

## CHAPTER ONE

# Introduction

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Under Alexander and his successors, new Greek civic centers arose throughout the Eastern Mediterranean and Western Asia, and the political structure of the *oikoumenē*, the “inhabited world,” changed drastically, as the competition between *poleis* and regional leagues became subordinated to a competition between imperial states ruled by Greco-Macedonian kings. Once a balance of power had been reached, these rulers turned toward the project of transforming their courts and capitals into fully Hellenized centers, replicating the traditional Greek city for those living in diaspora and showcasing their power and refinement to the world, eager to prove their right to represent and manage Hellenic culture. Local elites followed suit, for very similar reasons.

In their eagerness to establish Greekness abroad, the Hellenistic rulers and cities could be said to have created a sort of virtual reality whereby all could have the experience of living, if not in Greece, at least in an idea of Greece. Alexander led the way toward the creation of this Virtual Greece when he paid his respects at Troy on his way to do battle with the Persians. He self-consciously assumed the role of a new Achilles, heralding a return to an age of heroes (Erskine). In its modern use, virtual reality involves interaction with a computer-simulated environment. The Hellenistic Virtual Greece was a political game played by way of creative postures and literary illusions. In the film *The Matrix*, the world was in fact a post-holocaust wasteland but people experienced reality through a computer program (the Matrix) that created what human minds, based on past experience, were conditioned to perceive as normal lives. Hellenistic Greekness is likewise a construct, mindset, or concept, based on a past presented as common and cultural traditions perceived as shared. Yet the Hellenistic world crucially differs from the world of *The Matrix* in that Hellenized minds were not disconnected from the Real. Although reality was sometimes literally a desert, it was metaphorically far from that. The citizens of Virtual Greece were in the end still denizens of Egypt, Asia Minor, or Mesopotamia, regions with their own history, literature, and culture, their own economic and social infrastructures, their

own religions and ideologies of kingship. Although the impact of these realities on Hellenistic literature and culture is not always obvious, it should not be ignored (Stephens).

In their patronage of the arts and sciences, Hellenistic kings were following in the tradition of tyrants such as Polycrates and Pisistratus. Their courts supported generations of intellectuals who studied and rescripted traditional literature and knowledge in a competitive environment that fostered innovation (Strootman). Their achievements provided entertainment for the new elites at customary venues, such as festivals and the symposium, only this time situated in multicultural enclaves far from Hellas. Here all “friends of the king” jockeyed for attention and influence, whether they were poets or soldiers, diplomats or astronomers, philosophers or administrators. Regardless of pursuits, all were courtiers first. Alexandria even went so far as to vie with Athens as an intellectual center, creating the massive Library and think-tank Museum in imitation of Aristotle’s Lyceum, and asserting its cultural affinity with Athens by giving prominence to tragic performances and applying the name Eleusis to the quarter that housed its principal cult site of Demeter. The famous anecdote about a Ptolemy relinquishing the huge deposit paid for original copies of the plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides likewise hints at the transference of cultural prestige from Athens to Alexandria (Stephens).

The importance attached to literature by the highest strata of society, local no less than royal, is reflected in education (Wissmann). In support of Virtual Greece, gymnasia sprouted throughout the Hellenic *oikoumenē*. They played a critical role in the education of the young, promulgating traditional concepts considered central to Greek culture, not in the last place through poems such as the Homeric epics. A substantial number of school texts from locations throughout Egypt provide a sense of the average curriculum. More can be gleaned from the many references to education in Hellenistic literature, which sketch a picture of the schooling not just of ordinary children but also of mythological figures such as Heracles, the ultimate icon of Greekness. These testify to a general interest in the practice of education, which in this period became increasingly formalized and professionalized, assuming the general shape it was to retain until well into the Byzantine period.

The literary work that stands out as quintessentially Hellenistic and that dominated the literary discussion in its day and beyond was Callimachus’ *Aetia*, which, as fate would have it, survives only in random citations, translations, and papyrus scraps (Harder). Featured in this (paradoxically) playful and scholarly elegiac poem of four books is a non-continuous and impressionistic history of Hellas from Minos to Berenice through “origins” (*aitia*), making of Ptolemaic Alexandria the culmination of Greek advancement, the obvious model for Ovid’s future *Metamorphoses*. The apparent seamlessness of the transition from Greek to Macedonian cultural hegemony represents perhaps the greatest illusion of its time.

The primacy of the *Aetia* is also to some extent an illusion, one which is actively and openly propagated by its poet. Modern critics sometimes create the impression that Callimachus’ poetry created a kind of Copernican revolution, establishing a new poetics which caused a radical paradigm shift and obliterated “old-fashioned” types of poetry. It is perhaps more accurate to say that Callimachus identified and appropriated the poetic spirit of his time. It is not at all obvious, for example, with whom or what

he is actually polemicizing at the start of the *Actia* and elsewhere, and many of the tropes and features which are generally considered emblematic of “Callimachean” poetics are already prefigured in Archaic and Classical poetry, including, indeed, its self-consciousness and polemical stance (Acosta-Hughes). In Hellenistic poetics, tradition and innovation are paradoxically intertwined. The themes, forms, and principles of the poetic past are scrutinized, appropriated, and developed further, and then further, until they become something that is at the same time daringly novel and surprisingly familiar.

Nowhere does the figure of Callimachus loom as large as in elegy, where, due to the Roman poets’ embracement of the *Actia* as a prime model, other incarnations of the genre were virtually eclipsed (Murray). It is telling that Quintilian in the first century CE recommends only Callimachus and Philotas as reading for the aspiring orator and not, for example, the fourth-century BCE innovator Antimachus or any of the earlier elegists, such as Mimnermus or Simonides. If, however, one looks backward not from Roman poetry but from Callimachus, one might argue that the *Actia* successfully revised the history of elegy and established itself as the new *aition* of a protean genre. Elegy took many forms from Archaic times onward, and it underwent many crucial developments in the late fifth through fourth centuries BCE due to changes to the way poetry was produced and consumed. The demarcation between long elegiac poems and hexameter poetry became even vaguer than before, and short elegiac poetry and epigram melted together in the genre of literary epigram, composed for the book roll and symposium, which included much of the thematic ground of earlier elegy.

The writing of epigrams in fact became a major literary fashion of the Hellenistic age (Bruss). Many of these pose as genuine inscriptions, playing with the conventions and teasing out the possibilities of poems such as commonly found on tombstones and dedicated objects. Epigrams imagine, for example, conversations between the deceased and passersby and suitable epitaphs for famous people. They present ordinary and bizarre dedications never made, some mimicking the shape of the item dedicated. Others, such as sympotic, erotic, or scoptic epigrams, forego the inscriptional fiction entirely. Drawing their inspiration primarily from the sympotic poetry of the past, elegy and iambos, they present imaginary symposia, fantasy love affairs, and staged feuds. Labels and classifications, however, do not do justice to the versatility of this genre, which offers an exceptionally large scope for experimentation and seems infinitely capacious of ideas, motifs, and forms from other types of literature. These brief, polymorphic poems generally demand an intensive interpretational effort from the reader, and many remain ultimately elusive.

While the inscribed epigrams of earlier days rather straightforwardly reflect the interests and ideology of those wealthy enough to commission such poems and the dedications and monuments on which they were inscribed, Hellenistic literary epigram, whether produced at court or in other elite circles, displays throughout a keen interest in ordinary people and everyday life, a “realism” that is also manifested in other literary genres and in the art of the period. However genuine or voyeuristic this interest in artisans, herdsmen, and prostitutes may also be, their *mimēseis* in any case functioned as a virtual alternative reality, a looking-glass image of the concerns of the court and public life. A song from the musical *Camelot* captures this elite fascination as well as any scholarly discussion:

GUENEVERE

What do the simple folk do  
To help them escape when they're blue?  
The shepherd who is ailing, the milkmaid who is glum,  
The cobbler who is wailing from nailing his thumb.  
When they're beset and besieged  
The folk not noblessly obliged,  
However do they manage to shed their weary lot?  
Oh, what do simple folk do we do not?

ARTHUR

I have been informed by those who know them well  
They find relief in quite a clever way.  
When they're sorely pressed, they whistle for a spell  
And whistling seems to brighten up their day.  
And that's what simple folk do,  
So they say.

Although composed in a more traditional genre and on a much larger scale than epigram, Apollonius' epic *Argonautica* was no less in tune with contemporary tastes (Köhnken). In fact, it has many points of contact with Callimachus' *Aetia*, belying the ancient biographical tradition that promulgated the story of a bitter argument between the two poets. Like the *Aetia*, the *Argonautica* contains numerous "origins" and is related by a prominent narrator who relies on the Muses but also talks like a historian. And like the *Aetia*, it is highly episodic but by no means disjointed, its episodes being connected through numerous thematic links, shared intertexts (from Homer to Pindar, Herodotus, and Euripides), cross-references, foreshadowing, and bridging devices. Quintessentially Hellenistic is also the epic's main hero, Jason. Apollonius has so reduced Jason's stature that modern scholars question his heroic status, particularly as he appears to have been fully upstaged in the course of the poem by a seemingly all-powerful Medea. Jason's diminished abilities resonate, however, with contemporary interest in realism. In reality, an average young man like Jason cannot handle fire-breathing bulls or single-handedly kill scores of earthborn warriors. This could only happen through the intervention of some superhuman force. Apparently, Hellenistic audiences found such a figure more engaging than a godlike hero, predetermined for success.

Unfortunately, apart from the *Argonautica* no other long narrative hexameter poems survive from the Hellenistic era. We have titles and fragments of other epics, but not enough to determine if Apollonius' approach to the genre was an exception or the rule. What do survive are short narrative poems on mythological topics which scholars have come to call *epyllia*, "little epics" (Ambühl). Such poems typically treat select episodes of familiar stories from novel angles, leaving out key parts of the story to be supplemented by the readers. A number of the surviving texts focus on the ultimate Greek hero, Heracles, in unconventional ways, presenting him in love, childhood, disguise, or *absentia*. Remarkably often in Hellenistic poetry the interest in the human side of the great mythological figures takes the form of a prequel. Theocritus' Heracles (*Idyll* 24), Callimachus' Theseus (*Hecale*), and Apollonius' Jason and Medea (*Argonautica*) are represented in the process of becoming the

figures celebrated in earlier literature. In this way Hellenistic literature turns literary chronology on its head.

Hellenistic hymnal and encomiastic poems raise many thorny questions, first and foremost regarding their context and function. While earlier praise poems, from the *Homeric Hymns* to Simonides' encomia, were first and foremost scripts to be performed at some sort of public occasion, many of their Hellenistic incarnations are more redolent of the library than the festival (Bullock). The borders between hymn, encomium, and epyllion are often blurred, as gods, heroes, and kings are matched up in poems that praise but also, as in mythological epic, show their subjects' human side. In evidence throughout the extant corpus is a novel mixture of traditional religious-political thought and contemporary ideologies, from Egyptian concepts of kingship, as in Callimachus and Theocritus, to Stoic theology, as in Cleanthes.

Several of Callimachus' hymns create the illusion of a festival, including, as it were, their performance context within the text. Something similar happens in contemporary paean, songs for Apollo and Asclepius composed by otherwise unknown poets (Fantuzzi). All are preserved in inscriptions which elaborately contextualize the paeans' lyrics, providing a key to, for example, the original performance context, the propagandistic subtext, the authority of poet, patron, and poem, and in some cases even the music. These texts with their tendency toward self-conscious innovation, intertextuality, and self-justification suggest that even far from the courts poets were touched by contemporary poetic trends. They also show that a tradition of sung poetry still flourished in the sanctuaries of the Greek homeland at a time when avant-garde poets used dactylic meters even for themes that were originally melic, creating a sort of virtual music.

No poetic genre reflects Hellenistic writers' interest in learning more clearly than didactic. It therefore seems appropriate that the key representative of this genre, Aratus' *Phaenomena*, should vie with Callimachus' *Aetia* for the title of the period's most influential poem (Volk). The *Phaenomena* refashions contemporary research on astronomy and meteorology along the lines of the *Works and Days*, and to such an extent that Callimachus observed about the *Phaenomena* that "the song and manner are Hesiod's." As in the case of the *Aetia*, modern scholarship has found it difficult to see past the poem's Roman reception, which fogs up Aratus' relationship to his predecessors and sources, and his intentions in this poem. Although the *Phaenomena* has been widely used as a textbook, its explicit didactic goal of teaching farmers and sailors is clearly a conceit. Nor is the *Phaenomena* merely an attempt to show that a good poet can make pleasing poetry out of any material. Rather, it is didactic in a broad sense, providing lessons about the nature of the universe, the divine, and the human condition – be they Stoic or more generally philosophical – focusing on the importance of "signs" and their interpretation.

Much the same applies to the *Theriaca* and *Alexipharmaca*, the didactic diptych of Nicander, who at least a generation later achieved a comparable result in reconstructing Hesiod's *Works and Days*, this time with poisonous creatures and antidotes as the unlikely subjects (Magnelli). Here too, common laborers are the explicit beneficiaries, but the ideal audience would consist of those who not only knew Hesiod but also Aratus, Callimachus, Theocritus, and Apollonius well enough to appreciate Nicander's allusions, verbal plays, and metrical finesse. More so than in the *Phaenomena*, verbal

virtuosity takes center stage, in keeping, it seems, with the underlying didactic agenda. Nicander's display of poetic *technē* mirrors his emphasis on the technicalities as opposed to the practicalities of toxicology in these poems, which both open without a reference to the gods but with a triumphant "easily," a catch word that matches Aratus' "signs" and may suggest that, in Nicander's worldview, human control comes not through recognizing signs but through *technē*.

Theocritus' bucolic poetry takes the creation of fictional realities even further than other Hellenistic genres. Its humble herdsmen spend their time singing and in love in pleasurable surroundings without pressing needs, inhabiting a fiction that belongs to no world, mythological or real, outside the individual poems in which they appear (Payne). While these poems have a dramatic setting, they are largely plotless: the action revolves around the performance of songs, in which the herdsmen poets, all highly conscious of their predecessors, identify themselves with figures such as Daphnis or Polyphemus, creating microcosms within the poem that are somehow related to, yet separate from, the world of the dramatic frame. There can be little doubt that Theocritus himself appears as a fictional character in *Idyll* 7 under the guise of Simichidas, which raises the question of whether the poet is also represented in the other poems. While Callimachus and Herodas receive their inspiration in dreams, Theocritus inserts himself as a sort of avatar into an illusory world in order to actualize an aspect of the self that cannot be attained otherwise: he achieves the status of a Hesiodic poet through the re-enactment of a poetic investiture overseen by a mysterious goatherd. Ironically, only by becoming another can the poet, like his characters, realize the self to which he aspires.

Later writers of bucolic poetry followed Theocritus' precedent and freely inserted themselves into fictional worlds of their own invention. Some also inserted other historical figures, from historical predecessors, such as the poet Bion in the *Epitaph for Bion*, to contemporaries, such as Augustus in Vergil's *Eclogues*. Vergil's move proved a crucial one, as it gave rise to a tradition of bucolic poetry that creates a full-fledged counter-image of historical reality to offer a social critique. By Vergil's time, however, Theocritus' experimental poems about herdsmen had spawned a literary genre with its own conventions and a coherent fictional world, recognizable, for example, in Moschus and Bion. At an early point in the process of genre-formation stand three poems preserved among the works of Theocritus: *Idyll* 6, ascribed to Theocritus himself, and *Idylls* 8 and 9, generally considered post-Theocritean (Reed). All three seem to be synthesizing Theocritus' (earlier) bucolic poetry. Treating its innovations as conventions with which to work, they codify a specific type of herdsmen's exchange and pastoral world, and stereotype its intertextual tropes in such a way that they become stepping-stones to a new poetics.

The Archaic iambic poet Hipponax was resurrected during the Hellenistic era, even literally in Callimachus' first *Iamb*. As was the case for other authors whose works were appropriated as models at this time, iambographers updated Hipponactean verse in tune with the intellectual trends and literary tastes of the day (Scodel). Most importantly, Hellenistic iambos and its sister parody are no longer vitriolic and cruel but relatively mild and amusing. The people lampooned are largely straw men, and personal invective and gross obscenity have been replaced by general moral advice. Where the Archaic iambographer presented himself as a drinker, brawler, and seducer,

the main models of his Hellenistic incarnation are philosophers such as Socrates, Diogenes, and Pyrrho, socially marginal “wise men” who mock common behavior and teach virtue and detachment – but most of all, happiness. As far as Hellenistic iambos is still hostile and contemptuous, it is to conventional beliefs, to wealth and power, in short, to any sort of pretension, including literary. Beyond this overall “philosophical” atmosphere the extant satiric-parodic texts vary widely. Boundaries between genres, styles, and illocutionary modes are porous, and so are those between schools of philosophy. Phoenix’s choliambos dispense lighthearted moral advice, perhaps with a Cynic flavor. Callimachus’ learned and complex *Iambi* are only loosely attached to the spirit and form of Archaic iambos, containing poems in different meters and on non-satiric topics; in some Plato is an important model. Cercidas introduced meliambic verse, a meter related to the dactylo-epitrite, to sing a Cynic tune in a Doric literary dialect. Macho’s *Chreiai* are vulgar anecdotes with punch lines in prosaic diction and regular iambic trimeters. The hexameters of Timon of Phlius satirize the philosophical schools from a Skeptical perspective; those of Crates of Thebes sell Cynicism through poetic parody (White). A mixed bag indeed.

Herodas’ *Mimiambos* offer another take on the iambic genre, blending iambos and mime, with Hipponax himself showing up for Herodas’ consecration as iambic poet, a Hesiodic theme explored by so many Hellenistic and, later, Roman poets (Esposito). Herodas’ depiction of the lives of ordinary people, such as cobblers, housewives, and school masters, is also typical of the period. The *Mimiambos*’ unpretentious subject matter and seemingly realistic dialogue led some earlier critics to evaluate them as popular poetry or even, with a Marxist twist, as an indictment of the elitist literature of the court. Yet the simplicity of these poems is deceptive. Just like Theocritus’ hexameter “urban mimes” (*Idylls* 2, 14, and 15), they address an audience equipped to appreciate complex allusions and philological games, and they likewise seem to support a Ptolemaic cultural agenda. They are, in fact, far removed from the anonymous “popular” mimes which were performed by traveling troops throughout Hellenistic Egypt. These, as fragmentary scripts and related documents testify, drew their effect from various combinations of scripted dialogue, improvisation, music, song, and dance. Although the *Mimiambos* too may have been performed in some manner and context, Herodas clearly had attentive readers in mind as well.

The passage of time was not kind to Hellenistic drama, but Menander’s comedies were so ubiquitous in Greco-Roman Egypt that many chunks and scraps survived in the dry sands, to resurface only in recent years. We have one virtually complete play (*Dyskolos*) as well as large parts of a handful of others from which to get a good sense of what was happening on the comic stage. To this we can add the surviving Roman adaptations by Plautus and Terence, although their evidence should be handled with care. Throughout the Hellenic *oikoumenē*, rulers and civic elites embraced drama to advertise their allegiance to Greek culture in general and Athenian culture in particular – for despite the rise of an international theatre industry and professional theatrical guilds, drama retained its special connection with Athens and drama produced in Athens enjoyed a broad appeal. What makes this remarkable in the case of Menander is that his comedies, complex five-act marriage plots, are centered around problems which are highly specific to life in the Athenian *polis* with its exclusive citizenship laws

(Lape). Why, one might ask, would a Syracusan living in Alexandria want to see the travails of a young Athenian in love? One reason is surely that citizenship was an issue of intense interest to the mixed populations of the Hellenistic kingdoms, and that Menander's plays, although they are ultimately faithful to the tenets of Athenian civic identity – legitimacy, nativity, and freedom – also kick against them by constantly exploring the relationship between character and birth. But we may be dealing with a more generic issue as well. Asking why Menander's comedy appealed to a non-Athenian audience is like asking why modern audiences across the world like westerns, police dramas, and martial arts flicks. What these genres have in common is that they offer audiences who are not Athenian citizens, cowboys, police officers, or kung fu masters a fictional world with clearly defined parameters and conventions as a counter-image of their own reality. In this respect, the worlds of Menander and bucolic have something in common.

Hellenistic tragedy is almost entirely covered in darkness. We know that mythological dramas continued to be produced, and that there were historical tragedies as well as satyr-plays, but little more (Sens). What might the plays written by members of the so-called Pleiad, the most important dramatists of the time, have looked like? Would we encounter the mixing and blending of genres, Homeric glosses, and intrusion of contemporary issues observed elsewhere? To judge from the names of tragedians we know, which include the scholarly poets Alexander Aetolus, Lycophron, Philicus, and Sositheus, and from the evidence for actual texts, it would appear that like so many genres, tragedy came to Alexandria through the rabbit hole. In Sositheus' *Daphnis or Lityerses*, Daphnis, searching the world for the nymph he loved, found her as a slave at the court of the Phrygian king Lityerses, who required strangers to engage in a contest of reaping and killed them when he won; the play ended with Heracles decapitating Lityerses and returning the nymph to her lover. The main hero is a bucolic icon, the outcome that of a Euripidean tragedy, while the overall plot recalls satyr-play, epic, and the later novel. Whatever this play was, it was just as remarkable as the two best preserved Hellenistic "tragedies," Ezekiel's *Exagoge*, which dramatizes the story of Exodus (Gruen), and Lycophron's *Alexandra* (Sens). Lycophron's curious piece consists entirely of what represented only one scene of a typical tragedy, the messenger speech. In almost 1,500 lines, a messenger reports to King Priam an oracular utterance by Alexandra (i.e., Cassandra, the sister of Alexander/Paris), the prophet whom no one believed, couched in mystifying neologisms and recherché kennings. Cassandra's words provide an account of the Trojan cycle, but in such a way that the original audience would have required the equivalent of a PhD to understand their meaning. For the *doctus lector* able to decrypt it, the *Alexandra* explores the interrelationship between epic and tragedy, the historical conflict between East and West culminating in the rise of Rome, and last but not least the very hermeneutic effort required to access Hellenistic poetry's manifold levels of signification, "winding and traversing, pondering with wise mind, the obscure path of riddles" (lines 9–11). Such pondering presupposes reading, and it is indeed hard to imagine any audience decyphering the entire *Alexandra* in performance.

Whereas for poetry we possess a substantial number of key texts by key authors in their original form, the situation is radically different for prose. The three centuries after the death of Alexander are unquestionably important in intellectual history,



showing crucial developments in fields such as philosophy, literary criticism, oratory, mathematics, astronomy, and medicine. Yet our evidence for these developments is almost entirely indirect. With some notable exceptions (such as the *Histories* of Polybius and technical works) we are able to access the prose literature of the period only through its reception, through discussions, summaries, and the occasional quotation in the works of later authors, writing in Latin as often as in Greek. Such testimonies and fragments allow us to say something – and sometimes even a lot – about the content of texts, but they rarely tell us much about the text as a text. For this reason Hellenistic prose tends to fill relatively few pages in literary histories.

Rhetoric and its most immediate application, oratory, are cases in point. Formal speeches doubtless played an important role in law, politics, and display within and among courts and cities. Yet not a single speech, whether forensic, epideictic, or diplomatic, survives: nearly all our information about Hellenistic speech-writing comes from authors such as Cicero and Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who were active at the very end of our period and favored the orators of the fourth century over Hellenistic styles (Cuypers). For theoretical thinking about language use and text composition – usually covered under rhetoric and literary criticism – we rely on largely the same set of authors, but with one crucial addition. Thanks to modern imaging techniques and new editions, we are increasingly able to interpret the carbonized papyrus texts of early first century BCE works by Philodemus of Gadara, found at Herculaneum. In addition to providing insight in Hellenistic theoretical discussions we previously knew little about, they show that many strands of criticism which were once thought to be peculiar to later writers in fact perpetuate centuries-old discussions (Gutzwiller). Philodemus treats fundamental questions regarding the function of literature, the nature of the poetic, the relationship between poetry's subject matter, language, style, and thought, and how to judge a literary work; he also discusses the so-called euphonist critics, who prioritized the sound of poetry over all other aspects, and allegorical approaches, which emphasized poetry's hidden lessons.

As an author of works on phenomenology, theology, ethics, rhetoric, music, poetry, and the history of philosophy, Philodemus also illustrates the breadth of the territory covered by *philosophia* after Aristotle and the interconnectedness of the fields within it (White). Of the three basic spheres of Hellenistic philosophy, physics dealt with the natural world as a whole, encompassing not only cosmology, theology, and metaphysics, but also, for example, biology, geology, and meteorology. Ethics covered all aspects of human conduct and therefore studied not only character and values but also the organization of cities and empires and the responsibilities of leaders and intellectuals. Logic went beyond formal logic and epistemology to include grammar, rhetoric, and literary criticism. Many who bore the label philosopher ranged even wider: Philodemus wrote poetry and was a historian (of philosophy at least); others were, for example, mathematicians. Although there are differences between first-century Rome and third-century Alexandria, there can be little doubt that in Callimachus' time philosophy, rhetoric, and literary criticism were as strongly interconnected, as established within Hellenic *paideia*, and as relevant to poetry production as they were in Philodemus' time. On the impact of these interrelated spheres on Hellenistic poetry much work remains to be done.

As for philosophical literature in the narrower sense, all that survives intact of the colossal production of Hellenistic Peripatetics, Stoics, Epicureans, Skeptics, and Academics are three letters by Epicurus and collected excerpts from his writings; short poems (notably Cleanthes' *Hymn to Zeus*); some pseudepigrapha preserved under the names of Plato, Aristotle, and others; and a few documents such as wills (White). For everything else we rely on the testimony of authors such as Cicero, Lucretius, and Sextus Empiricus. In the many forms philosophical literature took, a feature that stands out is the prominence of the persona and voice of the philosopher himself, engaged in communication in genres such as dialogues, biographies, anecdotes, and letters; this phenomenon may be usefully compared to trends in contemporary poetry and historiography. As in the case of oratory, the close of the era saw a renewed interest in the originary texts of the discipline. Unlike Hellenistic oratory, however, Hellenistic philosophy was not obliterated by this development but remained the basis for interaction with the works of Classical authors such as Plato and Aristotle for a long time to come.

It is a tenet that philosophers increasingly led what we would call an academic life, devoted to study and reflection. Yet they could and did wield influence. As intellectual icons of their community they could be paraded, for example, on diplomatic missions (Erskine), and they instructed the future political and intellectual elite. Just as Aristotle had taught Alexander, his successor Demetrius of Phalerum, after governing Athens for Cassander, became a tutor to the Ptolemies, whose Museum, as we saw, was modeled upon the Lyceum. At Alexandria and elsewhere, philosophers participated in the intellectual competition and complex politics of the court just like all other courtiers, be they poets or generals.

Ironically, the area of Hellenistic prose where most texts are extant also happens to be the one least accessible to most students of Greek literature. Scientific writing, even if it could be classified under philosophy, was somewhat separate back then as it is now. It addressed an audience of specialists through concise verbal explanation with visual illustration, using formal conventions which are surprisingly similar across disciplines (Cuypers). Substantially preserved (occasionally in Arabic translation) are works on mathematics, optics, astronomy, and mechanics by over a dozen authors, including key figures such as Euclid and Archimedes. As in the case of poets and philosophers, the biographical tradition often insists that these men were primarily motivated by intellectual challenges per se and regarded real-world applications with disdain; but although there are indeed important similarities in spirit between science and contemporary poetry, it is a fact that the mechanical treatises of Biton and Philo describe war machines and artillery – also the area where Archimedes proved his worth to Hiero of Syracuse – and that Apollonius of Citium, the author of the only extant medical treatise of the era, criticizes his predecessors precisely for their lack of hands-on experience. Scientists too had patrons and were expected to make themselves useful.

In historiography the only text to survive (though not completely) is Polybius' *Histories*, which forms an island in the sea of fragments that leads from the fourth century BCE to Dionysius of Halicarnassus in the late first (Gowing). Features of some pre-Polybian histories can be gleaned from Polybius' criticism of them, even if, as in the case of Callimachus' *Aetia* prologue, we should perhaps be slightly wary

of Polybius' insistence that the "dramatic" and "universal" histories of his predecessors were much inferior to his own Thucydidean "pragmatic" history. Not only do veridical polemics come with the territory, many of Polybius' predecessors also worked in a different tradition, which privileged romantic storytelling, exoticism, and wonder. This tradition can be traced from Herodotus through fourth-century authors such as Theopompus and Ctesias to various ill-demarcated literary categories of the Hellenistic period, including paradoxography, utopia, biography, and local history, in which history and myth, fact and fiction, Greek and non-Greek were closely interwoven (Whitmarsh). There were, for example, countless local historians who wrote about the peoples, places, and events associated with their own towns and regions in stories and histories, putting them on the cultural map of the Hellenic *oikoumenē*. Local lore and wonders likewise occupy a prominent place in poems such as Callimachus' *Aetia* and Apollonius' *Argonautica*, both of which also include their share of eros. The exploits of Alexander the Great, first recorded by "serious" historians whose works we can now only glimpse through Diodorus, Plutarch, and Arrian, also gave rise to many tales of wonder, as preserved in the *Alexander Romance*. Although there is no straight road from Hellenistic literature to the erotic-exotic novels of Imperial times, it is clear that in this period a crucial development occurred. Various Hellenistic innovations in what we would call prose fiction are the products of genuine cross-cultural hybridity, fusing Greek, Egyptian, and Western Asian elements into something recognizably new.

This cross-cultural dialogue goes far beyond prose fiction. Although Greek became the *lingua franca* in all lands under Greco-Macedonian rule, this did not imply that indigenous elites were simply "assimilated" or that the Hellenic elite was ignorant of local cultural traditions. Literature continued to be written in Egyptian, Akkadian, and Aramaic. Some genres remained exactly as they were, others underwent more or less substantial developments, but few disappeared completely. When indigenous elites adopted the Greek language and Greek literary forms, it was often not so much to demonstrate their Greekness but for self-presentation to a broad audience. Jewish writers penned dramas, epics, *ktisis* tales, histories, letters, and dialogues, and through these insinuated themselves brilliantly into Greek cultural history and reached out to an increasingly Greek-speaking Jewish population in diaspora (Gruen). A similar ploy can be seen in the *Alexander Romance*, in its origin a product of Ptolemaic Egypt, where Nectanebo, the last pharaoh of Egypt, goes to the court of Philip II and impregnates Olympias with Alexander, persuading her that she would be sleeping with Amun. Accordingly, Alexander and his successors could be seen as the natural successors of indigenous rulers (Dieleman and Moyer). The strategy is also employed in the *Babyloniaca*, written by Bel-re'ushu (Berossus). In this historical work, the Seleucids were portrayed as the final stage in the succession of empires stretching back to Nabopolassar and his son Nebuchadnezzar (Knippschild). Much like the *Aegyptiaca* of the Egyptian priest Manetho, Berossus' work was not a straightforward imitation of Greek historiography but to some extent adhered to indigenous conventions of form; and with respect to their message both works cut both ways, flattering not only the rulers but also the ruled, whose cultural pride was clearly very much intact.

While Greeks had dealt with the peoples of Western Asia and Egypt for centuries, Rome was a new power which established itself on the Mediterranean stage in a relatively short time in the third century and proceeded to swallow up the Hellenistic kingdoms at a swift pace. Apart from being unfamiliar to the Greeks and being the ruler instead of ruled, the Romans also did not have a long and distinguished literary history, even if they had a strong and distinct cultural tradition. For all these reasons the interaction between Greeks and Romans was fundamentally different.

Greek historiography provides us with a fascinating view of how the Greek attitude toward the Romans shifted over time (Gowing). For Polybius, writing in the second century, the Romans were still the Other who had recently gained an empire, for which reason it was necessary to explain to Greeks who they were and how they had become so successful. In the later writings of Polyhistor, Posidonius, and Dionysius of Halicarnassus, we see the perspective gradually change as Roman hegemony becomes more and more a fact of life and a new symbiosis develops between the Roman elite and the Greek intellectuals streaming into Rome: not an uneasy pact between conqueror and conquered, but a relationship of mutual interest and respect. In time, Dionysius would go so far as to see the Romans as honorary Greeks, which is not so startling a thought when one considers the extent to which Roman writers, thinkers, and artists absorbed Hellenic culture.

This should not, however, be taken to imply that Roman literature simply took over Greek concepts, forms, and styles; rather, it assimilated them, individuating itself from Hellenistic literature with great success. This process of assimilation and individuation culminated in the first century but began as early as the third. In their adaptation of Greek poetic genres, Roman authors managed to maintain their own voice from the start. Enough survives of the earliest Roman epics by Livius Andronicus, Naevius, and Ennius to demonstrate a keen awareness of Hellenistic sensitivities (Clauss). With respect to their learnedness, playfulness, and self-consciousness these poems might have been at home in Alexandria; yet in their content and ethics they are unmistakably Roman. The contemporary comedies of Plautus, which are both firmly connected to and significantly different from Hellenistic comedy, allow a similar analysis.

Historians almost universally let the Hellenistic period end in 31/30 BCE, the years of the Battle of Actium, the fall of Alexandria, and the death of Cleopatra, after which Augustus ruled, effectively with sole power, over much of the area once dominated by Alexander and his successors. It was also shortly after Actium that Dionysius of Halicarnassus arrived in Rome, an event that provides an appropriate book-end to a chapter in literary history whose beginning was marked by the deaths of Aristotle and Demosthenes. The city in which Dionysius arrived must have looked to him very much like a Hellenistic metropolis. It was filled with Greek sculptures and paintings, peripteral temples in foreign marble instead of the local stone, public buildings and porticos faced with Corinthian columns and ornate entablatures. Intellectuals from all over the *oikoumenē* flocked to the Seven Hills to give displays of their erudition. In the decades that followed Actium, Rome came to resemble a Hellenistic city even more, and Alexandria in particular, as intellectual life blossomed and construction boomed. Among other allusions to Alexander's great city, Augustus built a magnificent mausoleum in imitation of the great Macedonian general's tomb, in front of

which stood two obelisks. He also commissioned a monumental Horologium whose gnomon was another obelisk, and to his home he added a temple to Apollo and libraries, an obvious nod to the Alexandrian Library and Museum. It seems fitting, therefore, that Medieval and Renaissance Europe would become acquainted with Hellenistic literature primarily through Rome. While the Roman poets, rhetors, philosophers, and historians of the early Empire went their own way, they indirectly preserved much of the Hellenistic literary tradition of which they were the immediate heirs. Due to the vagaries of history, many of their works survived while the Hellenistic texts did not. Our direct knowledge of these texts has begun to grow significantly only since the nineteenth century, thanks to finds such as the Herculaneum scrolls, the Archimedes palimpsest, and most of all, of course, the numerous literary papyri that have emerged from the sands of Egypt, with the “New Posidippus” as the most spectacular recent example. It is to be hoped that such finds will continue to increase our understanding of Hellenistic literature in the future.

## FURTHER READING

Hellenistic literature often fares poorly in histories of Greek literature, most of which explicitly or implicitly offer a rise-and-fall narrative that privileges the Classical period and sees the Hellenistic period as a time of decline. The almost complete loss of much of the period’s prose literature makes it even easier to give it short shrift. Kassel 1987 is an informative survey of the demarcation and evaluation of the Hellenistic period in literary histories from Vossius to modern times, which foregrounds the rehabilitation of Hellenistic poetry, if not of Hellenistic literature at large, at the end of the nineteenth century, the time of the first major papyrus finds. Kassel rightly singles out the contribution of the vehemently anti-Classicistic Wilamowitz, directly through publications (see notably 1912, 1924) and indirectly through his students. Tellingly, the Hellenistic section of Schmid and Stählin’s revision of Christ’s *Geschichte der griechischen Literatur* grew to 506 pages in the fifth edition of 1911, then to 662 in the sixth edition of 1920. This work, which remains the most comprehensive survey of Hellenistic literature to date, posits a cultural break at 146 BCE between “the creative period of Hellenistic literature” and “the period of the transition to Classicism,” which it lets end around 100 CE – an analysis challenged by various chapters in this *Companion*.

An accessible book-length introduction to Hellenistic literature is Gutzwiller 2007a, which inevitably focuses on poetry but includes substantial discussions of prose that survives in its original form (Polybius, technical treatises). Almost half of the volume is devoted to analytic discussions of topics such as historical context, learning, book culture, aesthetics, and the critical impulse in literature and art. Recent bite-sized introductions are Hunter 2003b and Krevans and Sens 2006, both largely restricted to poetry. Substantial discussions of Hellenistic literature in broader literary histories include Lesky 1971 (German) and 1966: 642–806 (English); Dihle 1991 (German) and 1994: 231–311 (English); Saïd 1997: 277–402 (French; a radically abbreviated English version in Saïd and Trédé 1999: 93–118). Schmitt and Vogt 2005 includes substantial entries on all major Hellenistic authors and genres.

Recent surveys of Hellenistic poetry in particular include Bulloch 1985, Hutchinson 1988, Fantuzzi and Hunter 2004, and Manakidou and Spanoudakis 2008 (in Greek). Influential older

surveys are Couat 1882 (English version 1931), Susemihl 1891–2, Legrand 1924, Wilamowitz 1924, and Körte 1925 (English version 1929; revised as Körte and Händel 1960). Fowler 1990 anthologizes Hellenistic poetry in English translation; Hopkinson 1988, in the original Greek.