poets, Pherecrates celebrates his metrical invention through an unabashed reference to the buzzword καινότης ('novelty'), while also sharing the language of discovery with Boiscus (ἔξευρήματι fr.84.2; εὐρών, *SH* 233.2). Admittedly, both Philicus and Boiscus explicitly associate their innovations with the act of writing (καινογράφου, *SH* 677; γραφεύς, *SH* 233), whereas Pherecrates merely addresses his spectators (ἄνδρες, fr.84.1), yet this display of metrical originality still presupposes a self-consciously literary poet, far closer in spirit to his Hellenistic successors than the performative world of fifth century Athens might lead us to expect. As with the numerous parallels already adduced, these

⁶⁴ A contest which Storey (2003: 87-8), following Kaibel, suggests is between two comic playwrights, perhaps Eupolis and Aristophanes.

⁶⁵ See now the collection of articles in *aitia* 7.1 (2017): "Tradition et nouveauté à l'époque hellénistique" [<http://aitia.revues.org/1669>].

⁶⁶ τὴν κατὰ σαυτὸν ἔλα, 54.12, 16 *HE* [1288, 1292] (= *AP* 7.89 = 1 Pf.)

⁶⁷ This Theocritean example is especially interesting, in that it inverts the usual Homeric evaluation of guest-gifts; the value of traditional Homeric ξεῖνιά was enhanced by their previous ownership (cf. Grethlein (2008: 35-43) on Homeric 'biographies of things'), whereas this Theocritean cup is valued precisely for its *lack* of such a history, for being 'untouched' (ἄχραντον, *Id.*1.60) and freshly-made (νεοτευχές, *Id.*1.28), reflecting the novelty of the bucolic genre itself.

⁶⁸ E.g. Bing (1988a: 22-23; 2009: 109-110); Hunter and Fantuzzi (2004: 37) on "the figure of the man of letters who delighted in experimentalism".

⁶⁹ Cf. Castorion of Soloi's boasts in his *Hymn to Pan*: an implied, rather than explicit, assertion of novelty (*SH* 310.3-4).

connections should encourage us to reconsider the boundaries of the bookish and the performative in both Old Comedy and Hellenistic Poetry.

1.3 Text and Performance: A False Dichotomy?

From this brief survey, it is clear that Attic Old Comedy displays a number of close similarities with later Hellenistic poetry, including a number of elements and features that are usually regarded as distinctively 'Alexandrian.' Indeed, Matthew Wright's recent summary of comedy's 'literariness' could almost be repeated *verbatim* as a description of Hellenistic poetry's defining features:

"[T]hese comedies are shaped by their relationship to other literary works; the huge and detailed knowledge of poetry which they display; the extent of their self-consciousness and their intertextual complexity; the sheer number of quotations and adaptations that they incorporate; the relative obscurity of many of their allusions; their intricate, 'scholarly' attention to detail, including matters of style; their explicit interest in literary history; the fact that many scenes consist of a patchwork of excerpts from numerous disparate works of different types and dates; the prevalence of parody and pastiche – all of these features seem to point towards a new sort of conception of literature."⁷⁰

Besides the final reference to parody and pastiche, every one of these details could easily be mistaken as a reference to any Hellenistic poet. There is, ultimately, little in Hellenistic poetry that cannot be found in some similar, if perhaps less developed, form in the Attic comedians of the late fifth century – a striking realisation, especially given how different the poetic environments of fifth century Athens and third century Alexandria are usually considered to be.⁷¹ There is, however, already considerable evidence for a blossoming book culture and increasing literacy levels in Athens by the late fifth/early fourth century,⁷² which might encourage us to reconsider the distinction between these two corpora of texts: the environments in which they were produced are not worlds apart. After all, old comedians, just like Hellenistic poets, make numerous references to books and the materiality of poetry,⁷³ and we even have at least one case of a comic poet 'writing', not just 'making' or 'singing', his work: in Cratinus' *Pytine*, the poet presented himself on-stage in the process of 'writing' (γράφ', fr.208; γράψον, fr.209), presumably on a wax tablet (μάλαθρον, fr.217), an example which clearly contradicts Peter Bing's claim that "archaic and classical poets do not refer to themselves as "writing" their songs."⁷⁴ In reality, this case is no different from those of Callimachus with his writing-tablet in the *Aetia* prologue (δέλτον, fr.1.21-2) or the poet of the *Batrachomyomachia* commencing on the first column of his own tablets (πρώτης σελίδος, ... δέλτοισιν, *Batrach.*1-3). Both old comic and Hellenistic poets could, in short, be conceived as *writers* of verse.

⁷⁰ Wright (2012: 143-4).

⁷¹ One potential exception is the acrostic, which recurs in a number of Hellenistic authors and is often considered a tell-tale sign of bookish poetics: Gutzwiller (2007: 180-181); Bing (2009: 110); Wilson (this volume: 320: "acrostics only work in written texts"). For Hellenistic examples, see Danielewicz (2005); Stewart (2010); Cheshire (2010); Hanses (2014). I do not know of any acrostics in Old Comedy, yet the fact that we already find an acrostic in the fourth century tragedian Chaeremon (XAIPHM-, *TrGF* I, 71 F14b) suggests that it would not be totally inconceivable for a comic acrostic to be discovered in the future. One should also not forget the ΔΕΥΚΗ acrostic at *Il.*24.1-5; this is usually dismissed as purely coincidental, though see Korenjak (2009). On acrostics in general, see Luz (2010: 1-77).

⁷² Pébarthe (2006) and Missiou (2011) have recently argued, *contra* e.g. Harris (1989), that reading and literacy were far more extensive in Classical Athens than is often assumed. Older bibliography is listed in Lowe (1993: 80 n.3) and Wright (2012: 204 n.7), to which add e.g. Steiner (1994) and, for the fourth century, Pinto (2013).

⁷³ References to books, readers, book-stalls and booksellers in Old Comedy include Aristomenes fr. 9; Aristophanes *Av.* 1288, *Ran.* 52-4, fr. 506, 795; Cratinus fr. 128; Eupolis fr. 327; Nicophon fr. 10; Plato Comicus fr. 122, 189; Theopompus fr. 79. For Hellenistic poetry, see Bing (1988a: 15-20). The later middle comic Alexis also appears to have depicted an extensive library on stage (*Linus*, fr. 140).

⁷⁴ Bing (2009: 112).

Perhaps the most famous old comic reference to a contemporary book culture, however, occurs in the *Frogs*, when the chorus reassure the competing Aeschylus and Euripides that the audience are not ignorant, but are rather ‘seasoned-campaigners’ (ἐστρατευμένοι), each of whom has their own book and understands ‘the clever stuff’ (βιβλίον τ’ ἔχων ἕκαστος μανθάνει τὰ δεξιὰ, *Ran.*1109-1118). Although the historicity and seriousness of this claim has been questioned,⁷⁵ one cannot deny that Aristophanes constructs a world of books and learned readers, implying that possession – and knowledge – of books is a prerequisite for full appreciation of his subtleties. Indeed, building on such hints as these, Matthew Wright has renewed the suggestion that an elite, privileged community of discerning readers existed to appreciate Aristophanes’ dense allusions already in the fifth century.⁷⁶ Although he too readily dismisses the significance of the dramatic competitions, the idea of a literate group capable of appreciating Aristophanes’ literary nuances seems very plausible. Comedies could, of course, be enjoyed and appreciated on multiple different levels, as Aristophanes acknowledges (*Eccl.*1155-57): there was something in them for everyone. Yet this image of an ideal community of readers is remarkably similar to that often posited for Hellenistic poetry,⁷⁷ and encourages the conclusion that the literature of the Hellenistic age does not mark as radical a change as is often made out, but rather a mere intensification of pre-existing tendencies: the bookishness of Callimachus and co. finds strong precedent already in the fifth century. Equally, however, the presence of such literary and textual elements in a dramatic and performed genre should make us rethink our assumptions when encountering these very same elements, though in intensified form, in Hellenistic poetry: even extremely literary texts could be, and indeed were, performed, an important consideration to bear in mind for those who debate the various performance possibilities of Hellenistic literature.

Indeed, this very tension between text and performance can itself be traced back to Attic comedy. We know of a small number of comedies that never appear to have been performed, including Metagenes’ *Thourio-Persians*, Nicophon’s *Sirens*, and Aristophanes’ revised *Clouds*,⁷⁸ and it is debated whether such plays were ever ‘intended’ for the stage. The revised *Clouds*, at least, has traditionally been read as specifically designed for book circulation,⁷⁹ although recent scholars have plausibly restated the case for reperformance.⁸⁰ Nevertheless, as Martin Revermann (2006: 332) has noted, “re-performance culture” does not “preclude a conceptualization of the revision as a text” and in fact “presupposes a strong notion on part of the playwrights of the very textuality of those mobile scripts which would be reinstated and reach diverse audiences”; and indeed, Ralph Rosen (1997: 411) has explored how the revised *Clouds* actively interrogates and destabilises the opposition between performance and text, seeing in the revised parabasis in particular “a unique view of the tension between the play as a single performance and as a fixed text.” In addition to these readings, however, I would add that if the play was never performed, the script we have is nevertheless inscribed with the (ultimately unrealised) potential for performance, envisaging and evoking a performance context that was never to be (e.g. the addresses to the audience as ‘spectators’, θεῶμενοι, *Nub.*518; θεαταί, *Nub.* 575). In that case, the play could be read as precedent for the strongly

⁷⁵ See e.g. Woodbury (1976: 351-357); Dover (1993: 34); Lowe (1993: 60): “absurd”; Wright (2012: 65): “ironic”.

⁷⁶ Wright (2012: esp. 141-50), e.g. p.141: “Many of our comedians, I believe, saw themselves as producing works that could be enjoyed not just as one-off performances in the theatre, but also as texts, to be read, consulted and dipped into at leisure long into the future (albeit by a relatively small circle of well-educated bibliophiles).” Cf. e.g. Lowe (1993); Zogg (2014: 16-23); and Silk (2000a: 4-6), esp. n.9 on Aristophanes’ avoidance of producing/directing and his “orientation towards the written word.”

⁷⁷ Cf. e.g. Wilamowitz’s “gebildeten Leserkreis” (1924: I.151) and Bing’s “elite group of insiders” (2009: 109).

⁷⁸ For the first two, see Athenaeus 6.270a; for the *Clouds*, see esp. *hyp.* 1 (Dover) = 6 (Wilson); *hyp.* 2 (Dover) = 5 (Wilson), with Dover (1968: lxxx-xcviii).

⁷⁹ E.g. Dover (1968: xcvi): “intended for readers”; Lowe (1993: 82 n.14): “book circulation as the deliberate and specific goal of the rewritten version”.

⁸⁰ E.g. Revermann (2006: 326-32) and Biles (2011: 167-210). Revermann sensibly notes that “‘never performed’ (ἀδίδακτος) need not imply ‘never meant to be performed’ (2006: 327) and that “‘unperformed’ may [simply] mean ‘unperformed in Athens’” (2006: 330).

‘mimetic’ character of much Hellenistic poetry, which has often been read as a compensation for the lack of actual performance.⁸¹

In a later Attic comedy, meanwhile, these tensions between textuality and performance are explicitly addressed through the motif of ‘speaking poetry books’ (again familiar from Hellenistic poetics).⁸² In the play *Sappho* by the middle comedian Antiphanes, the Lesbian poetess propounds a riddle of ‘something feminine, that protects its children who, though mute, can be heard by some people but not others.’ The solution turns out to be a letter (ἐπιστολή) whose ‘children’ are the words inscribed on it (fr.194). Antiphanes’ use of the ‘speaking book’ image here, however, is even more pointedly paradoxical than later Hellenistic examples. Far from simply ‘speaking’ like the papyrus columns of Sappho in Posidippus (φθεγγόμεναι σελίδες, 17.6 HE [3147] = 122.6 A-B), Antiphanes’ written word is explicitly mute (ἄφωνα), despite also being able to ‘send forth a loud-sounding shout’ (βοῆν ἴστησι γεγώνον) – a startling paradox, which demonstrates Attic comedy’s own mediation between its performative status and simultaneous existence as text. Although Antiphanes is slightly later than most poets considered in this study, his exploitation of this image nevertheless demonstrates – as we have repeatedly seen in this section – the great similarity between Attic comedy and Hellenistic poetry. Both employ a literate poetics on the cusp between textuality and performance, engaging strongly with the literary past and present, and all too keenly aware of their need to mark out their own place within the literary tradition. Viewed from this perspective, Hellenistic poetry is not anything drastically new, but rather the crystallisation of pre-existing trends that can be traced a long way back into the literary past. As ever, when dealing with Hellenistic poetry, continuity and evolution – rather than rupture and revolution – should be the key words.

2. The Model of Old Comedy: Conflict and Criticism

Given these numerous similarities between Hellenistic poetry and Attic comedy, it would be unsurprising to find Hellenistic poets employing Old Comedy as a model to articulate their own poetic programme; the old comedians’ similar literary spirit would render them an attractive target for emulation. The argument of the second half of my paper is that this was indeed the case: Old Comedy played a more important role in the formation of Hellenistic literary programmatics than is usually recognised. Scholars have occasionally noted stylistic similarities between Old Comedy and Hellenistic poetry, especially centred on the relationship between Aristophanes’ *Frogs* and Callimachus’ *Aetia* prologue (see below). Yet Hellenistic poetry’s systematic engagement with Old Comedy’s agonistic poetics and literary criticism is still underappreciated. A closer examination demonstrates the extent of Old Comedy’s influence, as a key model to be parroted, appropriated and inverted. We shall begin here by analysing the familiar relationship between the *Frogs* and *Aetia* prologue, before turning to broader areas of contact.

2.1: Retracing the Well-Trodden Path: Callimachus’ *Aetia* Prologue and the *Frogs*

Scholars have long recognised the numerous parallels between the *Aetia* prologue and Aristophanes’ *Frogs*.⁸³ At the most basic level, the opposition between Callimachus’ original, small-scale poetry and the bombastic work praised by his detractors, the ‘Telchines’, closely maps onto that between Euripides as an innovative verbal technician and Aeschylus as an old-fashioned, inspired poet. Yet there are also a significant number of closer verbal and thematic parallels between the two texts: the contest in

⁸¹ Discussions of ‘mimetic’ poetry must of course now take into account the criticisms of Gramps (this volume: 129-155). Callimachus appears to have missed this precedent, however: according to a *scholion*, he mistook the entry for the original *Clouds* in the *didaskaliai* (a dated list of dramatic productions) as a reference to the surviving, revised version, and thus could not understand why *Clouds* was listed two years before Eupolis’ *Marikas*, even though Eupolis’ play is referred to in the revised version at *Nub.*553 (see Σ^F *Nub.*553).

⁸² On ‘speaking books’, see e.g. Bing (1988a: 29) who also notes tragic precedent.

⁸³ E.g. Wimmel (1960: 115 with n.1); Pfeiffer (1968: 137-8); Cairns (1979: 8-10); Hopkinson (1988: 89-91); Cameron (1995: 328-330); Harder (2002: 208-9; 2012: II.9); Acosta-Hughes & Stephens (2002: 246-7); Acosta-Hughes (2010: 87-90).

Aristophanes' play is on the topic of τέχνη and σοφία, the very same subject at issue in Callimachus' prologue,⁸⁴ and the means of judging these attributes is the same – Dionysus weighs both tragedians' verses with scales, just as Callimachus judges the 'weight' of (at least) two poetic predecessors (*Ran.*1365-1410, esp. 1397 καθέλξει; *Aet.*fr.1.9-10, esp. 1.9 καθέλκει).⁸⁵ The poetic dichotomy in both texts is also extremely similar: the tragedy of Aeschylus seems an archetype of that endorsed by the Telchines – thundering, martial, and overweight. His poetry is built up like fortified towers (πυργώσας ῥήματα σεμνά, *Ran.*1004) and 'swollen with bombast and overweight vocabulary' (οἰδοῦσαν ὑπὸ κομπασμάτων καὶ ῥημάτων ἐπαχθῶν, *Ran.*940), just like the μεγάλη γυνή which Callimachus rejects (*Aet.*fr.1.12). His plays centre around the grandiose tales of kings and heroes that Callimachus spurns (*Aet.*fr.1.3-5), including the *Persians* (*Ran.*1026) and the *Seven Against Thebes*, a 'play full of war' (δραῖμα Ἄρεως μεστόν, *Ran.*1021); and he is described as a 'mighty thunderer' (ἐριβρεμέτας, *Ran.*814), engaging in the very 'thundering' which Callimachus leaves to Zeus (*Aet.*fr.1.20, βροντᾶν οὐκ ἐμόν, ἀλλὰ Διός). Euripides, by contrast, proves to be a close forerunner of Callimachus' own literary aesthetic: he is an advocate of refined λεπτότης (καταλεπτολογήσει, *Ran.*828; λεπτολόγους ξυνετὰς φρένας, *Ran.*876;⁸⁶ λεπτῶν ... κανόνων, *Ran.*956), who has 'slimmed down' the tragic τέχνη which he received from Aeschylus (*Ran.*939-44),⁸⁷ and is described as 'shaking the bridle of envy' (φθονερούς κινούσα χαλινούς, *Ran.*827), seeking to free himself from jealous censure like Callimachus.⁸⁸ Both poet's ethereal diets, moreover, parallel their 'lightweight' poetic outputs,⁸⁹ while Euripides' humble female subject matter matches Callimachus' own focus on elegiac poetry named after women in the prologue, rather than tales of kings and heroes (*Ran.*1039-1098).⁹⁰ In both texts, there is thus a clear contrast between bombastic noise and harmonious song, reinforced further by the very rhythms of each passage.⁹¹

Despite these numerous similarities, however, some scholars are sceptical of any direct relationship between the two texts. Dover, for example, claims that "it is not surprising if two people talking about similar things use similar words",⁹² but such an argument would have greater validity if it were made of two poets writing in the same metre, which is not the case here. More significant, however, are the arguments of those who would see both Aristophanes and Callimachus independently drawing on contemporary literary-critical terminology and debates. Ferriss-Hill, for example, claims that this language in the *Frogs* "which we think of as so Aristophanic ... is more a symptom of the age" rather than anything

⁸⁴ κρῖσις ... τῆς τέχνης (*Ran.*785-6), ἀγών σοφίας (*Ran.*882); cf. *Aet.*fr.1.17-18, τέχνη | [κρίνετε.] ... τὴν σοφίην.

⁸⁵ Cf. too the idea of measuring poetry in *Ran.*799, with its 'rulers and measuring-tapes for phrases' (κανόνας ... καὶ πήχεις ἐπῶν), and Callimachus' dismissal of the Persian σχοίνοσ, an Egyptian land-measurement (*Aet.*fr.1.17-18).

⁸⁶ Hopkinson (1988: 90), O'Sullivan (1992: 9) and Wright (2012: 199 n.41) all connect this phrase directly with Euripides without further comment, despite the fact that it is used in the plural in a context possibly referring to both tragedians. Nevertheless, considering the use of ξυνετός, a favourite Euripidean word (Sommerstein 1996: 233), and the craftsman metaphor of 'minting new ideas' in γνωμοτύπων (877), this phrase does seem better suited to Euripides than Aeschylus. The same could also be said of 1108's λεπτόν τι καὶ σοφόν and 1110-1's τὰ λεπτά.

⁸⁷ Cf. Callimachus keeping his Muse 'lean' (τὴν Μοῦσαν ... λεπταλέην, fr.1.23-4) and the programmatic significance of 'dieting' in Hellenistic poetry more generally, e.g. *AP* 6.300-302 (Leonidas of Tarentum 36, 37 *HE* [2183-2198]; Callimachus 28 *HE* [1175-1178] = 47 *Pf.*) and Theseus' humble reception in the *Hecale*: see Ambühl (2004: 40-1), (2005: 87-92). Cf. too *Aet.*fr.1b.8-9 (τὸ κάτισχνον) and 3 *HE* [1047-1056] (= *AP* 12.150 = 46 *Pf.*), of the Muses 'reducing' the wound of love (κατισχναίνοντι).

⁸⁸ Cf. *Aet.*fr.1.17 and 29.4 *HE* [1182] (= *AP* 7.525 = 21 *Pf.*) (βασκανίη); *Hymn* 2.105-113 (Μῶμος and Φθόνος).

⁸⁹ αἰθήρ, ἐμόν βόσκημα ('Sky, my nourisher', *Ran.*892); cf. προίκιον ἐκ δῖης ἡέρος εἶδαρ ἔδων ('eating the free food from the divine sky', *Aet.*fr.1.34).

⁹⁰ Cf. *Ran.*1382-3, where the first line of Euripides' *Medea*, about the winged Argo, evoking the love story of Medea and Jason, opposes Aeschylus' line about the river Spercheius, recalling the grandeur and martial associations of the Trojan war.

⁹¹ See Scharffenberger (2007), esp. 235 n.16 on the contrast in *Frogs* between Aeschylus' opening concentration of long syllables and Euripides' numerous resolutions and short syllables. Similarly, the prologue's sole spondeiazon, ὀγκήσατο (fr.1.31), "creates a dragging effect, reproducing the ass' clumsy bray": Hopkinson (1988: 96). For sound in the prologue more generally, see e.g. Andrews (1998: 4-7) and Romano (2011: 318-322).

⁹² Dover (1993: 33 n.65).

distinctively comic.⁹³ According to Hunter, meanwhile, the *Aetia* prologue “plays provocatively with familiar terms of literary discussion” (2004: 72). It is of course true that both texts include many foreshadowings of, or allusions to, literary-critical terminology: the thundering of Aeschylus which Callimachus avoids recalls the ‘thunder’ that Pseudo-Demetrius offers as an example of the ‘weighty’ style (Ps-Dem., *On Style* 177), while Euripides’ slimming of Tragedy (ἰσχνάνα, *Ran.* 939-944) and its Callimachean echoes evoke the ἰσχνός χαρακτήρ, ‘unadorned style’ (Ps-Dem., *On Style* 190-239).⁹⁴ Yet both texts’ interactions with wider literary critical discourse hardly precludes a direct connection between the two, and given the number of often rather precise parallels they share (esp. e.g. καθέλεξει / καθέλκει), it seems sensible to regard the *Frogs* as one of Callimachus’ key intertexts for the *Aetia* prologue.

Indeed, the argument for the *Frogs*’ central role behind the prologue is strengthened when we note its influence elsewhere in Hellenistic poetry, both in and beyond Callimachus: the contest between the laurel and the olive in *Iambus* 4, for example, may well draw its wrestling ‘triple strike’ motif from the use of the same figure in the *Frogs*,⁹⁵ while Callimachus’ pejorative characterisation of Euhemerus and others elsewhere in the *Iambi* as ‘chatterers’ (λαλάζων, *Ia.*1, fr.191.11; λάλοι, *Ia.*2, fr.192.14) parallels Aristophanes’ criticisms of Euripides (λαλίστερα, *Ran.*91; λαλεῖν, 954). Callimachus’ praise of Aratus as ‘taking an impression’ of Hesiod’s best verses, moreover, may well be indebted to the same metaphor used of Aeschylus’ Homeric imitations,⁹⁶ while Dionysus’ mission to resurrect a dead poet to restore the ills of a degenerate present is an important precedent for Hipponax’s own *anabasis* and ethical advice in *Iambus* 1.⁹⁷ Beyond Callimachus, Dioscorides praises Aeschylus in terms strongly reminiscent of the *Frogs*’ central dichotomy, as somebody who has ‘carved letters not neatly chiselled, but as if water-worn by a torrent.’⁹⁸ Yet perhaps the most significant parallel is with Herodas’ 8th *Mimiambos*, where we have another contest between two poets (Herodas and Hipponax?), again arbitrated by Dionysus (Herod.8.63) and articulated in part by a strong contrast between youth and age.⁹⁹ Given this broader influence of the *Frogs* on other Hellenistic literature, we thus have every reason to accept the scholarly consensus that Aristophanes’ play was also a crucial model behind the *Aetia*’s programmatic opening.

Returning to the prologue itself, however, it is worth noting, as many critics have, that Callimachus has not just faithfully transplanted elements from the *Frogs* in outlining his central opposition, but also adapted and inverted them, reversing the play’s evaluative criticism. In Aristophanes’ comedy, it is Aeschylus, not Euripides, who finally comes out on top (*Ran.*1471), a result already prepared for before the contest starts when we are told that criminals support Euripides, whereas τὸ χρηστόν (‘the decent sort’)

⁹³ Ferriss-Hill (2015: 191), with further bibliography in n.8. For Aristophanes’ potential debts to rhetorical theory and literary criticism more generally: see e.g. Denniston (1927), Reitzenstein (1931), O’Sullivan (1992: 7-22, 106-150) and Hunter (2009). For Callimachus and Hellenistic poetry, see e.g. Fantuzzi & Hunter (2004: 71-2, 444-461), Gutzwiller (2007: 202-213), Romano (2011), and Barbantani (2015).

⁹⁴ Note also the repetition of Aristophanes’ δρᾶμα Ἄρως μεστόν (*Ran.*1021) in Gorgias (82 B 24 DK). Most scholars are inclined to believe that Aristophanes borrowed the expression from Gorgias, suggesting Aristophanes’ debts to broader contemporary discussions of literature: e.g. Pfeiffer (1968: 46-48, 281); O’Sullivan (1992: 16); Dover (1993: 31).

⁹⁵ Thus Clayman (1980: 25 n.38): τὰ τρί’ ἢ δάφνη κεῖται (*Ia.*4, fr.194.80); cf. *Ar.Ran.*1268 (δύο σοι κόπω...τούτω) and 1272 (τρίτος ... σοι κόπος οὔτος). Though the metaphor does seem to have a wider currency (e.g. *Aesch.Ag.*171-2, *Eum.*589, *Soph.fr.*941.13).

⁹⁶ Thus Cameron (1995: 330): ἀπομαξαμένη, *Ran.*1040; ἀπεμάξατο, 56.3 *HE* [1299] (= *AP* 9.507 = 27 *Pf.*).

⁹⁷ See Kerkhecker (1999: 15-17). Encounters with dead poets were a common motif of comedy: e.g. Aristophanes’ *Gerytades* and Eupolis’ *Demoi*. For further debts to comedy in *Iambus* I, see Hunter (1997: 50-1). Cf. also Schmitt (1970: 76), who suggests that *Iambi* fr.215’s ληκυθίζουσα might be an allusion to the ληκύθιον ἀπώλεσεν motif of *Ar.Ran.*1208-1241.

⁹⁸ Dioscorides 21.3-4 *HE* [1593-4] (= *AP* 7.411): ὁ μὴ συμλευτὰ χαράξας | γράμματα, χειμάρρα δ’ οἶα καταρδόμενα; cf. Euripides’ συμλεύματα ἔργων (*Ran.*819) and Aeschylus’ κρουνόν (*Ran.*1004-5).

⁹⁹ Cf. Chesterton (this volume: 13-37, esp. 23-31).

are fans of Aeschylus (*Ran.*771-83).¹⁰⁰ Callimachus, however, implicitly rejects this evaluation by presenting his own slender ‘Euripidean’ Muse as superior to the Telchines’ ‘Aeschylean’ preferences, thereby appropriating and reclaiming terminology originally used to satirise Euripides: for him, λεπτότης is not a negative characteristic, but a positive ideal. Such a reversal is also apparent in the metaphor of weighing poetry: in the *Frogs*, Aeschylus’ heavier words outdid Euripides’ lightweight ones, but here Callimachus reverses the criteria for success; in the *Aetia*, the apparently short-scale Θεσμοφόρος defeats its long-winded rival (τὴν μακροῦν, *Aet.*fr.1.9-10). Moreover, if the *Contest of Homer and Hesiod* is an intertext which underlies the *Frogs*, as Ralph Rosen has argued,¹⁰¹ Callimachus’ posturing can also be seen as a corrective of Aristophanes’ ‘misreading’ of that tale. For while Hesiod was the victor of the original contest, it is the ‘Homeric’ Aeschylus in the *Frogs* who defeats the ‘Hesiodic’ Euripides.¹⁰² In the *Aetia* prologue, by contrast, Callimachus realigns the balance to once more favour a ‘Euripidean’ and thus ‘Hesiodic’ brand of poetry, a realignment which fits with the programmatic assertions of allegiance to Hesiod elsewhere in Hellenistic poetry.¹⁰³ When Callimachus alludes to the second stasimon of Euripides’ *Heracles Furens* later in the prologue, therefore, it can be read as an implicit assertion of his preference for this ‘Euripidean’ (and implicitly ‘Hesiodic’) poetics.¹⁰⁴ In reversing the final evaluation of the *Frogs*, Callimachus appears to side himself with the technical, theory-laden Euripides, rather than the old-fashioned, inspired Aeschylus.

However, Callimachus goes one step further than simply inverting the outcome of the *Frogs*’ contest. For while Aristophanes presented a binary opposition between inspired and technical poetry, Callimachus subtly deconstructs this absolute dichotomy by co-opting long-standing images of poetic inspiration alongside his proclamations of ‘Euripidean’ *leptotes*:¹⁰⁵ the poet receives instruction from the divine source of Apollo, converses directly with the Muses, and undergoes an ‘initiation’ similar to Hesiod in the following dream scene (*Aet.*fr.2). His wish to become a cicada (τέττιγος, *Aet.*fr.1.30), moreover, equates the poet with an animal which was closely connected to the Muses and which was also a source of inspiration in its own right,¹⁰⁶ while the words ὁ ἐλαχύς, ὁ πτερόεις (‘the light one, the winged one’, *Aet.*fr.1.32) also appear to recall Socrates’ characterisation of the manic, inspired poet in Plato’s *Ion*: κούφον γὰρ χοῦμα ποιητῆς ἐστὶν καὶ πτηνὸν καὶ ἱερόν (‘for the poet is a lightweight thing, winged and sacred’, *Ion* 534b).¹⁰⁷ Far from simply taking the side of ‘Euripidean’ *techne*, therefore, Callimachus also appropriates the ‘Aeschylean’ poetics of inspiration.¹⁰⁸ While evoking the stark dichotomies of Old Comedy, he has

¹⁰⁰ Dionysus’ final verdict is, admittedly, sudden and arbitrary and it is questionable whether he has really shed his identity as a βωμολόχος by the play’s end. The degree to which we are supposed to endorse his decision is hotly debated: see e.g. Dover (1993: 19-20) and Von Möllendorff (1996/7: 135-6 n.20).

¹⁰¹ Rosen (2004), arguing for a fifth century tradition of the contest underlying our version of the text (which dates to the second century CE). See Bassino (2013: 118-19) for further reasons to think that the story dates back to the fifth century.

¹⁰² Thus Rosen (2004: 306). For Euripides’ connection with Hesiod and Aeschylus’ with Homer, see Hunter (2014a: 305-306). For evidence that Homer and Hesiod were already viewed as representatives of rival literary styles and competing world-views in the fifth and fourth centuries, see O’Sullivan (1992: 66-79).

¹⁰³ See e.g. Reinsch-Werner (1976); Hunter (2005); Sistakou (2009).

¹⁰⁴ Thus Harder (2012: II.73-4). The implicit programmatic connection between Euripides and Hesiod here is strengthened by the suggestion of Scodel (1980: 318-9) that Callimachus’ wish for rejuvenation alludes, via the Euripidean passage, to the tradition that Hesiod enjoyed a second life and youth.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. La Penna (1971); Hunter (1989b); Acosta-Hughes & Stephens (2012: 43-6).

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Plato *Phdr.*258e6-259d8, where we are told the origin of the cicadas and how they became ‘the prophets of the Muses’; cf. too *Phdr.*262d2-6, where the cicadas are included in a list of local divinities and sources of inspiration.

¹⁰⁷ As Hunter (1989b: 2) has suggested, the problematic syntax of verses 33-5 could be regarded in this light as “amusingly suggestive of the ecstatic, ‘possessed’, mode which Socrates ascribes to poets and into which Callimachus suddenly changes.”

¹⁰⁸ One could equally ask how precisely Callimachus maps onto the Aristophanic Euripides: for Euripides’ οἰκεία πράγματα sit ill with Callimachus’ rejection of πάντα τὰ δημόσια (2.4 *HE* [1044] = *AP* 12.43 = 28 *Pf.*), just as Euripides’ characteristic ‘chattiness’ (λαλίστερα, *Ran.*91; λαλεῖν, 954) is something which Callimachus distances himself from elsewhere (λαλάζων, *Ia.*1, fr.191.11; λάλοι, *Ia.*2, fr.192.14).

manipulated tradition to cast himself as a figure of *both* poetic craftsmanship *and* supernatural inspiration, the heir of both the written and the oral worlds.¹⁰⁹

Callimachus' engagement with Aristophanes' *Frogs* thus demonstrates Old Comedy's potential as a model for Hellenistic poets: this is a case not just of superficial contact, but of detailed and precise appropriation, in which Aristophanes' central opposition is inverted and even destabilised. Most modern scholars, however, do not look beyond this single instance of Callimachean comic reception; after all, the prologue in which it occurs is packed with so many other intertextual echoes.¹¹⁰ Consequently, it seems an isolated and unique exception. In the remainder of this paper, however, I shall argue that this example in fact fits into a broader pattern, in which Hellenistic poets appropriated the agonistic nature of Old Comedy as a whole (2.2) and systematically inverted its evaluative criticism (2.3).

2.2: *Beyond the Frogs: Agonistic Poetics and the Literary Apologia*

The close connection between the *Frogs* and *Aetia* prologue rests not only on their shared language and terms of debate, but also on the very presence of debate itself: the agonistic quality of the *Frogs* episode is one of the key features which made it so suitable for Callimachus to employ in his own 'response to the Telchines'. When turning to Attic Old Comedy as a whole, however, it becomes readily apparent that the Aristophanic dispute between Aeschylus and Euripides is only one of many comic literary debates. Such quarrels are, of course, part of a broader agonistic tradition, including the *Certamina* of Homer and Hesiod, the Thracian Thamyras and the Muses, the prophets Mopsus and Calchas, and the poets Lesches and Arctinus.¹¹¹ And indeed, much early Greek poetry was already itself characterised by an inherently agonistic outlook.¹¹² Yet what sets Old Comedy apart is the genre's consistent and intensified interest in such debate, doubtless a reflection of the agonistic context of the dramatic competitions at the Lenaea and Greater Dionysia themselves. Cratinus' *Archilochoi* (fr.1-16), for example, involved a contest between the proponents of blame poetry, including Archilochus (Θασίαν ἄλμην, fr.6.1), and those of heroic epic, including Homer (ὁ τυφλός, fr.6.3) and Hesiod (Diog.Laert.1.12),¹¹³ while the comic Plato's *Skeuai* seems to have contained some kind of dramatic contest between two rival producers squabbling over the respective merits of each other's plays (fr.136). Fragments of Phrynichus' *Musae*, which competed directly against Aristophanes' *Frogs* in 405 BCE, also offer us tantalising hints of a poet standing trial,¹¹⁴ as does Cratinus' *Pytine* with its mention of counting votes (fr.207). Moreover, even when poets themselves were not pictured in competition, their works were still often compared: an unassigned fragment of Eupolis suggests that his characters undertook a *synkrisis* of the 'modern' and 'old' styles of song (fr.326), while Aristophanes' *Clouds* included a dispute between father and son over the respective merits of Simonides/Aeschylus and Euripides (*Nub.*1353-1376). Such debates appear to have been a common feature of the comic genre, offering miniature re-enactments of the larger festival competition – a *mise-en-abyme* of the very contest in which the old comedians were engaged.

Yet comic poets did not just present scenes of literary criticism on stage as self-contained spectacles for the audience to enjoy. They also actively engaged in critical debate themselves, fashioning their own

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Bruss (2004) on the interplay of literacy and orality in Callimachus' *oeuvre*.

¹¹⁰ For the *Aetia* prologue's incessant intertextuality, see e.g. Acosta-Hughes & Stephens (2002); Harder (2002: 206-211; 2012: II.9).

¹¹¹ For Thamyras and the Muses, see *Il.*2.594-600 and Eur. *Rhesus* 915-25; for Calchas and Mopsus, see Hes. *Melampodia* fr.278, 279 M-W; for Mopsus' similar quarrel with Amphilochous, see references at Harder (2012: II.294); and for Lesches (author of the *Little Iliad*) and Arctinus (author of the *Iliou Persis*), see Phaenias (fr.33 Wehrli).

¹¹² See e.g. Griffith (1990); Collins (2004); Barker (2009); Klooster (2011: 117-119). The *locus classicus* is Hesiod's 'good strife' which sets poet against poet (Hes. *Op.*26-8).

¹¹³ Bakola (2010: 70-79), Storey (2011: I. 268-9). Little of the play survives, but fr.7's Διὸς μεγάλου θᾶκοι περσοῖ τε appears to evoke the contest between Athena and Poseidon for the patronage of Athens, suggesting an agonistic environment (cf. Photius δ 659; Hsch. δ 1925).

¹¹⁴ Note especially the encomium of Sophocles (fr.32) and the mention of a voting-pebble (τὴν ψηφόν, fr.33).

distinctive *personae* and responding to each other's criticism and caricatures.¹¹⁵ This overt antagonism is especially, but not wholly, connected to the *parabasis*, the moment in Old Comedy when the chorus would step forward and speak on behalf of their poet, defending him against alleged slights from the Athenian public, politicians and rival poets. In the *parabases* of *Wasps* and *Clouds*, for example, Aristophanes directly blames his unreceptive audience for the failure of the first version of *Clouds* (*Vesp.*1009-1050; *Nub.*518-562),¹¹⁶ while elsewhere he repeatedly refers to his feud with the demagogic politician Cleon.¹¹⁷ In the poetic realm, meanwhile, he appears to have engaged in an ongoing plagiarism dispute about the authorship of the *Knights* with Eupolis, as well as a contest over poetic style with Cratinus.¹¹⁸ Indeed, Cratinus' *Pytine* is perhaps the most elaborate example of this agonistic self-defence, effectively a play-length *parabasis* designed to counter Aristophanes' criticisms of drunkenness and old age in the *Knights* (*Eq.*523-34).¹¹⁹ In the past, scholars were intent on reconstructing the original historical context for these 'feuds', but more recent critics have emphasised the programmatic literary self-fashioning at play. Rosen, in particular, has linked this creation of rivalries to the tradition of *iambus* and blame poetry, where conflict with an 'enemy' was a core part of the poet's self-presentation (Lycambes for Archilochus; Bupalus for Hipponax).¹²⁰ Regardless of the historical underpinnings of these parabolic moments, what is important is the opportunity they presented for comedians to outline and 'defend' their own poetics; in the words of Jennifer Ferriss-Hill, "the poet alludes to an earlier injury, emphasizing that he does not deserve such misfortune and casting himself in the role of the wounded party; he identifies a group of critics ... who are, as is almost universally the case, anonymous; and, together with an exposition of his poetic program, he offers the present reader-spectator the opportunity for redemption, attainable only through proper appreciation of the poet."¹²¹

This parabolic posturing, I would argue, is the central model underlying Hellenistic poetry's own similarly abrasive and agonistic self-fashioning.¹²² Callimachus, above all, repeatedly presents himself as the subject of criticism, defending his literary aesthetics against the reproaches of the malignant 'Telchines' in the *Aetia* prologue, his anonymous detractors in *Iambus* 13, and the baneful presence of *Phthonos* ('Envy') in the *Hymn to Apollo*. Each of these passages fits Ferriss-Hill's summary of the key elements of 'defensive poetics', as she herself has acknowledged,¹²³ yet we can also find cases beyond Callimachus, such as the Theocritean Lycidas' dismissal of the *Μοισῶν ὄρονιχες* who strive against Homer (*Id.*7.47-8). As with Old Comedy, all these passages were once regarded as key evidence for historical feuds of the Hellenistic era, especially the problematic 'Telchines' of the prologue: ancient scholars already attempted to reconstruct historical lists of the real-life 'Telchines',¹²⁴ and a number of their modern counterparts have also sought a historical explanation for these hazy figures.¹²⁵ Yet the precedent of Old Comedy strengthens the case of

¹¹⁵ See e.g. Sidwell (1995); Biles (2002; 2011; 2014); Ruffell (2002); Bakola (2008; 2010: 13-80); and Telò (2014) for the poets' intertextual rivalries; and Hubbard (1991) on Aristophanes' evolving 'autobiography'.

¹¹⁶ For fragmentary hints of audience-criticism by other poets, see e.g. Eupolis fr.392; Cratinus fr.211, fr.360; Plato fr.99.

¹¹⁷ See e.g. McGlew (1996); Pelling (2000: 123-164); Sommerstein (2004).

¹¹⁸ *Nub.* 553-6; Eupolis fr.89; Cratinus fr.213. See e.g. Storey (2003: 278-303); Kyriakidi (2007); Ferriss-Hill (2015: 175-178).

¹¹⁹ See e.g. Rosen (2000); Luppe (2000); Biles (2002; 2011: 134-166); Bakola (2008: 11-20; 2010: 13-80).

¹²⁰ Rosen (1988), especially pp. 59-82 on the Aristophanes-Cleon feud; cf. Rosen (2013).

¹²¹ Ferriss-Hill (2015: 122-123).

¹²² For even earlier precedent, some might point to Pindar *Ol.*2.86-88, following the scholia in reading the 'boisterous crows' as rival poets set against Pindar as the 'divine bird of Zeus': see e.g. Willcock (1995: 162-3); Kyriakou (1995: 218-219). Even if it is right to interpret these lines as a case of literary polemic, however, their implicit and allegorical nature renders them less significant parallels than Old Comedy's explicitly agonistic posturing.

¹²³ See Ferriss-Hill (2015: 134-138).

¹²⁴ One ancient list of Telchines survives in the Florentine scholia (*PSI* 1219 = *Aet.*fr.1b), which includes Asclepiades, Posidippus and the peripatetic Praxiphanes of Mytilene (cf. Callim. fr.460 Pf.); yet it is unclear whether this is mere guesswork or a reflection of secure knowledge.

¹²⁵ E.g. Klooster (2011: 127-137); Harder (2012: II.14).

those who prefer to see the ‘Telchines’ as a primarily literary device, regardless of the historical reality. What is important is that the ‘Telchines’ are constructed as an outer group, a rhetorical foil against which Callimachus can define his own poetry and audience.¹²⁶ After all, the ‘Telchines’ here are particularly textual and literary figures, recurring later in the very same poem as the hubristic sorcerers mentioned in Xenomedes’ Coan history (*Aet.fr.75.65*). They can also, moreover, be read as a parodic inversion of the ideal poet:¹²⁷ not only do they contrast with the *φῦλον αἰοιδῶν* loved by the Muses and praised by Odysseus in *Od.8.481* (*cf. φῦλον α*, *Aet.fr.1.7*), but they are also described with the participle *ἐπιστάμενον* (*fr.1.8*), a common term to designate a poet’s special knowledge and skill;¹²⁸ here, however, their ‘skill’ ironically lies in their ability to eat away their very own livers, and we in fact know from the second verse that they are fully ‘ignorant’ of the Muses (*νήϊδες*, *Aet.fr.1.2*). The ‘Telchines’ are thus rhetorically constructed as the precise opposite of – and a negative foil to – Callimachus and his ideal audience, playing the role of both Aristophanes’ unreceptive audience and his critical rivals. The same could also be said of *Iambus 13*, where the anonymous critic seems even more of a rhetorical construct, a mere unnamed voice whose critique is reported by the poet himself.¹²⁹ Yet it is perhaps the *Hymn to Apollo* that is the most parabolic of Callimachus’ programmatic passages, containing as it does a miniature dialogue ‘on stage’ between *Phthonos* and Apollo, the mouthpiece of the poet, alongside the clear construction of an inner, privileged group.¹³⁰ The old comic *parabasis* thus offered Callimachus the ideal vehicle to express his own aesthetics as a ‘literary response’ to vague, anonymous critics. In this light, it would be attractive to read the allusion to the *Frogs* in the *Aetia* prologue not just as an end in itself, but rather an implicit acknowledgement of the more fundamental role of Old Comedy’s agonistic and defensive poetics in Callimachus’ larger literary programme.

2.3 Metaphors of Criticism: Evaluating Literature

Hellenistic poetry’s broader debts to Old Comedy also extend to their shared repertoire of literary-critical terminology. Although scholars frequently restrict their focus to the influence of the *Frogs*, most Hellenistic literary-critical metaphors in fact find parallels throughout Old Comedy.¹³¹ We have already noted the amatory metaphor shared by Pherecrates and Hermesianax, to which we could add numerous other common tropes, including those of giving birth to literature,¹³² trampling literary paths,¹³³ and poetic sweetness.¹³⁴ Yet what is striking is how many of Callimachus’ and other Hellenistic poets’ programmatic metaphors draw upon a pre-existing comic vocabulary: the thundering that Callimachus shuns in the *Aetia* prologue, for example, is also exhibited by Pericles’ oratory in the *Acharnians*, while Aristophanes’ Aeschylus and Aeacus both produce the cacophony of noise that Callimachus avoids.¹³⁵ Callimachus’ poetic water analogies are also foreshadowed by Old Comedy’s recurring emphasis on characters’ uncontrollable

¹²⁶ Cf. e.g. Schmitz (1999: 151-178); Asper (1997: 246-7; 2001).

¹²⁷ Cf. Dubielzig (1995: 343-4).

¹²⁸ E.g. *Od.11.368*, *21.406*; *Hes.Op.107*; *Hymn.Hom.Merc.479*; *Archil.fr.1.2 W²*; *Solon fr.13.52 W²*.

¹²⁹ Cf. Acosta-Hughes (2002: 76): “The critic of *Iambus 13* is rather a foil, a voice to whom the poet may respond in outlining his own compositional ideals.”

¹³⁰ Cf. Bassi (1989); Gramps (this volume: 136-141, “The space of inclusion”).

¹³¹ On Aristophanes’ literary criticism and use of metaphor, see now Worman (2015: 104-145).

¹³² *Aet.fr.1.20* *τίκτεσθαι*, *Ia.13.14* *τίκτειν*; *cf. Ar.Ran.1059* *τίκτειν*, *Cratinus fr.203* *τέκοι*.

¹³³ *Aet.fr.1.25* *πατέουσιν*; *cf. Ar.Av.471*: οὐδ’ *Αἴσωπον πεπάτηκας* (‘your copy of Aesop is not well-trampled’).

¹³⁴ Old Comedy: e.g. *Vesp.219-20*, *Av.748-51*, *Chionides fr.4*, *Cratinus fr.256*, *Phrynichus fr.68*. In Hellenistic poetry, sweetness is a key programmatic term (e.g. *Id.1.1-4*; *Nossis 1 HE [2791-4]* (= *AP 5.170*); *Asclepiades 1 HE [812-5]* (= *AP 5.169*), *Hedylus 5 HE [1853-6]*; *cf. Sens (2015)*), and frequently used to praise past and present poets, including Erinna (*Asclepiades 28.1 HE [942]* = *AP 7.11*), *Mimnermus (Aet.fr.1.11*; *ἠδύν*, *Hermesianax fr.7.35*, p.99 Powell = *fr.3.35 Lightfoot*), *Callimachus (Meleager 1.21-2 HE [3946-7]* = *AP 4.1*), *Homer (Hermesianax fr.7.28*, p.98 Powell = *fr.3.28 Lightfoot*), and *Aratus (Callim. 56 HE [1297-1300]* = *AP 9.507* = *27 Pf.*).

¹³⁵ *Pericles: ἐβρόντα*, *Ar. Ach.530-1*; *cf. Aet.fr.1.20*, *βροντᾶν οὐκ ἐμόν*. *Aeschylus: ψόφου πλέων*, *Nub.1367*; *Aeacus: τὸν ψόφον τῶν ῥημάτων*, *Ran.492*; *cf. Aet.fr.1.19*, *μέγα ψοφέουσιν αἰοιδῆν*.

torrents of words,¹³⁶ and – in particular – by Aristophanes’ apparently metapoetic ‘river of diarrhoea’ in the Underworld (*Gerytades*, fr.156), which offers precedent for the pejorative associations of Callimachus’ muddy ‘Assyrian river’ (*Hymn* 2.108-9). Callimachus’ dismissal of the braying din of asses, moreover, is paralleled by Old Comedy’s mocking association of Philonides of Melite with the donkey: Theopompus calls him a ‘brayer’, the result of his mother’s illegitimate union with a donkey, just as the comic Plato explicitly calls him an ‘ass’.¹³⁷ On the other side of the opposition, meanwhile, Callimachus’ child-like poetics (παῖς ἄτε, *Aet.*fr.1.6) could in part be indebted to comic criticism of jokes as only fit for children,¹³⁸ while Campbell (1974: 44-46) has suggested that the prologue’s “discussion of the *intellectual* aspects of λεπτότης” is indebted to Aristophanes’ λεπτή φροντίς in the *Clouds* (*Nub.*227-32). On a larger scale, comedy’s frequent use of female figures in metapoetic roles might also have influenced Hellenistic poetry’s strong emphasis on poetic females, including the comparisons of female poetry in the *Aetia* prologue (*Aet.*fr.1.9-12) and conflicting discussions of Antimachus’ *Lyde* (Asclepiades 32 *HE* [958-961] = *AP* 9.63; *Callim.* fr.398 *Pf.*).¹³⁹ Yet perhaps most significant is the apparent foreshadowing of the *Frogs*’ central opposition already in Aristophanes’ and Cratinus’ personae-construction of the 420s: while Aristophanes presented himself as a clever, innovative youngster similar to the *Frogs*’ Euripides, Cratinus took the pose of an old inspired genius, reminiscent of the *Frogs*’ Aeschylus.¹⁴⁰ The oppositions that Callimachus is often thought to have adopted solely from Aristophanes’ *Frogs*, therefore, in fact permeated Old Comedy as a whole: the poetics he co-opts are not simply ‘ranine’, but authentically ‘old comic’.¹⁴¹

Of course, the use of metaphors to represent poetry and poetic production had long been a prominent feature of the literary tradition, especially in lyric and epinician poetry.¹⁴² Yet as Wright has recently argued, “whereas the early poets’ use of metaphors is *descriptive*, the comedians used metaphors in a predominantly *evaluative* sense”,¹⁴³ and it is this evaluative tinge of comic metaphors that makes them so important for Hellenistic poets, who often expressed their aesthetic preferences similarly through elaborate metaphors. Indeed, in two particular cases (those of craftsmanship and λεπτότης), we can see Hellenistic poets actively inverting and undermining comic evaluative criticism: just as Callimachus shifted and blurred the poles of the opposition in the *Frogs*, so too can we see Hellenistic poets recalibrating the comedians’ metaphors on a larger scale.

First, craftsmanship. From its very beginning, Hellenistic poets associated refined poetry with skilful artisanry: Philetas, for example, was already contrasting the rustic farmer with ‘one who knows the ordering of words and toils greatly’ (ἐπέων εἰδῶς κόσμον καὶ πολλὰ μογήσας) a generation before Callimachus,¹⁴⁴ while Herodas’ persona similarly talks of ‘my labours...among the Muses’ (τοὺς ἐμοὺς μόχθους...ἐν Μούσησιν, *Herod.*8.71-2). Asclepiades, too, associates poetic success with toil when talking of ‘Erinna’s sweet labour’ (ὁ γλυκὺς Ἡρίννας ... πόνος, 28.1 *HE* [942] = *AP* 7.11), while the Theocritean Lycidas claims that his poetry is the polished result of much toil (ἐξεπόνασα, *Id.*7.51). The same idea also lies behind the explicit comparison of poets with builders, as in Lycidas’ unfavourable equation of those

¹³⁶ *Eq.*526-8 and Cratinus fr.198 on Cratinus’ poetry; Pherecrates fr.56 and *Ar.Ran.*1005 more generally. For Callimachean water metaphors, see *Hy.*2.105-113 and the κρήνη of *Epiqr.*28 *Pf.* (= 2 *HE* [1041-6] = *AP* 12.43).

¹³⁷ Θόρουβον ... ὄνων, ὀγκήσαιο (*Aet.*fr.1.30-31); cf. ὀγκάς ... ὄνω (Theopompus fr.5); ὄνον (Plato fr.65.6-7). Cf. Philyllius fr.22, where Philonides is dismissed as the offspring of a camel (κάμηλος).

¹³⁸ E.g. *Ar. Nub.*539; Eupolis fr.261. For the Callimachean childish persona, see Cozzoli (2011).

¹³⁹ See Hall (2000) for metapoetic female figures in comedy.

¹⁴⁰ See esp. Bakola (2008).

¹⁴¹ Cf. too Stewart’s suggestion (2008: 593-4) that *Lysistrata* 23-30 could underlie the programmatic imagery of Callimachus, *Epiqr.* 27 *Pf.* (= 56 *HE* [1297-1300] = *AP* 9.507).

¹⁴² For a comprehensive analysis of lyric poetry’s use of metaphorical language, see Nünlist (1998).

¹⁴³ Wright (2012: 105). For a more comprehensive discussion of “the metaphorical language of criticism” in Old Comedy, see Wright (2012: 103-140). For metaphors in Callimachus, see e.g. Asper (1997).

¹⁴⁴ Fr.10, pp.92-93 Powell = fr.8 Lightfoot. Many solutions have been proposed for the identity of the κλήθρη and ‘marshaller of words’ in this poem. The most plausible suggestion is that of Cerri (2005), who notes that κλήθρη is a Homeric *dis legomenon* (*Od.*5.64, 239), referring to one of the trees used in Odysseus’ raft. The ‘marshaller of words’ would then be Odysseus himself, an appropriate model for the toiling Hellenistic poet; cf. Kwapisz (2013: 155-6).

who ‘crow against’ Homer with those who try to build as high as mountains (*Id.*7.45-9), as well as Callimachus’ more positive association of his own compositions with builders’ products in *Iambus* 13.¹⁴⁵ Yet such comparisons could also feature more implicitly: in *Idyll* 1, the boy in the bowl *ecphrasis* seems to be a reflection of intricate craftsmanship, weaving a ‘fine’ cricket-cage (*Id.*1.52-3),¹⁴⁶ while in Herodas’ sixth *Mimiambos*, the dildo-maker Cerdon appears to be an embodiment of the poet’s own poetics: not only does the repeated use of the verb ῥάπτω (Herod.6. 43, 47, 48, 51) connect Cerdon’s handiwork with the poet’s craft, but the use of diminutives such as ἱμαντίσκοι (6.71) seem well-suited to reflect the attenuated nature of Herodas’ own poems.¹⁴⁷ The equation between poet and craftsman thus recurs repeatedly in Hellenistic poetry, and it appears to have had important evaluative associations, as we might also infer from Callimachus’ dismissal of Antimachus’ *Lyde* as a γράμμα that is οὐ τορόν, lacking the refinement or sophistication of a properly ‘crafted’, ‘drilled’ or ‘pierced’ work (fr.398 Pf.).¹⁴⁸

The origins of this metaphor are often traced back to the epinician poets, who wished to stress the monumental and eternally commemorative power of song, presenting their own work as almost tangible objects which were as durable as, if not more durable than, physical buildings.¹⁴⁹ Yet old comedians also seem to have played an important role in developing this image, extending the variety of crafts associated with poetry (e.g. Aristophanes’ evocation of a metal foundry, fr.719), as well as concretising the metaphor to stress the physical textuality of poetic production.¹⁵⁰ Especially noticeable in this regard is the way in which words are repeatedly envisaged as physical and measurable objects, described as three-cubits tall by Crates (ἐπὶ τριπίχῃ, fr.21) and capable of being levered into place like stones by the comic Plato (fr.69), as well as being measured by a wide variety of instruments in Aristophanes’ *Frogs* (*Ran.*798-802). Yet perhaps Old Comedy’s most significant influence is the way in which it associated this craftsmanship metaphor especially with the ‘lightweight’ poetics of progressive intellectuals like Euripides and Agathon. We have already noted, for example, how Euripides in the *Frogs* is presented as a kind of carpenter, with all the appropriate tools of the trade, such as a linchpin and chisel (*Ran.*819), but he is also described as behaving τορῶς (‘smartly’, *Ran.*1102), the precise opposite of Callimachus’ conception of the unsophisticated *Lyde* (γράμμα ... οὐ τορόν, fr. 398 Pf.). Beyond the *Frogs*, meanwhile, Teleclides uses the same metaphor with a similarly intellectual flavour when describing a Euripidean play as ‘put together with Socratic rivets’ (fr.42), while Agathon (another tragedian linked with the innovations of New Music) is implicitly compared to a ship-builder, chariot-maker and metalworker in Aristophanes’ *Thesmophoriazousae* (*Thesm.*52-7).¹⁵¹ Old Comedy thus seems to have employed the metaphor in contexts which mocked and criticised modern intellectual developments. In redeploying the image for themselves, Hellenistic poets were reclaiming the epinician poets’ more positive use of the image from its negative overtones in Old Comedy. Just as Callimachus reversed the final evaluation of the literary contest in the *Frogs*, so too did Hellenistic poets revalue the worth of poetic craftsmanship more generally.

¹⁴⁵ *Diegesis* IX. 37-8: οὐδὲ τὸν τέκτοναῖρα τις μέμφεται πολυειδῆ σκευὴ τεκταινόμενον, ‘nobody finds fault with a builder for creating a variety of artefacts’.

¹⁴⁶ E.g. Cairns (1984: 103-4).

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Stern (1979: 252-4). Other points support this metapoetic reading, including the fact that Cerdon also comes from Chios or Erythrae (both rival claimants to be Homer’s birthplace), and the dismissal of Nossis (6.20) and Erinna (6.33), possible allusions to Herodas’ fellow poets.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. Crinagoras 11.1 *GPh* [1823] (= *AP* 9.545), where Callimachus’ *Hecale* is called τὸ τορευτὸν ἔπος.

¹⁴⁹ E.g. Nünlist (1998: 83-125) and Ford (2002: 93-157). West (2007: 35-40) connects the metaphor with broader Indo-European patterns. Wright (2012: 117) also notes Presocratic precedent, to which we could add Thucydides’ κτήμα ἐς αἰεὶ (1.22.4) and Plato’s later interest in craft analogies. Roman poets continued to employ the metaphor: e.g. Horace 3.30: *exegi monumentum aere perennius*.

¹⁵⁰ Thus Wright (2012: 116-120). For poetry as labour in Old Comedy, see too e.g. ἐξεπονήθη (Cratinus fr.255); χαλεπώτατον ἔργον (*Ar.Eq.*516); ἔργον πλείστον (*Nub.*524).

¹⁵¹ Plutarch claims that Agathon was the first poet to introduce τὸ χρωματικόν into tragedy (*Mor.*645e), an innovation also elsewhere attributed to Euripides ([Psell.] *De trag.* 5: συστήμασι δὲ οἱ μὲν παλαιοὶ μικροῖς ἐχρώντο, Εὐριπίδης πρῶτος πολυχροδία ἐχρήσατο).

A similar conclusion can be drawn from Hellenistic poetry's reception of comic λεπτότης. For 'thinness' extends well beyond its association with Euripides in the *Frogs* and appears to have been a generally pejorative term for a variety of intellectual figures in Old Comedy, especially dithyrambists and sophists.¹⁵² Socrates and Strepsiades, for example, are repeatedly connected with λεπτότης in the *Clouds* (e.g. *Nub.*153, 161, 320, 359),¹⁵³ while the dithyrambist Cinesias is mocked for his alleged thinness across a number of plays: in the *Birds* (*Av.*1372-1409), he wishes to fly on light wings (περὺγεσσι κούφαις, *Av.*1372) and is as thin as 'linden-bass' (φιλύρινον, *Av.*1377); in the *Frogs*, he is connected with wings and lightweight flight in Euripides' plan to save the state (*Ran.*1437-8); and in the *Gerytades*, he is associated with 'slender' hopes alongside the tragic poet Meletus and the comic Sannyrion (λεπτῶν ἐλπίδων, *Ar.fr.*156.10). Indeed, this last comedy appears to have placed a strong emphasis on 'thinness', given that Athenaeus explicitly talks of these poets as 'slender men' in his summary of the play (λεπτούς, *Ath.* 12.551a), and at some point their insubstantiality even seems to have left them in danger of being swept away by the river of the Underworld's current (*fr.*156.11-12). In another fragment of the same play, moreover, an unknown character says 'treat him and fatten him up with monodies' (θεράπευε καὶ χόρταζε τῶν μονωδιῶν, *fr.*162), no doubt referring to one of these 'thin' poets and advising that he should be fattened up with the opposite of Tragedy's 'Euripidean' diet in the *Frogs* (*Ran.*939-44). Yet it is not just Aristophanes who engages in such a critical discourse on 'thinness', for Strattis also mocks Sannyrion by calling him a 'skeleton' on account of his leanness (διὰ τὴν ἰσχνότητα, *fr.*21), while Sannyrion in turn mocks Meletus as 'the corpse from the Lenaeum' (*fr.*2), a likely jibe at the tragic poet's allegedly emaciated appearance. Comedy thus seems to have taken great pleasure in mocking various intellectuals and poets for their skinniness (*cf.* Aelian *VH* 10.6). It is likely, however, that much of this comic criticism is not aimed directly at the targets' actual real-life physical condition, but rather their intricate and carefully crafted intellectual output, their devotion to which, it is implied, compromises their physical well-being.

Λεπτότης and ἰσχνότης, therefore, seem to have been central features of metaphorical comic mockery, not just limited to the Euripides of the *Frogs*. In Hellenistic poetry, by contrast, λεπτότης is a repeatedly celebrated virtue, appearing not just in the *Aetia* prologue, but also in a host of other texts, including Callimachus' famous praise of Aratus' *Phaenomena*: the poet's sleepless nights of toil produce fine and subtle verses, not a frail and emaciated shadow of a man.¹⁵⁴ By contrast, it is chunky and weighty poetry that Callimachus dismisses, like Antimachus' 'fat' *Lyde* (παχὺ γράμμα, *fr.*398; *cf.* πάχιστον, *Aet.**fr.*1.23). In realigning the evaluative balance in favour of λεπτότης, Hellenistic poets thus appear to have gone against the whole comic tradition of criticism, simultaneously adopting and reversing their models in one bold swoop. Of course, Philetas likely played a decisive role in this positive reassessment of λεπτότης, a figure who seems to have been similarly mocked for thinness, even allegedly needing to insert lead into his shoes to avoid being swept away.¹⁵⁵ Yet, regardless of who initiated the paradigm shift, it is clear, as Wright has noted, that Hellenistic poets transformed "the comedian's ambivalent and ludicrous use of this imagery

¹⁵² *Cf.* Wright (2012:137-8).

¹⁵³ *Cf.* too Socrates' corpse-like pupils, as emaciated as Spartan prisoners (*Nub.*187). The Socratic Chaerephon is also repeatedly mocked for his allegedly pale appearance, attributed to his unhealthy indoor life of study (*Ar.Av.*1296, 1564, *fr.*584; *Eupolis fr.*253); the scholion on *Pl.Ap.*20e (which quotes *Ar.fr.*584) explicitly calls him ἰσχνός.

¹⁵⁴ *λεπταὶ ῥήσεις* (56.3-4 *HE* [1299-1300] = *AP* 9.507 = 27 *Pf.*). I remain unconvinced by Tsantsanoglou's attempt to read ambivalence into this epigram (2009: 75-87) and his suggestion that λεπτός can sometimes have negative connotations in Hellenistic poetry, such as 'overparticular' or 'pedantic' (2009: 59). See too *λεπταλέην* (*Aet.**fr.*1.24); *λεπτολόγος* (Ptolemy, *SH* 712); *λεπτή φροντίδι* (Leonidas 101.1-2 *HE* [2573-4] = *AP* 9.25); Aratus' ΛΕΠΤΗ acrostic at *Phaen.*783-7; *λεπτή* in Posidippus 1.4 A-B; and *λεπτόν* in Hedyllus 5.2 *HE* [1854]. In Hermesianax's *Leontion*, even Homer's rugged Ithaca has become *λεπτήν* (*fr.*7.29, p.98 Powell = *fr.*3.29 Lightfoot)! Of course, λεπτότης remains only one facet of the Hellenistic aesthetic: see Porter (2011).

¹⁵⁵ Aelian *VH* 9.14 (note especially *λεπτότατον*); *cf.* *Ath.*12.552b (*λεπτότερος*) and *Ael. VH* 10.6 (ἐς λεπτότητα). *Cf.* too the depiction of Philetas as a frail old man in Hermesianax (*fr.*7.77-8, p.100 Powell = *fr.*3.77-8 Lightfoot) and an 'elder full of cares' in Posidippus 63.5-6 A-B (*ἀκρομέριμνον ... πρ[ό]ξιστον*). There has been much discussion about whether these anecdotes are simply standard comic criticism or actually reflect something more about Philetas' own poetic preferences. See e.g. Cameron (1995: 488-93) and Bing (2009: 11-32).

into a more serious and committed statement of literary belief, making it into ‘a triumphant apologia for the “new poetics”, rather than an elaborate joke.’¹⁵⁶ As in the case of poetic craftsmanship, Hellenistic poets redeemed and revalidated a key metaphor of comic criticism, simultaneously drawing upon, and yet inverting, comic precedent: a typically Hellenistic mixture of tradition and innovation.

3. Conclusions

Hellenistic poetry’s debts to Old Comedy have long been underappreciated by scholars who belittle the relevance and significance of the theatre in the Hellenistic world. As I demonstrated in my introduction, however, drama continued to flourish throughout Hellenistic society as an important marker of Greek identity and cultural prestige, both within and beyond the royal courts; and Ptolemaic Alexandria, in particular, appears to have been saturated with references to and discussions of drama, thanks in no small part to the Ptolemies’ active patronage of dramatic performance and scholarship. In such a climate, it is unsurprising to find that Attic Old Comedy played an influential role in the development of Hellenistic poetry, as both a precedent and a model.

There are two main conclusions to draw from this study. The first is one of literary history, challenging the traditional and still-lingering conception of Hellenistic poetry as a rupture with the literary past. Much of what is often thought distinctively ‘Hellenistic’ can in fact be shown to have clear old comic precedent: Old Comedy, just like Hellenistic poetry, is heavily intertextual (even to the point of re-appropriating Homeric *hapax legomena*); engages in frequent generic manipulation; displays a strong interest in literary history; emphasises its own literary and metrical innovations; and displays a self-conscious awareness of the tensions between textuality and performance. Even though Old Comedy features rarely in any list of Hellenistic precursors, therefore, its literate poetics demonstrate more than ever that the dawning of the Hellenistic age saw no radical departure from the poetry that had come before.

The second conclusion is one of direct reception and intertextuality: Old Comedy was a more important model for Hellenistic poets than is often acknowledged, a realisation that has often been obscured by the far-reaching shadow of Aristophanes’ *Frogs*. Yet in their agonistic self-fashioning, the old comedians were a prime model for Callimachus’ defensive literary programme, while their elaborate repertoire of literary-critical terminology provided material which Hellenistic poets could both appropriate and systematically invert, redeeming the negative comic metaphors of ‘craftsmanship’ and ‘thinness’ as positive paradigms for their own poetics. What I hope should now be clear is that Hellenistic poetry’s direct debts to Old Comedy extend well beyond the famous literary *agon* of the *Frogs*.¹⁵⁷

As a final comment, however, it is perhaps worth highlighting the conspicuous absence of Menander in this study: the emphasis on Old Comedy here is not so much an intentional choice, as a reflection of the differences between ‘New’ and ‘Old’ Comedy. The very nature of Old Comedy made it a particularly suitable model for Hellenistic poets: agonistic, literary-critical and self-consciously intertextual. Yet the changes that comedy gradually underwent over the course of the fourth century shifted focus away from many of these features. This is, of course, not to deny the sophistication and complexities of Menander’s plays, where careful manipulation of the audience’s expectations and tragic parody can still be

¹⁵⁶ Wright (2012:139), quoting Hopkinson (1988: 90-1), although perhaps too simplistically attributing this all to Callimachus alone.

¹⁵⁷ Given these similarities, it might also be worth asking whether recent parallels drawn between Roman New Comedy and Hellenistic poetry could not be traced further back to Old Comedy itself, especially the parallels drawn between Terence’s prologues and the *Aetia* prologue: see e.g. Hunter (1985: 32) and Sharrock (2009: 78-83). Sharrock’s study of Terence’s elaborate intertextuality is also inviting (2009: 205-32).

found,¹⁵⁸ nor of Middle Comedy, where many of these features are still visible in some form;¹⁵⁹ but by the time of 'New Comedy', the strong impression of a combative individual author behind the drama had been lost. It was rather the old comedians, and perhaps especially their self-consciously professed epigonality in relation to tragedy, which provided a key model for Hellenistic poets in their own negotiations with the earlier literary tradition.

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¹⁵⁸ See esp. Petrides (2014) on New Comedy's rich range of literary and theatrical techniques, both intertextual and 'intervisual', esp. pp. 49-82 on its relation to tragedy (with further bibliography at 59 n.103). One should also not dismiss the strong influence of New Comedy on Hellenistic 'mime' poetry, especially that of Theocritus and Herodas.

¹⁵⁹ See e.g. Wright (2013); and also Konstantakos (2003-2004) for a diachronic survey of the changes in comic self-criticism and reflexivity.

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